

Summary

In the history of the Hussite Wars, the Second Crusade of 1421 was an important chapter. It was probably the largest military campaign organized by the Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Hungary and Catholic Europe against the “Hussite heretics”. Tens of thousands of armed men flooded into Bohemia and Moravia in the period from late summer to winter of 1421, united not only by the sign of the cross sewn onto their clothing, but above all by the conviction that they were fighting for a holy cause: for the purity of the faith, which had been seriously endangered by the “heresy” of Wycliffe and Hus around the turn of the 15th century.

Although the Second Crusade had been thoroughly prepared ideologically, organizationally and strategically, quite unlike the hastily organized and rather improvised First Crusade of 1420, it achieved minimal success and ultimately failed spectacularly. In Bohemia, the Crusader armies only managed to capture a number of towns and fortresses controlled by the Hussites. In Moravia, King Sigismund of Luxembourg achieved somewhat greater success, forcing the local Hussite nobility to surrender, renounce heresy, and close the *Landfrieden* for five years. However, the crushing defeats suffered by Sigismund’s army at Kutná Hora, Habry and Německý Brod (today Havlíčkův Brod) in January 1422 called even these partial successes into question and allowed for their gradual re-evaluation. Many of the places conquered by the Crusaders in Bohemia and Moravia were soon recaptured by the Hussites, the *Landfrieden* in Moravia gradually became an illusion, and the Moravian nobility began to return to the side of the chalice.

The sharp contrast between the thorough preparations, the grand arrival and the spectacular failure of the Second Crusade has

always fascinated historians – as it did contemporary chroniclers. In particular, the most intriguing question is how the Hussite factions managed to defend themselves against such overwhelming numerical superiority. More recent scholarship has mostly agreed that the failure of the expedition was caused primarily by the lack of coordination between the individual Crusader armies, which, according to the original plan, were meant to attack Bohemia from the west, north and east simultaneously. However, both Sigismund's Hungarian troops and the Austrian troops of Albert V were significantly delayed, which contributed greatly to the retreat of the main imperial army from Žatec. However, the explanations of why the delays of Sigismund and Albert actually occurred differ considerably, with regard to whether it was the fault of Sigismund, Albert, both monarchs, or rather a combination of external circumstances.

Nevertheless, even if we accept that in the first stage of the Crusade Bohemia was attacked “only” by the main imperial army and Meissen, Lusatian and Silesian troops, and in the second stage by the Hungarians and the remaining Silesian forces, the Crusader armies always had considerable numerical superiority over the Hussite forces. There were certainly other reasons for withdrawal of the Crusaders from Žatec and the crushing defeats of Sigismund's army between Kutná Hora and Německý Brod, most likely the well-chosen tactics of the Hussite forces, which differed in the first and second phases of the Crusade. While the Hussites did not allow themselves to be provoked into a rash open conflict with main imperial army, slowly gathering their forces at Slaný and leaving the Crusaders to exhaust their strength in a lengthy siege of Žatec, Jan Žižka decided to launch a surprise counterattack with a numerically inferior force catching the monarch clearly unawares. It has yet to be fully explained why different strategies were pursued in autumn and winter, which were successful in both cases (it was also long thought that the Hussites had launched a counter-attack

on the western front as well and the Crusader troops had retreated before the approaching Hussite army, but this has now been convincingly refuted).

Of course, the Second Crusade was not only a series of military campaigns, but also the result of a complicated political and diplomatic game between the King, the Electors, other princes, the Hungarian Estates and the Holy See. These political negotiations, which took place throughout the spring and summer months, have also been extensively studied by historians, but with quite different interpretations. Was the Second Crusade primarily the work of the Electors and imperial princes, or of papal policy, or was it an equal collaboration between the Empire and the Papacy? Did Sigismund play a completely passive role in the preparation of the Crusade, leaving the whole initiative to the Electors, who, in preparing the campaign, demonstrated their ability to organize imperial affairs more effectively than the monarch? Or were there objective reasons for Sigismund's absence from the Nuremberg Diet in May and his limited activity in imperial politics, which the monarch could have quite easily defended without suffering a significant blow to his authority? Was not Sigismund's recruitment of the Hungarian army finally seen as an equal contribution alongside the raising of the imperial army? Moreover, it is important to take into account the war preparations in the subsidiary lands of the Bohemian Crown: did the Silesians and the Lusatians coordinate their advance with the imperial princes, with the King, or with both sides?

However, in addition to military preparations, it is necessary to consider the ideological background. Pope Martin V, or rather his legate, Cardinal Branda da Castiglione, undoubtedly set the tone in this respect. While the Pope issued the Crusader bull, the Cardinal sought to promote it as widely as possible throughout the Empire and in other countries. But were the crusade indulgences and the preaching of the cross in the first half of the

15th century an effective promotional tool for obtaining for the Crusade large numbers of soldiers who would fight in return for the prospect of spiritual reward? Or was the indulgence campaign more about raising funds that could then be used to finance a professional army? And was the elaborate Crusader propaganda successful in the end? Was it not ultimately necessary to pay the Crusader armies more or less out of the finances of the monarch or the individual princes? This brings us to another complex issue, which is the financial dimension of the Crusade, one that has also not yet been sufficiently explored.

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Even this book cannot provide “definitive” answers to the above questions, as this, of course, is not possible in historical research. Nevertheless, it is the most comprehensive study on the circumstances and course of the second anti-Hussite Crusade to date, which is based on an extensive study of sources. The individual authors ask both traditional and new questions, painstakingly seeking the answers in contemporary sources. Almost all the contributions also provide “new” sources, i.e., sources that were hitherto completely unknown or overlooked by previous research. It is primarily this aspect that leads to some surprising conclusions, which will hopefully advance research on the Second Crusade.

The book begins with an extensive chapter by Pavel Soukup, which is devoted to the preparation of the Second Crusade in the Empire. It focuses on the key role of the Electors, who presented themselves as protectors of the true faith and repeatedly stressed the lack of activity on the part of the King; this was especially the case in the propagandistically styled document *Correctorium missum ad dominum Martinum papam V^m ex parte principum Reni tam secularium quam spiritualium*, which is published in an appendix to the chapter. Soukup then discusses the circumstances surrounding the publication of the papal bull *Redemptoris omnium* and the mis-

sion of Cardinal-Legate Branda. He promoted the bull and wrote a comprehensive instruction on it, thereby creating a model for the organization of the preaching of the cross, the granting of crusade indulgences and the celebration of votive masses, which was also used during the subsequent anti-Hussite Crusades. In addition, Soukup analyses the course of the first phase of the Crusade, i.e., the campaign of the imperial army in Bohemia from its beginning to its collapse during the siege of Žatec. In this part, the author introduces a considerable number of new sources, be it contemporary correspondence or chronicles from western regions of the Empire, Burgundy and France, among others. In this way he significantly refines our knowledge of the events of the war in western and north-western Bohemia.

In the second chapter, Petr Elbel turns to the role of Sigismund of Luxembourg, first of all disputing the idea that Sigismund absented himself from the preparations for the Crusade and left the whole initiative to the Electors. It would appear that at the very beginning of the preparations Sigismund played quite an active role but was then overtaken by the dramatic events in Bohemia and Moravia, thus preventing him from participating in the Nuremberg Diet. Nevertheless, even in the summer of 1421 Sigismund had not lost sight of the preparations for the Crusade, as confirmed by Alexandra Kaar's newly discovered appeal from Sigismund to all his subjects in the Empire, Bohemia and Moravia, in which he encourages them to participate in the Crusade (this source is discussed in more detail in a separate chapter by Alexandra Kaar described below). Elbel then examines the reasons for Sigismund's delay in the late summer and autumn of 1421, which, on the basis of new sources, partially revises the existing research, including his own earlier studies. He still believes that the primary reason for the delay was the complex marriage negotiations between Sigismund and Albert, but a new finding is that it was most likely not Albert who insisted on conducting the negotiations be-

fore the Crusade, but Sigismund, who apparently wanted to secure his daughter's succession in the Bohemian lands before this risky military undertaking. Moreover, from the outset, he probably also counted on borrowing his daughter's *antidos* to finance the campaign. The author then details the course of Sigismund's expedition into the Bohemian lands, from the Hungarian army's invasion of eastern Moravia and the night-time raid on a Crusader camp in the vicinity of Uherský Brod by the Hussite lords to the series of Crusader defeats between Kutná Hora and Německý Brod.

In the following chapter, Kristýna Luger focuses on the northern front of the Crusade, i.e., the invasion of eastern Bohemia and Moravia by Silesian and Lusatian troops, which began at the same time as the imperial campaign. The author points out the key role of Bishop Konrad Oleśnicki of Wrocław, and then, on the basis of extensive research of sources, describes the preparations and course of the Silesian campaign. She shows that the Silesians initially achieved many successes in eastern Bohemia and northern Moravia, some of which were virtually unknown to previous scholarship. In particular, she pays special attention to the conquest of Moravská Třebová, whose castle garrison surrendered to the Silesian army, followed by the town's surrender. There is remarkable documentary evidence of the event, dated 8 December 1422 in Jihlava, but the author convincingly dates it to 8 December 1421 (there is apparently an error in the annual date of the dating formula). At this time, one part of the Silesian army was accompanying King Sigismund on his campaign to Bohemia, while another did not wait for the king and returned home.

In the fourth chapter Štěpánka Grunová traces the involvement of Duke Albert V with the Austrian army, whose participation in the Second Crusade was eventually limited to fighting in southern and south-western Moravia. Their greatest success was the conquest of the town and castle of Jevišovice, which partly belonged to the Kuntštát family, whose lord sided with the Hussites.

However, as the Kunštáts of Jevišovice and their cohorts had conducted plunderous raids into Austria in previous decades, the Austrian campaign to Jevišovice was clearly not only part of the anti-Hussite Crusade, but also a punitive expedition against a stronghold of robber knights. The capture of Jevišovice is mentioned in the interesting testimony of Ulrich of Starkenberg, a Tyrolean nobleman in the service of Albert, who took part in the expedition and sent a written report of it to Tyrol.

Following these four chapters dealing with the preparation and course of the Second Crusade on its various “fronts”, there are three chapters devoted to more structural issues, namely, war propaganda, communication and finance. Alexandra Kaar publishes and analyses the aforementioned appeal of King Sigismund to his subjects to participate in the Crusade against the Bohemian heretics, which represents an important source on the role of the King in the preparation and promotion of the Crusade. The document contains a vivid account of Hussite crimes styled in the manner of anti-Hussite manifestos, a call to arms, and also a surprisingly detailed directive on the trade blockade of the Hussites. In the light of this source, it cannot be said that Sigismund completely absented himself from the organization and ideological preparation of the Crusade, although his “manifesto” can also be seen as a delayed forceful reaction to the earlier criticism of the Electors.

The chapter by Stanislav Bárta is dedicated to the issue of financing the Crusade. He draws on the pledge deeds insuring the debts of Sigismund of Luxembourg to the Bohemian and Moravian nobility and points out the interesting fact that the number of pledge deeds fell significantly not only during the second Crusade, but also as early as the first. Bárta attempts to explain this phenomenon and draws important conclusions regarding the monarch’s involvement in financing the Crusade. It would seem that, at least in Bohemia and Moravia, nobles loyal to Sigismund participated in the Crusade at their own expense. This was most like-

ly not because the nobles were lured by the crusade indulgences, but rather because Sigismund had summoned the military forces of both lands and declared that the war against the Hussites was a fight against enemies of the realm.

In the final chapter Tobias Heil deals with the issue of war communication, using the example of the imperial city of Nuremberg. He meticulously compares Nuremberg's communication with the Crusader army in Bohemia with other cities of the Empire, princes and nobility, during the second and third (according to some authors, the fourth) anti-Hussite Crusades, i.e., in 1421 and 1427. In doing so, he somewhat relativizes the widespread idea of Nuremberg as the communication centre of the Empire and shows that regular information from the war front was rather important political capital for Nuremberg and was distributed to individual recipients on the basis of actual need. Nevertheless, it remains the case that the correspondence of the city of Nuremberg represents a key source on the course of the fighting in western and north-eastern Bohemia and is used as such in the chapters by Pavel Soukup and other authors.

The present publication as a whole aims to contribute not only to the understanding of the dramatic events that took place in Bohemia and Moravia in the autumn of 1421 and the beginning of 1422, but also to the broader discussion of the phenomenon of the Crusades against the Hussites, which has flourished in Czech and international medieval studies in recent years. The book clearly confirms the role of the Second Crusade as a specific milestone: on the one hand, it established the mechanisms used in the organization and promotion of subsequent anti-Hussite Crusades, and on the other, it also clearly showed that the military defeat of the Hussites by a large imperial or European army was an extremely complicated task and required extensive preparation and coordination. This realization led to the growing importance of cross-border daily warfare against the Hussites in the later years of

the Hussite Revolution, which was necessary to occupy the time between the major campaigns. The question remains as to what extent the failure of the Second Crusade also contributed to King Sigismund's gradual search for ways to arrive at the negotiating table with the Hussites. The chapter by Petr Elbel suggests that this connection was far from straightforward and that in 1422 Sigismund was still counting on both the daily warfare and another Crusade. His first attempts to negotiate with moderate Hussites in the autumn of 1423 came about rather slowly and due to a confluence of multiple circumstances.