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(Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II; 16)

Final edition, 1st version

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Abstract

In 1451, Emperor Friedrich III sent Bishop Enea Silvio Piccolomini, high-ranking imperial diplomat, to attend a meeting of the Bohemian estates, eventually held at Beneschau (Benesov). Piccolomini’s mission was to communicate the emperor’s refusal to accept the Bohemian demands for the person of their king, Ladislaus the Posthumous, a boy of 11 years, then in the emperor’s wardship. In his oration, the “Petivistis ex Caesare”, Piccolomini told the Bohemians why fulfilment of their demands would not be in their own best interests and why it was advantageous for them that Ladislaus stay in the emperor’s wardship. He also assured them that when Ladislaus came of age, the emperor would favour the Bohemian claims over those of the Hungarians. And finally, he told the Bohemians, to their faces, that their threat to choose another king could not be taken in earnest. While on this mission, Piccolomini also had occasion to visit the Hussite community at Tabor, and to have a lengthy discussion with the governor of Bohemia, Georg Podiebrad, on political and religious matters.

Keywords

Enea Silvio Piccolomini; Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Æneas Silvius Piccolomini; Pope Pius II; Papa Pio II; Emperor Frederick III (Habsburg); Kaiser Friedrich III (Habsburg); King Ladislaus the Posthumous; King Ladislas the Posthumous; King Ladislav the Posthumous; Bohemia; Hungary; Austria; 15th century; 1451; Renaissance orations; Renaissance oratory; Renaissance rhetorics

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Foreword

This is the first version of the final edition of the present text. I do not, actually, plan to publish further versions of this text, but I reserve the option in case I – during my future studies - come across other manuscripts containing interesting versions of the oration or if important new research data on the subject matter are published, making it appropriate or necessary to modify or expand the present text. It will therefore always be useful to check if a later version than the one the reader may have found previously via the Internet is available in HAL Archives.

In 2007, I undertook a project of publishing the Latin texts with English translations of the orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II (altogether 77 orations - including papal responses to ambassadorial addresses - are extant today, though more may still be held, unrecognized, in libraries and archives). Later the project has been expanded to include ambassadors’ orations to the pope, of which about 40 are presently known.

I have published the preliminary editions of both the individual orations and the collected orations in the French digital research archive, HAL Archives, and I shall gradually be replacing them with the final edition until the whole work – Deo volente - is completed in 2020.

I shall much appreciate to be notified by readers who discover errors and problems in the text and translation or unrecognized quotations.

15 October 2018
MCS

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I. INTRODUCTION
1. Context

Emperor Friedrich’s decision to have his ward, Ladislaus the Posthumous, accompany him on his coronation journey to Rome in 1452 caused a flurry of political activity in Bohemia, Hungary, and Austria. As the only male heir of his father, Albrecht II, Ladislaus was Archduke of Austria and had been recognized as King of Hungary and King of Bohemia. At the time, he was only 11 years old and the ward of his uncle, the emperor – who himself had been the ward of one of his Habsburg uncles during the time of his minority, as stipulated by the house rules of the House of Habsburg. In Ladislaus’ countries there was uneasiness and even outright dissatisfaction about their king and prince being in the emperor’s wardship, and indeed the Hungarians had earlier, by military means, tried to force the emperor to surrender their boy-king and had even petitioned for the pope’s support in the matter.

In March 1451, ambassadors from Bohemia came to the Imperial Court in Wiener Neustadt to request of the emperor that the boy-king be released to them. An imperial embassy was dispatched to Prague to announce the refusal of the Bohemian petition. Among the ambassadors was the emperor’s top diplomat, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, who was to address a meeting of the Bohemian estates. The meeting was to be held in Prague, but had to be moved to Beneschau (Benesov) because of an outbreak of the plague in the capital. During their journey, the imperial ambassadors took the opportunity to visit the Hussite centre in Tabor, and in this context Piccolomini formed an understanding of the Hussite movement and its cause which would be useful to him on later occasions. He also had a long conversation with the Bohemian governor, Georg Podiebrad. The governor impressed him as an intelligent politician with whom it might be possible to reach an understanding for the improvement of relations between Bohemia and the Papacy, and specifically regarding the thorny question of communion under both species.

Piccolomini gave a vivid description of his contacts with Podiebrad and the Hussites in a long letter to Cardinal Juan Carvajal of 21 August 1451. In the letter, he wrote only briefly about the main business of the imperial embassy, stating that when it arrived in Beneschau, he had over three days meetings with various personalities and groups from the Bohemian nobility. The

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1 Pius II: Commentarii, I, 21 (Meserve, I, pp. 100-101; Wolkan, II, III, 1, pp. 26-30; Boultin, 188-189; Papaparelli, pp. 132-136; Reinhardt, pp. 150-155; Stolf, pp. 244-247
2 Cf. Oration “Tritum est sermone”. Cf. also HA, I, pp.482-486
3 Palacky: Geschichte, IV, 1, p. 264; Würdigung, p. 244
4 Palacky: Geschichte, IV, 1, p. 265 ff.; Heymann, pp. 50-52
5 See the oration “Res Bohemicas”, where Piccolomi, as imperial diplomat, argued for a papal concession to Bohemia of the use of communion under both species. See also the oration “Superioribus diebus”, where, as pope, he refused it. See also the relevant parts of his Historia Bohemica
6 With Prokop von Rabstein as interpreter, Wolkan, III, 1, p. 28
7 Wolkan, III, 1, pp. 22-57
nobles were persuaded to have a later meeting with an apostolic legate, Cardinal Nikolaus of Kues, concerning religious issues, viz. the Hussite schism. Concerning Ladislaus, Piccolomini did not mention his own oration, but only wrote that the meeting was held for the sake of the embassy and so that each party, i.e. the Bohemians and the emperor, would understand the position of the other.¹

In the first version of his *Historia Austrialis* from late 1453/beginning of 1454,² i.e. two or three years later, Piccolomini wrote about the events in Beneschau:

*In the meantime, the Bohemians, as is their custom when they have to act in common, summoned a meeting in Prague, but when the plague broke out they moved it to Beneschau. It was rumoured that they would petition the emperor to send Ladislaus to their kingdom and that they would elect another king if their request was refused. The emperor sent legates to soften their agitated minds. We ourselves were among the legates. ... There, the imperial legates were heard and with kind words they put an end to all the excitement.*³ ⁴

In the second/third version of the *Historia Austrialis* from 1455-1458⁵ Piccolomini wrote:

*In the meantime, the Bohemians, as is their custom when they have to act in common, summoned a meeting in Prague, but when the plague broke out they convened in Beneschau. It was rumoured that they would petition the emperor for their king and that they would elect another king if their request was refused. As this would be an impediment to the emperor’s journey to Italy, ambassadors⁶ were sent. They were Enea, Bishop of Siena, Prokop,⁷ a Bohemian knight, and two noblemen from Austria. Their task was to soften the agitated minds of the Bohemians so that they would not prematurely ask for the boy who could not at the time be of any profit to the kingdom. .... There, the imperial legates were heard, and with kind words they put an end to all the excitement. The Bohemians should wait until Ladislaus*

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¹ Wolkan, III, 1, p. 28: *Quia vero conventus ille nostri causa tenebatur, ut videret quae cesar ad petitiones regni responderet, fuimus tribus diebus in tractatu cum eis quartaque demum die et illi nostram intentionem ad ultimum intellekerunt et nos illorum propositum cognovimus dimissumque concilium est*
² HA, I, p. xvii
³ *Dum haec aguntur, Bohemi suo more de verbis [rebus] acturi communibus conventum apud Pragam indixere, sed cum ibi pestis crassaretur, ad Villam, quam Benedicti appellant, convenere. Fama erat eos Ladislaum petituros ad regnum mitti; nisi obtinarent, alium regem quesituros. Eo missi legati a cesare sunt, qui ferores eorum animos lenirent. Nos quoque inter eos fuimus... Ibi legati caesaris auditii beneigne omnem turbam amoverunt.*
⁴ HA, I, pp. 99-100. The editors point out that according to the acts of the diet, the estates were not satisfied with Piccolomini’s vague promises on the emperor’s behalf, but sent new petitions to the emperor, cf. also Palacky: *Geschichte*, 4, 1, p. 267 ff, 500
⁵ HA, I, p. xx
⁶ Heinrich Truchses and Albrecht von Ebersdorf, cf. Palacky: *Würdigung*, p. 244
⁷ Prokop von Rabstein, friend and former colleague of Piccolomini
attained his majority and not doubt that he would come to them first when he was released from the wardship. The mission won the favour of the Bohemians who asked for the king more out of a sense of duty than because they really wanted it.

In another work, the Historia Bohemica, which he finished in the summer 1458, shortly prior to his election as pope, Piccolomini wrote:

But when Friedrich had decided to travel to Italy to receive the imperial crown, the Bohemians, the Hungarians, and the Austrians again sent embassies to the emperor, putting pressure on him and demanding Ladislaus. All their demands were denied. The Bohemians were to hold an assembly on this question in Prague, and they appeared to be very upset and wanting to elect another king unless their demands were met. The emperor decided to send legates to them, adding us to their number. The representatives from the provinces had been summoned to Prague, but as the plague broke out there, they met in Beneschau. Georg Podiebrad presided over their numerous assembly. We addressed them as follows: “You have requested of the emperor … [here follows the text of the oration as given below]”. The oration inspired confidence and was accepted favourably. Our colleague, Prokop made it even more acceptable as he translated it into their language for the benefit of those who did not understand Latin. Then we were asked to leave the assembly, but shortly afterwards we were called back and given this answer: “Thank the emperor for sending this embassy and for having stated his preference for the Bohemians over the others when the king will be released.” They accepted the good counsel received. They would send young noblemen to

1 And not to the Hungarians who had rival claims on Ladislaus who was their king, too
2 HA, Il, pp. 443-444: Inter haec Bohemi suo more de rebus acturi communibus conventum regni apud Pragam indicunt. Sed cum pestifera lues eo supervenisset, apud Villam quam Benedicti appellant, convenere. Fama fuit eos regem repetituros; nisi obtinerent, alium quseturos. Id caesaris iter in Italiam remorari videbatur. Mittuntur erga ad eos legati Aeneas episcopus Senensis, Procopius eques Bohemus et duo ex Austria viri nobiles, qui feroces lenirent animos, ne pupillum ante annos expeterent, dum nullo usu regno esse posset. Expectarent pubertatem neque dubitarent illum, cum dimitteretur, ad eos imprimis venturum. Grata hec legatio Bohemis fuit, quippe qui magis ex debito quam ex animo regem petebant
3 HB, I, p. 02
join and serve the emperor on his journey to Italy. They would await his return peacefully, and wished happiness, prosperity and the favour of Heaven on him.  

Some years later, Piccolomini, now Pope Pius II, wrote in his Commentarii:

Meanwhile the Bohemians, after many vain efforts to get Ladislas for their king, convened a national council at Prague to discuss their affairs. They declared that unless Albert’s son, the heir to the kingdom, was sent to them, they would choose another king for themselves. Aeneas was therefore despatched, together with several other noblemen, to meet with them. A terrible plague was then raging through Prague, so the council was transferred to the village of Beneschau. There Aeneas addressed a public assembly where he delivered a message from the emperor. He explained that the boy-king needed a guardian; he could be in no better hands than the emperor’s; moreover, it would not be long before they saw their wishes fulfilled. This speech soothed their anger and they promised not to call anyone else to the throne.

One of Pius’ two contemporary biographers, Campano wrote:

Immediately after his return to Friedrich he was sent to the Bohemians who would have taken up arms if he did not hurry. Ladislaus, King of Hungary and Bohemia, was still a young boy, being the son of Friedrich’s brother. Fear of plots as well as the fact that the boy was too young to govern and at risk of coming to harm caused Friedrich to keep him at court and to give him guards so that he would not be abducted. However, the Bohemians thought that it was an unworthy treatment of the boy to guard him and keep him away from his paternal

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1 At cum Fridericus imperialis coronae suscipiende gratia Italian petere statuisset, rursus Bohemi, Hungari et Austriales legationibus seorsum missis imperatorum fatigavere Ladislaum reposcentes. Postulata omnibus negata sunt. Ad Bohemos, qui ea de re conventum Prage habituri erant ac ferocius agere videbantur regem aliun electur, nisi mos eis geretur, legatos mittere placuit, quibus et nos additi sumus. Provinciales, quibus apud Pragam dies statuta fuerat, crassante illic peste, in Beneschavia convenere. Quos in frequenti conventu presidente Georgio Pogiebratio in hunc modum allocuti sumus: “Petivistis ex Caesare [here follows the oration as given below].” Vero similis oratio visa neque sine favore excepta est. Acceptiorem Procopius, noster college, reddidit, qui patrio sermone latine lingue ignaris verba nostra interpretatus est. Iussi sumus ex conventu paululum abire. Max revocatis responsum datum: Reddite imperatori gratiae, qui eam legationem misisset atque in dimittendo rege Bohemos preferre ceteris. Accipere se bene consulta consilia. Missuros ex nobilitate sua primarios juvenes, qui cesarem Italiam petentem sequantur eique ministrant. Expectaturos quiete reditum, quem felicem faustumque superum benignitate futurum exoptent

2 HB, I, pp. 486-496

3 Pius II: Commentarii, I, 21, 2 (Meserve, I, 101): Interea Bohemi, cum saepe Ladislaum regem petentes non obtinuissent, conventum regni apud Pragam indixerant rebusuis ut suis consulerent; quod nisi Alberti filius heresque regni ad se mitteretur, aliun se regem assumpturos minabantur. Ad eos igitur Aeneas et illi plerique procurae missi sunt; verum peste apud Pragam mirum in modum grasante, conventus in villam translatus est quae Benedicti appellatur. Ibi ergo cum Aeneas publice mandata caesaris exposuisset, pupillumque regem gubernationis egentem in nulla melius quam in caesaris manu esse, eosque breve post tempus voti futures compotes affirmasset, feroces mentes lenivit nec aliun se postea vocatuos regem dixere.

4 He was not the son of Friedrich’s brother, but of his cousin, Albrecht II.
kingdom. Therefore they threatened to gather troops and go to war unless they were given a proper explanation why the emperor did as he did. [In his oration Aeneas] especially referred to the danger of poison which actually, due to a Bohemian plot, killed the boy some years after when he had been sent off by his uncle.¹²

And Platina, the other contemporary biographer, wrote: When he returned to the emperor, he was immediately sent as ambassador to Bohemia to settle a conflict which had arisen between him and the Bohemians. When the Bohemians had been pacified...³

In his Würdigung der alten böhmischen Geschichtschreiber from 1830, Franz Palacky examined the oration on the basis of documents kept in the Wittingauer Archive.⁴ One of the documents was a translation (in his own hand) of the oration into Bohemian by Prokop von Rabstein who acted as Piccolomini’s interpreter at the assembly. This translated version differs significantly from the text of the oration as given by Piccolomini, cf. below. It begins with a praise of peace in general, based on a quotation from Isaiah,⁵ and continues with a praise of the willingness of the estates to recognize Ladislaus as their king. Then it communicates the emperor’s refusal to hand over Ladislaus, justifying it with the boy’s tender age. Finally, it promises that the emperor’s wardship over the boy-king will only last some years more, and that the emperor will send him to Bohemia first, before Austria and Hungary.

According to Palacky the estates were dissatisfied with this vague answer and demanded a written statement concerning the length of the wardship and guarantees that it would not be extended.

In his written reply, Piccolomini referred to the rules of the House of Habsburg concerning wardship over princes in their minority. As for a guarantee that the prince would be sent first to Bohemia, he could only point to the emperor’s own promise.

¹ Zimolo, pp. 19-20: Ex templo ubi ad Federicum pervenit, ad Boemos mittitur, arma sumpturos nisi properasset. Cum enim Ladislaum Pannoniae ac Boemia regem admodum puerum frater filium Federicus metu insidiarum et quod regno immaturo adhuc esset atque injuriae obnoxius apud se educaret, adhibitis custodibus ne clam subduceretur, Boemi indignum rati custodiri accersirique a regno patrio regem, coactis copiis bellum, nisi dimitteret, comminabantur. Horum conatus statim compescuit, ratione adhibita cur ita fieri oporteret, maxime injusto metu veneni, quo paucis post annis dimissus a patruo puer fraude boemica absuntmus est
² The causes of Ladislaus’s death in Prague, at the age of 18 are not known except that he died of a sudden illness. Pius certainly thought – and wrote – that he had died by poisoning, suspecting the regent, Georg Podiebrad, of the deed
³ Zimolo, p. 102: Ad Caesarem tandem reversus, ab eo statim orator in Bohemiam micititur, ad tollendam omnem controversiam, que inter eum et Bohemos orta erat. Pacata Bohemia ...
⁴ Archiv Cesky, II, 303-309; Palacky: Würdigung, p. 244; Geschichte, p. 268
⁵ Isaiah, 32, 8. Cf. Palacky: Geschichte, p. 267, i.e. peace. Interestingly, Piccolomini himself re-used this quotation from Isaiah 9 months afterwards, in the oration “Moyses vir Dei”, to Pope Nicholas V
Upon this, the estates sent a new petition to the emperor, demanding a more precise answer, and threatening with violence if their demands were not met.

Palacky concluded that the divergence between the documents examined by him and Piccolomini’s own reports from the meeting undermines Piccolomini’s credibility: his arguments concerning the financial state of the kingdom, the political problems connected with the appointment of a regent during the king’s minority, and the threats to elect another king were irrelevant in view of earlier promises and guarantees made by the Bohemians to the emperor. Also Piccolomini’s remarks concerning the success of his mission were evidently untrue.¹

In his Geschichte von Böhmen, from 1857, Palacky gave a similar, but more measured account of the events in Beneschau.²

Georg Voigt (1862) based his description of the imperial embassy to the Bohemians on the studies of Palacky and concluded that Piccolomini’s own report was a lie and that the text of his oration inserted in the Historia Bohemica was pure phantasy,³ and he repeated Palacky’s contention that the text of the oration as reported by Piccolomini himself was both unsuitable and insulting to the Bohemians.

The observations of Palacky, as taken up by Voigt, raise the question which version of the oration, the one in the Historia Bohemica or the one as translated by Prokop von Rabstein is the correct one.

Concerning this issue, the following observations may be made:

Firstly, Piccolomini usually revised the texts of his orations after they had been delivered. Mostly, the changes were of vocabulary and style, and rarely of substance. There is no doubt that Piccolomini himself thought he had an author’s right to make such revisions and that he considered the last, revised version as the final literary product – notwithstanding the fact that the text of the original version would be the proper historical document. If he had revised the text of the “Petivistis” before inserting it into the Historia Bohemica he would simply be following his own pattern of literary production, and only if he had changed it substantially would he really merit any criticisms by historians.

¹ Palacky: Würdigung, pp. 244-246
² Palacky: Geschichte, IV, 1, pp. 266 ff.
³ Voigt, II, p. 27: Nun hat Enea in seine böhmische Geschichte eine Rede hineinphantasiert, and later: Dieser Bericht wäre also eine Lüge
Secondly, since it is clear and well documented that Piccolomini gave an oration – or at least made some kind of address - in Beneschau in 1451, the text of this oration or address must have existed before the writing of the *Historia Bohemica* in 1458. Indeed, the text of the oration is extant individually and outside the context of the *Historia* in a humanist collective manuscript, the Cod. 3471 of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ff. 13f-13v. There are only very small discrepancies between that text and the text in the *Historia*, but they are there and indicate a very slight revision of the text before its publication as part of the *Historia*. Theoretically, it may have been the other way round: the text in the collective manuscript may have been copied from the *Historia* with some minute changes of style, but this is less credible, for why would Piccolomini revise the text after it had been published in the *Historia Bohemica*?

Thirdly, Piccolomini himself stated, in the *Historia*, that in translating his text Prokop had revised it so that it would be more palatable, suitable and pleasing to Bohemian ears: *Prokop, our colleague, made it even more acceptable when he translated it into their language for the benefit of those who did not understand Latin.*¹ It is not easy to understand why Palacky and Voigt disregarded this remark by Piccolomini, as it clearly documents Piccolomini’s awareness – and indeed his acceptance - that the text as translated by Prokop not only differed somewhat from his own, but that it was also more acceptable to the Bohemians.

Fourthly, the assertions of Palacky and Voigt that Piccolomini’s mission was not the success that he himself claimed it to be, also merit consideration. The fact that the Bohemians sent a new petition to the emperor asking for guarantees concerning the length of his wardship may be considered as the sign of a not unmitigated success. But Piccolomini’s satisfaction with the results of his mission would probably not be caused by the immediate effects of his oration with regard to the wardship, but by the general results of his negotiations with Georg Podiebrad and others. Indeed, it is quite reasonable to assume that these negotiations were essential to the establishment of an understanding between Podiebrad and the emperor which would result in the emperor’s acceptance of Podiebrad’s appointment as full regent, *gubernator*, of the Kingdom of Bohemia in 1452² and in Podiebrad’s support of the emperor in his conflict with the Austrians in that same year – though events then moved so fast and were handled so ineptly by the emperor that Podiebrad could not reach Wiener Neustadt in time to aid the emperor militarily, had he really wanted to.³

¹ HB, I, pp. 486-496: *Acceptiorem Procopius, noster college, reddidit, qui patrio sermon latine lingue ignaris verba nostra interpretatus est*
² Hoensch, p. 157
³ Cf. Palacky’s own observation in *Geschichte*, IV, 1, pp. 265, 288-289, 302, 305, 311
This view is supported by later historians.

In 1905, Adolf Bachman wrote:

Jetzt in Beneschau suchte er [Piccolomini] in klug berechnender Darlegung und mit dringenden Vorstellungen die böhmischen Stände zu weiterem geduldigen Zuwarten, bis der junge Ladislaus mündig wäre, zu bewegen, und sonst den römischen König, seinen Herrn, gegen alle die verschiedenen Anklagen zu verteidigen, die auf dem Landtage erhoben wurden.\(^1\) Unverkennbar hatte er sich dabei der indirekten Förderung Podiebrads zu erfreuen. Die Stände wiederholten ihren Wunsch, den jungen König bald in ihrer Mitte zu haben, ohne die gewohnten Drohungen. ... Man darf es wohl in gewissem Masse dem Berichte Enea’s, freilich auch dem Drange der Sachlage zuschreiben, wenn König Friedrich, im Begriffe seine Romfahrt zu unternehmen, bald darauf selbst die böhmischen Stände aufforderte, Georg von Podiebrad, den er mit der Verwaltung des Königreichs betraut habe, in dieser Würde anzuerkennen, so wie er schon vordem die oberste Gewalt im Königreiche Ungarn dem Kriegshelden Johannes Hunyadi überlassen hatte.\(^2\)

In his *Geschichte Böhmens*, the modern historian, Jörg K. Hoensch wrote, in 1987:

Zu den im Juli 1451 in Beneschau (Benesov) geführten Verhandlungen wurde auch der päpstliche legat Eneas Silvius Piccolomini\(^3\) (Verfasser einer Historia Bohemiae und als Pius II. von 1458 – 1464 Papst) hinzugezogen; sie erbrachten immerhin eine gewisse Annäherung der Positionen, so dass sich Friedrich III. zur Anerkennung Georgs als “Gubernator Böhmens” bis zur Regierungsfähigkeit Ladislavs bereit erklärte.\(^4\)

Georg Podiebrad’s modern historian, Frederick G. Heymann, in his description of Piccolomini’s mission to Bohemia and his negotiations at the meeting in Beneschau, states that Piccolomini

could inform the King that his refusal to release Ladislav before the boy’s having come of age, reiterated in an elaborate address which he, Aeneas, had presented to the Czech diet, had met with little serious protest, owing essentially to the help given by George. Probably he had emphasized his impression that George was a man of growing strength, and not a fanatic but one with whom it would be possible to negotiate. Thus the King was now more ready than before to grant George’s factual leadership of the Czech nation his recognition.\(^5\)

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\(^{1}\) In a note Bachmann here refers, i.a., to Piccolomini’s “angebliche Rede”  
\(^{2}\) Bachmann, II, p. 423  
\(^{3}\) At this conference Piccolomini represented the emperor, not the pope  
\(^{4}\) Hoensch, p. 157. See also Seibt, p. 540-541  
\(^{5}\) Heymann, p. 53
In conclusion, the text of the “Petivistis” may quite reasonably be assumed to be identical with or or very similar to the text as delivered by Piccolomini in Latin at the meeting in Beneschau, and his mission may quite well be considered successful in as much it as it contributed to strengthening the understanding - or alliance – between the Bohemian regent and the emperor.

2. Themes

The main theme of the orations was the Bohemian demand for King Ladislaus’ person and the emperor’s refusal.

In his argumentation for the emperor’s decision Piccolomini brings forward two sets of reasons: Sending the boy-king to Bohemia would not profit the Bohemians because, since he could not govern effectively,

- it would be necessary to set up of tutelary government with a number of political complications and rivalries as consequences.
- Moreover, the cost of establishing a royal court would be high and would have to be paid for by the Bohemians.

On the other hand, keeping the boy in the emperor’s wardship was a quite reasonable course of action, since

- Ladislaus was still a very young boy,
- the emperor was his uncle and closest relative, and
- the emperor’s preeminent position made him the most suitable guardian for an underage king.¹

Finally, Piccolomini explicitly stated that the Bohemian threat to elect another king if Ladislaus was not sent to them was not credible and would therefore not impact on the emperor’s decision. It must be kept in mind that Piccolomini had actually had political consultations with leaders and groups of the Bohemian nobility, including Georg Podiebrad, for three day before

¹ These arguments were developed further by Piccolomini in his oration against the Austrian insurgents against the emperor, the oration “Sentio”
the session where he delivered his oration. It is difficult to believe that this highly experienced diplomat would not have good reasons for making such a statement publicly.

3. Date, place, audience, and format

According to Palacky, the oration was delivered in the beginning of August, at Beneschau.¹

Piccolomini arrived in Beneschau on 18 July² and had three days of negotiations before delivering the oration. Therefore, the date of 22 July is probably more correct.

The audience was an assembly of Bohemian nobles, including Georg Poediebrad.

The format was an ambassadorial address on behalf of Emperor Friedrich III.

4. Text

The oration “Petivistis ex Caesare” was not included in the Collected Orations of Pius II, compiled in 1462 under his direct supervision. It is therefore not extant in the seven manuscripts containing that collection.

The text, however, is extant

- individually in a humanist Sammelhandschrift in Vienna, and
- as part of the Historica Bohemica.

4.1. Individually

- Wien / Österreichische Nationalbibliothek 3471, ff. 13f-13v (W)

¹ Palacky: Würdigung, p. 244
² Heymann, p. 50
The text was not published by Mansi in his collection of Pius’ orations, presumably because he did not have access to any manuscript containing the text.

It has been edited at least once, in


Piccolomini also included the oration in his *Historia Bohemica* (HA), the standard edition of which will be undoubtedly be the edition by Hejnic and Rothe:


In this edition are listed the manuscripts and former editions of the HA, cf. I, pp. 486-494

### 4.2. Present edition

For principles of edition (incl. orthography) and translation, see *Collected Orations of Enea Silvio Piccolomini / Pope Pius II*, vol. 1, ch. 9-10.

**Text:**

The edition is based on the manuscript in Vienna and the *Historia Bohemica* as edited by Hejnic & Rothe, with collation of Müller’s edition.

**Pagination**

Pagination in the text published below follows the manuscript in Vienna *(W)*.
5. Sources

This oration is devoid of references to biblical, classical and other authors. Piccolomini may have considered that such oratorical embellishments would be lost on his audience.

6. Bibliography


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Müller, Johann Joachim: *Des Heil. Römischen Reichs Teutscher Nation ReichsTags Theatrum wie selbiges unter Keyser Friedrichs V. Allerhöchsten Regierung von Anno MCCCCXL bis MCCCCXCIII gestanden ... Theil I*. Jena, 1713

Palacky, Franz: *Würdigung der alten böhmischen Geschichtschreiber*. Prag, 1830, pp. 308

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1 Abbreviations used in the notes are given in bold types

Paparelli, Gioacchino: *Enea Silvio Piccolomini (Pio II)*. Bari, 1950. (Biblioteca de cultura moderna; 481)

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Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigerunt* [1464]

- Pius II: *Commentarii rerum memorabilium quae suis temporibus contigervnt*. Ed. A van Heck. 2 vols. Città del Vaticano, 1984 (Studi e testi; 312-313)


Pius II: *Epistolae*


Pius II: *Orationes*.

- Pius II: Pius II: *Orationes politicae et ecclesiasticae*. Ed. Giovanni Domenico Mansi. 3 vols. Lucca: Benedini, 1755-1759

Reinhardt, Volker: *Pius II. Piccolomini – Der Papst, mit dem die Renaissance begann*. München, 2013


7. Sigla

**W** = Wien / Österreichische Nationalbibliothek / 3471

**HB** = Historia Bohemica, as edited by Hejnic and Rothe

**MU** = Müller, Johann Joachim: *Des Heil. Römischen Reichs Teutscher Nation ReichsTags Theatrum wie selbiges unter Keyser Friedrichs V. Allerhöchsten Regierung von Anno MCCCCXL bis MCCCCXCIII gestanden ...* Theil I. Jena, 1713
II. TEXT AND TRANSLATION
Oratio Aeneae, episcopi Senensis, jussu Friderici Caesaris, ad Bohemos Ladislaum regem postulantes

Oration of Enea Silvio, Bishop of Siena, at the command of Emperor Friderich, to the Bohemians requesting King Ladislaus

1. Emperor’s\(^1\) refusal to release the boy king Ladislaus from his wardship

[1] Men of Bohemia, you have requested of the emperor that Ladislaus,\(^2\) son of your former king,\(^3\) be sent to you. But the Hungarians and the Austrians make the same difficult request. So, if the emperor agrees to your request, he must of necessity offend the others. And if the emperor agrees to the requests of the others, he must set aside yours. Should he have to choose between these alternatives, the emperor would prefer his friendship with you because of the old alliance between his ancestors and the people of Bohemia as well as because of the memory of mutual services in recent times. And if we look at courage, strength, and fame, all must envy the Bohemians who in our time have won more victories than other peoples have ever done. But the emperor considers that it is not necessary to make such a choice at this time since the boy is too young to be useful to you as well as to the Hungarians.

\(^1\) Friedrich III (Habsburg) (1415 – 1493): Duke of Austria (as Friedrich V) from 1424. Elected King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor in 1440, crowned in Rome in 1452
\(^2\) Ladislaus the Posthumous (Habsburg) (1440 – 1457): Archduke of Austria from 1440, King of Hungary from 1444 and King of Bohemia from 1453 until his death
\(^3\) Albrecht II of Habsburg (Habsburg) (1397 – 1439): Archduke of Austria. King of Hungary and Croatia from 1437. Uncrowned King of Bohemia. Elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1438, but died the next year

\(^1\) recte tutela \(\text{MU}\)
2. Disadvantages to the Bohemians had the request been accepted

[2] But let us imagine, for a moment, that Ladislaus were to come to Bohemia now: how would that benefit the kingdom? Would he dispense justice to litigants? Would he reform the state? Would he lead armies against the enemies? Would he be able to carry out the duties of war and peace? No, such things cannot be achieved by someone who himself requires a governor. If he came, this is what would happen first of all: royal splendour would be restored, the palace would be lavishly refurbished, court officers would be appointed, and a royal court would be established after the pattern of the king’s ancestors. For this, huge sums would be needed. But I hear that you have no treasury, and that there is no income from taxes and customs. So, you would have to rely on your own resources: you would have to pay the costs yourselves; you would have to ensure the upkeep of the king and satiate the insatiable court and ministers.
[3] Video praetera inter vos non paucos esse proceres consilio, auctoritate, atque opibus paene pares. Cura regis uni committenda erit, non omnibus. Ille dominus, ille rex vester judicabitur, qui regis corpus in potestate habebit. Et quis vestrum est, qui non eum sibi honorem\(^1\) quam alteri malit? Seminarium\(^2\) inter vos discordiarum petitis, nisi prius in unum conveneritis, qui regis curae praesit. Vos his incommodis Fridericus liberat, qui suo sumptu pupillum regium gubernans dissensionum fomitem vobis\(^3\) aufert.

[4] \{13v\} Nec vos latet, quandoquidem tenera regis aetas est, corpus ejus in potestate Caesaris rectius quam\(^4\) alterius cujuspiam. Ille enim consanguineus est ex eadem familia natus et imperator\(^5\). Quis pupillo regi convenientius tutor detur quam princeps principum?


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\(^1\) sibi honorem : honorem sibi MU
\(^2\) semina MU
\(^3\) fomitem vobis : vobis fomitem HB, MU
\(^4\) in add. MU
\(^5\) et add. HB, MU
\(^6\) omit. MU
\(^7\) in add. MU
\(^8\) erant HB
\(^9\) quia MU
\(^10\) mittite W
Moreover, I see that among you there are many noblemen who are almost equal in sagacity, authority, and wealth. But the care of the king must be entrusted to one among them, not to all. The one who has the king’s person in his power will himself be like your lord and king. Who among you will not want this honour for himself rather than for someone else? Your request will sow discord among you unless you first agree on who should be responsible for the care of the king. Friedrich frees you from these troubles: by governing the boy-king at his own cost, he removes a cause of conflict from you.

3. **Why it is better for Ladislaus to be in the emperor’s wardship**

3.1. **Friedrich III is both emperor and Ladislaus’ close relative**

Moreover, you must be quite aware that because of the king’s tender age it is better for him to be in Caesar’s power than in anybody else’s. For he is his relative being of the same family, and moreover he is the emperor. To whom could this orphan be entrusted more fittingly than to the prince of princes?

3.2. **Hungarian legal claims on Ladislaus better than those of the Bohemians**

If a conflict between you and the Hungarians concerning the custody of the king’s person be brought before an outside judge, he would judge yours and their cause to have equal weight. You both demand the king, and you will both provide proof of your loyalty. But the Hungarians will have one advantage: they can say that the king was born and crowned in their country. Though the emperor considers your cause to have much greater merit than the Hungarians’, he prefers that he himself should be his nephew’s guardian rather than you. So, look after your kingdom, but leave the orphan boy to the emperor who will hand him over to you as soon as he comes of age.


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1 nobis MU  
2 tenetis memoriae : memoria tenetis HB, MU  
3 Austriali HB  
4 Slesia HB; Slesia MU  
5 parent MU  
6 vestrum regnum : regnum vestrum MU  
7 marchiones quoque : marchionesque MU  
8 laedatur HB, MU  
9 superflue MU  
10 pupillum in Italiam : in Italiam pupillum MU  
11 adducit HB; abducet MU  
12 integritateque MU
4. Bohemian threats to elect king not taken seriously

[6] Your ambassadors have talked about finding another king. The emperor considers that this was said in order to scare him, not because you really mean it: your unbroken loyalty until now makes that course very unlikely. It would also be quite inappropriate in view of the benefits bestowed upon you by Ladislaus’ ancestors, and quite unmerited by someone of his innocent age. Besides you should, as wise men, carefully consider whom you would prefer to Ladislaus. As you are aware, his mother’s family has produced four Roman emperors. And if you look at his father’s family, the House of Austria has held the imperial dignity five times. Anybody who is not satisfied by such fame and nobility must of necessity seek out obscurity. To this must be added the power, the friendships, and the clienteles. He has Austria, your neighbour. Moravia and Silesia obey him. And though the Hungarians may be considering a change of regime, they will remain loyal. The emperor, on whom your kingdom depends, will support his own blood and defend the rights of his own family. The dukes of Bavaria and Saxony, the margraves of Brandenburg, and almost all the princes of Germany are closely related to Ladislaus. If this orphan boy is molested, all of Germany is molested, too.

5. Conclusion

[7] I do not doubt that it is quite superfluous to remind you of these things, but this is what the emperor has commanded me to say. He will bring his ward with him to Italy. When Ladislaus comes back and attains his majority, the emperor will send him to you first - if you remain loyal to him. In the meantime, he admonishes you to gravely and sincerely look after the interests of the Kingdom of Bohemia and its orphan king.

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1 If the emperor would not hand over Ladislaus