

Vít MIŠAGA, *Christian IV, Mansfeld and the Invasion of Silesia and Moravia. Several Aspects of the Danish Phase of the Thirty Years' War*, PhD dissertation, Charles University in Prague 2014

Summary

In Czech and European historiography of the early modern period, the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) is one of the most discussed topics. Among Czech historians, there has always been an understandable emphasis on the revolt of the Bohemian estates, also known as the Bohemian phase of the war (1618–1621). The Danish phase (1625–1629) is considerably less popular. The winners had already been or – to be more precise – seemed to be almost determined, and the further developments of the war did nothing to change the fate of the Czech lands. Analysis of the second half of the 1620s is therefore dominated by other topics – the recatholisation process, exile waves or the character of Albrecht von Wallenstein. Foreign historiographers also seem to downplay Denmark's influence. It is as if King Christian's unsuccessful attempt to fight the Emperor was only biding everyone's time until the "Lion of the North", Gustav II Adolf of Sweden, makes his great entrance. Or at least that is the perspective of an "all-knowing" historian who already knows the result. This thesis is trying to bring a different perspective. It is based on the analysis of general Ernst von Mansfeld and Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar's invasion in Silesia and Moravia in 1626–1627 that was first developed as a master's thesis. Emphasis is here placed on the perspective of the anti-Habsburg side of the conflict.

The long-expected invasion had enormous consequences for the Danish war. Already at the time, it was considered something extraordinary. While Mansfeld had his own troops, formally answering to England, Duke Johann Ernst I the Younger of Saxe-Weimar commanded the regiments of Christian IV, the King of Denmark and Norway, who was in the years 1625–1629 leading the anti-Habsburg coalition established at The Hague. The diversion in Silesia started in June 1626. The campaign was planned to achieve several objectives at once, and many hopes were resting on its success until October 1626. This courageous attempt was intended by the Hague alliance to achieve strategic dominance over the growing strength of the Habsburg-Catholic side in the form of the armies of the Catholic League and the Empire, the former led by the experienced general Tilly and the latter by the rising star of the Empire, Albrecht von Wallenstein. Their protestant opponents wanted to push the war away from the Lower Saxony region and further inland into the enemy territory, and after joining forces with Gábor Bethlen, the Prince of Transylvania, keep marching perhaps all the way to Vienna. For many reasons, however, this objective had to be abandoned. After Bethlen's peace treaty with the Emperor, the death of both General Mansfeld and Duke Johann Ernst and significant losses that the army suffered along the way, the campaign seemed hopeless. Thanks to the royal war commissioner Joachim Mitzlaff, the remaining army was salvaged and managed to establish a strong base in the occupied territory of Moravia and Silesia, threatening the Emperor and his lands for more than six months. In June and July 1627, the Danish enclave was wiped out by the military might of Albrecht von Wallenstein.

Even though this brief description of the events and activities of the leading actors may be clarified in details, this thesis aims to do something different. The heuristics of research kept expanding in scope and extended beyond local archives abroad, specifically to Germany, Austria, Denmark and, in terms of historiography, also Norway. The thesis has the character of a trilogy, divided into three main sections. Even though each chapter has the form of an independent study, they are all parts of a consistent whole. The research started with the diversion in the Czech lands, discussed in the third section. The main emphasis is here placed on showing the action from multiple perspectives. What was the perception of this invasion into the centre of Europe by a military commander, a diplomat, a regular soldier or an inhabitant of the land? And what was the role of Transylvania in the action? Documents from Weimar made it possible to study the life of the talented commander Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar; the edition of the diplomatic correspondence of Sir Thomas Roe, the English Ambassador to Constantinople, helped in analysing the position of Bethlen, the Prince of Transylvania. There are few

direct means of studying Bethlen, and both Czech and foreign historiography are still struggling with language barriers. In the context of the campaign, it seems necessary to consider also the perspective of civilians. Willingly or not, the inhabitants of towns and villages were an important factor influencing the development of the war on the local level in various ways. What was happening in the conquered parts of North Moravia and Upper Silesia? The fact that the surrounded Danish enclave managed to survive for a relatively long period is quite remarkable. To what extent was this helped by Moravian and Silesian civilians? Emphasis in this discussion was placed on active parts played by the civilians.

This analysis of the fate of the military campaign in Central Europe raised questions extending beyond the topic itself. How was the idea of the invasion formed? Who came with it and why did Denmark decide to execute the plan? What were the roles of Mansfeld, Johann Ernst of Saxe-Weimar and Christian IV? What kind of military leaders were they, and why did they lose? What about exiles and soldiers from the Czech lands? What was their position in the Danish army? The second part of the thesis focuses primarily on the activities of General Ernst von Mansfeld. Decisions regarding the structure of the analysis were inevitably influenced by Walter Krüssman's extensive thesis on Mansfeld published in 2010. One of the most important moments of Mansfeld's campaign in the Danish war was the Battle of Dessau Bridge on 25 April 1626. His army was almost crushed, but his spirit was not. Was his defeat at the bridge an unlucky accident, or was it a consequence of falling dangerously behind the stronger foe? What role did Christian IV play here?

It is the king who is the subject of the next important set of questions that need to be resolved when discussing the Danish phase and invasion. Was the Danish king capable of waging war against the Empire in its own territory? Was not his defeat in Silesia and Moravia in the summer of 1627 merely a logical consequence of factors that had been known in advance? For this reason, the first part of the trilogy focuses on Christian IV and his war effort. The analysis does not only discuss the international situation and specific movements of armies, but also the military potential, financial resources and strategic abilities of the King of Denmark. These questions inevitably lead to broader problems beyond the scope of this thesis. Was the Danish phase merely an intermission before the grandiose entrance of Gustav II Adolf? Was the Danish king only preparing the stage for the mighty Lion of the North? Or, in our situation, quite specifically: What role did the invasion in Silesia play in the war exactly? Did it show the king's strategic thinking? In the context of the major Swedish victories that followed, Gustav's predecessor in the anti-Habsburg fight necessarily remains overshadowed. This thesis does not in any way intend to diminish the reputation of the Swedish king, but merely sidesteps his legacy to find a different perspective. The Danish king is being pushed into the background for another reason as well: the imposing figure of Wallenstein who dominates also in German writing about the Danish phase.

The topic defines the scope of the thesis and essentially limits it to only a specific part of the Danish phase of the war, the years 1625–1627. This period of two and a half years is called by Danish historians the "German phase". The reason is that until the summer of 1627, the military campaign was limited to Lower Saxony and was still merely the king's personal project. It was only after the defeat in Silesia and the return of Wallenstein to German battlegrounds that the balance of power changed and the Danish king was forced to retreat to his country. This changed the character of the conflict. The war of large-scale manoeuvres was replaced by a series of fights defending various positions.

An integral part of the thesis is an edition of source documents provided in the appendix. In addition to a list of soldiers of several Danish companies, obtained by probing the archives, this edition includes the correspondence between Ernst von Mansfeld and Christian IV from autumn 1625 to June 1626. This very selective sample from the enormous wealth of material concerning the history of the invasion is dominated by a comprehensive report by the Danish war commissary Mitzlaff who was leading the Danish army in Silesia after the death of its commanders and who made a significant contribution to the functioning of the enclave until July 1627.