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AN EXPEDITION OF HENRY II, KING OF GERMANY, TO THE DOMAIN OF BOLESŁAW I THE BRAVE IN 1005 IN THE LIGHT OF WRITTEN SOURCES AND HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT¹

Abstract. The article explores an expedition of Henry II, king of Germany, to the domain of Bolesław the Brave in 1005. While the issue has raised considerable interest in academic literature, the analyses have been carried out mainly in the context of major events i.e. the wars of 1002-1005, 1007-1013 and 1015-1018. In this work, an attempt has been made to narrow down the perspective to Henry II's expedition of 1005 which reached as far as Poznań. To this end, I have analysed the written sources (specifically the records of Thietmar of Merseburg, a German chronicler) in an effort to indicate not only the expedition's itinerary but also its rate and the state of preparation of the two major parties of the conflict, the German Reich and the Piast dominion. In addition, I have decided to make use of my experience of historical re-enactment in a pioneering way, in order to find out if the rate of the marching maintained by contemporary re-enactors of historical events provides a good comparison background for the rate of Henry II's expedition of 1005. Next, archaeological sources provided some supplementary information on the conflict of 1005. In the light of all these data I have managed to adopt a different and unique approach to the analysed issue.

Keywords: Henry II, Bolesław I the Brave, Poznań, stronghold, historical re-enactment.

INTRODUCTION

When approaching the German king's expedition to the Piast domain in 1005, a question needs to be posed, namely how we know about the war in the first place. The major source of information is the account by Thietmar, Prince-Bishop of Merseburg (Thietmar 1953). The chronicler, born in Walbeck (Jedlicki 1953, XIII) gave a comprehensive account of the 1005 expedition. To some extent, this major source is supplemented by materials from the time in question. They include the *Annals of Quedlinburg* with scant information about the 1005 conflict, specifically

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the conditions of the Poznań peace treaty (Die Annales 2004, pp. 522-523). Another important source text is the “Letter to king Henry II” by Bruno of Querfurt who criticised Henry II for his cooperation with the Veleti² (pagans) in the 1005 warfare (*Epistola Brunonis* 1973, pp. 97-106). In fact, these three sources represent the basis of deliberations about Henry’s expedition of 1005. However, only Thietmar’s account is suitable for detailed analyses of the specific stages of the expedition (I will focus on it further in the article). Notably, the expedition of 1005 was a result of events which took place following the demise of Otto III, Holy Roman Emperor. The war of 1003-1005 fought by Henry II and Bolesław I the Brave has been discussed widely by historians (Miśkiewicz 1961, pp. 240-249; 2008, pp. 25-30; Grabski 1956, pp. 322-331; 1966, pp. 130-161; Strzelczyk 1999, pp. 114-128; Weinfurter 2002, pp. 211-218; Zakrzewski 2006, pp. 203-213) and for this reason, I will abstain from devoting too much time to the entire campaign. In my considerations, of key importance is the year of 1005 when Henry II embarked on an expedition to the Piast domain. In the final stage, the royal troops approached the Poznań stronghold (they were as close as two miles away from the *castrum*, on which I will elaborate further in the text).

In an analysis of the 1005 expedition, reference to the sources is of key importance. To date, the route of Henry’s troops has been retraced (in its entirety or selected stages) over a dozen of times in literature on the subject (the authors including Callier 1888, pp. 10-12; Nadolski 1962, pp. 329-330; Grabski 1956, pp. 322-331; Miśkiewicz 1961, pp. 245-248; Grabski 1966, pp. 153-161; Olejnik 2002, pp. 43-46; Zakrzewski 2006, pp. 210-212; Witczak 2011, pp. 66-67, 69; Samp 2019, pp. 28-51). All these texts have their advantages and some of them, like Edward Dąbrowski’s works, provide additional knowledge resulting from an analysis of the results of archaeological excavations. However, their major disadvantage is a lack of more comprehensive analyses of the route of Henry’s troops, the distances covered and, first and foremost, the rate of the army’s marching at the specific stages of the 1005 expedition. It turns out that Thietmar’s text allows to identify specific locations reached by the royal soldiers. What is more, the specific recorded days make it possible to identify the average rate of the troops’ marching. Finally, neither of the above mentioned books has made references to experience related to historical re-enactment where contemporary performers travel in reconstructed garment, history-inspired equipment and replicas of the weapons. There is an indication that the knowledge may supplement, in an interesting way, the issues related to Henry II’s warfare of 1005.

² Both in Thietmar’s and in Bruno’s texts, the Veleti were referred to as the Lutici but we know that they have been covered in written sources and literature on the subject also as: the Wilzi and the Liutizi (see Widajewicz 1946, p. 12; Strzelczyk 1968, pp. 32-33; Lübke 1997, p. 55; Strzelczyk 2002, p. 15).

THE COURSE OF THE 1005 EXPEDITION

According to Thietmar's account, before the expedition was even launched, Henry II had announced it in his court and in the specific parts of his dominion, instructing the troops to gather on 16 August in Licykawa (Leitzkau):

Ius[sit etiam in pala]tio ei in omnibus regni suimet comita[tibus expeditionem] ad Poleniam conventumque ad Liezca per [bannum fieri. Con]venit exercitus statua hora, [id est XVII. Kalendas Septembris, co]ndicto loco (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 19, p. 341).

Further on the record says that back on the day of the Assumption of Mary i.e. 15 August, the German king was in Magdeburg but on the very same day, he crossed the Elbe to reach Leitzkau to join the troops on the arranged day. The town was located to the south-east of Magdeburg (Licykawa was identified as Leitzkau by Grabski 1966, p. 153; Strzelczyk 1999, p. 121 and others) and approximately 27 km away from the capital of the Magdeburg archbishopric (Grabski calculated the distance at 22 km: Grabski 1966, p. 153)³. It is therefore highly probable that on 16 August or the next day, the troops marched to the east, headed for Bolesław the Brave's domain. This is probable since in the text mentioned above, Thietmar clearly emphasised that the army had gathered on time (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 19, p. 341).

The other key data of the expedition is related to Henry II's arrival to the monastery in Międzyrzecz: *Thebaidae legionis festivitatem* (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 353). The fork of the river Obra and the Paklica hosted also a stronghold which was, most probably, set on fire as indicated by the results of archaeological surveys (Kurnatowski 1998, p. 39; Banach, Chrzanowska-Wawrzyniak, Kościński, Kurnatowski, Urbańska-Łosińska and Zamelska-Monczak 2015, p. 81; Kurnatowski 2015, p. 21). In the case of the mentioned feast, it was 22 September (Strzelczyk 1999, p. 126) i.e. more than a month after the fighting (exactly after 37 days of marching⁴) when Henry II reached Wielkopolska. The contemporary route between Leitzkau and Międzyrzecz is about 280 km⁵. However, the itinerary of Henry II's army reached other locations which clearly indicates that the distanc-

³ The distance of 22 km, suggested by Andrzej Feliks Grabski, was calculated in a straight line. However, we know that in the early Middle Ages (or today), nobody travelled along a straight line because routes were determined by waters and forests. It was easier to take a longer route but one following a beaten tract than to wade through swamps or dense forests. It is important to specify here that the distances provided by me are contemporary distances between two locations, that can be covered on foot, following the existing roads. Again, this is an imperfect calculation because contemporary roads often do not overlap the early medieval ones. Still, this method provides the best outlook on the length of the route than calculating the distance between two topographic points but calculated along a straight line.

⁴ Days calculated since 16 August i.e. the day when the troops gathered in Leitzkau.

⁵ The distance from the centre of Leitzkau to the stronghold in Międzyrzecz.

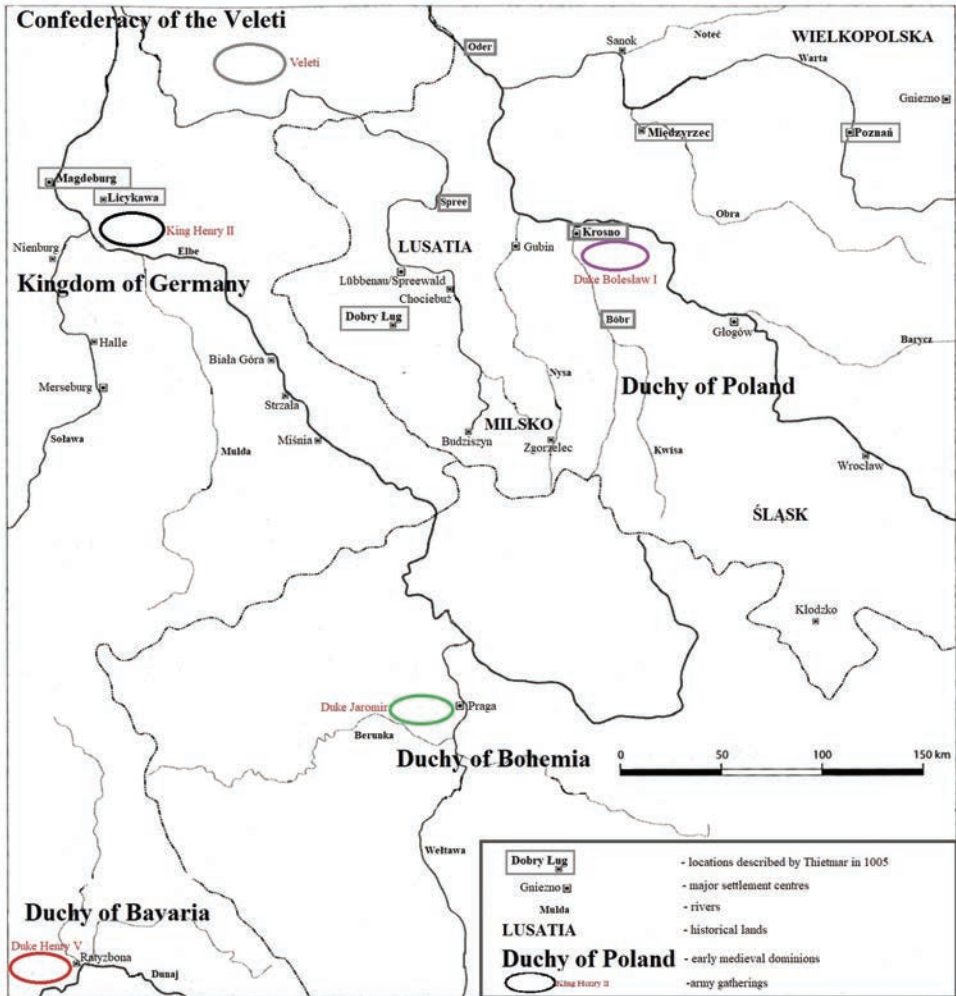


Fig. 1. Map of king Henry II's expedition in 1005

es covered in 1005 by the royal troops were bigger than the 280 km mentioned above⁶. Thietmar's description clearly says that the troops marched from Leitzkawa to Lusatia, to Dobry Ług settlement:

Exercitum autem nostrum cum prosperitate ad locum, qui Dobraluh dicitur, in pago Luzici venientem Heinricus et Iarimirus duces, ad supplementum eiusdem cum suis properantes, laetificant maioreque consilii ac fortitudinis spe roborant (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, p. 343).

⁶ I will expand on this issue further in the article.

There, Henry II's army joined that of Jaromír, Duke of Bohemia and of Henry V, Duke of Bavaria, which was of key importance to the expedition's further course and the military advantage of the royal troops. Clearly, Dobry Ług was the second gathering place of the troops allied with Henry II. The location, now called Doberlug-Kirchhain upon the Kleine Elster, was in Lusatia. It was an excellent gathering point, located approx. 130-140 km from Henry II's troops leaving Leitzkau and approx. 210-220 km from Prague. We can assume that Jaromír, Duke of Bohemia, set off from Prague's Hrad and headed north-west (a similar opinion in Olejnik 2002, p. 44) to reach Dobry Ług. Finally, Henry V's army must have arrived in Dobry Ług from far-off Bavaria. In this case, it is hard to establish the kilometres that the troops were to cover. We do not know where the Bavarian troops gathered or what route they followed: did they march across Germany or maybe also in Bohemia (this option seems less likely)? We can only suggest a hypothesis that Henry V's army must have covered the longest route of up to 360-370 km if it left Regensburg (Olejnik indicated a similar gathering location for the Bavarians, Olejnik 2002, p. 44).

It is hard to say exactly how much time the German king's army and the troops of his allies needed to reach Dobry Ług as there were many factors involved: the weather, the water conditions, the forestation in the covered area, the capacity and availability of roads as well as the food provisions for Henry II's army. All the armies' mobility was certainly boosted by the fact that on their way to Dobry Ług, they moved in relatively familiar terrain and their march was not delayed by skirmishes with foreign troops. My experience accumulated in the course of historical re-enactment tells me that a fit walker can cover 30 km a day⁷. What is more, walks organised as part of historical re-enactment show that a travel takes more time as the number of walkers, or the number of waterways and forests to cover, grow. Of importance is also the equipment transported during an expedition⁸. In a scenario with weapons transported on carts, the march is slowed down as exemplified by hiking historical re-enactors from August 2017 (Table 2). On the other

⁷ This seems to be confirmed by my experience of historical re-enactment. In October 2015, as part of the "Stronghold route" project, carried out by AUREA TEMPORA Association for Historical Education and Re-enactment, we managed to cover a daily distance of 28 km. The hike started in the stronghold in Giecz and finished in the Archaeological Reserve Grzybowo Stronghold. Interestingly, the footmen carried food supplies, water and equipment required to spend the night in the woods. They took five rest halts and covered the entire distance in 7 hours 40 minutes (sans the halts). Therefore, they travelled at 3.6 km/hour. These experiences suggest that in the early Middle Ages, a route of 30 km could have been covered in one day. Notably, in this case the knowledge of the local topography was of great importance. We can also assume that the threat and a bleak prospect of fighting in the course of the expedition must have slowed down the marching. Clearly, there are factors affecting the time of covering a distance during expeditions. The situation could not have been different in 1005.

⁸ Cf. table 2 with the listed data from different expeditions undertaken as part of historical re-enactment that took place in garments, equipment and with food supplies fully aligned with their medieval counterparts.

hand, taking the load off the soldiers and use of draft animals and carts certainly reduced the infantry's fatigue but also significantly extended the travel. In this case, marching through forested areas, rivers or even streams must have posed a considerable challenge. The rate of the marching was largely affected also by the organisation of the travel and the related former preparation of the roads and river crossings. In this scenario, people working in the rear of the army (carpenters, boat builders and other craftsmen) must have been priceless with their skills and experience in building structures like temporary bridges. Therefore, of interest are Thietmar's remarks confirming that Henry II's troops could *naves atque pontes pararet* (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 351). It is therefore right to assume that the troops must have been accompanied by constructors of bridges and ships whose skills came in handy during an attempt of crossing the Oder (more probable) or the Bóbr (less probable) i.e. at the final stage of the expedition when the royal troops reached the vicinity of Krosno Odrzańskie. Certainly, the craftsmen's presence improved the manoeuvre capability of Henry's troops and increased the speed of the army's marching. We can only guess that among the specialists were also constructors of siege machines (more information on the then siege machines provided in books written by Miśkiewicz 1957, pp. 463-486; 1961, pp. 199-213; Nadolski 1994, pp. 83-85; Bogacki 2009, pp. 113-117; Jurga 2011). During their war expeditions, German rulers often made use of siege machines. Henry II was no exception: in 1008 as well as in 1022 he used this war equipment (Bachrach 2014, pp. 180-181). Quite possibly, when the German king's troops reached the vicinity of Poznań, they planned to replenish food supplies but also construction of siege machines (Pilarczyk 1988, p. 35). Thietmar's entry seems to confirm this hypothesis:

Excercitus autem in colligendis frugibus caeterisque rebus necessariis divisus magnum ab insidiantibus inimicis sustinuit damnum (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 353).

The chronicler did not suggest that Henry II's army transported siege machines; this should not come as a surprise because this type of equipment was typically built on site or assembled there from finished elements (provided they were transported). This would have been the situation of preparing ships and bridges for the crossing of the river near Krosno Odrzańskie as mentioned above.

After leaving Dobry Ług, the further stages of the expedition of royal troops, coupled with the Czech and Bavarian reinforcements, deserve more attention. The bishop of Merseburg noted that the first problems appeared at that time, affecting the speed of the journey:

Hic, ducibus corruptis et sua defendere cupientibus, per solitudines paludesque circumductus ad modum gravatur et, ne cito ad hostem ledendum perveniret, invida eorum malignitate tardatur (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, pp. 343, 345).

These complications resulted from the fact that, following the Polish-German skirmishes of 1004, Lusatia remained under the suzerainty of Bolesław the Brave (Grabski 1966, pp. 151-152; Strzelczyk 1999, p. 127). Therefore, during the expedition to the enemy area, Henry II and his troops must have been more vigilant. Guides were indispensable – some of them could have been the locals as they knew the area best. Of course it is impossible to decide whether Thietmar tried to justify the army's slow progress when he mentioned bribed guides or maybe these people acted for the benefit of Bolesław the Brave because they were bribed by him or his entourage. In my opinion, Thietmar's note can be easily deemed reliable – after all, guides and scouts were bribed in many medieval wars (Bachrach 2014, pp. 227, 233; cf. comments on reconnaissance in the course of war conflicts: Józwiak 2004, 2005). It was also the case of the military developments in 1005. Henry II's army, having launched an offensive and marching to face Bolesław the Brave's troops, was in need of guides, especially in the course of crossing the topographically challenging Lusatia, a low country peppered with swamps (Stieber 1967, p. 133, cf. Słownik 1884, pp. 841-842). Despite the difficulties, the royal forces reached a country called *Nice* and set up a camp near the Spree. As for the scouts who rendered their services, the bishop of Merseburg mentioned them again when the German king's troops reached the Oder and set up tents near the river Bóbr. In that area, the guides proved their worth because, after seven days, they found a very convenient ford that allowed the troops of Henry II to cross the river. According to Thietmar, it had not been possible before because Bolesław the Brave's soldiers were stationed across the river, in Krosno (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 351). We do not know where Henry II's army crossed the river and the issue has been discussed in literature on the subject (Callier 1888, p. 11; Grabski 1956, p. 326; 1966, p. 157; Dąbrowski 1967, p. 198; Samp 2019, p. 44). Following research carried out by Edward Dąbrowski, the most frequently indicated location has been the ford in Połęcko-Maszewo (Dąbrowski 1962, p. 34; 1967, p. 198). The issue is of importance to the identification of the route of the expedition but the sources do not let state unambiguously where the six legions of Henry II crossed the Oder.

The subsequent important information in Thietmar's chronicle refers to the royal troops' stay in the camp near the Spree in a country referred to by the chronicler as *Nice*. Most probably, he meant the area between the Spree and the lower Nysa. In that area, on 6 September (the third key date on which I will elaborate later) there was a skirmish between some of the royal forces including Thiedbern, a royal knight who owned strongholds on the Mulde (on Thiedbern in Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 16, p. 337, cap. 22, p. 345 – in my opinion, it is the same individual mentioned by the chronicler when presenting two different stories). Thietmar's description suggests that Thiedbern was caught in ambush among cut down trees (he probably meant a clearing; Grabski was of the same opinion: 1956, p. 323; more on this form of defence in Miśkiewicz 1961, pp. 92-108; 1970,

pp. 389-390; Leśny 1984, pp. 112-114, 118-122; Kowalczyk 1984, pp. 389-394; Dąbrowski 2007, pp. 89-93). There, with the help of archers, Bolesław the Brave's forces defeated the knight's troops (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, p. 345). Clearly, in Lusatia, in the vicinity of the Spree, the soldiers of the Polish prince were engaged in hit-and-run tactics against Henry II's troops.

Bolesław the Brave adopted the same tactics when Henry II's army approached the Oder and the Bóbr:

Quos Bolizlavus, munitis littoribus prefati fluminis cum exercitu grandi in Crosno sedens, ullo modo transire prohibuit (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 351).

This description shows that the Piast prince made an effort to prevent the troops accompanying the German king from crossing the river. For *VII dies*, Bolesław the Brave must have been quite effective if the king decided to prepare ships and bridges (as mentioned here before). This problem was solved owing to scouts who found the right ford and only then could the six legions cross the river (most probably, it was a reference to crossing the Oder: cf. Callier 1888, p. 11). Apparently, the chronicler suggests that Bolesław the Brave's troops fled, leaving behind lots of war materials (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, pp. 351, 353). However, it remains uncertain whether in this specific case Bolesław withdrew his forces on purpose, or fled because Thietmar noted that the prince had left the camp and fled (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 353). So it could not have been a panicked flight if the Polish ruler managed to break the camp and withdraw with his army. On the other hand, two facts are quite telling: abandoning the war material and Bolesław the Brave's troops being chased at the further stage of the king's expedition (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 353). It seems that in this specific situation, the Polish prince applied hit-and-run tactics against troops most probably smaller than those under the command of Henry II (German, Bavarian, Czech and Veleti troops). Certainly, he was not able to face the army in the open field. Instead, he cleared the forest (on the Spree), protected the crossings on the Bóbr and the Oder but did not attack from ambush until the German king's forces crossed the rivers. Bolesław the Brave applied this method against the separated troops of Henry II, located barely two miles from the Poznań stronghold (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 353).

In the light of these data, we can conclude that the German king's army was a more active party in the conflict, certainly with better fighting efficiency than Bolesław the Brave's troops. What is more, during the invasion, Henry II's army made use of constructors of ships and bridges as well as guides/scouts who must have known the area. We can assume that various scouts were summoned, including members of the local population. Thietmar's harsh opinion on the scouts leading the army from Dobry Ług towards the Spree, combined with a positive opinion on the scouts who found a good ford on the river, seems quite telling. On

the other hand, Bolesław the Brave's troops were involved in hit-and-run tactics, delayed the marching, cleared the forests, secured river crossings, fortified river banks and, eventually, locked themselves in the strongholds.

I have indicated above that we know the year of the expedition and three important days. Back on the Assumption of Mary, king Henry II was still in Magdeburg and on that day, he left for *Liezca* (Leitzkau) where on 16 August the troops gathered (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 19, p. 341). I assume that on that day, the king was also in Leitzkau if he was to cover only 27 km. The next date of the expedition was 6 September when near the Spree, in Lusatia, knight Thiedbern was killed (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, p. 345). However, before the royal troops reached *Dobraluch* (Doberlug-Kirchhain), they met Bavarian and Czech reinforcements. This means that Henry II and his soldiers had to cover between 130 and 140 km (I abstain from attempts at indicating many additional locations along the route of the German king as it has been the case in literature on the subject: Grabski 1956, pp. 326, 328; Misiewicz 1961, p. 245; Grabski 1966, p. 154; Olejnik 2002, p. 44; Samp 2019, p. 39). The forces gathered in Doberlug-Kirchhain and only then left for the Spree. Unfortunately, we can only speculate on the route covered by Henry II's army. The most rational assumption is that the troops marched to the north-east, towards Lübbenau/Spreewald⁹ because after crossing the Spree in that area, they could head straight away along the Bóbr and the Oder towards Krosno Odrzańskie. In the subsequent part of his chronicle, Thietmar noted the presence of the German king's troops. I am interested in the number of kilometres covered by the king and his army between Doberlug-Kirchhain and the Spree. If we assume that the troops were headed for Lübbenau/Spreewald, they would have had to cover 40 to 46 km. This data suggest that within 22 days (since 16 August – the moment when Henry II's troops gathered in Leitzkau, until 6 September when knight Thiedbern was killed near the Spree), the troops covered between 170 km and 186 km. Bearing this distance in mind, on a daily basis the troops could have covered between 7.7 km and 8.4 km (Grabski, 1956, p. 326, provides very different calculations but it stems from the fact that he added several locations along the German king's route which are not confirmed in the sources). My calculations are simplified because we do not know for example, how long Henry II's troops stayed in Doberlug-Kirchhain where they were joined by the soldiers of Henry, duke of Bavaria and Jaromír, Duke of Bohemia. The sources fail to inform whether the army marched every day or maybe there were times when they stayed in a location for more than one day.

It is a good idea to find out if the rate of the marching increased at the subsequent stage of Henry II's expedition which has also been documented in the sources under specific dates. Specifically, it is the distance between the Spree and

⁹ This is the only place not mentioned in Thietmar's text and which, for the purpose of this article, I assume as a possible location along the route of Henry II's troops.

Międzyrzecz. The chronicler wrote that the forces of the German king reached the Spree on 6 September (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, p. 345) and Międzyrzecz on the feast of the Thebaid Legion (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 353) i.e. on 22 September. Therefore, the second stage of the expedition took Henry II's army 17 days although the king spent as long as 7 days with his troops on the Bóbr and the Oder, looking for a river crossing in the vicinity of Krosno Odrzańskie (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 351). In total, the distance between the Spree, the Bóbr and the Oder (something between 85 and 95 km) was covered in only 10 days (cf. Grabski 1956, p. 325 where the author calculated that the distance separating the Spree and Krosno Odrzańskie amounts to 45 km. However, it is impossible to figure out what data he used to calculate it). Next, Henry II left the Oder bank and headed for a monastery in Międzyrzecz (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 353) which means that the troops covered another 65 km to 70 km. The entire distance from the Spree and Międzyrzecz amounted to between 150 km and 165 km. The royal army covered it at a rate between 15 km/day and 16.5 km/day. Clearly, since the skirmishes near the Spree and the subsequent gathering of the forces of Henry II near the Oder, Henry V and Jaromír with the Veleti reinforcements (that was one day before all the troops reached the Oder: Thietmar, cap. 22, p. 345), the rate of the marching increased (Grabski was of a different opinion, Grabski 1956, p. 337 although he failed to present the source argumentation behind it). This happened despite the fact that the expedition was slowed down by a long search of a good river crossing near the Bóbr and the Oder where the main line of defence of Bolesław the Brave must have been. Once the river was crossed by Henry II, the Polish prince could not put on active resistance until *duo miliaria ab urbe Posnani* (Thietmar, cap. 27, p. 353). Reaching Międzyrzecz, the German king was 100-110 km away from Ostrów Tumski i.e. if we assume the previous speed of marching at between 15 km/day and 16.5 km/d, his troops should have reached the Poznań stronghold on 28 or 29 September but this did not happen. It is hard to establish the exact length of the mile as recorded by Thietmar (the problem of the mile as a unit of distance in old times has been discussed in literature on the subject and a conclusion has been reached that it was not a fixed unit: Gloger 1898, p. 349; Stamm 1938, pp. 32-37; Dunin-Wąsowicz 2016, pp. 415-433). Late medieval sources indicate that the distance between Poznań and Gniezno amounted to 7 miles (Gloger 1898, p. 349) which translates into 47 km (Lech Hill in Gniezno – Ostrów Tumski in Poznań). Therefore, following a simple calculation we can assume that one mile equalled approx. 6.7 km. Consequently, Henry II would have been approx. 13.4 km from the Poznań stronghold. The exact location reached by the royal forces remains unknown (in literature on the subject, some researchers have indicated Krzyszków, see Zakrzewski 2006, pp. 211-212). We can assume that even if these calculations are of hypothetical nature, the army consisting of Germans, Bavarians, Czechs and the Veleti was very close to Ostrów Tumski. This fact was indirectly recorded by

Thietmar who mentioned that archbishop Tagino and other members of Henry II's entourage travelled to the Poznań stronghold where they made peace (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, pp. 353, 355). We can assume that the stronghold was located nearby if the chronicler did not write that the king's representatives needed to cover a long distance. Unfortunately, no source from the time in question indicates the day when peace was made. However, it can be safely assumed that the event took place in September. Thietmar described the return of Henry II's army to Germany in a single sentence:

Laeti tunc revertuntur nostri, quia itineris longitudine et nimia fame cum intermixta belli asperitate magnum sufferebant laborem (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 355).

We do not know the dates of Henry II's and his troops' return to Germany, let alone the days when the Veleti, Czechs and Bavarians reached their respective abodes.

Table 1. The stages of Henry II's expedition of 1005 with approximate distances and speed of marching

The expedition's stages	Route (from – to)	Date	Distance	Speed (km/day)
Stage one	Magdeburg – Leitzkau	15 August 16 August	Approx. 27 km	Approx. 27 km/day
Stage two	Leitzkau – Doberlug-Kirchhain	16 August ?	130-140 km	Between 7.7 km/day and 8.4 km/day
Stage three	Doberlug-Kirchhain – vicinity of the Spree	? 6 September	40-46 km	
Stage three	Vicinity of the Spree – vicinity of the Bóbr and the Oder near Krosno Odrzańskie	6 September ?	85-95 km	Between 15 km/day and 16.5 km/day
Stage four	Vicinity of the Bóbr and the Oder near Krosno Odrzańskie – Międzyrzecz	? 22 September	65-70 km	
Stage five	Międzyrzecz – vicinity of Poznań	22 September ?	86-96 km	?

THE SPECIFIC STAGES OF THE 1005 EXPEDITION AND THE SPEED OF MARCHING

At stage one of the expedition, the German ruler had to cover the distance from Magdeburg to Leitzkau where on 16 August, the royal troops were to gather. This means that Henry II had to travel the distance of approximately 27 km. You can cover up to 30 km within a day as evidenced by the hike taken by historical enactors from Giecz to Grzybowo in October 2015 (see Table 2). However, I am

assuming that Henry II covered the distance from Magdeburg to Leitzkau on horseback so, if he set off after a holy mass on the day of the Assumption of Mary, he managed to reach the destination where the meeting point was planned i.e. on 16 August.

Table 2. The “Stronghold route” project carried out as part of historical re-enactment

Lp.	Distance	Starting point	Destination	Time	Speed of marching
1.	30 km	St. Nicholas' church in Giecz	Grzybowo stronghold	24 October 2015	3.6 km/h
2.	25 km	Motte-and-bailey castle in Powidz	Chładowo stronghold	15 July 2016	3.125 km/h
3.	24 km	Chładowo stronghold	Grzybowo stronghold	22 October 2016	3.692 km/h
4.	23 km	Wylatkowo on Lake Niedzięgiel	Chładowo stronghold	26 August 2016	3.833 km/h

The subsequent stage of the expedition, from Leitzkau to the Spree via Doberlug-Kirchhain, was more complicated. I am assuming that, while this is not necessarily certain, the king and his army set off early on 16 August and headed for the east. We should also ponder whether, once he reached Doberlug-Kirchhain upon the Kleine Elster, Henry II had to wait for Henry V's and Jaromír's reinforcements, or perhaps there was no such need because all the three armies reached the destination at the same time. Nevertheless, we can ascertain that the speed of the troops marching from Leitzkau towards the Spree (I have assumed in the direction of Lübbenau/Spreewald) amounted to 7.7-8.4 km/day (a distance of 170 km to 186 km) and that the speed was very slow. It is difficult to simply compare this expedition and trips taken by historical re-enactors because the speed of the marching is affected by several factors: the weather, the terrain, the number of people taking part in the expedition and additional circumstances that accompany the trip. It is reasonable to ask why Henry II's troops marched so slowly towards the Spree. The answer is provided by Thietmar who mentioned the bribed guides leading the army all the way round and delaying the march (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, pp. 343, 345). Besides, under the year of 1006 (right after the description of the 1005 expedition) the chronicler recorded that in Fallersleben, Henry II sentenced to death knight Brunkio of Merseburg along with Boris and Vezemiskle, leading men among the Slavs, along with their followers (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 28, p. 355). Some authors have seen this record (at least with reference to the Slavic leading men) as administering capital punishment on traitors – perhaps the mentioned guides who slowed down the royal troops marching from Doberlug-Kirchhain towards the Spree (cf. Hirsch 1862, p. 371; Grabski 1956, pp. 326-327; Grodecki and Zachorowski 1995, p. 91; Strzelczyk 1999, p. 127). The slow speed of the marching must have been affected by the terrain because Lusatia was full of marshes with a strongly developed system of rivers as spotted by Thietmar who



Fig. 2. Fragment of a stronghold's earth bank near Zagórze in Poznań

referred to the guides leading the army as *per solitudines paludesque* (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, pp. 343, 345). We should also take into consideration a circumstance that slowed down the marching across Lusatia towards the Spree and resulted in the slow speed of the expedition. In literature on the subject, researchers indicate that the expedition of 1005 resulted in the German king's regaining of Lusatia and Milsko (Korta 1990, p. 171; Strzelczyk 1999, p. 127; Zakrzewski 2006, p. 203; Labuda 2012, ps. 88; Urbańczyk 2017, p. 205). Unfortunately, the sources fail to mention the conditions of the peace concluded in Poznań; the evaluation of the peace treaty has also been viewed differently (cf. Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 353, 355; Die Annales 2004, p. 523). Indirectly, the events of 1007 when Bolesław the Brave reclaimed Lusatia and Milsko (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 34, p. 365), seem to confirm that earlier, in 1005, the German king had regained the territory. On the other hand, I do not agree with the opinion that Milsko and Lusatia were occupied during Henry II's return to Saxony i.e. following the peace treaty in Poznań (the theory was put forward by Urbańczyk 2017, p. 205). There is no information about Henry II's retreating and claiming Lusatia and Milsko. P. Urbańczyk's line of reasoning is also contradicted by the distance covered by Henry II's army and the speed of marching (between 7.7 km/day and 8.4 km/day). Long marching (at least 21 days), including the distance between Leitzkau and the Spree, could have been very time-consuming (specifically the distance from

Doberlug-Kirchhain to the river) for another reason. Namely, if the area claimed by Bolesław the Brave in 1002 was occupied immediately (at least partly). It seems that Lusatia and Milsko were seized exactly between 16 August and 6 September. Perhaps the activities were continued on the way to the Oder until joining the Veleti troops as covered by the chronicler from Merseburg (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 22, p. 345). Therefore, there are no arguments from the sources that would corroborate the fact that these actions took place only in late September/early October or in October when Henry II's army was on its way back from Poznań. The autumn must have been an unattractive season to seize Lusatia or Milsko, covered with rivers and marshes. What is more, the army was tired after nearly two months of a war expedition. Thietmar himself mentioned that following the peace, the soldiers joyously returned home (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 355) without an indication of any fighting taking place. Finally, the stage of the expedition which took place between 6 and 22 September (when 150 km to 165 km were covered between the Spree and Międzyrzecz) shows that the marching took only 10 days (7 days were spent on looking for the crossing near the Bóbr and the Oder). Notably, after crossing the Oder, Henry II was on enemy territory. The German, Bavarian, Czech and Veleti troops were less familiar with it than with Lusatia and Milsko and yet the army managed to maintain a high speed of marching – an indication that this stage of the expedition was not about seizing a territory but catching up with the fleeing/retreating enemy. Bearing this in mind, the slow rate of the marching between Leitzkau and the Spree, specifically from Doberlug-Kirchhain to the river, must have been affected by the terrain and the guides of Henry II's army who favoured Bolesław the Brave but also the fact that the German king had seized right away Lusatia and Milsko to re-incorporate them into his dominion.

The troops marched from the Spree towards the Oder and next to Międzyrzecz very efficiently, except for 7 days spent in the vicinity of Krosno Odrzańskie where Henry II was looking for a river crossing while Bolesław the Brave tried to prevent it. At that stage of the war expedition, the speed of the marching increased significantly (it more or less doubled) and amounted to 15 km/day – 16.5 km/day. Maintaining this speed of marching of a large army consisting of cavalymen, infantrymen and carts was no mean feat. The experience of historical re-enactment shows that it is possible to march even much more quickly, up to 3.83 km/h (Table 2). However, this speed is possible when a small group of people marches (typically over a dozen, several dozen at a maximum), all goods are transported by the soldiers rather than carts and when the footmen know the route very well. In the case of a large army manoeuvring in unfamiliar terrain, these conditions cannot be fulfilled. That was the situation of the army under the command of king Henry II. Therefore, any crossing of an even small river required preparation for transporting the carts. Consequently, the crossing locations forced the marching army to halt. On top of that, it was September when the days were significantly



Fig. 3. The archaeological excavations conducted in the castle in Międzyrzecz in the 1950s.
Photograph from the archive of the Alf Kowalski Museum of Międzyrzecz Land

shorter than in July which also affected the distances that the army could cover within a single day. We do not know anything about the weather during the expedition although September with its days, colder than in July and August, must have meddled with Henry II's war scheme. With all this in mind it seems that the speed of the marching from the Spree towards the Oder and next to Międzyrzecz (in enemy territory) was still high. The question is how fast it was possible to march if earlier, between Leitzkau and the Spree via Doberlug-Kirchhain, the army covered between 7.7 km and 8.4 a day. Two factors seem to have been at play: the first one refers to what I have already presented as my opinion that Henry II seized Lusatia and Milsko immediately, heading towards the Spree. When the German king crossed the Oder, his only goal was to beat Bolesław the Brave's army but without seizing the territory. The other factor are the key 7 days that Henry II spent in the vicinity of the Oder and the Bóbr, looking for a crossing, actively prevented by Bolesław the Brave. Thietmar's account suggested clearly that the Polish army withdrew immediately after the royal forces crossed the river (probably the Oder); Thietmar presented it as fleeing and leaving behind war equipment (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, pp. 351, 353). If the description matches the actual events which took place upon the Oder, it explains the high speed of marching of Henry II's army. According to the chronicler, Bolesław the Brave was continuously pursued (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 353) and did not stop

until he reached Poznań. If the information provided by the bishop of Merseburg is accurate, although doubts have been expressed in literature on the subject (Dąbrowski 1962, p. 37; Samp 2019, pp. 47-48) and which in my opinion is unjustified reasoning (some scholars also trust Thietmar's account, see Zakrzewski 2006, p. 211), this explains why further on, the troops marched at such a high speed. It seems that after Henry II's army crossed the Oder and Bolesław the Brave indisputably abandoned war equipment, the latter was not able to defy the German king's forces. Interestingly, it was not until Bolesław the Brave reached Poznań i.e. the centre of the ideological Piast dominion (Wielkopolska) when he was able to launch an ambush attack (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 26, p. 353). Therefore I think that after crossing the Oder, Henry II could afford marching quickly because the Polish prince failed to organise another well-prepared line of defence as he did in the vicinity of Krosno Odrzańskie. We can only guess that if the peace treaty had not been concluded, the Poznań stronghold would have been a subsequent point of resistance.

The losses suffered near Poznań, before the siege even began, the powerful church fortifications, the early autumn coupled with the prospect of returning home before the autumn rains, must have contributed to Henry II's willingness to comply with Bolesław's request. These events were of course covered by Thietmar, the bishop of Merseburg:

Interim per fidos intercessores regis gratiam Bolizlavus peccit et exaudiri mox promeruit. Tagino archiepiscopus cum aliis familiaribus regis ad civitatem predictam a Bolizlavo rogatus venit et cum iuramentis ac emendacionibus condignis firma pacis foedera apud eundem pepigit (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, pp. 353, 355).

However, there is no reason to suggest that the expedition was Henry II's failure or that Bolesław the Brave did not lose this stage of the war as older literature on the subject suggested (Miśkiewicz 1961, p. 248; 2008, pp. 29-30). The above descriptions by Thietmar clearly suggest that it was Bolesław who requested peace and that the war was fought also on his territory. Of course the Poznań stronghold was not captured which probably saved Bolesław the Brave from complete defeat. Similarly, we do not know the ultimate provisions of the peace treaty. Thietmar commented very briefly on the return of Henry II's army to Germany:

Laeti tunc revertuntur nostri, quia itineris longitudine et nimia fame cum intermixta belli asperitate magnum sufferebant laborem (Thietmar 1953, lib. VI, cap. 27, p. 355).

The issue is not explained in *The Annals of Quedlinburg* (Die Annales 2004, pp. 522-523).

Henry II's army must have been exhausted. However, the subsequent events, highlighted by Gerard Labuda and Jerzy Strzelczyk, indicate that the German king regained Lusatia and Milsko while Bolesław had to accept losing Bohemia (Korta

1984, p. 38; Strzelczyk 1999, p. 127; Zakrzewski 2006, p. 203; Labuda 2012, p. 88; Urbańczyk 2017, p. 205). Another loss mourned by Bolesław the Great must have been West Pomerania where the Kołobrzeg bishopric collapsed as a result of the Veleti's participation in the war expedition of 1005 as supporters of Henry II (Strzelczyk 1999, pp. 203-204; Labuda 2012, p. 88; Urbańczyk 2017, p. 207). In this conflict, the German king was definitely victorious although the peace treaty did not really satisfy either party (as presented by Sochacki 2016, p. 189).

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