Relationships between the Bohemian Lands and the northern countries existed a long time before the outbreak of the Thirty Years War. There were several northerners at the court of Rudolf II (maybe the best known is Tycho Brahe; less well-known is, for example, the Danish scholar Canutius who enrolled at the Charles University and was going to debate its reform). The Thirty Years War intensified these relationships; the Czechs came to know Denmark first (some poetic compositions were dedicated to King Christian), and then when Sweden became involved in the war the eyes of the Czech Protestants were fixed on its king, Gustav II Adolf.

At the time that Gustav Adolph launched his campaign against the Roman Catholic forces the situation of the Protestant intelligentsia of Bohemia was somewhat complicated. For several years following the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620s a large majority of Bohemian Protestant intellectuals, especially university teachers and priests, left their country. Czech literature in Latin, including poetry, eagerly cultivated in non-Catholic circles, lost both its publishers and its authors. After Ferdinand III came to power there was in the context of re-Catholicisation a ban on the publication of Protestant authors, and the activities of the printing houses were limited to a chosen few. In the early days, even Catholic literature necessary for re-Catholicisation had to be imported from abroad. In place of the formerly flourishing literary activity there was a modest publication of literary works abroad, in university cities and places where the Czech exile community found its refuge – Wittenberg, Dresden, Pirna, Elbing, but also the cities of the Low Countries and the northern lands, and even England. A Czech exile printing house was founded in Pirna but, in an
irony of fate, it was destroyed in 1639 when the Swedish army invaded Saxony.

If we look at the nature of the Latin poetry by Czech exiles we will find that it is primarily religious, and practised by Protestant clerics in particular. They devoted themselves to this literary activity with the intention of bringing relief and hope to their fellow-believers in a difficult political and social situation. There is also poetry for special occasions – the outcome of the Humanists’ onerous necessity to obtain patrons and supporters who would take care of their financial problems, which were greater in exile than they had been while still in Bohemia. The indigence of the Czech intellectuals is also evident in that poems which in normal circumstances would have been published by the printing houses (general epithalamia, epicedia, poetic panegyrics and so on) have survived only as manuscripts. In some cases the effort to bring their works to the ears of the powerful led to an interesting form of publishing. One example is the hanging broadsheet in Latin and German by Jeremiáš Slovacius, *Idea religionis orthodoxae sive emblema theologicum*. Dedicated to the Swedish king Gustav Adolf and the Saxon Elector George, it is printed on green silk.3

Research in the field of Czech exile poetry is made the more difficult by its dispersion and the problems of accessing its sources. A number of them remained outside Bohemia and have not yet been adequately examined. In the Czech Republic, the Library of the National Museum has specialised on the collection of sources from the period of the Thirty Years War. Its collection contains a number of manuscripts, early prints and broadsheets on this theme.

Fields in which Latin poetry used every opportunity to make its mark in wartime included contemporary reportage and all small-form prints serving as propaganda for the individual warring sides. Broadsheets and pamphlets of this period are relatively well researched.4 In these sources Latin usually appears in combination with one of the living languages – Czech or German. Unfortunately, if the piece is not signed, it is difficult or even impossible to find out who wrote it. They were rarely signed, and even when they were, often with a pseudonym. The poets were not going to boast about their service to propaganda.

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3 ERP, 5: 125–126. The work is kept in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden.