

Title: A declaration of the causes, for the which, wee Frederick, by the grace of God King Bohemia, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Elector of the Sacred Empire, & c. have accepted of the crowne of Bohemia, and of the countries thereunto annexed.

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Descriptive Summary:

In 1619, after mounting tensions between Catholics and Protestants in the Holy Roman Empire, Frederick of the Palatinate accepted the title and crown of King of Bohemia. The placement of a Protestant king on the throne further upset the fragile religious balance, and Frederick's claim to the throne was one of several factors that ultimately led to the Thirty Years War. Known as the "Winter King," Frederick only held the throne briefly and was deposed after the battle of White Mountain. This document offers Frederick's diagnosis of the troubles in the region and why he sees his rise to power as a necessity to help bring peace.

Edited by Tracey Carter

**A
DECLARATION
OF THE CAUSES, FOR
THE WHICH, WEE FREDERICK,
BY THE GRACE OF GOD KING
OF BOHEMIA, COVNT PALATINE
OF THE RHINE, ELECTOR
OF THE SACRED EM-
PIRE, & C.**

haue

**ACCEPTED OF THE CROWNE OF
BOHEMIA, AND OF THE COVN-
TRYES THEREVNTO
annexed.**

(1)

FREDERICKE, By the Grace of GOD,
King of BOHEMIA, Count Palatine of the RHINE,
Elector of the Sacred EMPIRE, Duke of BAVARIA,
Marquise of MORAVIA, Duke of SILESIA and
Lvxembvrg, Marquise of the Higher and Lower
Lvsasia, & c. To ALL Potentate, Electors, Prin-
ces, and States of Christendome, happy Greeting.

WEE make no doubt, but all in ge-
nerall, residing either within or
without the Empire, doe now suf-
ficiently vnderstand the miserable
and most perilous estate, into
which the Kingdome BOHEMIA is reduced,
being so Famous for Antiquitie, and a principall
member of the Sacred Empire, as also the
ountries thereunto annexed and Incorpora-
ted, with other bordering Prouinces. Neither
can they be ignorant of such actions of Oppres-
sion, hostilitie, and violence, which haue beene
practiced within a little time, through continuall
Rapines, Murders, Combustions, Deuastations,
plentifull effusion of Innocent blood, violation
and rauishing, both of Wiues and honest Vir-
gins, dismembering of little sucking Children,
with many other inhumane, most Cruell, and
Barbarous insolences. In like manner the true
source and originall of all these euils, of what af-
terwards ensued, or may in future time accrue,

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most evidently appeareth and is as clear as day, both by experience, and the ample Relations that haue bene diuers times made thereof; that they who by their depraued Councils, and suggestions, haue bene the means to precipitate the mightier sort, into present danger and losse, are now themselues conuincd, euen wihin their owne consciences. And notwithstanding the successe of these latter times, wherein sundry opinions haue been hatched, about the subject of Religion, may make one clearly discern with his eye, and (as it were) touch with his finger, that according to the veritie of holy Scripture, and a Maxime heretofore, held and maintayn'd, by the ancient Doctors of the Church, that mens Consciences, ought in no sort to be violated, vrged, or constrained; and whensoever men haue attempted any thing by this violent course, whether openly, or by secret meanes, the issue hath bene pernicious, and the cause of great and wonderfull innouations, in the principallest and mightiest Kingdomes, and Countries of all Christendome: Yet so it is, that a certaine extrauagant, and strange kinde of people, hauing dispersed themselues ouer Christendome, but especially within the Empire, and other Kingdomes and Countries, bordering and depending thereupon,

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and hauing there brought in, and planted a new Doctrine, absolutely sunestall and obnoxious, to all Potentates, and Magistrates: nay and further, hauing not onely obtained fauour and accesse to great men, but also drawne to their own bent, both their Councillours, and Officers, and generally the most Honourable, and opulent of euery place, through the false charme, of a counterfeit and masked Sanctitie, an implacable desire and thirst, did meruailously grow and increase, of persecuting all those, who were sepe- rated from the Romaine Church, yea and totally to extirpate them, if they did not yeeld, and come vnder that Jurisdiction. Whereupon, it came to passe, that notwithstanding all the good endeauours, that precedent Princes, and Gouver- nours haue bestowed both in the Empire, and more especially in the Kingdome of BOHEMIA, for preseruatiō of common Peace, and carrying an euen hand between the adherents of the one, and th'other Church, conformable to the Con- cessions, and Edicts of pacification, granted in fauour of Religion: their Successors for all this (more through others instigation, questionlesse, then of their owne proper disposition) haue beene vrged so farre, as to giue a large field of leaue and Libertie to the pestiferous kinde of

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people and their complices, who entring here-
vpon into a full and mayne Careir, they pre-
fumed fometimes to innouate one thing, then ano-
ther, and not onely by publike writing to draw
into doubt and controuersie, but also really to
annihilate and make frustrate the said Concessi-
ons, liberties of Religion, [Pacts], Obligations and
Oathes, solemnly assumed for their confirmation.

But wee will not heere set downe in particu-
lers, what hath beene [practiced] for many yeares
since, and attempted in all parts of the Empire,
vpon the purchase of this Licence and Liberty;
neither in how weake and instable manner, af-
fares still continue and stand: referring our
selues herein, to that, which Time shall further
manifest by sufficient tryals and proofes, in
whatsoever shall be requisite and conuenient.

But as for the Crowne of BOHEMIA, and the
Countrys thereunto annexed, wee must no
wayes dissemble it, and it is very well knowne,
that according as the light of the holy Gospell
spred his beames more and more from time to
time, the lustre and repute of the Roman Ca-
tholike Religion, hath there beene wonderfully
eclipsed, not without procuring much trouble
and strife: so that finally, it most necessarily be-
houed to prouide for the maintainance of com-

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mon Peace and tranquillitie within the Realme, and this was effected by certain permissions and Licences, to preuent, that diuersity of Religion might not wholly alter or disturbe a generall and peaceable humane Societie. So long as things remained in these indifferent tearmes, both one and other party held themfelues well contented.

But those turbulent Spirits, of whom wee formerly spake, hauing no will to confent to publicke repose and peace, they rather chose to hazard and reduce thinges to an vtter extremity, then to diminish the least tittle of that intention which was so deeply grauen in their hearts; which was, that all things might come vnder the Popes spirituall jurisdiction, and at last, vnder the secular Dominion of some strange and forraigne gouernment. All which added more and more agrieuances and molestations to Religion. And aboue all the rest, many plots were laide to frustrate the Royall Letters and Concessions of his Majesty, to dimolish, or at least shut vp, the Euangelical Churches, and Temples newly built, to raise vp thunderings, and threatenings amongst the Estates, to interdict, and [actually] prohibite their lawfull defence, horribly to persecute the poore [Subjects], with comminations of more terrible Oppression, Insults, with

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losse of body, Life, and goods, besides sundry other in-justices, perpetrated against men of eue-ry seuerall condition. And on the other side, when naturall and just resistance, opposed these insolences, or any other meanes which necessity vrged vnto, as those Manifests published by the said Estates can testifie, they of the contrary party, instead of referring their cause to reason and equall hearing, proceeded further, by open hostilitie, and force of Armes to such a point, that a good part of the said Kingdom of BOHEMIA, and the Prouinces Incorporate, remayneth now dismembred by Fyer, and Sword, being (as it were) turned into Blood and Ashes. Whereunto, we might also add, that whereas many yeares since, and especially the last part, the said Kingdome, and Countryes, haue exposed their liues, and substance, for the Defence and maintenance of the Crowne of HVNGARIE, but aboue all other, of the Frontier Fortifications, against the Forces of the Turke, a puissant, and dreadfull enemy to Christendome; quite contrary, and as it were, for an accumulation of all euils, the said places were vnfurnished both of Men, Atillery, and warlike munition, that the fame might bee employed against the Bohemian Nation, which was appointed, and ordayned against the Turke.

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Moreouer, they haue in the Empire, not onely exacted that which remain'd yet vn timer of the olde Contributions against the Turke: but also vnder a speciall pretext of the preservation and defence of the said places, in certaine Precincts and Prouinces of the Empire, they haue imposed new Subsidies, which being obtayned and Collected in a great part, it was no wayes imployed to the pretended vse, and end, but rather to the ruyne and desolation of the members of the Empire, and their dependances. By meanes whereot, one may sae the Vauntmure, and Bulwarke of Christendome full of holes, and breaches, ready to tumble and fall downe. And this gaue the HVNGARIAN Nation, sufficient warning, to looke to their own securitie & Defence.

We also suppose it is no lesse generally known, with what care, affection, and loue, how we and other Electors and Princes (yea and some forraine Potentates likewise) by our exhortations and intercessions, haue procured all the best Offices possible, to quench and extinguish that fire, which daily spread it selfe more and more in the said Kingdome, and to devise some meanes how to preuent a greater disaster. And in truth, nothing would haue been more pleasing to vs then to see those differences and oppositions accruing

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between Princes and Subjects, soone appeased and ended by an Admission of the Estates of the same Countries, to heare and determine therein, as heretofore the laudable and commendable Custome was, and by vs out of sincere and viscerall affection in due time Vrged and moued: by reason that the Intermission of remote Princes and Potentates procured great losse of time, and very often augmented suspicion & distrust.

But all present circumstances clearely manifest, what fruit or effect the said aduertisements brought forth, seeing vnder colour of a suspension of Armes, there hath not onely many Monthes passed ouerhead, during which time, the enemy hath not ceased to forage and spoyle; But moreouer vnder shadow of deferring it, to such an interposition, there hath also a long space of time slipt away: whereas in such dangerous and imminent cases, and when hostile Actions are dayly re-enforced, we ought effectually to make vse of other more expedite meanes to worke a cessation, for it had bin impossible profitably to haue treated of any Accommodation, by way of Interposition, without first stopping the course of the fore-mentioned Hostilities, and setting downe a preualent, and validius security.

Besides all this (no doubt rather by the sug-

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gestions of some persons, who hauing lost all hope of attaining their ends and scopes by lenitie and mildenes, aspired thereunto by way of Armes) they were negligent and careles, to lay hold of the iust & oportune occasion of the re-establishing the Peace, which after the death of the Emperour MATHIAS deceased, of laudable memory, presented it selfe ; in that they would by no meanes lend their eares , to the wholesome counsell of good Patriots, nay of persons constituted in high place and Dignity , to recouer (as was most fit and requisite) alienated hearts , and affections : but rather they made choise, to follow the directions of some vnaturall and disloyall Bohemians, and of others , either wholly strangers or relying and hanging meerly vpon them. From hence it succeeded, that instead of reall satisfaction and security, for that, where now they were so strictly bound and oblied, nothing was offered more then promises, and Confirmations in papers and writings. And by the same course, they laboured to possesse themselves of the Kingdome by Armes, to ouerthrow the fundamentall Lawes and Priuiledges of the Country, to enerate the obseruance of them, (though this should be the only platforme of all other obligations) to prostitute those Countries.

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which haue a prerogatiue of free Election, to the yooke of governments Hereditary , and to conclude (at what rate soeuer) to compass effects, conformable to their designes, and vnder colour of punishing some few nocents, to extirpate and destroy many thousands of Innocents. Wherein also, they imployed the assistance of strange Nations, very ill affected to all Euangelicall professors ; of whom, a great number, and many thousands both Foote and Horse , yea whole Regiments at a time , haue marched through the Countries of the Empire, (although, without consent of the Electors, the Emperour himselfe, hath no Authority nor power) to conduct them against the Estates of BOHEMIA, & the Prouinces annexed, for the wreaking of their euill affection, & to enrich themselues, with their spoyle.

But contrariwise, if too manifest a true intention to Peace, they had deposed Armes from the beginning, remou'd the Authors of these troubles, prouided for the government of the Estate, by the aduise and cooperation of the Prouinces, remedied so many aggriouances, restored the violated priuiledges, and taken order for their obseruance , by meanes of a sufficient securitie, (without which all other courses had bene but vaine) they might easily haue wrought a Peace,

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and diuerted greater alterations and changes. So farre they were, from choosing so expedient and requisite a way, that on the contrary, by extreme violence they enforced the Countries to haue recourse, to such a lawfull and speedy defence, as G O D and Nature alloweth them, to be their own deliuerers out of these extremities ; And to this effect, they erected a generall Confederacie amongst them, (but not without Royall permission for what passed) making hereupon a new Election, for reducing the Estate, to a better order and Gouernment. Of all which things, the Estates of our Crowne of BOHEMIA, and the Countries incorporate, hauing presented the fundamentall causes and reasons, to the eye and view of the whole world, by Deductions so ample and cleare, any one not transported with passion, but impartially waighing all the reasons, and Circumstances, hee may herein, easily and equally be able to yeeld a true iudgement and censure.

Yet in this place, we meane not to charge our selfe with such Inferences, much lesse also in this respect, heere to insert the rightes and immunities of the Realme, aswell in the point of Free Election, as otherwise: but in this case, we referre all men, to the Information and Iustification

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which the Estates, haue diuulged and published.

True it is, that the Election of a King of Romanes made not long since at Franckfort, fell out at the same time. But so likewise, we very perfectly carry in minde, that we perswaded, what possibly we could, not to make too much haste therein, but before all things, to take counsel, for the cessation of Armes, and to appease the Warre, which now was kindled in so many partes : causing our Councillours to intimate, how it was not reasonable, therein to reject (as they did) the Depvties of the said States of Bohemia, but rather so to sway and contriue in those Consultations, that by their meanes, the way might be cleare of the Interposition, which then had bene propounded to them. Though our good intentions therefore tooke no place, and that we were driuen to let then present affaires to runne their course : Yet in all our Actes and Decrees, we expresly by our saide Councillours reserued to every one, the priuiledge to him appertaining, with solemne protestation that in nothing we would prejudice the Estates of this Kingdome, causing a speciall are to be had, of all that, which (according to the judgement of our owne Consciences) concereth the Liberty, and good of the Empire;

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Not as being hereunto inuited by any hope of particular profit, feeling then we had not the least apprehension of such things as afterwards ensued : but onley in that we fore-saw such an alteration and change, as euent haue now made manifest and so greatly desiring, that it might haue bene auoyed and shunn'd.

Seeing therefore the Estates of BOHEMIA, and of the Countries annexed, in their generall Assembly, vnanimously, and with one consent, haue conferred their Suffrages and Election vpon our Person; We protest before GOD, and with a cleare Conscience, that we euer hauing liued content, with the Electorall Dignity, and such Principalities, and Countries hereditary, as God imparted to vs, we neuer of our selues aspired to this said Crowne : and much lesse attained we thereunto, by any seductions, or stratagem, euen as those Estates which Elected vs, may yeeld vndoubted witness and testimony.

As likewise wee had no reason, considering the tempestuous, and lamentable Estate, of present affaired, but surely it had bene farre more acceptable to vs, to have seene the Peace of that Kingdom established, and withal, the Imperiall tranquility, preserued, and aduaunc'd. For we duely waigh and fore-see the Change, Perill,

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and care which will redound vnto vs, by the continuation of Armes, deuastation of Countries, and other War-like Incommodities. And there's no question but those of riper iudgement will readily conceiue, that to accept the offer of a Kingdome, standing in such like tearms, required a farre more constant resolution, then to refuse a peaceable Kingdome for which notwithstanding some haue bene so highly extolled by Hystoriographers.

Moreouer we boldly auerre, vpon the sincerity of our Conscience, that if we could haue found out any other assured meanes, which by our refusall thereof, might incoutinently, haue extinguished the heate of so disastrous a Warre, and entertained and reduced the Peace publicke to his true State and existance, so that the whole Empire might haue been sufficiently assured and secured thereof : the Honours and interests of this world, should little haue preuailed with vs, but most cheerfully in this case, we had refused the offer to vs made, and freely employed our whole endeauour and power, to obtaine the said meane of a generall Peace. Neither did we precipitantly entrude our selues, vnto this so waigh-ty and important an affaire. For first, it was after an humble inuocation of the King of Kinges,

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who giues and takes away Crownes to, & from whome he thinks best, with zealous Supplication & Prayer (in all this) to direct and gouerne our Spirit and vnderstanding : And vppon this, after hauing communicated with our nearest & dearest Friends, maturely weighing & considering all the circumstances ; we sensibly felt and perceiued in all this prouidence of God, who, thereto put his helping and omnipotent hand. Beholde now therefore, why we neither could nor ought to oppose herein, his diuine & holy will : And so much the lesse ought we to refute this Impositio, by reason we are absolutely perswaded in our owne Judgement and vnderstanding, that the said Estates of the Crowne of BOHEMIA, and of the Countries thereto incorporate, had just cause and reason to attempt this mutation, for the re-establishment of their libertie and most ancient right of Election, which others went about absolutely to disanull and abolish, by diuers stratagemes & deunces. And therefore this occasion is no lesse just, pious, & commendable, then easie to be intimated and proued by plentifull examples of Histories, both sacred and prophane. In like manner, we seeke not to detaine, or take away from any other, that which properly belongs to

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him, but rather to maintaine and defend those, which defend the right of Liberty, of Priuiledges, of royall Grants & Letters Patents, for a free exercise of the religion of the Gospell, and other obseruances, against an vnjust & violent oppression: and to Protect these noble Countries, and so many thousands os innocent Persons from totall ruyne, so farre as God shall strengthen our arme, and enlarge upon us his Graces and benedictions: having undouted hope, that whereas or simple intentions ayme in all this, neither at Vulptuonsnes, nor pleasures, at Honours, or worldly riches ; but onely at the glory of God, the comfort of the afflicted, the release of the oppressed , and at the consolation of so many desolate harts, whose deep sighs, sobbes and teares, urged us to a feeling compassion, that God our high and soueraigne Conductor will never forsake, and abandon us, but that rejecting all vaine thoughts and cogitations of men, he will send down vnto us from aboue, his benigne assistance and ayde, with fit and requisite meanes herein, to execute the Arrest, and Decree, of his sacred will, prouidence, and inexhaustible wisdom : wherein, if we should com short of our duty, our conscience would not onely be inwardly wounded, but further we should drawe vpon our-

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selues Gods Diuine wrath, and punishment.

Moreover also considering, that if we had refused this diuine Vocation & Dignity, we could not possibly haue auoyded (especially, with all those that make profession of the Gospell) the imputation and blame, of so much blood consequently shed, and of all the spoyle and waste made in the same Countries : As also if they of the contrary party, had attained to the end of their designes (which was to suppress the Bohemian Nation) it would further mightily haue encouraged them, to employ both against our selues, and all the other Euangelicall Estates of the Empire, the Armes they had in hand, to effect that, whereunto the boyling malice of their hearts, hath hitherto excited them, both couertly and openly, nay by written impressions, divulged and published, not sparing little Infants, no not their owne sometimes, nor illustrious Families, with their Countries & Subjects, as their comminations have threatned in diuers partes : Adding further, that if there had not beene present prouision made, and that by a preualent meanes, for the Kingdome of Bohemia, and the Countries thereunto annexed, which are one of the principall members of the Empire, and as it were a ramper against all externall Nations:

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they had bene in great danger to haue fallen into a Strangers hand, and finally to haue bene entirely cut off, from the body of the Germaine Empire, or at least reduced to such a Condition, that they must needs haue bin the Authors of great Inconueniences, directly prejudicial to the Electors, Princes, and States Euangelicall adjacent: These circumstances, I say considered, we could finde out no other more conuenient way, then the present resolution we haue vndertaken. Whereunto wee were likewise obliged, more nearly, by the Faith, and fidelity which we owe to the sacred Empire, through the peculiar interest of our Electorall Family, and Principality of the superiour Palatinate, and by the hereditary Alliances, which the saide Principality from all Antiquity, hath held with the Crowne of Bohemia: for Protection and preseruation whereof, the fore-mentioned reasons to watch the more circumspectly, hoping that euery man well inform'd of the Truth, and free from all passion, will rightly judge of our Actions, and no wayes sinisterly enterpret them.

And this was the reason, why in Gods name, for the aduancement of his Glory, for the Comfort of the poore afflicted, fro the preseruation of common prosperity, and Liberty and other

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very important occasions, at the humble, and instant request of the Estates of the Kingdome of BOHEMIA and the Countries incorporate, diuers times reiterated, both by writing and Embassies directed to vs, as also by serious remonstrances to vs intimated : that at last we approued of the Election of our person vnanimously made, and accepted the Crowne, and Gouvernement of the Kingdome of BOHIMIA, and of the Countries annexed. And to this end, we together with the Princesse of great BRITAINE, our deare Spouse, have transplanted our selues unto this City of PRAGVE, where with the common Consent and Assistance of the said Estates, we haue beene solemnly Crowned, and with great popular applause, collocated in the Royall Throne, which God by his omnipent arme, graciously confirme, and grant vs this fauour, so to begin and continue our Raigne, that the Kingdome of Jesus Christ, may still more and more, be augmented in vs, and our Subjects, and they happily, and long time, maintained in true Peace and felicitie.

So that once more we protest before God and the whole world, that from this time forward, we are firmly resolued , not to persecute or molest, or suffer to be persecuted, or molested any

person whosoeuer, for matter of Religion, no not they, which professe themselues to be of the Romane Churche, neither to trouble, or distrube them in the exercise of their Religion, so they liue conformably to the Lawes of the States, Edicts of Pacification, Royall Letters, and to former publicke Grants passed in fauour of Religion. As to Speake truth, a good number of the saide Romane Catholicks within the Kingdome of Bohemia and the Prouinces annexed, haue voluntarily expos'd and offer'd themselues by Oath, and subscription, to that common defensie Confederation Instituted between the saide Kingdome, and Countries, and by yeelding vs their due homage, inclusiuey haue approued of our Election and Coronation.

We in like manner are determin'd, to deuce all expedient and possible meanes, not onely in short time, to recouer by the grace of God, tranquillitie and Peace, in our Kingdome of Bohemia and the Countries annexed; but further entertain, & plant, some better correspondencie between the Estates and the Empire, and to prevent all other Iconueniences, so that the saide Estates, each one in his particuler, be mutually hereunto affected, and that no obstacle be interpos'd, nor occasion giuen of greater troubles.

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And that the sinceritie of our intentions, may more manifestly appeare, wee will euer haue a care, by all possible meanes, to embrace Amitie, correspondencie, and friendly Intelligence with all Potentates, Electors, Princes, and Estates of Christendome, but more especially with those that border and confine vpon vs: We presuming no lesse of them, that they will reciprocally testifie the like to vs, assisting vs with their Counsels, and performances, against all those who out of some contray Disseigne, would hostilely attempt against vs, our Kingdome and Countrey.

And therefore wee request them, out of the same affection and loue, which we are ready to acknowledge towards euery one of them, in all Offices possible within our power, and vpon all occasions, they may be presented: Wee finding it fit and necessary, in the times wherein we liue, to manifest and make knowne the fame to all men, by this our publicke
Declaration.

*Giuen in our Royall Castle at Prague
the 7 day of Nouember. 1619.*