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FRANCE, DEVRIES,  
ROGERS (editors)



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Edited by JOHN FRANCE, KELLY DEVRIES  
and CLIFFORD J. ROGERS

JOURNAL OF  
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Volume XVIII

# JOURNAL OF MEDIEVAL MILITARY HISTORY

## *Editors*

Clifford J. Rogers

Kelly DeVries

John France

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The Journal, an annual publication of **De re militari: The Society for Medieval Military History**, covers medieval warfare in the broadest possible terms, both chronologically and thematically. It aims to encompass topics ranging from traditional studies of the strategic and tactical conduct of war, to explorations of the martial aspects of chivalric culture and *mentalité*, examinations of the development of military technology, and prosopographical treatments of the composition of medieval armies. Editions of previously unpublished documents of significance to the field are included. The Journal also seeks to foster debate on key disputed aspects of medieval military history.

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JOHN FRANCE

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## The Eastern Campaigns of King Henry II of Germany, 1003–17

David S. Bachrach

*Over the past forty years, the military history of pre-Crusade Europe has benefited from considerable scholarly attention, with the notable exception of the kingdom of Germany. This lacuna is due, in large part, to Germany's own modern history and a tradition of hostility to the study of military matters in the aftermath of the Second World War. As a consequence of the neglect of this topic, the more general histories of medieval Germany tend to rely on outmoded generalizations regarding the conduct of war, which have been substantially refined or even abandoned for other regions of Europe. This study, therefore, is intended to help illuminate the nature of warfare in early eleventh-century Germany through an examination of the lengthy military conflict between the German ruler, King Henry II (1002–24) and Duke Boleslav Chrobry of Poland (992–1025). In the context of examining the series of military campaigns undertaken by Henry II in the period from 1004 to 1017, this essay considers the interplay of politics, military organization, logistics, strategy, and tactics with the pursuit of long-term objectives.*

In comparison to the West, the military history of the German kingdom in the period before c.1150 has received very little attention from scholars since the publications of Hans Delbrück, and this is particularly true of the history of individual campaigns.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, the rather dire image of an era bereft of even minimal elements of military science in the German kingdom, postulated

<sup>1</sup> Two notable exceptions to the otherwise spare historiographical tradition are the articles by Leopold Auer, "Die Schlacht bei Mailberg am 12. Mai 1082," *Militärhistorische Schriftenreihe* 31 (1975), 1–31; and John Gillingham, "An Age of Expansion, c.1020–1204," in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. Maurice Keen (Oxford, 1999), pp. 59–88. Several of the major battles of the Saxon wars also were outlined by Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst in Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, vol. 3, third edition (Berlin, 1923, originally published 1907), trans. by Walter J. Renfroe as *History of the Art of War, Volume III: Medieval Warfare* (Lincoln, 1982, repr. 1990), pp. 131–45. For the general state of German military history during the Ottonian and Salian dynasties during the tenth, eleventh, and early twelfth century, see David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge, 2012); idem, "Feudalism, Romanticism, and Source Criticism: Writing the Military

by Delbrück, has remained largely unchallenged in current scholarship.<sup>2</sup> In an effort to fill this lacuna, the present study focuses on the eastern campaigns of King Henry II of Germany (1002–24) against the Polish duke Boleslav Chrobry (992–1025). These campaigns provide a highly illuminating case study for the ways in which an early medieval ruler pursued long-term military objectives while attempting to overcome a range of challenges that included establishing sound logistics, mobilizing and transporting large armies over considerable distances, and maintaining tactical and operational security, as well as addressing competing political and military priorities both within and beyond the frontiers of Germany.

The German kingdom under Henry II was the most powerful realm in early eleventh-century Europe, with enormous human, material, and economic resources, a strong ruler, and well-developed institutions for the conduct of war.<sup>3</sup> The Polish realm under Boleslav Chrobry, by contrast, was created by his father Miesco only half a century earlier, and its resources and institutions were inferior in every way to those of its powerful western neighbor.<sup>4</sup> However, the wars between Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry were not a one-sided affair, and the German ruler suffered significant setbacks, ultimately failing to achieve his maximalist objectives.

One important reason for the relative success of the Polish ruler in this unequal contest was the proximity of the military theater to his own center of power near the Oder River in the fortress towns of Wrocław (German Breslau),<sup>5</sup> Poznań, and Gniezno. [See Figure 1.1.] Most of the fighting between the two

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History of Salian Germany,” *Journal of Medieval Military History* 15 (2015), 1–25; and idem, “*Milites* and Warfare in Pre-Crusade Germany,” *War in History* 23.3 (2015), 298–343.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, the approval of the dismal picture painted by Hans Delbrück in Gordon A. Craig, “Delbrück: The Military Historian,” in *The Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton, 1986), pp. 326–53, at p. 331. In general, however, military matters, with a few exceptions, are simply ignored in the German kingdom, and this is particularly true of campaign history.

<sup>3</sup> For the military institutions of the German kingdom inherited by Henry II in 1002, see Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, passim. Regarding Henry II’s strengths as a king, see the discussion by Stefan Weinfurter, “Die Zentralisierung der Herrschaftsgewalt im Reich durch Kaiser Heinrich II,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 106.2 (1986), 241–97.

<sup>4</sup> With respect to the foundation of the Polish state by Miesco see the discussion by Zofia Kurnatowska, “The Organization of the Polish State – Possible Interpretations of Archaeological Sources,” *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae* 1 (1996), 5–24; Knut Görich, “Eine Wende im Osten: Heinrich II. und Boleslav Chrobry,” in *Otto III. – Heinrich II. Eine Wende?*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller and Stefan Weinfurter (Sigmaringen, 1997), 95–168; Andrzej Pleszczyński, “Poland as an Ally of the Holy Ottonian Empire,” in *Europe Around the Year 1000*, ed. Przemysław Urbanczyk (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 409–25; Paul M. Barford, “New Directions in Polish Early Medieval Archaeology,” *Journal of the British Archaeology Association* 156 (2003), 1–26, particularly pp. 11–15.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the essay, I will use the name of the place that is used currently in the country where this place is located, e.g. Wrocław, which is located in modern Poland. In those cases where this place is commonly known by another name in German this additional form will be provided the first time this place appears in the text, e.g. Breslau, which is the German name for Wrocław.

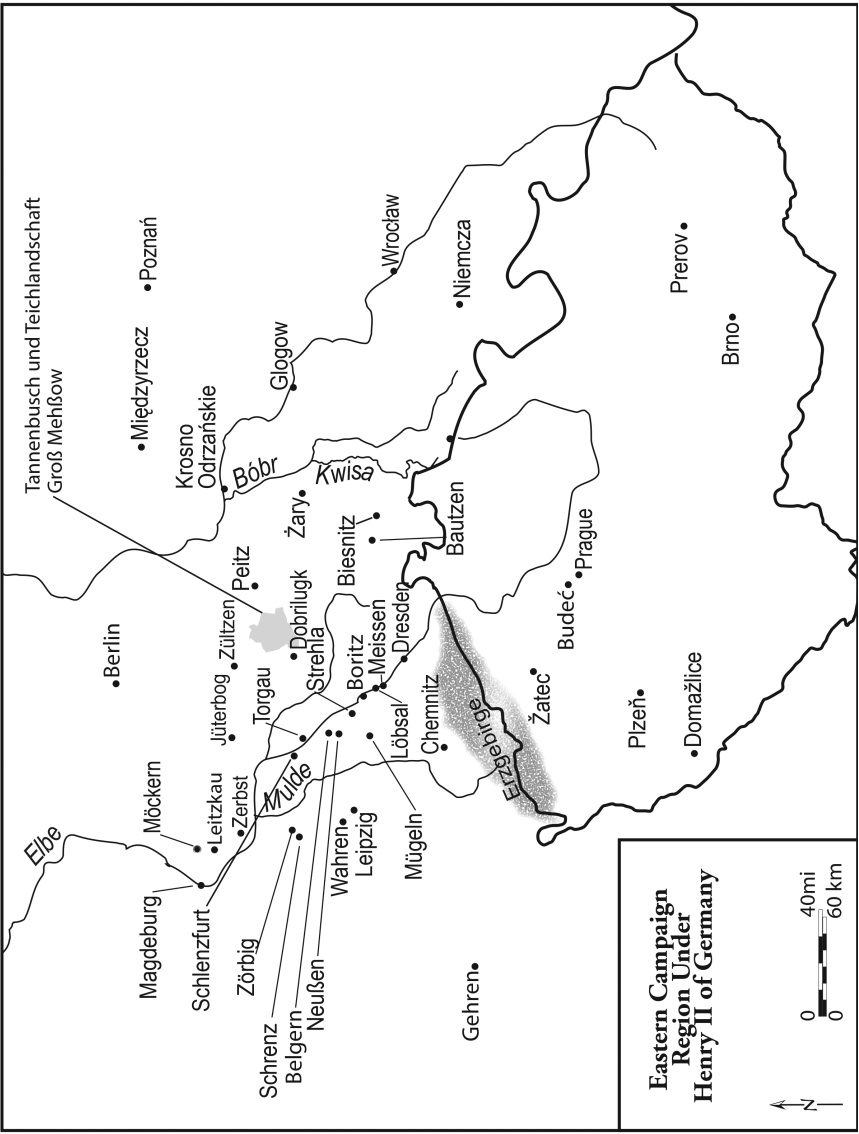


Figure 1.1 The Eastern Campaign. Region under Henry II of Germany.

sides took place in Lusatia, which is the region between the Bobr (German Bober) and Kwis Rivers in Poland, the Elbe River in the modern German states of Saxony and Brandenburg, and the northern part of the Czech Republic. Upper or Southern Lusatia is marked by hilly terrain, including the Lusatian mountains. This district was separated from Lower or Northern Lusatia in the early eleventh century by the *Grenzwall*, a region of very dense forest. Apart from sieges and raids in Lusatia, fighting between the armies of Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry largely was limited to the Elbe and Oder river valleys, with just brief raids either west or east by Polish and German forces, respectively.

In contrast to Boleslav Chrobry, who could devote almost all of his attention to fighting against the German kingdom, Henry II had to manage affairs in a vastly larger kingdom with military challenges to the south in Italy, to the west in Lotharingia, and to the northwest in Flanders and Frisia. King Henry rarely had the breathing space to devote his attention solely to affairs on the eastern frontier. Even when he could do so, conflicts within Germany rarely allowed Henry an opportunity to fulfill his campaign objectives. Ultimately, the German ruler's inability to focus on any one problem for sufficient time meant that he never solved any problem permanently.

### *Henry II's Eastern Campaigns in Historical and Historiographical Perspective*

Over the course of three decades and dozens of military operations in the period from the 920s to the 950s, King Henry I of Germany (919–36) and his son Otto I (936–73) conquered the entire region between the Saale river valley and the Oder River, including Upper and Lower Lusatia, and the entire Polabian region between the Elbe and Oder rivers, most of which was inhabited by non-Christian Slavic tribes.<sup>6</sup> In 983, however, a great uprising among the pagan Slavs uprooted many of these German-Christian settlements, destroyed the churches, and drove the German royal power back west of the Elbe frontier.<sup>7</sup>

This was a very difficult period for the German monarchy. King Otto II (973–83) died just after the Slavic uprising, and his heir, Otto III (983–1002), was only three years old. Moreover, the next two years saw an effort by the

<sup>6</sup> Christian Lübke, “Die Ausdehnung ottonischer Herrschaft über die slawische Bevölkerung zwischen Elbe/Saale und Oder”, in *Otto der Grosse, Magdeburg und Europa*, ed. Matthias Puhle, vol. 1 (Mainz, 2001), pp. 65–74; and Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, pp. 59–60.

<sup>7</sup> On the impact of the revolt of 983 see, for example, Wolfgang Fritze, “Der slawische Aufstand von 983 – eine Schicksalwende in der Geschichte Mitteleuropas”, *Festschrift der Landesschichtlichen Vereinigung für die Mark Brandenburg zu ihrem hundertjährigen Bestehen 1884–1984*, ed. Eckhard Henning and Werner Vogel (Berlin, 1984), pp. 9–55; Joachim Herrmann, “Der Lutizenaufstand 983. Zu den geschichtlichen Voraussetzungen und den historischen Wirkungen”, *Zeitschrift für Archäologie* 18 (1984), 9–17; Lorenz Weinrich, “Der Slawenaufstand von 983 in der Darstellung des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg”, *Historiographia Mediaevalis: Studien zur Geschichtsschreibung und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters, Festschrift für Franz-Josef Schmale zum 65. Geburt* (Darmstadt, 1988), pp. 77–87.

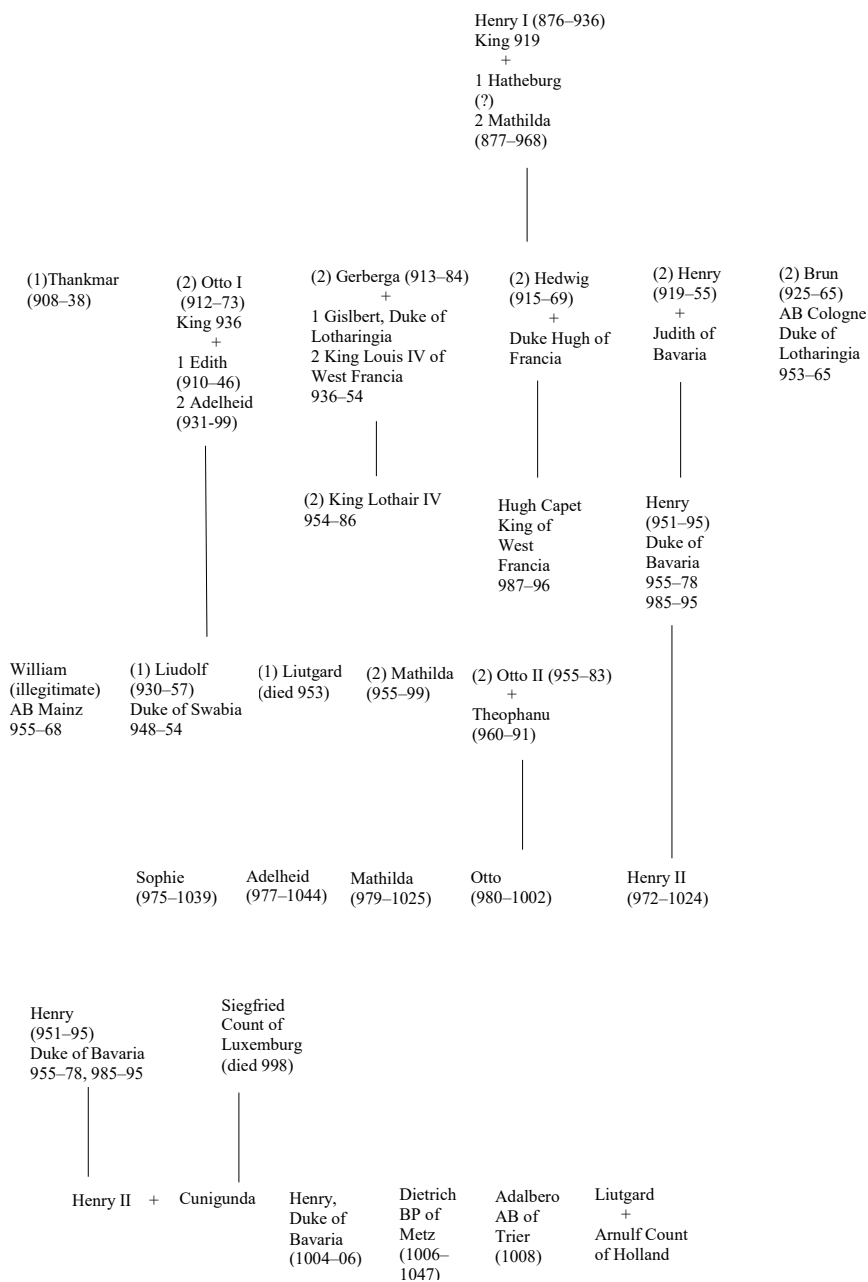


Figure 1.2 The Ottonian Genealogy

young ruler's cousin, Duke Henry the Quarrelsome of Bavaria, to seize the throne, and an invasion of the western duchy of Lotharingia by the West Frankish king Lothair IV (954–86). It was not until the early 990s that the German ruler was able to provide sufficient support to local Saxon magnates to re-establish the Elbe as the frontier and to make some efforts to push eastwards into territory held before 983.

During this period of recovery, Otto III's government developed a close alliance with the Polish duke Miesco (c.960–92) and then the latter's son Boleslav Chrobry against their common pagan enemy in Polabia as well as against the dukes of Bohemia. Boleslav provided Otto III with important military aid,<sup>8</sup> and Otto helped the Polish ruler to develop an ecclesiastical hierarchy that was independent of the archbishopric of Magdeburg in the German kingdom.<sup>9</sup> This close relationship served both of their interests quite well. Boleslav Chrobry used the prestige from these ecclesiastical and diplomatic successes to strengthen the ducal office within the newly established Polish polity. For his part, Otto III was able to draw upon Polish support in re-establishing direct military control over Upper Lusatia, and also in driving back the pagan Slavic confederation, called the Liutizi, from the Elbe river valley.<sup>10</sup> The death of Otto III in Italy in 1002, however, brought an end to this alliance and the beginning of a military conflict spanning almost 15 years.

Despite the intriguing nature of the German–Polish wars of the early eleventh century, and the significant body of source materials available for their investigation, this conflict has benefited from remarkably little historical scholarship. The only study that deals extensively with the conflict between Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry is a short book published in 1868 by Heinrich von Zeissberg. He situated the German–Polish wars within a broader context of the emergence of the Polish state and Boleslav's efforts to enlarge his territories to the west in Bohemia, Lusatia, and the Elbe river valley.<sup>11</sup> Overall, von Zeissberg follows

<sup>8</sup> See the discussion by Görich, "Eine Wende im Osten", pp. 99–105; and Pleszczynski, "Poland as an Ally of the Holy Ottonian Empire", pp. 415–16. The aid provided by Boleslav Chrobry to Otto III is discussed by the author of the *Annals of Hildesheim*, ed. Georg Pertz, MGH Scriptores 3 (Hanover, 1849), anno 986; and Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg in his *Chronicon*, 4.46 and 4.9. The newest edition of this work is now Thietmar von Merseburg, *Chronik*, ed. and trans. Werner Trillmich, 8th edition (Darmstadt 2002). All citations to the Latin text of Thietmar are to this Trillmich edition. The English translation is *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. and annotated by David Warner (Manchester, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Johannes Fried, "Der Heilige Adalbert und Gnesen", *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 50 (1998), 41–70; and Slawomir Gawlas, "Der heilige Adalbert als Landespatron und die frühe Nationenbildung bei den Polen", in *Polen und Deutschland vor 1000 Jahren: Die Berliner Tagung über den "Akt von Gnesen"*, ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin, 2002), pp. 193–233.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the emergence of the Liutizi confederation in the period after 983, see the discussion by Christian Lübke, "The Polabian Alternative: Paganism Between Christian Kingdoms," in *Europe Around the Year 1000*, ed. P. Urbanczyk (Warsaw, 2001), pp. 379–89.

<sup>11</sup> Heinrich von Zeissberg, *Die Kriege Kaiser Heinrichs II. mit Herzog Boleslaw I. von Polen* in *Sitzungsberichte. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse* 57

the narrative provided by the main source for this war, Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg, whose *Chronicon* offers the eyewitness perspective of a leading participant in Henry II's campaigns.

Subsequent to von Zeissberg's book, research on this conflict has been limited to archaeological studies of various of the road networks and fortifications that played roles in the campaigns conducted by Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry. The most wide-reaching of these was published by the archaeologist Werner Coblentz in 1963, who considered the state of the question regarding excavations in Lusatia during Boleslav Chrobry's efforts to capture this region.<sup>12</sup> Studies of individual fortifications and roads have been ongoing for the past six decades and they vastly expand the material understanding of the man-made military topography of the regions contested by the Polish and German rulers.<sup>13</sup> The following study draws upon the archaeological and documentary record, including the charters of Henry II, to reconstruct both the individual expeditions undertaken by Henry II and his commanders, and the political contexts in which they were conducted.

### *Origin of the Conflict*

The series of military campaigns fought between the Polish ruler Boleslav Chrobry (992–1025) and King Henry II of Germany (1002–24) began in the context of the disputed succession to King Otto III of Germany (983–1002), following the latter's death in Italy in January 1002. There were three contenders for the German throne in 1002: the future King Henry II, who at the time was duke of Bavaria; Duke Hermann III of Swabia (997–1003); and Margrave Ekkehard of Meißen (985–1002). Henry, who had been with Otto III in Italy, was the scion of a collateral branch of the Ottonian family. He had the support of the Bavarian nobility, as well as important leaders in both the Rhineland and in Saxony, and not least of the Ottonian abbesses Sophia of Gandersheim and Adelheid of Quedlinburg, the daughters of Emperor Otto II.<sup>14</sup>

Ekkehard's position as margrave of Meißen gave him a powerful military position along the eastern frontier, but he was not favored by most of the ecclesiastical and secular leadership in Saxony.<sup>15</sup> He was assassinated on 30 April,

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(1868), 265–432. Bruno Scherff, *Studien zum Heer der Ottonen und der ersten Salier (919–1056)* (Bonn, 1985), pp. 210–15 also provides a brief discussion of these campaigns, although his focus is more on political relations within Germany than on the conduct of war.

<sup>12</sup> Werner Coblentz, "Boleslav Chrobry in Sachsen und die archäologische Quellen," *Slavia Antiqua* 10 (1963), 249–85. A similar study by Joachim Huth, "Die Burgwarde der Oberlausitz," *Letopis B* 28.2 (1981), 132–61, synthesized the results of excavations of fortifications developed by Henry I and Otto I in Upper Lusatia in the period before 1073.

<sup>13</sup> Many of these studies are cited in David S. Bachrach, "Restructuring the Eastern Frontier: Henry I of Germany 924–936," *Journal of Military History* 78.1 (2014), 9–35, and others are cited below.

<sup>14</sup> For Henry's Saxon support and opposition to Margrave Ekkehard, see Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 4.52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*



although not by Duke Henry of Bavaria, as he was trying to win support by meeting with several Saxon magnates at the royal estate of Pöhlde.<sup>16</sup> For his part, Hermann had the support of much of the Swabian leadership, and sought for several months to maintain his royal candidacy. However, Duke Henry's evident military superiority finally convinced Hermann to give up his claims.<sup>17</sup>

As the German succession crisis unfolded during the spring and summer of 1002, Boleslav Chrobry pursued his long-planned goals of pushing his rule west and south into the region of Lusatia and the duchy of Bohemia.<sup>18</sup> In the immediate aftermath of Ekkehard's assassination, Boleslav Chrobry invaded Upper Lusatia and captured the strategically important fortification at Bautzen on the Spree River.<sup>19</sup> Bautzen, which is located approximately 70 kilometers east of the Elbe River, controls the entrance to the mountainous Lusatian region, and sits astride a main trade route, called the Via Regia or Hohenstraße.<sup>20</sup> This road originates in Frankfurt on the Main and passes through Leipzig, Strehla on the Elbe, Bautzen, the fortified center at Biesnitz (modern Görlitz), and then on to Wrocław (German Breslau) on the Oder.<sup>21</sup> During this same operation Boleslav also tried, in vain, to capture the strongholds of Strehla and Meißen in the march of Meißen, which protected important crossings over the Elbe River.

Early in 1003, Boleslav Chrobry then set in motion a plan to conquer Bohemia. He intervened in the conflict among the three brothers vying for the ducal seat: Boleslav III, Jaromir, and Ulrich. These three were his younger cousins, as their father, Boleslav II, was the brother of Boleslav Chrobry's mother Dobrawa. The Polish ruler entered the fray on the side of his like-named cousin and

<sup>16</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.5 and 5.6 for the assassination.

<sup>17</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, discusses the action at 5.3, 12, Hermann's decision to give up his claims at 5.20, and his reconciliation with Henry at 5.27. Also see of Bishop Adalbold of Utrecht's *Vita* of King Henry II in Markus Schütz, "Adalbold von Utrecht: Übersetzung und Einleitung," *Bericht des historischen Vereins für die Pflege der Geschichte des ehemaligen Fürstbistums Bamberg* 135 (1999), ch. 7 and ch. 13. For the reconciliation with Hermann and the restitution made to the bishopric of Straßburg for the losses it suffered at Hermann's hands during the struggle with Henry II, see *Die Urkunden Heinrichs II. und Arduins*, ed. Harry Bresslau, Robert Holtzmann, and Hermann Reincke-Bloch (Hanover, 1900–03), Henry II, nr. 34, issued on 15 January 1003. Also see the discussion by Stefan Weinfurter, "Konfliktverhalten und Individualität des Herrschers am Beispiel Kaiser Heinrichs II. (1002–1024)," in *Rechtsverständnis und Konfliktbewältigung. Gerichtliche und außergerichtlichen Strategien im Mittelalter*, ed. Stefan Esders (Cologne, 2007), pp. 291–311.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding Boleslav's political and military aims, see Görich, "Eine Wende im Osten," pp. 104–15.

<sup>19</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.9–5.10.

<sup>20</sup> Regarding the route of the *vita regia*, see Joachim Herrmann, "Herausbildung und Dynamik der Germanisch-Slawischen Siedlungsgrenze in Mitteleuropa," *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn: Berichte des Symposions der Kommission für Frühmittelalterforschung* (Vienna, 1985), pp. 269–80, at p. 269; Bernd W. Bahn, "Zscheiplitz im Netz alter Straßen," *Burgen und Schlösser in Sachsen-Anhalt* 1 (1999), 204–18, at pp. 204–05; and Klaus Karl, "Zwischen Strehla und Dahlen – Das Schicksal einer alten Straße," *Mitteilungen des Landesvereins sächsischer Heimatschutz* 1 (2007), 35–45.

<sup>21</sup> Herrmann, "Herausbildung," p. 269.

drove Jaromir and Ulrich into exile in Germany. Subsequently, the Polish ruler took advantage of the discord caused by Boleslav III's treatment of his political enemies in Bohemia, and again intervened directly in Bohemia. Boleslav Chrobry captured his cousin, and led a Polish army into Prague.<sup>22</sup> Boleslav Chrobry subsequently positioned Polish garrisons in strategic fortifications in Bohemia, such as Žatec (German Saaz) on the Eger river, located 70 kilometers northwest of Prague; Prerov, located 220 kilometers southeast of Prague; and Budec, located just 15 kilometers northwest of Prague.<sup>23</sup>

By this point, Henry II had been acknowledged as ruler throughout the German kingdom and sought to make an arrangement with Boleslav Chrobry regarding the March of Meißen as well as the Upper Lusatian region to its east.<sup>24</sup> The Polish ruler, however, wished to retain a free hand to undertake further conquests west of the Elbe River. In order to keep the now-king Henry occupied, Boleslav provided military support to Margrave Henry of Schweinfurt who was rebelling against the German ruler in eastern Franconia.<sup>25</sup> King Henry began operations against the group of fortifications held by the margrave in early August 1003, with men mobilized from Lotharingia, Franconia, and Bavaria.<sup>26</sup> The king captured all of the margrave's fortifications, including Henry of Schweinfurt's stronghold at Ammerthal, the garrison of which included a substantial number of Polish troops.<sup>27</sup> King Henry brought the rebellion to an end by early September 1003 and withdrew to the town of Bamberg, located in eastern Franconia.<sup>28</sup>

Notwithstanding King Henry II's ultimate military success against Henry of Schweinfurt, Boleslav Chrobry's policy of aiding the rebellious margrave did keep the German ruler occupied throughout the summer of 1003. It was during this period, according to Thietmar of Merseburg, that Boleslav tried once more to capture the fortresses at Meißen and Strehla.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Boleslav sent forces across the Elbe to assault the fortification at Mügeln, located some 20 kilometers south-southwest of Strehla.<sup>30</sup> This fortification was part of the network of strongholds utilized by King Henry I of Germany (919–36) to establish a buffer in the Saale–Elbe River basins against Hungarian attacks on

<sup>22</sup> See Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.29 and 5.30.

<sup>23</sup> For the Polish garrison at Saaz, see Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.11. For the strongholds at Prerov and Budec, see the discussion by Cenek Stana, "Prerov – eine Burg des Boleslav Chrobry in Mähren," in *Frühmittelalterliche Burgenbau in Mittel und Osteuropa*, ed. Joachim Henning and Alexander T. Ruttkay (Bonn, 1998), pp. 49–69; and Andrea Bartoskova, "Zur Stellung von Budec in der Struktur der böhmischen frühmittelalterlichen Burgwälle," *ibid.*, pp. 321–27.

<sup>24</sup> Henry II's effort to negotiate with Boleslav is commented on independently by Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.31; and Adalbold, *Vita Heinrichi*, c. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Adalbold, *Vita Heinrichi*, ch. 25–28 and Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.33–36 and 5.38.

<sup>26</sup> Adalbold, *Vita Heinrichi*, ch. 25.

<sup>27</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.34.

<sup>28</sup> Henry issued a charter at Bamberg on 9 September 1002. See Henry II, nr. 54.

<sup>29</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.36.

<sup>30</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.37.

Thuringia and Saxony.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, the attack on the Elbe and trans-Elbe fortifications achieved no permanent results. However, Boleslav Chrobry's forces did plunder the region around Meißen and, according to Thietmar, took thousands of prisoners, whom they carried back to Poland.<sup>32</sup>

King Henry likely received word of Boleslav's invasion of the march of Meißen and attacks across the Elbe in the summer or 1002 while at Bamberg in eastern Franconia. Rather than take immediate action, however, Henry dismissed his forces and spent the next several months hunting in the royal hunting grounds in the Spessart hills of Franconia, and then further southwest in the Vosges.<sup>33</sup> In the late autumn of 1003, Henry announced he would undertake a winter campaign against the Poles, as he made his way first to Regensburg in Bavaria, and then northwards to the royal estate of Pöhlde in Saxony, where he celebrated Christmas.<sup>34</sup> The German ruler prepared for the campaign at Merseburg, and advanced as far as Wahren, located in the valley of the White Elster River, where he issued a charter on 8 February 1004. However, according to Thietmar, Henry had to cancel military operations due to a heavy snowfall and subsequent warm temperatures that made the roads impassable, with the implication that they essentially turned into bogs.<sup>35</sup>

### *The Campaign of 1004*

Henry II had to postpone operations against Boleslav again when word reached him that Margrave Arduin of Ivrea (990–1015) had rejected Henry's claim to rule in Northern Italy and proclaimed himself to be the ruler in Lombardy. In response, Henry mobilized an army with forces from Lotharingia, Swabia and Franconia, and advanced into Northern Italy through the Brenner Pass.<sup>36</sup> In a rapid campaign, Henry dislodged Arduin from Verona, and then captured Pavia, before returning to Germany in the early summer of 1004, reaching the Rhenish fortress city of Mainz by late June.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> See the discussion of this network of fortifications by Bachrach, "Restructuring the Eastern Frontier" p. 535.

<sup>32</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.37.

<sup>33</sup> See Thietmar 5.38 and Henry II, nr. 57.

<sup>34</sup> See Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.38 and Henry II, nr. 59 and nr. 60.

<sup>35</sup> For Henry's stop at Wahren see Henry II, nr. 61. For the weather conditions, see Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.2.

<sup>36</sup> See Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.4; and for the most detailed treatment of the Henry II's Italian campaign see Adalbold, *Vita Heinrici*, ch. 34. For Henry II's development of resources to support the movement of armies over the Brenner Pass, see Wilhelm Störmer, "Die Brennerroute und deren Sicherung im Kalkül der Mittelalterlichen Kaiserpolitik," in *Alpenübergänge vor 1850: Landkarten, Straßen, Verkehr*, ed. Uta Lindgren (Munich, 1987), pp. 156–62; and idem, "Alpenübergänge von Bayern nach Italien: Transitprobleme zwischen Spätantike und Hochmittelalter," in *Bayern und Italien: Politik, Kultur, Kommunikation (8–15. Jahrhundert): Festschrift für Kurt Reindel zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Heinz Dopsch, Stephan Freund, Alois Schmid (Munich, 2001), pp. 37–54.

<sup>37</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.6 for the capture of Pavia, Henry II, nr. 80 for Henry's presence at Mainz on 1 July 1004.

From Mainz, the German king headed northward into Saxony, arriving at Magdeburg on the Elbe on 1 August 1004, covering a distance of some 400 kilometers in a month.<sup>38</sup> According to Thietmar, Henry II then ordered the mobilization of military forces to take place in mid-August at Merseburg.<sup>39</sup> As will become clear, this likely referred to the Saxon forces, whom the king led directly on campaign. As he made preparations to head east, Henry II was well aware that Boleslav Chrobry had good sources of information within the German royal court.<sup>40</sup> In order to mislead the Polish leader about the objectives for the summer campaign in 1004, Henry mobilized ships at two sites along the Elbe River called Boritz and Neußen.<sup>41</sup> The first of these is about 90 kilometers east-southeast of Merseburg and the latter is 80 kilometers east-northeast of Merseburg. According to Thietmar of Merseburg, Henry hoped to convince Boleslav that he was intending an invasion of Poland.<sup>42</sup>

Instead of marching east from Merseburg to either of the two Elbe crossings, however, Henry directed his army south along the valley of the Saale River and through the Erzgebirge, a range of mountains on the northern frontier of Bohemia.<sup>43</sup> The German king's objective was to drive Polish forces out of Bohemia and thereby relieve the threat that they posed both to Bavaria to the southwest and to Thuringia to the northwest. Henry II's army was accompanied by Jaromir, the younger brother of Duke Boleslav III of Bohemia, whose presence, according to Thietmar, was intended to convince the Bohemians to abandon Boleslav Chrobry.<sup>44</sup>

Thietmar, who is our major source for this campaign, states that after some initial success in Bohemia, including the surrender of an unnamed fortification, the German king called a halt, as he was waiting for the arrival of Bavarian troops.<sup>45</sup> The normal line of march for Bavarian forces entering northern Bohemia was from Regensburg through Cham and then Domažlice (German Taus) to Plzeň (German Pilsen), a distance of approximately 120 kilometers.

<sup>38</sup> See Henry II, nr. 81 and 82.

<sup>39</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.10.

<sup>40</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.10. Thietmar specifically comments that Henry kept his true plans secret so that anyone who only feigned allegiance would not be able to reveal them to the enemy. On this point, see the discussion by Stephan Freund, "Kommunikation in der Herrschaft Heinrichs II. Praktische Kommunikation und symbolische Kommunikation," *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 66 (2003), 1–32, at pp. 11–13.

<sup>41</sup> For the identification of Nisan as Neußen, see the discussion by André Thieme, "Nisan oder Neußen. Bemerkungen zu Thietmar VI.10 über den Feldzug König Heinrichs II. nach Böhmen im Jahre 1004," *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte* 76 (2005), 211–19.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.10, says that Henry II's army faced some opposition from Boleslav Chrobry's troops in a forest called Miriquidui, which generally is considered to be a place in the Erzgebirge. See, for example, Martin Eggers, "Mykviur," in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, vol. 20, ed. Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich and Heiko Steuer (Berlin, 2001), pp. 460–61.

<sup>44</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.11.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

From Plzeň, the army could either head northeast toward Lusatia or east-northeast toward Prague.<sup>46</sup> Thietmar does not state where Henry's forces met the Bavarians, but does note that while the German king waited, the Bohemian population of the town of Žatec massacred the Polish garrison and admitted Henry's troops within the walls.<sup>47</sup>

While he was waiting for the Bavarians, Henry dispatched Jaromir with a picked force to head to Prague, where Boleslav Chrobry was ensconced. Rather than waiting for Jaromir to arrive, Boleslav fled back to his own lands, leaving his younger cousin to reclaim the Bohemian ducal throne.<sup>48</sup> Henry II finally arrived in Prague in the first week of September, after the Bavarian forces had joined him. Among the Bavarians was a contingent led by Bishop Gottschalk of Freising (994–1005), who led the celebration of the birth of the Virgin Mary on her feast day, 8 September 1004.<sup>49</sup>

After settling matters in Prague, Thietmar reports that Henry sent the Bavarians back home and then led a joint force of German troops and Bohemians, under the command of Jaromir, against the fortress of Bautzen.<sup>50</sup> The route from Prague to Bautzen is just 130 kilometers due north as the crow flies. However, as Thietmar emphasizes, this march was “unspeakably difficult,” passing through the mountain range in the area known as Saxon and Bohemian Switzerland, which today is divided into German and Czech national parks.<sup>51</sup>

Once the combined German–Bohemian army arrived at Bautzen, Henry II invested the fortress in a close siege. The fortress itself was of the typical German style, with an inner stronghold and an outer bailey, which enclosed a church and possibly a settlement as well. The front wall of the internal citadel, which has been excavated, had a length of 100 meters. However, the remainder of the citadel and the outer wall of the bailey have not been excavated.<sup>52</sup> Thietmar reports that there were very heavy casualties on both sides during the siege, and many German troops were killed by archers and siege engines deployed on Bautzen's walls.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the fighting was not limited to the walls of Bautzen itself, but also extended to the banks of the river Spree where a well-known German soldier named Tommo was

<sup>46</sup> See the discussion of this route by David S. Bachrach, “Henry I of Germany's 929 Military Campaign in Archaeological Perspective,” *Early Medieval Europe* 21.3 (2013), 307–37, at p. 329.

<sup>47</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.11.

<sup>48</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.13.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.14–15.

<sup>51</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.14, “per ineffabilem itineris difficultatem adiens.”

<sup>52</sup> See the discussion by Coblenz, “Boleslav Chrobry in Sachsen,” 249–85; and Gerhard Billig, “Civitas Budusin 1002: Notwendige Bemerkungen zu neueren Veröffentlichungen zu Bautzen und der Ortenburg aus landesgeschichtlicher und methodischer Sicht,” *Burgenforschung aus Sachsen* 17 (2004), 81–97.

<sup>53</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.14–15.

killed.<sup>54</sup> Ultimately, Boleslav Chrobry sent an emissary to Henry II offering to surrender the fortress at Bautzen in return for the freedom of the garrison. The king agreed to this exchange, and then provided a new garrison for the stronghold, as well as reinforcements for other garrisons across the eastern marches, in what Thietmar calls the customary manner.<sup>55</sup>

It is in the context of the return march from Bautzen to Magdeburg that Thietmar comments that Henry's army was now thoroughly exhausted by the march and the lack of food.<sup>56</sup> If we consider the entire campaign up to the arrival in Bautzen, the army marched, beginning in mid-August, from Merseburg to Žatec, a distance of 160 kilometers through the mountains of the Erzgebirge, and then a further 70 kilometers to Prague, which Henry reached no later than 8 September. This is total of 230 kilometers over the course of 24 days, but with a lengthy halt while Henry awaited the arrival of the Bavarians. This was hardly a bruising pace, especially because there was a regular road from Žatec to Prague, and the Germans did not have to do any fighting along the way.

By contrast, the march of 130 kilometers from Prague to Bautzen through the Saxon and Bohemian Swiss mountain range, with no road system for wagons or carts, and no options for obtaining supplies along the route, almost certainly was, as Thietmar stated, very difficult. It seems unlikely that the army would have been able to travel more than 10–15 kilometers per day through this mountainous terrain.

Thietmar does not say how long Henry's army invested Bautzen, but there are two secure dates that can be used to give an idea of how long he might have remained there. The first of these is 8 September, when the German king celebrated the birth of the Virgin Mary at Prague. The second date is Henry's issuing of a charter at Magdeburg on 9 October 1004.<sup>57</sup> It is 220 kilometers as the crow flies between Bautzen and Magdeburg, however, Henry's route from Bautzen likely took him first to Meißen and then a march along the Elbe to Magdeburg, a distance of 275 kilometers. If Henry's forces marched 30 kilometers per day, they could have reached Magdeburg in nine days. However, it is likely that they went more slowly than this because Thietmar reports, as noted above, that the king stopped at a number of fortifications along the route to deploy additional men to their garrisons. At a more moderate pace of 20 kilometers per day for the exhausted army, Henry would have required fourteen days to reach Magdeburg from Bautzen.

Taken together, the march from Prague to Bautzen, and from Bautzen to Magdeburg likely required between 24 and 28 days, leaving just 3–7 days for the siege of Bautzen. As one can see from this brief analysis, Thietmar's

<sup>54</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.15. The death of Tommo is also recorded by the author of the *Annals of Quedlinburg*, ed. G. H. Pertz, MGH Scriptores 3 (Hannover, 1839), *anno* 1004, p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.15, "et marchiones regni sui, ubicumque opus habebant, solitis adminiculis adiuvit."

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, "Post haec rex cum exercitu itinere ac inedia iam defatigato domum rediit."

<sup>57</sup> Henry II, nr. 84.



description of the army as exhausted is quite reasonable in the context of three to four weeks of marching punctuated by a bloody and difficult siege. But what conclusions should be drawn from his statement that the army also was worn down by hunger?

Despite the lack of viable roads on the mountainous route between Prague and Bautzen, it is likely that the men could have carried “iron rations” to sustain themselves for 10–14 days without great difficulty. This would have required each man to carry a pack of 20–30 kilograms of dried meat and biscuit for his own use.<sup>58</sup> Although Thietmar makes no mention of them, pack animals also could have traversed the same difficult ground as the German and Bohemian troops. Given the military support provided by the newly installed Bohemian duke Jaromir for the Bautzen operation, there is every reason to believe that the storehouses of Prague and its environs were also available to Jaromir’s patron, King Henry II. Once Henry’s army came out of the mountains and invested Bautzen, his forces could have been supplied by the fortress at Dresden on the Elbe, about 50 kilometers to the west. In sum, although Henry’s men may not have enjoyed the food that they had available, it is likely that they were not going hungry. Indeed, their success in undertaking the arduous march from Prague and then forcing the surrender of the major fortress of Bautzen is a testament to their military capacity over these weeks.

### *Campaign of 1005*

After the successful military operations in the summer of 1004, during which Henry II deprived Boleslav Chrobry of the latter’s gains in both Bohemia and Upper Lusatia, he spent much of the autumn and winter in Saxony traveling among the fortresses at Magdeburg, Merseburg, Allstedt, and Dornburg where he celebrated Christmas.<sup>59</sup> From Dornburg, Henry went to Tiel, on the Waal River, a distance of 440 kilometers, where he arrived sometime before Quadragesima Sunday, which fell on 15 February 1005.<sup>60</sup> The purpose of this trip was to prepare a naval campaign against the Frisians, which took place in March.<sup>61</sup> Following the conclusion of this operation, Henry II was at Aachen by 1 April to celebrate Easter.<sup>62</sup>

It was likely during this Easter court that Henry II announced his plans for another campaign against Boleslav Chrobry. According to Thietmar, at the royal palace the king proclaimed a campaign to Poland and commanded the mobiliza-

<sup>58</sup> On the carrying of iron rations, see the discussion by Bernard S. Bachrach, “The Crusader March from Dorylaion to Herakleia, 4 July–ca. 2 September 1097,” in *Shipping, Trade, and Crusade in the Medieval Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of John Pryor*, ed. Ruthy Gertwagen and Elizabeth Jeffreys (Farnham, 2012), pp. 231–54, at p. 235.

<sup>59</sup> See Henry II, nr. 88, 89, 91, 92.

<sup>60</sup> *Annals of Hildesheim, anno 1005*.

<sup>61</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.19.

<sup>62</sup> *Annals of Hildesheim, anno 1005*; and Henry II, nr. 93.

tion of forces throughout every comital district within the realm, to assemble at Leitzkau, 25 kilometers southeast of Magdeburg.<sup>63</sup> Thietmar's emphasis on the proclamation going out to each county within the German kingdom points to the mobilization of expeditionary levies for this campaign, who were organized by county in the traditional Carolingian manner, and led by the count.<sup>64</sup>

The announcement of the campaign in early April allowed four and half months for men to prepare to mobilize and join the king for the scheduled departure date of 16 August. From Leitzkau, according to Thietmar, Henry II's army headed toward a place called Dobrilugk (modern Doberlug-Kirchhain) in Upper Lusatia.<sup>65</sup> The army likely followed a route that passed through the strongholds of Zerbst and then along the course of the Elbe River to the fortification at Torgau, before heading east into the upper Lusatian region, covering a distance of approximately 140 kilometers. At Doberlug-Kirchhain, Henry's army was joined by contingents led by Duke Henry of Bavaria and Duke Jaromir of Bohemia.<sup>66</sup> These two contingents likely followed the course of the Elbe River to Meißen and from there marched north to Doberlug-Kirchhain, a total distance of about 190 kilometers from either Prague or Plzeň.

After the two columns of Henry II's invasion force had joined together, he headed northeast toward the region that Thietmar calls Neiß, likely located between the lower course of the Neisse River where it parallels the Spree River. Henry II's army camped along the Neisse, probably in the neighborhood of Peitz in the modern district of Spree-Neiße.<sup>67</sup> It is approximately 65 kilometers from Doberlug-Kirchhain to Peitz, or normally a two- to three-day march. Thietmar, however, emphasizes that the guides for the army, seeking to keep Henry's troops from ravaging their own lands, led them through difficult and swampy terrain.<sup>68</sup> The most direct route from Doberlug-Kirchhain does lead through the waterlogged district now organized as Tannenbusch und Teichlandschaft Groß Mehßow national park. So Thietmar almost certainly was correct that the march was difficult, particularly if the army was accompanied by supply wagons. However, it must remain an open question whether treachery was involved in the choice of the route or whether this was, in fact, the most direct path.

According to Thietmar, while the army was encamped along the Neisse

<sup>63</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.19, "Iussit etiam in palatio et in omnibus regni suimet comitatibus expeditionem ad Poleniam conventumque ad Liecza per bannum fieri." On the role of Leitzkau as a starting point for German expeditions dating back to 995, see the discussion by Paul Grimm, *Handbuch vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Wall- und Wehranlagen Teil I: Die vor- und frühgeschichtlichen Burgwälle der Bezirke Halle und Magdeburg* (Berlin, 1958), p. 49.

<sup>64</sup> See the discussion of the county-based levy organization during Henry II's reign by David S. Bachrach, "Civilians and Militia in Ottonian Germany: Warfare in an Era of Small Professional Armies," in *Civilians and Warfare in World History*, ed. Nicola Foote and Nadya Williams (London, 2017), pp. 110–31.

<sup>65</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.22.

<sup>66</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.22.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.



River, a man named Thiedbern, a member of the military household of Bishop Arnulf of Halberstadt (996–1023), identified the presence of Polish forces in the area. Rather than reporting this information to his superiors, however, Thiedbern gathered together some men and sought to attack the Poles on his own in order, as Thietmar indicates, to gain the greatest praise for himself. Unfortunately for Thiedbern, he and his companions were ambushed by the Polish troops, and killed. Their date of death was recorded in the book of the dead (Necrology) from Merseburg as 7 September.<sup>69</sup> This detail gives us a *terminus post quem* for the arrival of Henry II's army in the region of Neiß and permits the conclusion that between its departure from Leitzkau on 16 August and arrival at the Neisse River, his troops marched some 200 kilometers in no more than three weeks, averaging approximately 10 kilometers per day for this entire period.

After the ambush of Thiedbern's group, Henry's army was joined by a force of Liutizi, pagan Slavs who inhabited the region between the lower course of the Oder and the lower course of the Elbe.<sup>70</sup> King Henry had first made overtures to the Liutizi in the spring of 1003 when it became clear that Boleslav Chrobry intended to undermine German interests in both Bohemia and Lusatia.<sup>71</sup> The German ruler also evidently made arrangements with the Liutizi in the spring of 1005 to join him for a campaign that was intended to cross over the Oder River into Boleslav's Polish lands. The march south for the Liutizi through the modern German states of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Brandenburg likely covered 200–300 kilometers, with a starting point some 200 kilometers northeast of the staging area for Henry II's army at Leitzkau. The ability of the armies to join together for military operations, therefore, suggests a great deal of advanced planning as well as a good understanding of the distances involved for the two elements of the army to come together in a pincer.

Henry II's army, which now included contingents from Bavaria, Bohemia, and the Liutizi, along with his original force mobilized at Leitzkau, now advanced approximately 50 kilometers east-northeast to the Oder River, and established its camp along a tributary, the Bobr. Thietmar explains that Boleslav Chrobry was waiting on the far side of the Oder River at Krosno Odrzańskie (German Krossen) with a large army (*exercitus grandus*), in the hope of keeping Henry II from crossing.<sup>72</sup> According to Thietmar, the German king ordered his men to build both boats and bridges to force a crossing. This task occupied them for a week. In the meantime, scouts, whom the king had dispatched to reconnoiter the banks of the Oder, discovered a ford. In the early hours of the eighth day of the confrontation, Henry dispatched a

<sup>69</sup> *Die Totenbücher von Merseburg, Magdeburg und Lüneburg*, ed. G. Althoff and J. Wollasch, MGH Libri Memoriales et Necrologia n. s. 2 (MGH, Hanover, 1983), 7 September, folio 5v, p. 12.

<sup>70</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.22.

<sup>71</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 5.31; and Adalbold, *Vita Heinrichi*, ch. 22.

<sup>72</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.26.

substantial number of men to cross the ford and secure a bridgehead on the other side of the Oder.<sup>73</sup>

After receiving word from his own scouts that Germans had forced a crossing, Boleslav Chrobry abandoned his camp and swiftly withdrew, leaving the opposite bank free for Henry to cross with his forces. Thietmar, who was exceptionally hostile to the Liutizi because they were pagans, sought to blame them for the failure to catch Boleslav's troops in a pincer. He claimed that if Henry had not waited for the slowly moving Liutizi, the German troops could have caught the Poles while they were still sleeping in their tents.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Thietmar makes clear that once Henry's army was across the river and thanksgiving prayers had been offered to God, they undertook a close pursuit of the Polish army.<sup>75</sup>

From Krosno Odrzanskie Henry's army advanced 60 kilometers northeast to Miedzyrzecz (German Meseritz), which was home to a large monastery.<sup>76</sup> Perhaps in an effort to temper his earlier criticism of King Henry for enlisting the support of pagans, the bishop of Merseburg emphasized that the German ruler took strong measures to ensure that his men did no damage to the monastery or to the property of the monks.<sup>77</sup> Instead, Henry ordered the army to celebrate the feast of the Theban Legion, on 22 September.

Taking into account the need to wait for the arrival of the Liutizi after the ambush of Thiedbern, noted above, which took place on 7 September, and the week-long wait at Krosno Odrzanskie while building bridges and boats, it would appear that the army's marching pace from the "region of Neiß" to Miedzyrzecz increased substantially over what it had been in the initial period of the campaign. The army covered approximately 110 kilometers in a maximum of eight days, averaging about 14 kilometers per day. Of course, if the army departed from the Neisse River after 7 September, then the average rate of march would be higher.

From Miedzyrzecz, Henry led his army in pursuit of Boleslav Chrobry all the way to the important Polish town of Poznan, 80 kilometers to the east. According to Thietmar, Boleslav did not dare to stop at any of the fortifications along the route because the German army was in such close pursuit. However, the bishop also adds that the Polish troops destroyed everything along their route, presumably to deny it to the pursuing army.

Once Henry II's army arrived at Poznan, according to Thietmar, the men dispersed into the countryside to collect supplies. This turned out to be an ill-advised decision because Polish forces successfully ambushed a number of these foraging parties and inflicted significant losses on them.<sup>78</sup> The need to forage for

<sup>73</sup> Ibid. Thietmar says that Henry dispatched six *legiones*.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.27.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.27.

supplies at this point in the campaign suggests that Henry II's army was suffering from shortages. This interpretation is also suggested by the German king's decision to accept terms at this point in the campaign, rather than advancing still further into Boleslav's territory and destroying Poznan as well as Gniezno, another important Polish town, just 50 kilometers to the northeast. Instead, according to Thietmar, when Boleslav asked to discuss peace terms Henry II immediately agreed. After a brief negotiation led by Archbishop Tagino of Magdeburg (1004–12), a peace agreement was made and Henry's army departed. Thietmar does not specify the terms of the agreement, but based upon events in later years, it would appear that Boleslav conceded any claims that he had in both Upper and Lower Lusatia, and agreed to the establishment of German garrisons in both regions.<sup>79</sup>

Following the peace agreement between Henry and Boleslav, Thietmar asserts that: "our men then happily returned because they had endured an enormous effort marked by the length of their journey, great hunger, and the harshness of battle."<sup>80</sup> As in the case of the campaign the previous year, Thietmar again commented upon both the difficulty of the journey taken by the German army and their allies, and also the logistical difficulties that they faced. The army had marched 400 or more kilometers to Poznan since 16 August, depending upon their starting point, much of it through enemy territory. They now faced a march home of some 360 kilometers to Magdeburg, 300 kilometers to Prague, or 340 kilometers to Regensburg. Consequently, Thietmar's statement about the weariness of the men, certainly seems once more to reflect their experience.

When we turn to the question of logistical problems faced by Henry II's army, Thietmar's observation that foraging parties went out near Poznan does suggest a lack of supplies. In addition, Henry II's decision to accept terms from Boleslav Chrobry rather than pressing on to capture Poznan and Gniezno, also suggests that supply had become a major problem. The major mobilization of military forces from across the German kingdom, as well as the Bohemians and the Liutizi, simply to halt outside the walls of Poznan requires an explanation. A determination by King Henry that it would be imprudent to pursue the campaign further with inadequate supplies would explain the decision to make a peace agreement at this point with Boleslav Chrobry. However, the fact that Thietmar gives no indication of supply problems along the return march does suggest that the army maintained sufficient provisions at least to make it back to the Elbe frontier without great difficulty.

### *The Crisis of 1007 and Campaign of 1010*

Despite the peace agreement between King Henry and Boleslav Chrobry in the summer of 1005, the relationship between the two sides remained tense. According to the author of the *Annals of Quedlinburg*, Henry II, remembering

<sup>79</sup> See the discussion by Coblenz, "Boleslav Chrobry in Sachsen," p. 252.

<sup>80</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.27, "Laeti tunc revertuntur nostri quia itineris longitudine et nimia fame cum intermixta belli asperitate magnum sufferebant laborem."

the losses that he had suffered on the way to Poznan, decided in early April 1007 to renew the conflict and sent messengers to Boleslav to tell him to prepare for war.<sup>81</sup> But, the author added, because Henry received a rumor (*fama*) about potential danger posed by Count Baldwin of Flanders, the German king was not able to act.<sup>82</sup> In fact, however, Baldwin had captured the royal fortress of Valenciennes in Lotharingia the year before, and Henry II had tried and failed to recapture it in September 1006.<sup>83</sup> In April of 1007, Henry was already planning a military campaign against Ghent, Baldwin's main seat, which took place in July 1007.<sup>84</sup> It is therefore very unlikely that Henry would purposely provoke a war against Boleslav, when he was already occupied in the west.

The more likely explanation for the outbreak of the war comes from Thietmar of Merseburg. He states that both Duke Jaromir of Bohemia and the Liutizi confederation sent representatives to King Henry while he was celebrating Easter at Regensburg and explained that Boleslav Chrobry was attempting to create a grand alliance against the German ruler by co-opting them to join the Polish side.<sup>85</sup> Jaromir and the Liutizi also insisted, according to Thietmar, that unless Henry formally renounced his peace agreement with Boleslav, they would no longer be able to maintain their loyal service to him.<sup>86</sup> In short, it seems clear that both the Liutizi and the Bohemian duke wanted to have a free hand to deal with provocations by the Polish ruler without worrying about being accused of violating the peace agreement made by King Henry.

In response to these reports, Henry dispatched Count Hermann, the son of Margrave Ekkehard I of Meißen and Boleslav Chrobry's son-in-law, to go to the Polish court and announce to Boleslav that their peace agreement was at an end.<sup>87</sup> At the same time, Henry sent word to Archbishop Tagino of Magdeburg (1004–12), whom he had placed in overall command of the Elbe frontier, about what had happened and to warn him to be ready for attacks by the Poles.<sup>88</sup> The warning, it turns out, was timely because Boleslav Chrobry initiated a series of strikes against German fortifications along the middle stretch of the Elbe as well as in Upper Lusatia. According to Thietmar, Boleslav's forces looted and burned the district around the fortification of Möckern, located just 22 kilometers east

<sup>81</sup> *Annals of Quedlinburg*, anno 1007, “simul etiam recenti suorum caede corde tenus tactus, mittit legatos ad Bolizlavonem, bellum se sitire.”

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.29; and *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium*, ed. L. C. Bethmann MGH SS 7 (Hanover, 1846), with the English translation *Deeds of the Bishops of Cambrai; Translation and Commentary*, ed. and tr. Bernard S. Bachrach, David S. Bachrach, and Michael Leese (London, 2017), 1.33.

<sup>84</sup> For this campaign, see Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.29; and *Deeds of the Bishops of Cambrai*, 1.115.

<sup>85</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.33.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.33.

<sup>88</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.33 notes that Tagino was well aware of all of the impending attacks by Boleslav Chrobry but did not take sufficient precautions, i.e. “Horum primicerius fuit Thagino episcopus, qui hec presciens non bene caute res agebat.”

of Magdeburg.<sup>89</sup> Polish troops then attacked the region around the fortification of Zerbst, 20 kilometers south-southeast of Möckern, and carried off a substantial number of captives.<sup>90</sup>

In his discussion of these events, Thietmar emphasizes that Archbishop Tagino had advanced warning of the Polish attack, but did not make sufficient preparations to protect the fortress districts beyond the Elbe or to mobilize sufficient military forces to face the Poles in battle. The archbishop did lead a pursuit of the Poles up to Jüterbog, 100 kilometers southeast of Magdeburg, but then withdrew after deciding that he had insufficient forces to continue the campaign.<sup>91</sup> Overall, Tagino had not prepared adequately to deter Boleslav from undertaking raids in force, or to face him in battle.

For his part, Boleslav followed up the raids against the Magdeburg region, which appear to have been a feint, with concerted assaults on several German fortifications in both Upper and Lower Lusatia. He began by capturing strongholds at Lausitz, located on the Black Elster River 25 kilometers southeast of the Elbe crossing point at Torgau, and Zary (German Sorau), located 150 kilometers east of the Elbe. He also occupied the region of Selpuli, which is the northern part of Lower Lusatia, which is located between the Neisse and Spree Rivers.<sup>92</sup> As suggested above, it is likely that Henry II had acquired both Selpuli and Zary in Lower Lusatia in the context of the peace agreement reached in 1005, because German control up to 1005 had extended only as far as Upper Lusatia.

After recovering control over the more northerly regions of Lower Lusatia, Boleslav then turned his attention to the fortress at Bautzen, which Henry II had recaptured from the Poles in 1004. After a two-week siege, the garrison surrendered on condition that they would be allowed to return home. Thietmar, in his description of the loss of Bautzen, emphasizes that Count Hermann, who had provided the garrison for this fortification, was not able to persuade the other military commanders in the district to provide troops to relieve Boleslav's siege.<sup>93</sup> Although Thietmar does not say so directly, the clear implication of his observation is that the military command of the eastern frontier was in disarray and that Archbishop Tagino was unable to carry out his duties effectively.<sup>94</sup>

Henry II was not able to respond immediately to Boleslav Chrobry's reconquest of Lower and Upper Lusatia and his raids in the Magdeburg district. The

<sup>89</sup> For the German fortification built over Slavic foundations at Möckern, see *Corpus archäologischer Quellen zur Frühgeschichte auf dem Gebiet der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (7. bis 12. Jahrhundert)*, ed. Joachim Hermann and Peter Donat (Berlin, 1973), p. 370. The fortress district centered on Möckern also is treated in *Die Urkunden Otto des II. und Otto des III.*, ed. Theodor Sickel (Hanover, 1888-1893), here Otto III, nr. 106.

<sup>90</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.33. The fortification at Zerbst is discussed in *Corpus archäologischer Quellen zur Frühgeschichte*, 384.

<sup>91</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.33.

<sup>92</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.34.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Thietmar owed his election as bishop of Merseburg to Tagino and was unwilling to criticize the archbishop too severely. See Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.38.

German king was engaged in the summer of 1007 in a military operation against Count Baldwin of Flanders. This highly successful campaign led the capture of Baldwin's main seat at Ghent and caused the count of Flanders to surrender to Henry II.<sup>95</sup> After this success, however, King Henry became bogged down for the next two years in internal conflicts in Germany, including rebellions by three of his brothers-in-law.

In the summer of 1008, Henry II was compelled to besiege the city of Trier in order to compel the surrender of his brother-in-law Adalbero, whose election as archbishop of Trier the king had rejected.<sup>96</sup> King Henry put down the revolt in Trier in early September and remained there for much of the autumn.<sup>97</sup> Henry spent Christmas at the royal palace at Pöhlde, in Saxony, so that he could begin preparations for a counterstrike against Boleslav Chrobry, but political events in Germany once more intervened.<sup>98</sup> Duke Henry of Bavaria, another of King Henry's brothers-in-law, tried to stir up a rebellion against the German ruler in the south of the kingdom. As a consequence, rather than dealing with Boleslav, King Henry found it necessary to travel to Regensburg and summon an assembly of the leading men in the duchy to reorganize affairs and depose the duke.<sup>99</sup>

After dealing with the emergency in Regensburg, Henry hurried northward again to Saxony to deal with troubles among his military commanders along the Elbe frontier.<sup>100</sup> Rather than defending the Elbe frontier against Boleslav, the counts and margraves were fighting among themselves. In particular, Gunzelin, the margrave of Meißen, was engaged in an ongoing dispute with his nephews: Count Hermann, whose forces surrendered Bautzen in 1007, and Hermann's brother Ekkehard.<sup>101</sup> The two sides caused extraordinary damage, including burning down several fortifications. The disruption that this infighting caused was so severe that King Henry ordered an assembly be held at Merseburg, held an inquest regarding the fighting, and issued a judgment along with his leading men in the region against Gunzelin, who was deprived of his office as margrave.<sup>102</sup>

While at Merseburg, however, the king received word of the rebellion of yet another of his brothers-in-law, Bishop Dietrich II of Metz (1005–46).<sup>103</sup> Henry mobilized a substantial army, including contingents of Liutizi, to undertake a

<sup>95</sup> *Deeds of the Bishops of Cambrai*, I.115.

<sup>96</sup> The conflict between Henry II and his brother in law Adalbero received considerable contemporary attention. See Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.35; *Annals of Hildesheim*, anno 1007; *Annals of Quedlinburg*, anno 1007; and *Gesta Treverorum*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH Scriptores 8 (Hanover, 1848), c. 30.

<sup>97</sup> Henry II, nrs. 186 and 187.

<sup>98</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.38 for the celebration of Christmas at Pöhlde.

<sup>99</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.41; and H. Breslau et al. (eds), *MGH Diplomata regnum et imperatorum Germaniae 3: Henrici II et Arduini Diplomata* (Berlin, 1957), 192 and 193.

<sup>100</sup> Henry II, 194, 196, 198, 199 and Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.54.

<sup>101</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.53.

<sup>102</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.54.

<sup>103</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.51.



lengthy siege of Metz, but was unable to capture the city.<sup>104</sup> Ultimately, Henry came to a negotiated settlement with his brothers-in-law, and again gained peace in the winter of 1009.

After finally settling affairs within the German kingdom, Henry once more began planning for a military campaign against Boleslav Chrobry. The starting point for the campaign was set at Belgern, on the River Elbe, located just south of Torgau.<sup>105</sup> The army, which included a Bohemian contingent under Duke Jaromir, marched 50 kilometers northeast from Belgern to Gehren, which is today part of the town of Heideblick at the edge of the Upper Lusatian region.<sup>106</sup> However, while encamped at Gehren, both Henry II and Archbishop Tagino, along with a large part of the army, became ill.<sup>107</sup> Instead of completely halting the campaign, however, a force under the command of Bishops Arnulf of Halberstadt and Meinwerk of Paderborn (1009–36), Margrave Gero of the Saxon East March, Count Hermann, and Duke Jaromir undertook a raid in strength against Boleslav's lands in the region of Diadesi and Silesia.<sup>108</sup>

According to Thietmar, the combined German–Bohemian army advanced all the way to Głogów (German Glogau), which is located in Silesia 170 kilometers to the east of Belgern. The campaign was focused on inflicting widespread destruction rather than on recapturing strongholds taken by Boleslav in 1007. In his discussion of the operations, Thietmar puts a speech into the mouth of Boleslav Chrobry, who ostensibly looked down from the walls of Głogów at the German and Bohemian troops. In this speech, the Polish ruler rejected the request from his men to fight a battle in the field. Boleslav is presented as claiming that even if he were victorious, Henry II would be able to raise another army, while his own resources were much more limited.<sup>109</sup> Obviously, Thietmar could not have had any access to Boleslav's conversation, but this statement of the relative strength of the two sides is accurate.

<sup>104</sup> See the discussion by Alpert of Metz, *On the Variety of our Times*, 1.5. The best edition of this text is *Alpertus van Metz: Gebeurtenissen van deze tijd en Een fragment over bisscop Diederik I van Metz*, ed. Hans van Rij (Amsterdam, 1980). See also the translation of this text in *Warfare and Politics in Medieval Germany, c.1000: On the Variety of our Times by Alpert of Metz*, translation and commentary by David S. Bachrach (Toronto, 2012). Also see 'Miracula Sancti Pirminii Hornbacensia. Des heiligen Pirmins Wunder von Hornbach,' ed. Kurt Schöndorf and Ernst Wenzel, *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 60 (2008), 273–91, at p. 288, and the discussion of this text by Franz Maier, "Der heilige Pirmin und seine Memoria in der Pfalz," in *Pilgerheilige und ihre Memoria*, ed. Klaus Herbers and Peter Rückert (Tübingen, 2012), pp. 145–64, at pp. 150–51. For the lack of success on his campaign, see the comment by the author of the *Annals of Quedlinburg*, anno 1009, that Henry II "rediit sine pace in Saxoniam."

<sup>105</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.56.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> For this campaign, see *Annals of Quedlinburg*, anno 1010; *Annales Altahenses Maiores*, ed. E. L. B. von Oefele Scriptorum Separatim editi 4 (Hanover, 1890), anno 1010; and Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.56.

<sup>108</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.57.

<sup>109</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 6.58.