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PEASANTS IN THE MEDIEVAL BOHEMIAN ARMY

One should start off with a brief assessment of the present research output. However, this cannot be done in an unambiguous way. Although there exist a few studies which are syntheses of the Czech military science¹, many crucial issues have not been extensively researched yet and therefore the number of relevant monographs is still small and insufficient. This gap becomes especially painful when one has to do with two different points of view: the interests of a social history researcher on the one hand and the needs of a specialist in military accessories on the other. Certainly, the above situation is not a coincidence as far as the subject of this paper is concerned. It is known that peasants were not a social group readily described in medieval sources, which naturally dealt with the life of various types of elites. Besides, the very terminology of such documents provides a reader with numerous interpretation difficulties. Under the circumstances, a comparative study seems to be of vital importance. The author should consider both the numerous similarities and differences in the social development of European countries and thus find all the missing links in the chain of conclusions.

From quite a broad perspective, a thesis that the main stages of the Bohemian military science in the Middle Ages reflect some of the rules known to us from other countries of Central and Western Europe seems to be acceptable. The most important element, which is decisive with respect to this and many other aspects of Bohemia's uniqueness is Husitism, which will be dealt with below.

The fundamental narrative source concerned with the state of the first Přemyslid rulers, as well as earlier times, is the chronicle by the Prague canon

Kosmas², which contains much information about the military accessories and the social context. At that time the Bohemian army must have been composed of a permanent crew and the levy in mass, including broader groups of the population. Undoubtedly the inhabitants of hamlets and villages were part of the second body, but their participation is hard to trace, especially because of the above-mentioned complicated and frequently misleading terminology of the source. General expressions such as "all the Czechs" and "the whole Bohemian army" are used by Kosmas to denote exclusively the duke's team. On the other hand, the term "Boemii" is understood to mean the feudal class, that is to say, the so-called "political nation"³. In a patrimonial state the freeholders seem to have constituted an important group of the population, which provided the country with infantrymen. Their role, however, might have been gradually reduced in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and consequently the group split into those who could become knights and noblemen and those who were reduced to the rank of peasants. The decreasing importance of peasants appears to be connected with numerous changes and transformations within the army, including the growing importance of the horse on the battlefield. Nonetheless, there were numerous opportunities to use footmen armed with projectile weapons in defensive warfare and guerrilla activities in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries. Relevant sources are scarce. But there were situations where peasants

¹ Cf.: F. Kurfürst, *Válečné dějiny československé do roku 1526*, Prague 1937; O. Frankenberg, *Pod orlici, lvem a kalichem*, vol. I, Prague 1938; P. Choc, *S mečem a štítem. České raně feudální vojenství*, Prague 1967; *Vojenské dějiny Československa /to the year 1526/*, vol. I, ed. Z. Procházk, Prague 1985.

² *Cosmae Pragensis chronica Boemorum*, ed. B. Bretschneider, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum, Nova series*, vol. II, Berlin 1923; cf.: D. Třeštík, *Kosmova kronika. Studie k počátkům českého dějepiscství a politického myšlení*, Prague 1968, by the same author, *Kosmas*, Prague 1972.

³ Cf.: B. Krzemieńska, *Kronika Kosmasy jako źródło do dziejów wojskowości (Kosmas' Chronicle as a Source for the History of the Military Science)*, *Studia i materiały do Historii wojskowości*, vol. VI, part 2, 1960, p. 79.

took part in expeditions to foreign countries. Such soldiers might have joined Boleslav the Brave's army marching to Kiev and the army of Bretislav I, who attacked Poland. Kosmas' term "populus" is not unambiguous either⁴. A bit later, in 1068, during the preparations for the expedition to Poland, Duke Vratislav gathered his team and the units of his brothers, comeses and priests with their retinues and *exercitus* (the Latin term might have denoted villagers, at least partly)⁵.

We do not have at our disposal many records documenting the participation of the infantry in Czech campaigns. According to the works by Thietmar and Gall, the phenomenon was much commoner in Poland, especially in the numerous wars with Germany⁶. It must, however, be remembered that this is a source picture, which might differ a lot from the real one. In the eleventh century, the infantry was used in heavy fighting in, among others, Austria and Saxony, to mention only the Central European area. In 1075, in the Battle of Hamburg the massive participation of peasants did not save the Saxon forces fighting against the Emperor Henry IV, assisted by the Czech Duke Vratislav, from losing the battle. In his work, a Saxon chronicler was very critical of peasants' military skills⁷. A few years later, in 1082, a battle was fought near Mailberg, in Austria, where some Czech troops faced the army of Austrian Duke Leopold, among whose soldiers there were many casual villagers, including pig and cow shepherds⁸. The Austrians suffered a defeat and, in consequence, administrative decrees were issued which banned drafting countrymen. It was Frederick I Barbarossa who was especially concerned to limit the freedom to bear arms. He wanted this to be a privilege of the nobility and knights. In 1152 he forbade peasants to use spears and swords and in 1186 he reminded them not to try to copy knights in that respect⁹. In the Middle Ages groups occupying lower positions in the social hierarchy were frequently banned from bearing arms. The bans affected both peasants and

townspeople¹⁰. They were of course caused by fear of the loss of the privileged position of the upper classes. The class differences were visible not only on the legal plane, but they also affected such "appearance" attributes as dress, arms and armour, as well as the right to bear arms. The nobility's unwillingness to give peasants the right to carry and use arms often manifested itself in quite an unexpected way. For example, the fourteenth century Austrian chronicler Heinrich der Teichner claims that a rise in iron prices in the country was caused by the peasants' desire to possess arms¹¹. A peasant's place is at the plough. This was one of the most popular stereotypes in the Middle Ages.

Infantry forces of peasant origin became rare, but they were still sometimes present on the battlefield. Peasants took part in the great expedition to Milan led by the Emperor Frederick I, assisted by, among others, the Bohemian ruler Vladislav II in 1158. The chronicler Wincenty wrote, "many abandoned their work in the fields and took shields and spears instead of the hoe and plough"¹². Later on the people will become bowmen in Italy. It might be added that helping the emperor did pay off, as the duke received the Czech Crown as a reward for himself and his successors¹³.

An interesting case is Sobeslav II, one of the heirs to the Czech throne. He was a peculiar epigone of rulers building up their royal authority on the strength of the support of the lower nobility and freeholders (who were already scarce at that time), which brought him the nickname of the "peasant prince". He is said to have distrusted the richer nobility during his war expeditions. According to the chronicler Jarloch, the ruler liked to have a bigger number of poor men (both footmen and mounted soldiers) in his army¹⁴. The former must have been freeholders who served as infantrymen and the latter knights of lower rank on horseback without their own units. Altho-

⁴ *Cosmae Pragensis*, pp. 85 seqq.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 114.

⁶ Thietmari, *Merseburgensis episcopi, Chronicon*, ed. R. Holtzmann, Berlin 1935, passim; Galli Anonymi, *Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. C. Maleczyński, *Monumenta Poloniae Historica, Series nova*, vol. II, Cracow 1952, passim.

⁷ See: P. Choc, *S mečem*, pp. 408 seq.

⁸ *Cosmae Pragensis*, p. 132.

⁹ *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Leges II*, pp. 101, 185; cf.: S. Epperlein, *Der Bauer im Bild des Mittelalters*, Leipzig 1975, pp. 95 seq.

¹⁰ Cf. for example: edicts for Venice [in:] E. Pavan, *Recherches sur la nuit vénitienne à la fin du moyen age*, "Journal of Medieval History" VII, 1981, No. 4, p. 343; by the same author, *Violence, société et pouvoir à Venise /XIV-XVI: forme et évolution des rituels urbains*, Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome, Moyen Age, Temps Modernes 96, 1984, pp. 908 seqq.

¹¹ S. Epperlein, *Der Bauer*, p. 96.

¹² *Letopis Vincencia, kanovníka kostela pražského, Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum II*, ed. J. Emler, Prague 1874, pp. 428 seqq.

¹³ J. Kejř, *Korunovace krále Vladislava II, Český Casopis Historický* 88, 1990, pp. 641-660.

¹⁴ *Letopis Jarlocha, opata kláštera milevského, Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum II*, p. 468; cf.: J. Kejř, *Böhmen und das Reich unter Friedrich I, [in:] Friedrich Barbarossa. Handlungsspielräume und Wirkungsweisen des staufischen Kaisers*, ed. A. Haverkam p, Sigmaringen 1992, pp. 263-273.

ugh Sobeslav II ascended the throne thanks to the Emperor Frederick I, the following incidents brought him into conflict with the powerful ruler. In 1178, in the South, Sobeslav had gathered a huge army composed of knights and peasants and was waiting for the emperor to attack. As the enemy did not arrive, Sobeslav came to the conclusion that Frederick had changed his mind and had given up the idea of invading Bohemia. Therefore he dismissed his army. The peasants, who had to come back to their work in the fields, were the first to leave the army. But Frederick attacked a bit later and easily defeated the weakened enemy. However, on June 23rd 1179, the two monarchs met near Lodenice¹⁵. Sobeslav, who was perfectly aware of the fact that his army, which was mostly composed of peasants, could not withstand an attack by Frederick's cavalry, ambushed the emperor's troops. The raid was a great success and many rich men and knights, both German and Czech, were killed in the emperor's army. Among them was Sezema, the father of the famous Hroznata, the blessed founder of the Premonstratensians' monastery¹⁶. Historians would often wonder about the reason for Sobeslav's fondness for peasants. V. Novotný was of the opinion that it was an attempt to limit the growing influence of the Bohemian nobility by supporting the peasants¹⁷. J. Peckař argued that the monarch wanted to be a just ruler, which manifested itself in his fondness for this social group¹⁸. According to other researchers, Sobeslav's characteristics played a significant role here. Some tried to present his motives as a sort of class struggle¹⁹. Whatever the reason, this opposition group of rich men and magnates brought the ruler down in 1180.

Changes in the technique of fighting as well as the growing importance of the heavy cavalry deprived peasant infantry forces of their position. Peasants, who were worse armed and often forced to fight, did not constitute a high quality army. Quantity could not substitute for quality in this case.

Thus peasants might have performed a number of subsidiary functions. Unfortunately, relevant sources do not provide sufficient information about them. Nonetheless they had to join the army, but in the end, were often dismissed before a military operation ended, which was the case in, for instance, 1273²⁰. The reason why a ruler decided to employ peasants was a serious menace to the country. That was the case with John of Luxembourg, who in 1345 attempted to free himself from an international alliance threatening the monarch. He wanted to launch a full-scale attack on Poland and his plan required that there was peace on all the borders (the ruler anticipated an attack from the direction of Bavaria). His peasants were drafted into the army in order to secure this section of the frontier²¹.

Access to weapons was conditioned by the legal situation and possession of arms was a privilege of yeomen. However, peasants living in the country often had weapons at their disposal, which was usually, though not always, connected with the various functions they performed, for example, the post of guard, etc. Weapons in the hands of peasants frequently appeared on the occasion of a rebellion. The members of numerous gangs of robbers, who were especially active around the turn of the fourteenth century in the southern parts of Bohemia and Moravia, also possessed and used arms. This is not the place for a broader analysis of this phenomenon. It should, however, be pointed out that the social structure of these gangs varied considerably (people of high social standing also belonged to those groups)²². The correspondence of the Cistercian abbot of Vyšší Brod and his order superiors reflects the turmoil of the contemporary world. The abbot is sorry that he cannot arrive at the General Chapter's meeting in Citeaux because of constant unrest, "and particularly constant fights started by our subjects and carried out in such a way that one can hardly pass through his land without his health and possessions being endangered"²³. Such phenomena

¹⁵Cf.: P. Choc, *Boje o Prahu za feudalismu*, Prague 1957, pp. 187 seqq.

¹⁶Cf.: recently W. Iwańczak, *Hroznata - możnowładca, pielgrzym, fundator klasztoru (Hroznata - a Magnate, a Pilgrim, the Founder of a Monastery)*, [in:] *Klasztor w społeczeństwie średniowiecznym i nowożytnym (The Monastery in Medieval and Modern Society)*, ed. M. Derwich, A. Pobóg-Lenartowicz, Opole-Wrocław 1996, pp. 355-363, where further literature.

¹⁷V. Novotný, *Česke dějiny*, vol. I, part 2, Prague 1913, pp. 1011 seqq.

¹⁸J. Peckař, *Dějiny československé*, Prague 1937, p. 18.

¹⁹See: P. Choc, *Boje o Prahu*, p. 193.

²⁰V. Novotný, *České dějiny*, vol. I, part 4, Prague 1937, p. 268, footnote 1.

²¹*Vojenské dějiny*, p. 119.

²²Cf. especially the following works by F. Hoffmann *K povaze drobné války, zástí a násilných činů před husitskou revolucí*, [in:] *Pocta akademiku Václavu Vaněčkovi k 70 narozeninám*, Prague 1975, pp. 55-75; by the same author, *Bojové družiny před husitskou revolucí na jižní Moravě*, Jižní Morava 22, 1986, pp. 99-116; by the same author, *Bojové družiny před husitskou revolucí ve východních Čechách*, Československý Časopis Historický 33, 1987, pp. 75-104.

²³Vyšší Brod, *The Library*, ms. 49, f. 15^v: "...propter bella intestina, quibus nostri domestici nos collidunt, ut vix aliquis in bonis propriis transire potest absque rerum periculo et persone...", quotation after F. Graus, *Dějiny venkovského lidu v Čechách v době předhusitské*, vol. II, Prague 1957, p. 525.

were of course severely criticized by moralists and preachers. One of them, Johlin of Vodňany, says in his "Postillia" that there have recently appeared a lot of bad and rebellious peasants. Those people replace shares with swords against the biblical commandments, telling them to forge swords into shares. Those practices are a real menace, as evidenced by constant rebellions²⁴.

Even though mercenary armies were gaining in importance, the owners of alodial and later on feudal landed properties had remained the country's military base. They took part in wars together with their retainers, which frequently included peasants. As we have already said, such units were of little battle value. The interesting thing is that medieval authors were of the same opinion. The Czech chivalric epic of the turn of the thirteenth century "Alexandreida", dealing with the victories of Alexander the Great, contains a number of allusions to Czech reality in the time of the Přemyslid dynasty. The peasant part of the army gathered by Alexander is also mentioned in the text. The monarch enlisted peasants, who were very good at fieldwork but had little idea about fighting techniques. As a result the expedition did not end well²⁵. Besides their complete inability to use arms and lack of knowledge in respect of fighting techniques, peasants were also accused of cowardice, which was a very common insult and sort of invective. In the fourteenth century, in *The Zbraslaw Chronicle*, a remark was made that forces from Meissen were as cowardly as simple peasants²⁶. A peasant was perceived as an uneducated and primitive creature and frequently compared to an animal. He was often presented as a person devoid of any virtues and good qualities²⁷, usually attempting to create a good impression. This sneering image of the villager was very common.

²⁴ The State /University/ Library in Prague, ms. IV. A. 2, f. 79^v: "Isti, qui iam per oppositum ex vomeribus faciunt gladios et ex falcibus conflant lanceas et sagittas; et propter hoc destruitur status ecclesie et respublica quasi periiit."; the quotation after F. G r a u s, *Dějiny*, vol. II, p. 525.

²⁵ *Alexandreida*, ed. V. V á ž n ý, Prague 1963, p. 101:

"Kmet, jenž oral po vše léta
i jenž robil, ploty pleta,
v ony u pokojné časy,
nemohl užiti nekrasy,
musil jíti, nesa kopie,
jenž lepe věděl o snopě,
i ten, jenž věděl o cepu
nebo kdy cas vzieti řepu."

²⁶ P. K l u c i n a, *Organizace vojska českého státu za posledních Přemyslovců*, *Historie a Vojenství* 33, 1984, 1, p. 92.

²⁷ Cf.: e.g. J. L e G o f f, *Kultura średniowiecznej Europy* (*The Culture of Medieval Europe*), Warsaw 1994, pp. 301 seqq.

Such descriptions reflected the well-known, concealed motif of longing for social promotion and joining the ranks of knights, wearing beautiful armour and characterized by chivalry. In the Czech poem entitled "Sedláci" ("Peasants") one can find a complete catalogue of peasant's vices, including their inability to use side-arms. In addition, those people would start quarreling for no good reason and at the same time consider themselves as very brave²⁸.

Hussitism brought about a radical change in attitudes to peasants' participation in war campaigns²⁹. This massive movement was, to a large extent, "peasant" in character. The symbol of the Hussite military art became the flail. This simple farm tool changed into a fearful weapon. Besides, Hussite forces were mainly "peasant" in composition. The massive influx of peasants and villagers at the beginning of the Hussite revolution determined the character of the army. At first, it was dominated by the peasant infantry and then, mainly thanks to Žižka's efforts, there also appeared peasant troops on horseback. However, both the armour and horses had to be looted. At first, the poor people of towns and villages had at their disposal arms which were easy to get: that is, remade farm tools and weapons looted in battle. The basic equipment of the peasant infantry did not include any novelties. The peasantry used well-known swords, spears, hatchets with long handles, pole-axes, and flails. Moreover, neither flails nor wagons were the Hussites' inventions. They were mentioned in the well-known work "Bellifortis" by Conrad Kyeser as early as in 1405³⁰.

Peasants had contributed a lot to the success of the Taborites, but they also belonged to Prague

²⁸ *Česká středověká lyrika*, ed. J. L e h á r, Prague 1990, p. 253:

"Chcete-li poslouchati,
co já vam budu zpievati,
ctmú družinu chváliti,
ješt' slovú sedláci.
Sedlák jest divné stvoření,
jemu v světě rovně nenie:
...neumějít' sermovati:
Zbaviž nás jich, božie máti!
...a kmotr vždy kmotru laje,
za kord se potrhaje.
...An sebu vrže jako zmek,
přisahát', by sám byl rek
a rka: "Věz to každý člověk,
žeť sem smělý pacholek."

²⁹ See the last synthesis: F. Š m a h e l, *Husitská revoluce*, vols. I-IV, second edition, Prague 1996.

³⁰ C. K y e s e r, *Bellifortis*, ed. G. Q u a r g, Düsseldorf 1967; cf.: G. Q u a r g, *Der Bellifortis von Conrad Kyeser aus Eichstätt*, *Technikgeschichte* 32, 1965, pp. 293-324.

forces. Those were mostly the inhabitants of villages owned by Prague patrician families. In the first stage of the revolution, the Hussites operated within a relatively limited range, because the peasants were mobilized either to take part in a concrete operation or to defend the forces against anti-Hussite crusades, which were organized from time to time and were supported by the very cream of the West-European knights. Peasants joined the Hussite army and served in it on their own or as part of units accompanying lords and knights who fought on the side of the revolution. In 1420, the noblemen Smílek of Kremže brought for Žižka half a thousand villagers, infantrymen (a part of them were his own people)³¹. In the following year, the diet at Časlav passed a resolution ordering all lords and knights to arrive in the vicinity of Nachod on St Vit's Day in order to defend it against the Silesians' invasion³².

One of the sources of Hussite forces' spectacular military successes was strict discipline. We learn of it not only from the accounts of battles but from the rulebook for the army published by Žižka too³³. The regulations required unquestionable obedience to the commanders and perfect order in the Hussite ranks. Any instances of disobedience were severely punished. Within the Hussite army various constituent parts could be singled out, depending on the social rank and status of a soldier. Of course, the army included a group of peasants. Contemporary observers confirm Žižka's magic influence and charismatic personality. Laurence of Březová says that countrymen equipped with simple weapons followed Žižka with a will and obeyed him eagerly³⁴.

The effectiveness of the Hussite army was unbelievable. This army, mainly composed of poor and simple people, successfully withstood attacks by perfectly trained knights from various countries. The interesting thing is that it was the very poor peasants and particularly their flails that the enemy was really afraid of. Before the Battle of Vyšehrad in 1420, Henry of Plumlov warned King Sigismund of Luxembourg against ignoring the enemy. He also mentioned their fearful flails, "Ego enim... tritulas rusticorum valde timeo"³⁵.

³¹ *Popravci kniha panů z Rožmberka*, ed. A. K a l n ý, Třeboň 1993, p. 60; see: Th. W a g n e r, *Jan Smil z Křemže*, Časopis Národního Muzea 62, 1888, pp. 169-194.

³² *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum* V, ed. J. G o l l, Prague 1893, p. 491: "...omnes domini cum militaribus et suis rusticis... ad festum Viti se preparent et in Nachod conveniant."

³³ There are several editions, cf.: *Staročeské vojenské rády*, ed. F. S v e j k o v s k ý, Prague 1952, pp. 23-27.

³⁴ *Kronika Vavřince z Březové*, *Fontes Rerum Bohemicarum* V, p. 364.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 439; the Czech version in: *Staré letopisy české*, ed. F. P a l a c k ý, Prague 1829, p. 54.

A count from Meissen is said to have expressed a similar opinion before the Battle of Ústí in 1426³⁶. In the treatise "De origine hussitarum", the principal adversary of the Hussites Andrew of Brod prays to God that the peasant troops and their arms would be destroyed³⁷.

The peasant troops' victories over the enemy knight army should be analysed in a specific ideological context. The Hussites, who were characterized by very strong messianic tendencies, considered them a manifestation of the grace of God. The special character of the grace of Lord is emphasized in, among others, "The Song on the Victory of Domažlice"³⁸ by Laurence of Březová. The Battle of Domažlice of 1431 was a very unusual and curious event. After they had heard the Hussites' battle song sung by the crowd of peasants, the crusaders left their arms and richly loaded wagons on the battlefield and simply ran away. This was probably one of the most disgraceful defeats in the history of war³⁹.

The peasants' long-underestimated military talents could fully develop during the Hussite revolution. The most spectacular characteristic was the warriors' eagerness to fight. Andrew of Brod rightly says, "Rustici vero et mechanici vel artifices ad obtinendas municiones vel civitates eciam fortissimas sic erant fervidi, ut in prima semper acie ponerentur"⁴⁰.

The international general public also regarded the Hussite wars as peasant conflicts. Moreover, the Hussites found an echo with the villagers of other countries. At the Council of Basel, even before the talks with the Hussite delegation, the numerous politicians who were present at the meeting warned the general public of the dangers caused by the fact that peasants in other countries wanted to support the Czech uprising⁴¹.

³⁶ *Výbor z literatury české*, ed. K. J. E r b e n, II, Prague 1868, p. 306:

"Strach na mně, jakž vidím cepy
a onyno černé chlapy,
pravié, že každý oněmí,
na komž oni derú oděnie."

³⁷ *Traktát mistra Ondřeje z Brodu o původu husitů*, ed. J. K a d l e c, Tábor 1980, p. 27: "...piissime Domine Iesu Criste, refugium unicum fidelium tuorum, libera nos a laqueo venancium, a sagittis istorum hominum impiorum, que vere, quia publice, sunt, volant in die, contere pharetram, collide sagittas, destrue machinamenta rusticorum, ut populus in te confidens et pro fide tua sancta exilium paciens de tue virtutis adhuc potencia glorietur."

³⁸ *Vavřinec z Březové, Píseň o vítězství u Domažlic*, ed. K. H r d i n a, B. R y b a, Prague 1951.

³⁹ Cf.: F. F o r s t, *Domažlice v dějinách husitského revolučního hnutí*, Domažlice 1961.

⁴⁰ *Traktát mistra Ondřeje*, p. 23.

⁴¹ J. K e j ř, *Zur Bauernfrage im Hussitentum*, Jahrbuch für Geschichte des Feudalismus 7, 1983, pp. 65 seq.

A similar menace was noticed at the synod of Bourges in 1432⁴². In the information sent by the notary of the Council of Basel to the cathedral chapter in Arras an alarming mention was found of a peasant rebellion in the Rhineland: "Timendum est, quod nisi concilium provideat, omnes isti rustici de Germania tenebunt partem istorum Bohemorum."⁴³

The Hussite revolution witnessed successful careers of the sons of some peasant families. Within the Taborite elite an important part was played by the so-called stewards (*vladaře*), who administered the Taborites' domain as vice-hetmans, though they did not have any political power⁴⁴. Information about four such stewards still survives. The most famous one is Nicholas of Padařov. All of them were probably men of simple origin. Oldřich of Rožmberk referred to either Nicholas or Phillip of Padařov (they both held such high posts) as "chlap Padeřovský". He also suggested that John of Srlin should poison the man⁴⁵.

The peasants who had often run away from faraway places and arrived in Tabor or joined the Taborite army stayed free until Tabor lost its autonomy in 1452. Such farmers turned into professional soldiers and never came back to their farms. Some of them became craftsmen or merchants.

The Hussites, who had contributed a lot to the development of the military science, to a large extent treated the peasantry as the foundation of their strategy. The mid-1430s witnessed a marked change in the Taborites' fighting techniques. The principle of self-defence was replaced with a semi-mercenary military service system⁴⁶. Nonetheless, some old and experienced warriors who did not want to take up trade or crafts and were not needed in Tabor could and did find employment in

mercenary forces taking part in numerous campaigns all over Europe.

After the end of the Hussite wars, the original shape of the army was restored, at least formally. Like the forces of many other European countries, the Bohemian royal army was composed of three main parts: the levy-in-mass, the king's vassals and the mercenaries. A decree issued by Charles IV of Luxembourg ordered representatives of all the lands to turn up whenever summoned. Peasants belonged to the noblemen's retinues and entourages. For example, the mobilization order issued by George of Podebrady in 1458 called upon lords to turn up together with their servants on horseback, footmen and a unit composed of all his people, including peasants⁴⁷. At that time the levy-in-mass was used exclusively to defend the country. Only the diet could decide whether or not to send those forces abroad. Despite all the problems connected with summoning the levy-in-mass, in the second half of the fifteenth century everyone realized the battle value of those forces. This is why they still constituted the main means of conducting wars. It should be added that there appeared plans to improve this torpid machine and introduce a sort of "general military service", which would be done not only by the men who were bound by feudal obligations but by all men. In spite of the changes in the property structure and social relations which were a result of the Hussite revolution, the project could not be realized in contemporary Bohemia. Mobilization campaigns were rare. For instance, in 1469 peasant troops from eastern Bohemia helped withstand the Hungarians' attack⁴⁸.

Translated by Zuzanna Poklewska-Parra

⁴² *Urkundliche Beiträge zur Geschichte des Hussitenkrieges in den Jahren 1419-1436*, II, ed. F. Palacký, Prague 1873, p. 272.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 269.

⁴⁴ F. Šmahel, *Táborští vladaři*, *Folia Historica Bohemica* 4, 1982, pp. 83-125.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁴⁶ F. Šmahel, *Dějiny Tábora*, vol. I, part 2, České Budějovice 1990, p. 588 seq.

⁴⁷ O. Frankenberger, *Husitské válečnictví po Lipanech*, Prague 1960, p. 67, footnote 90.

⁴⁸ *Vojenské dějiny*, p. 277.