

**Tomáš Černušák**

ORCID: 0000-0001-7368-8588  
Historický ústav Akademie věd České Republiky

## **The Prague Nuncios and Their Relationship to Non-Catholics at the Turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

**Nuncjusze prascy oraz ich stosunek do  
innowierców na przełomie XVI i XVII wieku**

### **Abstract**

In the second half of the sixteenth century, Emperor Rudolf II moved the imperial court to Prague, thus transforming the city into a centre of international diplomacy and the seat of representatives of various powers. Among these were permanent papal nuncios appointed to the imperial court to act on behalf of the Pope as the head of the Catholic Church and the sovereign ruler of the Papal States. During their long and continuous presence in the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, nuncios were constantly reminded of the predominantly non-Catholic character of the city, where, moreover, one of the confessions even enjoyed full legal protection of the state. Based on correspondence of the nunciature and other related sources within the context of the development of the Czech lands, the study analyses the ways in which these papal diplomats reflected their immediate surroundings with respect to confessional differences. Primarily, however, it examines whether or not there were certain acceptable attitudes towards non-Catholics and to what degree it was possible to maintain contacts with them. Contrarily, it also identifies areas of their

diplomatic activities in which, on principle, confessional boundaries could not be crossed. The study thus shows that, on the one hand, it was not realistically possible to eliminate contacts with non-Catholics altogether, and in some cases negotiations with them were even considered necessary, important or at least acceptable. On the other hand, we have witnessed efforts to clearly define and separate oneself from different confessional trends and their adherents, especially if the surrounding society could possibly interpret the contacts in an incorrect or inappropriate way, thus jeopardizing the credibility of the papal nuncio's position as the pope's diplomatic representative.

**Keywords:** Papacy, non-Catholics, Czech lands, the imperial court, Prague, nunciature

### Abstrakt

Miejscem pobytu cesarza Rudolfa II na przełomie XVI i XVII w. była Praga, która stała się również centrum międzynarodowej dyplomacji oraz siedzibą dyplomatów z różnych mocarstw. Należeli do nich także stali nuncjusze apostołscy, którzy na dworze cesarskim reprezentowali papieża będącego głową Kościoła katolickiego, jak również władcę suwerennego Państwa Kościelnego. W trakcie ich wieloletniej i ciągłej pracy w stolicy Królestwa Czeskiego musieli pogodzić się z faktem, że ich rezydencja znajduje się w wyraźnie niekatolickim mieście, gdzie nawet jedna z konfesji korzystała z pełnej ochrony prawnej państwa. Praca oparta na korespondencji nuncjuszy oraz kolejnych powiązanych z tym źródłach w kontekście rozwoju ziem czeskich analizuje sposób, w jaki dyplomaci apostołscy podchodzili do swego bezpośredniego otoczenia z punktu widzenia różnic konfesyjnych. Pierwszoplanowo jednak bada, czy istniały dla nich jakiegokolwiek akceptowalne odmiany podejścia do innowierców, czy i w jakim stopniu można było utrzymywać z nimi relacje oraz w których dziedzinach działalności dyplomatycznej dla nuncjuszy przekraczanie granicy konfesyjnej zasadniczo nie było możliwe. Z przeprowadzonego badania wynika zatem, że z jednej strony nie było realnie możliwe całkowite wyeliminowanie kontaktów z niekatolikami, a w niektórych przypadkach negocjacje z nimi uznano nawet za konieczne, ważne lub przynajmniej dopuszczalne. Z drugiej strony byliśmy świadkami prób jasnego zdefiniowania i oddzielenia się od różnych nurtów wyznaniowych i ich wyznawców, zwłaszcza jeśli otaczające społeczeństwo mogło ewentualnie interpretować kontakty w niewłaściwy sposób, podważając tym samym wiarygodność stanowiska nuncjusza papieskiego jako przedstawiciela dyplomatycznego papieża.

**Słowa kluczowe:** papieństwo, niekatolicy, ziemie czeskie, dwór cesarski, Praga, nuncjatura

At the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries Prague was the seat of one of the thirteen permanent papal nunciatures of the time.<sup>1</sup> This was not, however, a manifestation of some curial foresight of the importance of the Bohemian lands for the recatholicisation, as some historians have interpreted it.<sup>2</sup> In fact, the explanation is considerably more prosaic. Prague was at this time the residence city of Emperor Rudolf II (1576–1612), and permanent diplomats at the level of ambassadors of foreign powers (besides nuncios, diplomats of Spain, Tuscany and Venice) or diplomatic actors<sup>3</sup> of a lower level who represented other states or even private individuals as agents temporarily or for a longer period of time also moved here for this reason. However, it cannot be said that this was the first contact of papal diplomats with this city. Some of them had already stayed there for varying lengths of time during the reigns of Rudolf's predecessors, namely Ferdinand I (1526–1564) and Maximilian II (1564–1576). This was usually at the time when the Bohemian Provincial Assembly was in session in Prague and therefore a large representation of nobles and representatives of royal cities were present, who had important political rights that the Habsburg rulers had to respect. In 1575, for example, the nuncio Giovanni Dolfino stayed in Prague permanently from February to September.<sup>4</sup>

In the Czech literature it is quite often reported that the settlement of the imperial court in Prague – and thus the relocation of the nunciature from Vienna – took place in 1583. It first appeared in an important,

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- 1 The study is the result of the project ‘*The geopolitical character of the post-Tridentine apostolic nunciatures (1562–1605) – a prosopographical and comparative study*’, no. 2020/39/D/HS3/00742, funded by Narodowe Centrum Nauki, Poland. On the development of papal nunciatures in the early modern period, see Anton Pieper, *Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der ständigen Nuntiaturen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder'sche Verlagshandlung, 1894); Knut Wolf, *Die Entwicklung des päpstlichen Gesandtschaftswesens in dem Zeitabschnitt zwischen Dekretalenrecht und Wiener Kongress (1159–1815)* (München: Max Hueber Verlag, 1966), 55–137; Pier Blet, *Histoire de la Représentation Diplomatique du Saint Siège des origines à l'aube du XIXe siècle* (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Vaticano, 1982), 203–398; Michael F. Feldkamp, *La diplomazia pontificia* (Milano: Jaca Book, 1995), 45–73.
  - 2 Karel Stloukal, *Papežská politika a císařský dvůr pražský na předělu XVI. a XVII. věku* (Praha: Filosofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy, 1925), 155–156.
  - 3 On the term “*diplomatic actors*”, see Birgit Tremml-Werner, Dorothee Goetze, “A Multitude of Actors in Early Modern Diplomacy”, *Journal of Early Modern History* 23 (2019): 407–422.
  - 4 Daniela Neri (bearb.), *Nuntiatur Giovanni Dolfins 1575–1576* [Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland III/8] (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997) no. 34,1, p. 73; no. 149,2, p. 322.

often quoted study by Karel Stloukal, published in 1928.<sup>5</sup> The thesis was all the more tempting for historians because the then nuncio Giovanni Francesco Bonomi became the author of an important recatholicisation programme for the Czech lands in 1584,<sup>6</sup> which influenced the actions and decisions of many of his successors.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the first permanent papal diplomat to reside in Prague throughout his tenure was Orazio Malaspina in 1578–1581.<sup>8</sup> After the death of his successor, Ottavio Santacroce, the nunciature returned to Vienna for a short time in 1581–1583, or the then nuncio Bonomi travelled with the emperor to places where provincial or imperial assemblies met (Pressburg, Augsburg) or individually elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter, until 1612, when Rudolf II died, the seat was more or less permanently in Prague.

From the religious point of view, the settlement of the papal nunciature in Prague posed an important problem for the individual diplomats, namely how to deal with the majority non-Catholic population of this agglomeration, which was also partly legal and protected by the laws of the land, similar to the situation with the members of the Catholic minority. Already the first diplomats noted the complete domination of the Catholics by members of other denominations. The religious development here, as in the Czech lands, underwent a very specific development. The so-called “Bohemian Reformation” can already be said to have taken place in the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, when the teachings of Jan Hus and the subsequent Hussite revolution led to the development and stabilisation of Utraquism, recognised by the Council of Basel. In addition to the Utraquists, the originally small Unity of the Brethren, which was not officially covered by the legal framework concerning Utraquism but enjoyed considerable protection from the nobility, gradually gained considerable importance. Minority Catholicism was in a different situation.

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5 Karel Stloukal, “Počátky nunciatury v Praze. Bonhomini v Čechách v letech 1581–1584”, *Český časopis historický* 34 (1928): 1–24, 237–279. Here Bonomi is identified as “the first permanent nuncio of Prague” on p. 4.

6 The edition of Bonomi’s nunciature correspondence is currently being prepared by prof. Alexander Koller of the German Historical Institute in Rome.

7 Tomáš Černušák et al., *The Papacy and the Czech Lands. A History of Mutual Relations* (Rome: Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma; Prague: Institute of History, 2016), 169–170.

8 Tomáš Černušák, “Nunciatura u císařského dvora v prvních letech vlády Rudolfa II. a české země”, *Český časopis historický* 111 (2013): 730–731. For the correspondence of the nuncios Orazio Malaspina and Ottavio Santacroce, see Alexander Koller (bearb.), *Nuntiaturen des Orazio Malaspina und des Ottavio Santacroce. Interim des Cesare dell’Arena (1578–1581)*, [Nuntiaturrechnungen aus Deutschland III/10] (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2012).

9 Stloukal, “Počátky”, 8–24.

The originally well-developed and numerous religious institutions were weakened economically, personnel and socially, and the archbishopric of Prague had been vacant since 1421. The religious situation became even more complicated, to the detriment of Catholicism, with the German Reformation during the 16<sup>th</sup> century, whose adherents gradually added significantly to the confessional plurality of Prague, as was the case throughout the country.<sup>10</sup>

The number of Catholic Christians in Prague at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries can only be estimated. If the existing research shows that there were about 40,000 inhabitants in the city,<sup>11</sup> Catholics may have numbered no more than 10 percent.<sup>12</sup> This number would also correspond to information from diplomatic reports. According to the nuncio Giovanni Dolfino, there were about 4,000 Catholics in 1575.<sup>13</sup> Similar numbers are mentioned by Pompeo Vizani, who accompanied the new nuncio Ottavio Santacroce on his travel to Bohemia in 1581. His estimate is about 5,000 Catholics.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the residence city of the emperor was considered a predominantly Utraquist, heretical city from the point of view of the nuncios. This is clearly shown, for example, by the report of the aforementioned Giovanni Dolfino of 25 February 1575, where he summarised his first impressions of his arrival in Prague:

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10 On the religious situation in the Czech lands in the late Middle Ages and early modern period see especially František Kavka, Anna Skýbová, *Husitský epilog na koncilu tridentském a původní koncepce habsburské rekatolizace Čech. Počátky obnoveného pražského arcibiskupství* (Praha: Universita Karlova, 1969); Josef Macek, *Víra a zbožnost jagellonského věku* (Praha: Argo, 2001); Zdeněk V. David, *Finding the Middle Way. The Utraquists' Liberal Challenge to Rome and Luther* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Jiří Just et al., *Luteráni v českých zemích v proměnách staletí* (Praha: Lutherova společnost, 2009), 23–123; Rudolf Řičan, *The History of the Unity of Brethren. A Protestant Hussite Church in Bohemia and Moravia* (Bethlehem: Moravian Church in America, 1992); Winfried Eberhard, *Konfessionsbildung und Stände in Böhmen 1478–1530* (München–Wien: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1981).

11 For a critical assessment of the existing estimates of the number of Prague's inhabitants in the pre-Bohemian period, see Olga Fejtová, „Já pevně věřím a vyznávám...“ *Rekatolizace na Novém Městě Pražském v době předbělohorské* (Praha: Scriptorium; Ústí nad Labem: Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, 2012), 104.

12 I would like to thank doc. Zdeněk Hojda from Charles University.

13 Neri, *Nuntiaturo*, no. 34,2, pp. 74–76.

14 Roma, Archivio di Stato Roma, Fondo Santacroce 87, fol. 21v. For a partial edition of this report see Alexander Koller, *Imperator und Pontifex. Forschungen zum Verhältnis von Kaiserhof und römischer Kurie im Zeitalter der Konfessionalisierung (1555–1648)* (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 2012), 365–377, 397–402, 413–416.

io giunsi qui in Praga, dove ho trovato molto minor numero di catholici di quello, ch'io credevo. [...] Il resto del popolo, che è grandissimo, per la maggior parte è Hussito, ovvero, come essi si chiamano, sub utraque. [...] Vi sono poi molti lutherani, picardi, calvinisti, anabattisti, trinitarii et d'ogn'altra setta.<sup>15</sup>

Pompeio Vizani, for example, erroneously stated that of the 114 churches and chapels in Prague, only fourteen were held by Catholics.<sup>16</sup>

From the point of view of the instructions that the nuncios received from Rome and their practical implementation in daily diplomatic activities, their goals in the religious sphere were therefore quite clear. Thus, the correspondence of all papal diplomats, as well as the main instructions issued to them in Rome,<sup>17</sup> throughout the period of their residence in Prague, reflect and document their more or less successful efforts to limit the influence of non-Catholic officials on the monarch, their efforts to recatholicise the Utraquist university, to incorporate the Utraquists into the Catholic Church, and to support Catholic institutions.<sup>18</sup> However, the above-mentioned question of the attitude of Rome's diplomats towards non-Catholics did not consist only in the efforts to recatholicise the Bohemian lands, which had long been part of the mission of the nuncios as representatives of the head of the Catholic Church. It also included finding a suitable *modus vivendi* of common "coexistence" with non-Catholics and contacts with them in the normal course of the nunciature, which was practically unavoidable, and at the same time establishing a pattern of behaviour and appearance of the nuncio as a representative of the Pope, who could not let his social status be questioned or compromised.

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15 Neri, *Nuntiatur*, no. 34,1, pp. 73–74.

16 Roma, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Santacroce 87, fol. 20r. Vizani's statement, however, was wrong. In fact, in 1581, when Vizani stayed in Prague, there may have been 31 Catholic versus 50 Utraquist shrines. On the number of churches by denomination at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see Štěpán Vácha, "Sub utraque, sub una: eine Quelle zur sakralen Topographie des rudolphinischen Prag (zum Jahre 1618)", *Studia Rudolphina* 12–13 (2013): 116–133.

17 During the reign of Rudolf II, the main instructions and general reports of the nuncios were issued for the pontificates of the popes from 1585 onwards – Klaus Jaitner (bearb.), *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens VIII. für die Nuntien und Legaten an den Europäischen Fürstenhöfen (1592–1605)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1984); Silvano Giordano (a cura di), *Le istruzioni generali di Paolo V. ai diplomatici pontifici 1605–1621* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2003); Klaus Jaitner (bearb.), *Instruktionen und Relationen für die Nuntien und Legaten an den europäischen Fürstenhofen von Sixtus V. bis Innozenz IX. (1585–1591)* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Verlag Herder, 2021).

18 For a summary, see T. Černušák et al., *The Papacy*, 170–179.

The canonical faculties with which the individual nuncios to the imperial court were endowed provided for a similar situation and entitled their holders to converse with heretics or schismatics and to dine with them, provided, of course, that this was absolutely necessary.<sup>19</sup> However, the personal approach of individual papal envoys varied and probably reflected the specifics resulting from the attitude of their own conscience and its priorities. This is very well reflected in Camillo Caetani's final report in December 1592, which he drew up on the basis of his own experience and that of his predecessors. Its author was aware that no new nuncio could avoid dealing and contact with non-Catholics in all circumstances, and indeed for many reasons it would be inappropriate to do so. He therefore suggested to his successor that he should adopt a rather moderate, non-rigorous approach. In his words, his predecessors had adopted a similar attitude towards non-Catholics: *Delli nuntii precedenti alcuni sono stati in simil materia molto ritrosi, alcuni molto indulgenti, altri hanno tenuta la via di mezzo, con la cautela che meritano le circostanze*. He then gives to Speciano some examples of when it is necessary to show more willingness to deal with non-Catholics, if they occur, for example, in the context of various foreign missions whose members are both Catholics and "heretics":

Che s'introduca qualche negotio utile per la religione, la notitia sicura, del quale difficilmente si può havere da altri, che da heretici. Che con la pratica ci sia speranza di conversione. Che l'heretico finga di esser catholico et sia curioso di scoprire come si parla, come si vive nella casa del nuntio. Che il nuntio insieme con gli Ambasciatori et tutti li principali signori della corte sia invitato da heretici a qualche banchetto, et che l'invitante sia di quella sorta d'heretici, che essi chiamano molli et riverenti verso le persone graduate.<sup>20</sup>

The nunciature's correspondence from Prague therefore often describes in detail some meetings with other believers, but many less important ones, whose content or purpose is indicated by Caetani's text, are not mentioned and we can only guess at their existence. Among the former are, for example, the individual conversations that the nuncio

19 See for example the faculties for the nuncio Cesare Speciano of 1592: "ubi necessitas suaserit seu expedire iudicaveris, cum quibusvis haereticis et schismaticis colloqui conversari et etiam cibum sumere." Alena Pazderová (ed.), *Epistulae et acta Caesaris Speciani 1592–1598. Pars I (Mai 1592–Dezember 1592)* (Prague: Archivum Nationale, 2016), no. 7, p. 38 (hereafter EACS I).

20 *Ibidem*, no. 198.V.17, p. 451.

Cesare Speciano had at the beginning of his stay in Prague in 1592 with one of the most important and richest Bohemian aristocrats, Petr Vok of Rosenberg, who was a member of the Unity of Brethren. Speciano's actions at that time were motivated not only by concern for the position of Catholics on the estates of this nobleman,<sup>21</sup> but also by the hope that he might try to persuade him and his wife, Katherine of Ludanice, to convert to Catholicism.<sup>22</sup>

Although the papal diplomat met the new ruler of Rosenberg repeatedly, his efforts were ultimately in vain.<sup>23</sup> Another similar encounter was experienced by the nuncio Giovanni Stefano Ferreri in 1605. While negotiating with the Bohemian Chancellor and leading representative of the Catholic nobility, Zdeněk Vojtěch Popel of Lobkowitz, at his palace, he learned that the Duke Johann Friedrich von Württemberg, who was currently residing in Prague, would like to meet him in person. The Nuncio had intended to avoid a meeting with this Lutheran ruler because “non essendo egli principe cattolico, non mi pareva che si convenisse ch'io passassi seco complimenti pubblici,” but the Duke surprised him with his unexpected arrival at the Lobkowitz Palace. In the end, he had no choice but to discuss with him and the other aristocrats present the beauties of Rome, where the Duke had visited some time before.<sup>24</sup> Although personal contacts between papal nuncios and non-Catholics were tolerated or occurred for various reasons, on the other hand, in Prague at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, we can witness a relatively clear effort by the representatives of Rome to achieve a confessionally based separation from everything related to non-Catholics. This was primarily to maintain the social or religious credibility of the nuncios, who represented the Pope himself as head of the Catholic Church and as sovereign of the Papal State, and this status was not to be challenged or threatened by improper contacts or ties. This is well illustrated by the disciplinary rules designed for members of the nuncio's *famiglia* (family), that is, the group of his associates who came with him to the imperial residence from Italy and thus constituted, in effect, the staff of the nunciature. Their existence is attested in the sources in connection with Ottavio Santacroce's short stay in 1581. They were compiled by his friend

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21 *Ibidem*, no. 101,5, pp. 234–235.

22 The reasons for this action were outlined by Pavel Marek, “Cardinal Purple for Maximilian of Pernstein. A Contribution to Aristocratic Women's Political Communication”, *Theatrum Historiae* 23 (2018): 108–109.

23 EACS I, no. 133, pp. 300–301; no. 174,3, p. 382.

24 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Fondo Borghese, serie II, 152, fol. 189r-190r.

Pompeio Vizani at the time when the nuncio was awaiting an audience with the emperor. It is a sequence of positively and negatively defining decrees which all the inhabitants of the nunciature were obliged to follow.<sup>25</sup> Thus, for example, they were to attend Mass with the nuncio every day, to go to confession once a month, and then to receive the Eucharist at the hands of the nuncio. In the morning and in the evening – always at the signal of the bell – they were to kneel and pray the *Ave Maria*. In front of the images of the saints and in the churches, they were to behave reverently and remember to remove the head covering. Cursing and oathing in reference to God or the saints or gambling were forbidden. Moderate, preferably black, clothing was also prescribed, without any fashionable extravagance. From our point of view, however, there were important restrictions concerning contact with the outside non-Catholic world. Thus, members of the nuncio's household were strictly forbidden to enter the churches or chapels of "heretics," especially during the time of their worship. Similarly, they were forbidden to engage in any religious debates with them. The aim of all these measures was to ensure that the behaviour and appearance of each member of the nunciature was fully in line with the norms applicable to the person they served, that is, the nuncio as the direct representative of the Pope. Vizani points this out in the introduction to his regulations:

Essendo il principio de la sapienza il timore del Signore, dovrà ciascuno ricordarsi che temendo un nontio apostolico, che representando la Santa Sede Apostolica in questi paesi, deve regolare altri et indurre a la cognition del vero et a la devotione tutti, le conviene essere non solo esemplare, ma singolare in bontà, religione, modestia et creanza.<sup>26</sup>

The effort to delimit oneself against everything non-Catholic is also evident in the spatial location of the nuncio's residence. For a long time it was not known exactly where the nunciature was actually located in the Prague agglomeration. Moreover, reports from papal diplomats indicate that the location changed several times over time, so it was undoubtedly a rented property. In 1581, the aforementioned Ottavio Santacroce occupied an unspecified house in the Lesser Town, in the same part of the city where the Spanish embassy building was also located at the same time. His later successor, Filippo Spinelli, initially lived on the opposite

25 It is entitled "Ricordi a la famiglia di Mons. Nontio come debba portarsi", Roma, Archivio di Stato, Fondo Santacroce 87, fol. 23r-25r.

26 *Ibidem*, fol. 23r.

bank of the Vltava in the Old Town of Prague, from where he moved back to Lesser Town in 1600, a year after his arrival, for fear of being attacked by non-Catholics.<sup>27</sup> In the same quarter was the residence of Antonio Caetani, as it is clear from his report of 1610.<sup>28</sup> The evident preference for the Lesser Town was not accidental. Geographically, it was the closest to the imperial palace, and the quality of the linguistic, social and economic background here consisted of a distinct Italian community, confessionally clearly Catholic in orientation.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the Catholic population was strongly represented in this part of the city, which represented a marked difference from the urban streets of Prague on the right bank of the Vltava River.<sup>30</sup>

Certain boundaries of inter-confessional contacts, however, should never have been crossed. This can be seen very well in the analysis of the persons included in the papal network of relations, which was administered by the nuncios in Prague and which helped them in their mission to overcome linguistic, religious and cultural barriers. This network operated on the principle of a relationship between the clients and their patron, the Pope, represented in Prague by his ambassador. He acted in what historiography defines as a *broker*,<sup>31</sup> and was in charge of maintaining the network, communicating smoothly with individual clients and distributing rewards of various types where appropriate. The members of the network were aristocrats and courtiers who were in the circle of Emperor Rudolf II, had good access to him or had gained his trust, or had an important position in the Privy or Imperial Council or in some other provincial or imperial office. From this position, they could easily carry out the tasks and tasks set by the individual nuncios that corresponded to the intentions of papal policy or obtained important information for them. However, the network of relationships around the papal nuncios lacked a structured form and was characterized by considerable personal variability compared to the similar entity that operated around

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27 *Ibidem*, pp. XLVIII–XLIX; Stloukal, *Papežská politika*, 90.

28 Tomáš Černušák (ed.), *Epistulae et acta Antonii Caetani 1607–1611. Pars V. Julius 1609 – Februarius 1611* (Prague: Academia, 2017), no. 668, p. 574.

29 Josef Janáček, “Italové v předbělohorské Praze (1526–1620)”, *Pražský sborník historický* 16 (1983): 102–104.

30 Anna Ohlidal, “Präsenz und Präsentation. Strategien konfessioneller Raumbesetzung in Prag um 1600 am Beispiel des Prozessionswesens”, in *Formierung des konfessionellen Raumes in Ostmitteleuropa*, ed. Evelin Wetter (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2008), 207–208.

31 On the function of so-called brokers within relational networks, see Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4.

the Spanish embassy.<sup>32</sup> However, the essential condition for the inclusion of a person in the relational network administered by a nuncio was his affiliation to the Catholic faith combined with trust, which - in the words of the French sociologist Niclas Luhmann - “by reducing social complexity, facilitates the functioning of the individual in society, provided that a certain degree of risk is accepted.”<sup>33</sup> Although a person of a non-Catholic denomination might have had an important role in the emperor’s circle, the fact of a different denomination meant, from the point of view of the nuncios, an absence of credibility. Indeed, unlike Catholics, members of other Christian denominations were generally perceived by papal diplomats as untrustworthy or dangerous. In his personal notes summarizing the experiences and recommendations of his predecessors, the newly appointed papal representative in Prague, Giovanni Stefano Ferreri, stated in 1604 that “l’heresia è stata introdotta dalla superbia et avaritia e dove non è arrivata con la violenza, è arrivata con le occulte trattationi.”<sup>34</sup> His predecessor, Camillo Caetani, in the report quoted above, where he recommended a rather non-rigorous approach in general contacts with “heretics,” did not fail to stress at the end that “chi fa tavola ogni giorno, si mette in obbligo di non escludere alcuno, ma ogni volta che il nuntio sia tenuto osservante della sua professione et zelante, non ardirà l’heretico di domesticarsi.”<sup>35</sup>

The position of papal nuncios in Prague at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries was thus characterised by a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, it was not realistically possible to eliminate contacts with non-Catholics altogether, and in some cases negotiations with them were even considered necessary, important or at least acceptable. On the other hand, we have witnessed efforts to clearly define and separate oneself from different confessional trends and their adherents, especially if the surrounding society could possibly interpret the contacts in an

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32 For more details see Tomáš Černušák, Pavel Marek, *Gesandte und Klienten. Päpstliche und spanische Diplomaten im Umfeld von Kaiser Rudolf II.* (Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2020).

33 Niklas Luhmann, *Vertrauen. Ein Mechanismus der Reduktion sozialer Komplexität* (Konstanz–München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2014), 8. On the concept of trust, see also Barbara A. Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies. The Search for the Bases of Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Martin Hartmann, Claus Offe (Hrsg.), *Vetruuen. Die Grundlauge des sozialen Zusammenhalts* (Frankfurt a. M. – New York: Campus Verlag, 2001).

34 Zdeněk Kristen (ed.), *Epistulae et acta Johannis Stephani Ferrerrii 1604-1607. Pars I (1604)* (Prague: Institutum historicum, 1944), no. \*1, p. 37.

35 EACS I, no. 198.V.17, pp. 451–452.

incorrect or inappropriate way, thus jeopardizing the credibility of the papal nuncio's position as the pope's diplomatic representative.

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