

**Volume 5**

**Number 047**

**The Peace of Westphalia - I**

**Lead: In 1648, an exhausted Europe clawed its way out of thirty years of religious warfare with the Treaty of Westphalia.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Just over a century had passed since Martin Luther had provoked the debates that led to the formation of the Protestant churches of northern Europe. The religious unity of western Europe was**

**shattered. This furthered undermined what little political unity remained.**

**The rough division of the continent was hammered out in the Peace of Augsburg in 1555. Catholic and Lutheran princes were allowed to dictate what religion prevailed in their own territory, but such an arrangement was considered by many to be temporary at best. Hardly anyone embraced the notion of religious tolerance. One worshipped the way the King decreed he or she should worship in a given province or Kingdom. The situation further deteriorated as Calvinism spread and as a newly invigorated Roman Catholic Church with its Jesuit**

**missionaries sought to take back for the true faith those territories that had slipped into Protestant error. By 1610 there was a Catholic League arrayed against the Protestant Union and both groups were determined that neither should make territorial gains. The old empire was divided and armed to the teeth.**

**One of the few places in Europe where various religions could enjoy relative freedom of worship was Bohemia, a Kingdom that centered on the present day Czech Republic. In 1618 the rulers of Austria tried to reimpose Roman Catholicism on their Protestant subjects in Bohemia. The Bohemians resisted, and to**

**demonstrate their resolve, tossed two Imperial officials out of a castle window in Prague. With this, the so-called "defenestration of Prague," the Thirty Years War had begun. Next time: the Peace of Westphalia.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### **Resources**

**Cavendish, Richard. "The Treaty of Westphalia," *History Today* 48 (10, October 1998): 50-51.**

**Kamen, H. "The Economic and Social Consequences of the Thirty Years War," *Past and Present* 39 (April 1968): 44-61.**

**Wedgwood, Cecily Veronica. *The Thirty Years' War*. New York, NY: NYRB Classics, 1961.**

