

Chapter 2. Background of Moravia and the Czech Lands

A little background on Czech geography is in order, to help the reader's understanding and appreciation of the Kadlec family story. Contrary to popular belief, the Kadlec family did not originate in the country of Czechoslovakia, since we all know that Czechoslovakia only came into existence in 1918 and ceased to exist on January 1, 1993, when it peacefully split into the present-day Czech Republic (Česká republika) and Slovakia. In other words, our family was long gone from these lands before the political state of Czechoslovakia came and went.

Before 1918, the prevailing empire over the Czech lands was the German-speaking Austrian Empire from 1804 to 1867 and then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which lasted from 1867 until October 1918. And so for the purposes of this book we will refer to the place of our Kadlec ancestors as the 'Czech lands'.



Figure 2-1. Map of the Austrian Empire.

Although neither the Country of Czechoslovakia nor the Austro-Hungarian Empire exist today, the Kadlec family's village of origin (Velké Tresné) is presently alive and well and located in the region of Moravia, in the Southeastern portion of the Czech Republic. We will learn more about the rediscovery of the Kadlec family's home village, later in this document. But to set the stage for understanding the social and economic conditions that impacted the lives of the earliest known members of the Kadlec family of the 17th Century, an account of the "Thirty Years War" is presented, as well as a history of Moravia.



Figure 2-2. Map Showing the thirteen (13) Regions or "Kraj" of the Modern Day Country of the Czech Republic . The Kadlec Family Originally Hailed from Vysočina Kraj in Moravia.



Figure 2-3. Map Showing the Major Cities, Longitude/Latitude, and Countries Surrounding the modern day Country of the Czech Republic.



Figure 2-4. Elevation and River Map of the Czech Republic

The Moravian People

The Moravians today are a Slavic ethnic group who speak various dialects of Czech. Some Moravians regard themselves as an ethnically distinct group; others consider themselves to be ethnically Czech. In the census of 1991 1,362,000 (13.2%) of the Czech population described themselves as being of Moravian nationality. In the census of 2001 this number had decreased to 380,000 or 3.7% of the population (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moravia>)

History of Moravia

Around 60 BC the Celtic Boii people withdrew from the region and were succeeded in turn by the Germanic Quadi and in the 6th century the Slavic tribes. At the end of the 8th century the Moravian Principality came into being in present-day south-eastern Moravia, Záhorie in south-western Slovakia and parts of Lower Austria. In 833 this became the state of Great Moravia with the conquest of the Principality of Nitra (present-day Slovakia and parts of northern Hungary). Their first king was Mojmir I (ruled 830-846). Great Moravia reached its greatest territorial extent in the 890s under Svatopluk I. At this time, the empire encompassed the territory of the present-day Czech Republic and Slovakia, the western part of present Hungary (Pannonia), as well as Lusatia in present-day Germany and Silesia and the upper Vistula basin in southern Poland. After Svatopluk's death in 895, the Bohemian princes defected to become vassals of the East Frankish ruler Arnulf of Carinthia, and the Moravian state ceased to exist after being overrun by invading Magyars in 906-7.

Following the defeat of the Magyars by Emperor Otto I at the Battle of Lechfeld in 955, Otto's ally Boleslaus I, the Premyslid ruler of Bohemia, received Moravia. Boleslaus I of Poland annexed Moravia in 999, and ruled it until 1019, when the Premyslid prince Bretislaus recaptured it. Upon his father's death in 1035, Bretislaus also became the ruler of Bohemia. In 1054, Bretislaus decreed that the Bohemian and Moravians lands would be inherited together by primogeniture, although he also provided that his younger sons should govern parts of Moravia as vassals to his oldest son.

Throughout the Premyslid era, junior princes often ruled all or part of Moravia from Olomouc, Brno, or Znojmo, with varying degrees of autonomy from the ruler of Bohemia. Moravia reached its height of autonomy in 1182, when Emperor Frederick I elevated Moravia to the status of a margraviate (or mark), immediately subject to the emperor, independent of Bohemia. This status was short-lived: in 1197 Vladislaus III of Bohemia resolved the succession dispute between him and his brother Ottokar by abdicating from the Bohemian throne and accepting the margraviate of Moravia as a vassal of Bohemia.

Since then, Moravia has shared its history with Bohemia. The Premyslid dynasty became extinct in 1306, and in 1310, John of Luxemburg became king of Bohemia. Moravia and Bohemia remained within the Luxemburg dynasty of German kings and emperors, until inherited by Alfred II of Habsburg in 1437.

In the course of the Hussite wars, the Habsburgs lost control of Bohemia and Moravia, and the Czech lands were temporarily divided. The Hussite George of Podebrady was elected king of Bohemia in 1458. In 1466, Pope Paul II excommunicated George and forbade all Catholics from continuing to serve him, and in 1469, Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary, conquered Moravia. Moravia was reunited with Bohemia in 1490 when Vladislaus Jagellion, who had succeeded George as king of Bohemia in 1471, then also succeeded Matthias as king of Hungary. In 1526, Vladislaus' son Louis died in battle, and the Habsburg Ferdinand I was elected king of Bohemia. Moravia remained with Bohemia as a Habsburg possession until the end of World War I.

Until 1641 Moravia's capital was the centrally-located Olomouc, but after its capture by the Swedes it moved to the larger city of Brno, which resisted the invaders successfully. The Margaviate of Moravia had its own "zemský sněm" or Landtag (diet) whose deputies were elected (in the years following 1905) in ethnically separate German and Czech constituencies.

Following the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, Moravia became part of Czechoslovakia (and was part of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia during the German occupation of Czechoslovakia in World War II). In 1945 the ethnic German minority of Moravia were expelled. (See Expulsion of Germans after World War II). With the breakup of Czechoslovakia, Moravia became a part of the Czech Republic in 1993.



Figures 2-5 and 2-6. Moravian Coat of Arms and Moravian Flag

The Longest War in Czech History and Its Effects

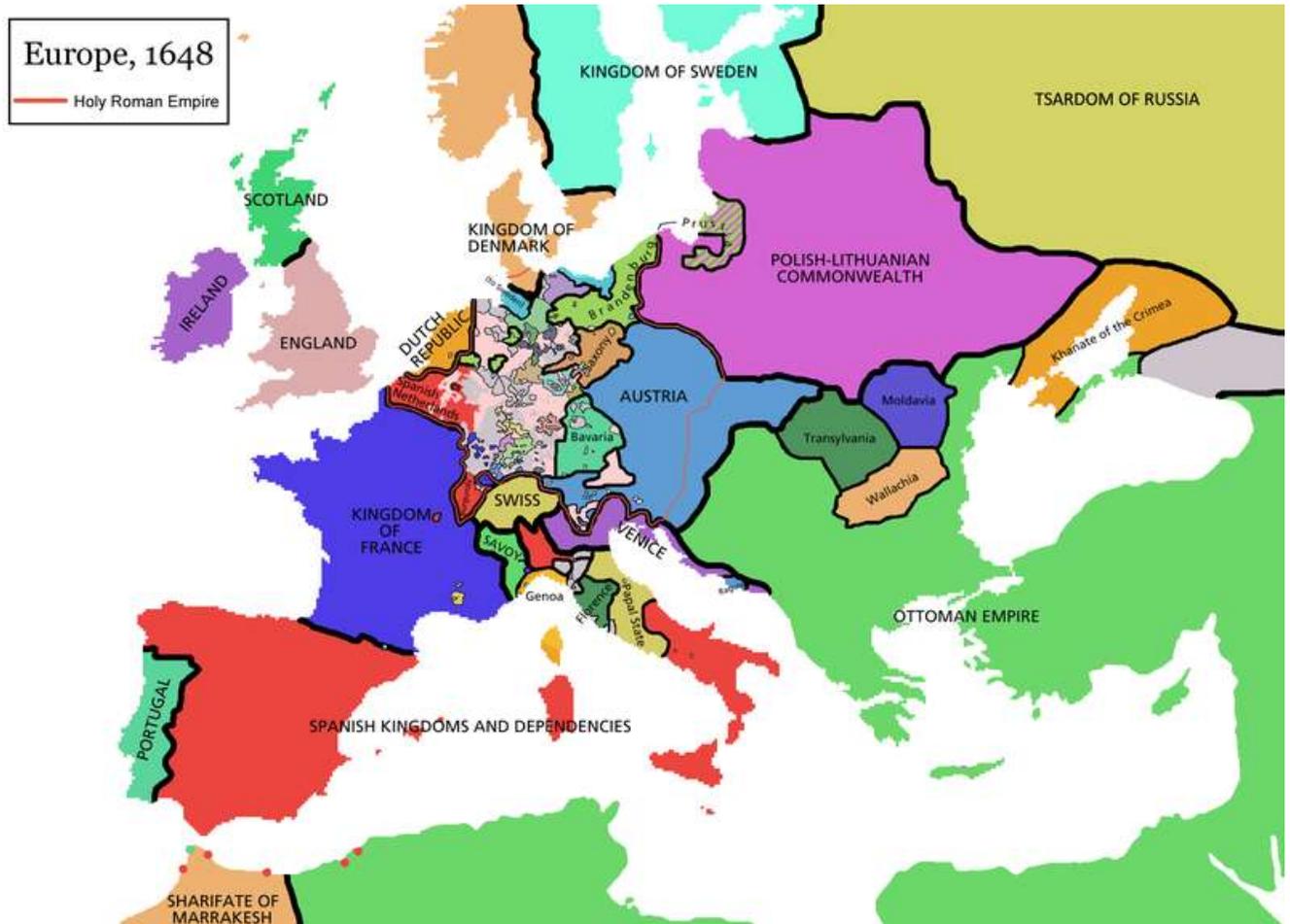


Figure 2-7. Map of Europe, 1648 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years_War).

By Miroslav Koudelka (*Naše Rodina*, March 2006 Vol. 18, No. 1, Page 7; Copyright 2006 CGSI, reproduction granted by permission of CGSI).

Great Father Czech, the legendary founder of the Czech nation brought his tribe in the early Middle Ages to an area poetically called The Heart of Europe. It is a great location right in the center of the continent from where it is not a long way to anywhere. On the other hand, there is one big disadvantage of this location---the relatively small but strategically situated area has always been an intersection of plenty of interests and most of the wars ever conducted in Europe have afflicted the country and its people.

The bitter truth undoubtedly refers to one of the most devastating wars in European history, generally known as the Thirty Years' War. It broke out in 1618, afflicted most of the nations on the Old Continent, namely its most developed and civilized areas, and lasted for thirty years indeed, up until 1648. It was the last big religious war in Europe, starting as the struggle between the Protestant and Catholic parties, but in the course of time, its character was changing and finally it became a fight of everyone against anyone, on all sides. An everlasting flight for territories, for profit, for power. All the parties kept on declaring their religious truths and highly honorable ideas, but that was nothing but an excuse for their

actual greedy-of-gain aims. And for the Czech Lands, unfortunately, were one of the very important scenes for that stressful drama.

The long, three decades lasting war was launched in Prague and its first period, 1618-1620 is known as the Czech War. It actually was an anti-Hapsburg uprising of the Bohemian Estates to which soon joined the Estates of the other provinces of the Kingdom; Moravia, Silesia and Lusatia, and for some time even the Estates of Upper Austria and Lower Austria. Why an uprising? Around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, a majority of Czech society was Protestant. As a matter of fact, the country was an island of religious liberty and toleration--Czech, German, Jewish and other people living here could officially profess as many as twelve denominations--Catholic, Old and New Ultraquist (their more moderate followers of Jan Hus), Brethren, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anabaptist, and so on. That was a rarity in the then Europe. But the pressure of Hapsburg rulers to cut down the role of Protestant churches and their representatives in public life and gradually re-Catholicize the country was stronger and stronger. And it called for a response.



Figure 2-8. Contemporary woodcut depicting the Second Defenestration of Prague (1618), which marked the beginning of the Bohemian Revolt, which began the first part of the Thirty Years War (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years_War).

The uprising started on May 23, 1618 with the so called Prague defenestration when two hated imperial officials representing the pro-Hapsburg, Catholic party, Governors Jaroslav Borita of Martinice and Vilem Slavata of Chlum and Kosumberk were thrown out of the

windows of Prague Castle by the leaders of the Protestant party. During the following two years, the General Diet of the Czech Kingdom dethroned the Hapsburg Emperor, Ferdinand II and elected a new king, Frederick Palatine. Calvinist by denomination and the leader of the Protestant Union. And their army twice besieged Vienna. By a newly passed constitution, the country became a confederation of the historical provinces having equal rights, with an elected sovereign and securing religious toleration. However, the uprising was finally beaten in the ill-fated battle on the western outskirts of Prague of November 8, 1620, known as the Battle of the White Mountain (Bila Hora).

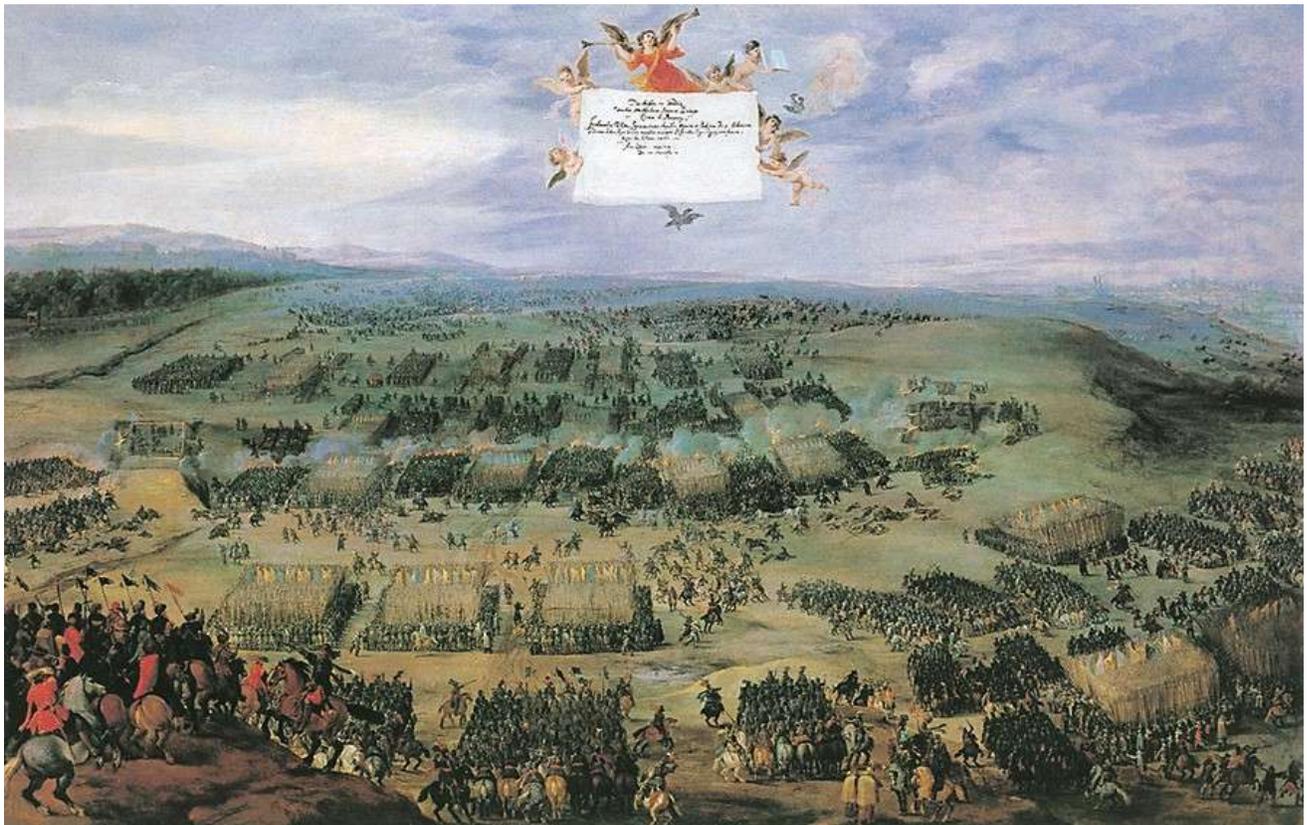


Figure 2-9. Contemporary painting showing the Battle of White Mountain (1620), where imperial forces under Johan Tzerclaes, County of Tilly won a decisive victory (Schlacht am Weißen Berg, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirty_Years_War).

The effects of the defeat came soon. Frederick and his court immediately fled Prague, leaving it defense-less before Ferdinand's army. Just a couple of following days were enough for the soldiers, most of which were mercenaries, to plunder the city. The most prominent commanders and political leaders of the uprising escaped for abroad. As we we'll see below, that was just the first wave of exile.

Those who had not left were imprisoned. And as an exemplary punishment, 27 representatives of the defeated party--3 lords, (highest rank of nobility), 7 knights (lower rank of nobility) and 17 burghers (representatives of cities)--were executed in Old-Town Square in Prague on June 21, 1621. There were distinguished personalities among them, such as an excellent traveler, writer and composer, Lord Krystof Harant of Polzice or a highly respected philosopher and medic, the personal physician of two previous emperors and rector (president) of the Prague University (today known as Charles University), Dr. Jan Jesensky (a.k.a. Jessenius). A reprieve was not even granted to the oldest of them, Sir Kaspar Kaplir of Sulevice who was as much as 86 years old then. The execution and its site are nowadays

commemorated in the pavement of the square, next to the Old-Town City hall with 27 white crosses and the date.

The public execution was a performance of terror. But the economic form of punishment had even more serious effects. The decade following the White Mountain may have been the biggest economic change in Czech history. At first, the properties of exiles and those who had been sentenced were confiscated. Anyone who had taken part in the "outrageous rebellion" was subject to the confiscation of either the whole estate or a fraction. Out of approximately 1,600 noble families living then in Bohemia, 680 lost all of their property, two thirds, a half or a third. And aside from a few exceptions (Ceske Budejovice, Pilsen who had not joined the uprising), most of the royal cities lost all of their fields, woods, vineyards, and other estates. Confiscated estates were purchased for ridiculous fractions of their actual cost by various adventurers and those who had been faithful to the Hapsburg Emperor. Some of them were actually given for free, just as an expression of thanks for their services.

These effects were multiplied by another important operation. A special consortium led by Prince Karl of Lichtenstein, Bishop Francis of Dietrichstein and commander Albrecht Eusebius of Wallenstein was entrusted with a monetary reform. In a year, the currency dropped to one tenth of its value and the country's economy went bankrupt. Just some became fabulously rich. Transfers of estates then continued in the 1630's, after Wallenstein's assassination. It is estimated that as much as about three quarters of real properties in Bohemia changed their owners in the years after the White Mountain. In Moravia the confiscations were not so brutal.

These social and economic steps were accompanied by measures in the field of religion and culture. Emperor's edicts expelled actually all non-Catholic priests from the country in the years 1621-1624. If we take into account that Catholics represented not more than a quarter of the country's population in the pre-war period, it means that out of approximately 1,400 Christian rectories existing then in Bohemia and Moravia, hundreds became vacant and a large number of people, and as a matter of fact, whole communities remained without spiritual support. And it was in the period when a support of this kind--owing to the war, its terror and a total moral derangement in the society was highly needed. With the breakdown of religious structure, the system of education was broken as well because most of the schools namely on the basic level had been bound to rectories and other bodies of particular churches. However, that was just a beginning. One of the measures, from 1624, forbade non-Catholic sermons, baptisms and marriages in private houses, as well as burials. Who would insult a Catholic priest or let non-Catholic rites take place in their homes, they would be punished by exile and property confiscation. Children could not become students or apprentices without becoming Catholic. And those who would blasphemously speak about God, the Virgin Mary, saints, Catholic rites or--of course--His Grace Emperor and His family, they would lose their property or even their lives.

The ruling circles certainly did not have enough power, energy and possibilities to perform all of these measures immediately and completely. But the pressure escalated. Its formal culmination in Bohemia came in 1627 when Ferdinand issued his "renewed" land constitution. In Moravia it came into power a year later on. It was a constitution of absolutism. The Hapsburg family was declared as the hereditary dynasty in the country. This way the Diet definitely lost the power to elect a new king. The structure of the Diet was rebuilt--bishops and prelates became most powerful, while all the forty-eight royal cities of Bohemia and Moravia got just one vote--and a majority of its legal authorities were substantially reduced. The local system of jurisdiction actually lost its sovereignty because the supreme appeal authority was transferred to the monarch. The Czech Kingdom, its

historical provinces and their institutions were not extinguished but the competence to make decisions in the substantial questions of politics and economy was transferred onto the central bodies in Vienna. When talking about the Kingdom, we should add that two of its lands, Upper Lusatia and Lower Lusatia were torn off in 1635 and granted Saxony for its support.

The new constitution changed the cultural life in the Czech lands as well. In addition to Czech as the only official language in the country so far, it introduced German as formally equal. The principle became the basis for the future trend to gradually Germanize official life in the country, and eventually, its people, the whole heritage. This aspect was supported by the fact that Hapsburgs invited many feudal lords to come to the Czech lands and take over the confiscated estates--and most of the "new" nobility coming from Germany, Italy or Spain were not willing to learn the language so strange to them. They used only the more international and fashionable German. Czech was step by step eliminated from the life of upper classes and it was surviving among the commons, namely in the country. A very good example of the equity of both the languages was given by the constitution itself. It was to be published in both German and Czech--but just the German version was declared as the authentic one. Besides, the official publication of the Czech edition was brought to the seventeenth fascicle--and never completed.

And finally, the constitution declared Catholicism as the only religion recognized by the state and mandatory for all. Non-Catholics were ordered either to convert within six months or to sell their properties (for the devaluated currency, let us repeat) and leave the country. Let me remind that the option was only given to those who were personally free (more or less just nobles and burghers), peasants subject to their feudal lords simply had just one choice, to follow--at least formally--the faith of the ruling circles. Many were even brought to the "correct" faith by violence.

As a result, some yielded to the pressure, of course. But many preferred their faith and morals and better decided to give up their homeland, with the hope that they would be able to come back one day. It is estimated that approximately one tenth of the population exiled. And many of them belonged among the most social, intellectual and moral personalities. The nation was deprived of its leaders. Readers of this article will most likely know at least one name--an excellent philosopher, educator, and theologian, Jan Amos Komensky (a.k.a. Comenius) the nickname of which is Teacher of Nations. He was even invited to become the first president of the oldest university in the New World, Harvard University in Massachusetts but he better stayed in Europe (Hungary, Poland, Sweden, Netherlands), hoping to return to the beloved motherland.

Among those who had to leave the country were Pavel Stransky, a distinguished lawyer, writer and historian. Vaclav Hollar, a famous master of the graphic arts who eventually became royal draughtsman and engraver of the Court in London, and many others. Let us remember one more, the first famous Czech American, a native of Prague, Augustin Herman. He left for the Netherlands at first, undertook several business trips to America and finally, in 1644, decided to stay there. Herman lived in the colony then named New Amsterdam (present New York City) and later on as a rich landlord and merchant in Maryland owning 24,000 acres of the best land. He was engaged in diplomacy, to, and made the first map of Maryland and Virginia for which he was raised to the rank of lords by the English. Missing his homeland, he at least gave particular estates patriotic names, such as Three Bohemian Sisters or Bohemian Manor.

The European war continued in the meantime, afflicted Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, the coasts of the Baltic and Northern Sea, simply the whole continent, and achieved its longest and most cruel stage. The armies of all the engaged countries adopted the principle that they had to be maintained by themselves. While the aim of the senseless struggle was more and more disappearing in the mist, various troops plundered the governed areas no matter whether on "their" side or in an enemy's country. And common people paid the bloody tax with repeated requisitions, forced drafts, epidemics, with their growing poverty, suffering and their lives.

Foreign armies several times flooded Bohemia and Moravia in the 1630's and 1640's. While protestant exiles cherished their hope to return with every victory of anti-Hapsburg armies, local people could hardly consider foreign troops as nothing but invaders. Just during the 1639 invasion of Swedish army to Bohemia, as many as 6,000 villages and towns were plundered and most of them burnt out. Olomouc, the capital of Moravia was occupied by the Swedes in 1642, they kept the city fortress up until 1650, and when they left, the city was literally eaten up and destroyed. There were even plans to discontinue it. The population of Jihlava, another royal city dropped from the pre-war 13,000 to less than three hundred. Eighty-six out of 197 houses in the city of Caslav were destroyed so totally that it was impossible to determine where they had stood. Prague or at least its particular sections were several times occupied and fell prey to Barvarian, Saxon and Swedish troops. For example, out of approximately 600 pictures of the Castle collection, 427 were transferred to Stockholm. And in addition to 100 wagons of "regular" spoils from Olomouc, Swedes dispatched 40 more wagons of manuscripts and valuable ancient prints from the local University Library. Many rectories were burnt out; their registers were irretrievably lost.

The three decades of war ended with a compromise. All the engaged parties simply became absolutely exhausted to continue, so the peace treaties were signed in Munster and Osnabruck, Westphalia on October 24, 1648. The conditions in Europe were to be established on the situation as it had been on January 1, 1624. For Czech Protestants it was a bitter disillusion because that decision actually reconfirmed the Hapsburgs' absolutist rule over the Czech lands and the unified way of spiritual life. The country was heavily devastated, its economy broken, some 150,000 - 200,000 persons escaped for exile, many more killed as the result of the war suffering both on the battlefields and in the rear. There was nothing similar to our present day statistics, however, it is estimated that the total population of Bohemia and Moravia fell to approximately 70% of the pre-war level. A whole generation was brought up knowing nothing other than war conditions. As a matter of fact, the country lost a century in its development because the population of the early 1600's was again reached as late as around the year 1700. And the painful step backwards did not only refer to population. From the vivid trend towards political and economic liberalism, education and religious toleration, the country was thrown back to deep feudalism with its conservatism and steady conditions. Many of the newly arrived feudal lords did not have the sense of responsibility for their serfs; their only aim was to squeeze the poor farmers and profiteer as much as possible.

The awaking of the country was slow and hard. It turned as necessary to find out the actual state of affairs after the war. So the land visitation was performed in the early 1650's, listing the so-called rustical land and its owners (i.e. the land owned and farmed by peasants by themselves, not the so-called dominical land managed under the feudal lords' administration). The results were summed up in 1654 and are known as Tax Roll (Berni Rula). Most of the volumes of that unique and rich document were published in the 20th century and they represent the first list of tax payees, their names and social conditions not only in the Czech lands but actually the first European document of its kind at all.