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## NIEMCZA (1017) – BAUTZEN (1018). DOES HISTORY “WRITE” WINNERS? (IN THE CIRCLE OF THIETMAR OF MERSEBURG’S CHRONICLE)

### NIEMCZA (1017) – BUDZISZYN (1918). CZY HISTORIA PISZE ZWYCIĘZCÓW? (W KRĘGU PRZEKAZU THIETMARA Z MERSEBURGA)

**ABSTRACT:** The article concerns the shaping of the narrative of Thietmar of Merseburg about the third war between Henry II and Bolesław the Brave (1015–1018), which ended with the Peace of Bautzen. In the description of the culmination of the conflict (the siege of Niemcza in 1017), the moral and theological interpretation of events draws the attention. Thietmar did not conceal his admiration for the defenders of the castle, emphasizing their Christian attitude. In this context, it is surprising that the chronicler called the participants of the expedition victorious and therefore he is sometimes accused of propaganda. Whereas it is more about an assessment of the effects of the war. The description of the events demonstrates that both parties could declare a victory: Henry, because he had got Bolesław’s request for peace, and Bolesław, because he had avoided appearing before Henry II.

**KEYWORDS:** Thietmar of Merseburg, Henry II, Bolesław I the Brave, Siege of Niemcza (1017), Peace of Bautzen (1018)

The millennium has passed since *Thietmar’s Chronicle* was written, without which the oblivion would have swallowed up a great deal of knowledge about the Europe of the Liudolfings’ era<sup>1</sup>. The axis of the narrative in this work is determined

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<sup>1</sup> *Kronika Thietmara*, Latin and Polish text, transl., preface and commentary Marian Z. Jedlicki, Poznań 1953 [hereafter: Thietmar]. For the author and the work see, among others: Marian Z. Jedlicki, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Ibidem*, pp. I–XXXI; Helmut Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg. Reichsbischof und Chronist*, Köln–Wien 1973 (Mitteldeutsche Forschungen, 72), pp. 46–137;

by the history of the mentioned dynasty, although its geographical horizon extends much further than the range of the Liudolfings' reign – as far as to Byzantium, the south of the Apennine Peninsula, the British Isles, Scandinavia, Ruthenia and the Stepp People. Thietmar devoted a lot of space to the beginnings of Poland, strongly intertwined with the history of the Roman Empire restored by Otto I, which, let's recall, included Germany, emerging at that time from the East-Frankish monarchy, and large parts of Italy with the Kingdom of the Lombards.

Thietmar – due to his belonging to the Saxon aristocracy and holding the office of the Bishop of Merseburg since 1009, and thus also being a representative of the close elite gathered around the German ruler, Henry II – was a watchful and politically committed observer of the Liudolfings' eastern policy. This circumstance, combined with his unusual curiosity for the world, resulted in the pages of his work both in reporting on the events taking place in the circle of Germany's Slavic neighbours, as well as in many information about their countries: geography, the social system, dynastic relations or issues of culture and religion. Excellent examples of it are passages devoted to the issues indicated in the title of these reflections: the siege of Niemcza during the third war between Henry II and Bolesław the Brave (1015–1018) and the final Peace of Bautzen.

What is important is that reports about these events, permanently inscribed in the canon of the basic views of Polish history, appeared only in the final part of the chronicle – Thietmar died on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1018, but his story ends in the summer of that year. So in this case we have a voice in the then current debate on Henry II's policy. For, by creating a picture of the facts entrusted to the memory of the writing, the historian not only expressed his views, but also shaped those of the elite of the Empire at the time, and thus also engaged himself in the political process of his time. Perfectly evident in this case is the pragmatic aspect of historiography at the time<sup>2</sup>, whose task was to influence the attitudes, behaviour and even decisions of the contemporaries, especially in the area of State's policy or the policy of the Church, integrally connected with the State.

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Werner Trillmich, *Einleitung*, [in:] *Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, ed. and transl. W. Trillmich, Darmstadt 1992, pp. IX–XXXII; Stanisław Rosik, *Interpretacja chrześcijańska religii pogańskich Słowian w świetle kronik niemieckich XI–XII wieku (Thietmar, Adam z Bremy, Helmold)*, Wrocław 2000 (Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis 2235, Historia CXLIV), pp. 43–60; Kerstin Schulmeyer-Ahl, *Der Anfang vom Ende der Ottonen. Konstitutionsbedingungen historiographischer Nachrichten in der Chronik Thietmars von Merseburg*, Berlin 2009.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Edward Potkowski, *Problemy kultury piśmiennej łacińskiego średniowiecza*, "Przegląd Humanistyczny", 3 (1994), pp. 21–40, p. 34.

References to more distant times and legendary threads have also gained not least importance in the realization of such a large-scale *causa scribendi*. And so the cornerstone in the structure of the narrative of *Thietmar's Chronicle* is the origins of Merseburg, mythologized and elevated with a Caesarian tune, as befits the future capital of the Diocese<sup>3</sup>, for whose good the author wrestled using the arms of writing. Founded in 968, it was already liquidated in 981, and its lands were divided between neighbouring dioceses with the Magdeburg Metropolis at the head, whose new Ordinary, Gisilher, hitherto the Bishop of Merseburg, was the main perpetrator of this dismantling<sup>4</sup>. In 1004, Henry II restored the Diocese of Merseburg, and Thietmar devoted the bulk of his work to his time, not only out of gratitude for the act itself, but also in the hope that in this way he would contribute to the widening of the boundaries of his diocese, which was restituted in a truncated form in relation to its original territorial shape<sup>5</sup>. The key importance in Thietmar's writing programme, however, was the very inscription of Merseburg as the church capital on the pages of history, so that no one would dare to erase it from them.

A warning in this case was the extensive development on the pages of the chronicle of the conviction, already widespread in the Empire, that the liquidation of the Diocese of Merseburg, approved by the authority of Otto II, was the cause of the misfortunes that had fallen on his monarchy at the end of his reign, such as the military disasters in Italy in the fight against the Saracens (982) and, above all, the loss of the Northern Polabia as a result of Slavic rebellions, first of all the Great Lutici Rising (983)<sup>6</sup>. It is worth recalling these threads as a model example of the chronicler's application of the moral and theological interpretation of history, which is here all the more clear since it concerns the past, in relation to which a considerable time distance itself was conducive to the selection of recorded events and their incorporation into the narrative stream in such a way that cause and effect sequences optimally reflect the essential messages of the narrative (in this case the

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<sup>3</sup> Thietmar I, 1; on the importance of this kind of – sometimes legendary – ancient, as well as apostolic “beginnings” in justifying the establishment of bishop's capitals, see e.g. Roman Michałowski, *Zjazd gnieźnieński. Religijne przesłanki powstania arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego*, Wrocław 2005, pp. 23–53.

<sup>4</sup> Thietmar III, 14.

<sup>5</sup> See e.g. Lippelt, *Thietmar*, pp. 89–115.

<sup>6</sup> Before Thietmar this view was expressed in writing by St. Bruno of Querfurt – see Bruno of Kwerfurt, *Świętego Wojciecha żywot drugi*, Monumenta Poloniae Historica [hereafter: MPH], n.s., vol. 4, part 2, Warszawa 1969, II, 10, 12; see e.g. Michał Tomaszek, *Brunon z Kwerfurtu i Otton II: powstanie słowiańskie 983 roku jako grzech cesarza*, “Kwartalnik Historyczny”, 109 (2002), 4, p. 5.

idea of the aforementioned heavenly punishment for the act against the existence of a diocese)<sup>7</sup>.

In depicting times closer to their historical description, the pace of narration becomes inherently slower and more detailed, which today is of great value to a historian due to the growth of factual data. However, this made it more difficult at the same time for the chronicler to express an equally coherent, schematic interpretation of the described events in a historical dimension as in the case of references to the distant past. However, even in those written down “up-to-date” – as will be discussed in more detail in the reflections below – there are plenty of clear assessments of the characters’ attitudes and events. This offers a special opportunity to reflect on the socio-political and cultural context in which the message is being written, allowing us to take a look at an old debate on current events, in this case from a thousand years ago, in which a chronicler participated with his writing. It is important, however, that we are dealing here not only with his personal position, but also with a reference to the views functioning in the wider circle of the German court and Church elite, who were also the primary target of his work.

This conviction can be confirmed by reading *Annals Quedliburgenses*<sup>8</sup>, written on an ongoing basis, in which we find a laconic and very general reference to both events mentioned in the title of this article. Under the year 1017, the annalist recalls Henry II’s expedition against the Polish Bolesław, pointing out its

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<sup>7</sup> Thietmar III, 17–22, broadly presenting the course of events which he considered as a result of the liquidation of the Diocese of Merseburg in 981 (see *ibidem*, III, 16: “Sed quae res destructionem hanc subsequerentur, lector attende!”), he changed their chronology, first showing the havoc affecting the Metropolis of Magdeburg and its dioceses caused by the rebellion of the Slavic peoples who crushed the sovereignty of the Empire in the Northern Polabia (first of all the Great Lutici Rising of 983), and then describing Otto II’s defeats in Italy (982). In another place, however, he gave the correct date of the 983 uprising in a brief presentation, aptly juxtaposing it with the events after the Italian military defeats of the Empire (see *ibidem*, III, 24). Thus, the aforementioned reversal of the chronology can be seen as a manifestation of the hierarchy of guilt and punishment for the abolition of the bishopric in Merseburg: it would be borne in the first place by the ecclesiastical side, primarily by the metropolitan Gisilher, who was the *spiritus movens* of this liquidation action, and in the second place by the monarch who approved it. See e.g. Rosik, *Interpretacja*, pp. 90 ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, Monumenta Germaniae Historica [hereafter: MGH], *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi* [hereafter: *Scriptores*], 72, Hannover 2004. Thietmar used these annals (see Martina Giese, *Einleitung*, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 213 ff., 258 ff.), although with regard to the events of 1017–1018, which are key in these considerations, the impact of this reading is not noticeable, which is not surprising given that the chronicler reported on current events.

miserable effect due to the plague weakening the imperial army<sup>9</sup>, and then under the year 1018, he notifies of the conclusion of peace between the aforementioned rulers<sup>10</sup>. It is striking to note that Bolesław was mentioned as regaining the imperial grace, so probably he was seeking it. And a similar situation can be observed in Thietmar’s narrative, who, in the presentation of the origins of the Peace of Bautzen, emphasized that it was the Brave who tried hard to conclude it, and before that – as it will be discussed in more detail below – showed the military aspects of the expedition to Poland in 1017 in accordance with the pessimistic assessment of its effects contained in *Annales Quedlinburgenses*<sup>11</sup>.

In this situation, however, it is remarkable that at the end of the description of this expedition its participants were called winners by Thietmar<sup>12</sup>. Churchill used to say that “history is written by the winners”, but with regard to this passage of the chronicle, a rather opposite point may come to mind: it is history (of course the “out-of-the inkwell” one) that writes the winners, even in spite of facts. However, before we succumb to the temptation to consider this mention of the Merseburg bishop only as a contribution to the study of the medieval history of political propaganda, it is worth making an attempt to explicate the meaning of this place in the chronicle, taking into account both the broader context of the work and the problems troubling the environment in which and for which it was created as its first addressee.

Therefore, let us treat the question posed in the title of these considerations only as a provocation to emphasize the specificity of the interpretation of the mentioned events in the work of the chronicler from Merseburg, whose interpretation of history – although it reproduces the common elements of living (though already fossilized in writing) memory in this matter, as we indicated above in relation to *Annales Quedlinburgenses*<sup>13</sup> – is highly complex. On the one hand, Thietmar’s fundamental moral and theological messages are evident in his work, while on the other hand, his concern for the political interests of the Empire and its subjects,

<sup>9</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1117: “Imperator etiam hoc anno iterum castra movit contra Bolitzlavum, sed nimia pestilentia et mortalitate populi obstante sine belli effectu rediit in patriam”.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, a.a. 1018: “...hoc anno Bolitzlavo per nuncios reconciliata pace imperatoris gratiam recepit”.

<sup>11</sup> More on that below.

<sup>12</sup> Thietmar VII, 64.

<sup>13</sup> In this case, we can speak of the voice of a specific narrative in the social circulation, expressing the core of socio-cultural memory (*memoria*) of events, subject to written interpretations, which were an important dimension not only of preserving but also of shaping this memory.

with the Saxons, native to the chronicler, at the forefront. Since their victory is difficult to see during the expedition of 1017<sup>14</sup>, it is nothing else to do but to expand our field of observation, starting with an indication of the causes of Henry II's third war with Bolesław the Brave, and therefore of the goals whose achievement could entitle the chronicler to the said verdict.

The origins of this conflict are known only from German sources, and it is particularly striking in Thietmar's account his unequivocal – and rather rightly suspicious<sup>15</sup> – blaming the Brave for provoking it. According to the chronicler, the Polish ruler did not keep his promises to support Henry II in his quest for the Imperial Crown in Italy<sup>16</sup>, and, as *Annales Quedlinburgenses* also report<sup>17</sup> – he tried, by sending his son Mieszko to Bohemia, to involve Oldřich, who ruled there, in a plot against the Emperor. However, Mieszko was imprisoned by the Přemyslid and then, at the request of Henry II, handed over to his custody (as his vassal)<sup>18</sup>. Some of the mighty in Germany believed – as Thietmar's narrative tells us – that the delay in the young man's liberation for too long contributed to Bolesław's such great dissatisfaction that even after his son was regained by him, he consistently refused to appear before the Emperor in person<sup>19</sup>. The Emperor, on the other hand, called upon him to explain himself and to make amends for his failure to provide support for the aforementioned Italian expedition<sup>20</sup>.

Thietmar points out that Bolesław, in response to the imperial calls, sent only – accompanied by his son-in-law, Margrave Herman of Meissen – a messenger

<sup>14</sup> For the course of the third war between Henry II and Bolesław the Brave, see e.g. Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry*, Poznań 1999, pp. 144–159; Przemysław Urbańczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry – lew ryczący*, Toruń 2017, pp. 258–269.

<sup>15</sup> It's highlighted by Andrzej Pleszczyński (*Niemcy wobec pierwszej monarchii piastowskiej (963–1034). Narodziny stereotypu. Postrzeganie i cywilizacyjna klasyfikacja władców Polski i ich kraju*, Lublin 2008, pp. 241–247), accurately pointing out some inconsistencies in Thietmar's narration, and above all the failure to take into account important aspects of the then Polish-Czech relations, crucial in the assessment of the case of imprisonment of Mieszko II by Udalryk, which is discussed below.

<sup>16</sup> Thietmar VII, 4. Bolesław made a commitment of loyalty to Henryk in Merseburg, paying homage and receiving a “benefice”. Soon he also received Saxon support in his expedition to Rus' in 1013. (see *ibidem*, VI, 92).

<sup>17</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1014. This information is contained in two laconic records: firstly, about the imprisonment of Mieszko and the killing of his people by Udalryk, then about passing the captured one to the Emperor, and about his release and handing him over to his father.

<sup>18</sup> Thietmar VII, 11–12. Here, too, about the release of Mieszko by the Saxon mighty, under the care of whom Henry II entrusted him.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 13.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 4.

named Stojgniew, who, however, with his lies, led to an escalation of tension. Upon his return to the country, he deliberately misrepresented the position of the Emperor, and in this situation Bolesław once more sent him to Henry, again in the company of Herman, who was making a particularly intensive effort to reconcile the conflicting parties<sup>21</sup>. However, in response, Henry only once again called upon Bolesław to appear before him in person, and the latter refused. Thietmar informs about the remaining imperial claims occasionally elsewhere when he mentions a convenient, yet not used by Henry II, moment for an attack on Poland in 1016, to restitute what Bolesław received from “our” lands, according to Thietmar, and to make him willing to surrender and be loyal to the Emperor for the latter’s offer of peace<sup>22</sup>.

The course of these events is more or less confirmed by *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, though they do not mention Bolesław’s disloyalty during Henry II’s Italian expedition. In the record under the year 1015, however, it was noted that the Brave was summoned before the Emperor’s face, and that he only sent the gifts, thereby, as the annalist points out, losing not only the gifts, but also the Emperor’s grace<sup>23</sup>. Then – still in the same year – it is said that Henry II sent a message to Bolesław with a call to give back the lands he had seized, but Bolesław, in his pride, supposedly replied not only that he intended to keep his own areas, but also that he preferred rather to reach for those of others<sup>24</sup>. It was with this answer that he allegedly provoked the emperor’s invasion.

In the first great clash, the Polish side, according to *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, lost as many as 900 people<sup>25</sup>. Thietmar estimated these losses more modestly: over 600<sup>26</sup>. Despite this success, Henry II’s army did not manage to enter far into the country of Bolesław, and during its retreat through the lands of the Dziadoszanie (*Dadosesani/Diadesisi*) a part of it was bloody destroyed by Mieszko, son of

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Henry did not take advantage of this moment as he was involved in the armed intervention in Burgundy. See *ibidem*, VII, 29: “Namque multi, quibus hoc cognitum erat, veraciter asserebant, si cesar ad eum tunc turmatim veniret, timorem, quod eundem de nostris respiceret, restituere et eum ad servitum suam pace tantum concessa promptum et fidelem habere potuisset”.

<sup>23</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1015: “Ibi Bolitzlavo omnia munera, quae illi miserat, simul cum gratia perdidit, dum illum legatione superba infestum reddidit”.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*: “Addidit etiam imperator hoc anno legationem mittere ad Bolitzlavum pro restituendis regionibus, quas abstulerat. Ille, ut solebat, superbe respondit se non solum propria retinere velle, quin potius non sua diripere malle”.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> Thietmar VII, 18.



the Brave<sup>27</sup>. Later, Mieszko also besieged his brother-in-law Herman in Meissen, which with great difficulty managed to defend itself<sup>28</sup>. So it is hard to finally consider this stage of the struggle as a success of the Emperor, who in the following year did not attack Poland, but without much success intervened in Burgundy. This gave Bolesław – not to mention the joy and pride driven by the miserable effect of these Emperor's efforts in the West – an opportunity to strengthen military his sovereignty<sup>29</sup> before another confrontation. In referring to this opportunity, we are already entering strictly into the thematic scope defined in the title of this article.

Thietmar's account gains a key importance in this case<sup>30</sup>, as this time *Annales Quedlinburgenses* are very laconic, and their one-sentence information in this matter has already been presented above<sup>31</sup>. Whereas, Thietmar not only described the exact course of the expedition, but also the preceding attempts at peace made in the first months of 1017. First, he mentioned the exchange of messages preceded by Bolesław's request, which resulted in a truce<sup>32</sup>; once it was concluded, Henry went to Merseburg, where he awaited the outcome of further negotiations. They were to be conducted on his part by appointed church and lay dignitaries<sup>33</sup>, who asked Bolesław through their envoys to come to negotiate on the Elbe River (and then even closer, on the Black Elster), but he refused, stating – according to Thietmar, obviously insincerely – that he was afraid of his own safety in the land he did not control. The failure of this attempt at the final end of the war prompted Henry II to prepare a new expedition and forbid further contacts of his subjects with the Polish ruler, who otherwise had many sympathizers among the German elite<sup>34</sup>.

In the late spring or summer of 1017, the Moravian warriors of the Brave slaughtered a Bavarian troop<sup>35</sup>, which fuelled the atmosphere of conflict. Meanwhile,

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 19–20; see also *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1015.

<sup>28</sup> Thietmar VII, 23.

<sup>29</sup> See Thietmar VII, 29: "Hostis autem noster Bolizlavus inter haec nil nostra lesit, sed sua munit et certus de eventu cesaris effectus laetatur et nimis extollitur". Thietmar's psychologizations (here: Bolesław's joy or his pride) suggest that he had good contact with the Polish ruler's environment or... he was only making suggestive guesses.

<sup>30</sup> It is worth mentioning that the Annalist Saxo also relied on Thietmar's account, reporting extensively on the 1017 campaign – see *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Klaus Nass, MGH, Scriptores, Hannover 2006, a.a. 1017 (pp. 350 ff.).

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 9.

<sup>32</sup> Thietmar VII, 50. From the context of the information, it appears that this truce was concluded in January 1017.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 51.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 52.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 57.



the Emperor’s expedition was already gathering. On 8<sup>th</sup> July, Henry II left Magdeburg, crossed the Elbe and waited for the late troops in *Lesca*. Nevertheless, still at that time the negotiations of the last opportunity were undertaken, by exchanging envoys, yet failed<sup>36</sup>. When the news came to light that Bolesław sent his son Mieszko on a plundering expedition to Bohemia – and this happened in the absence of Oldřich, who ruled there – it was the last straw: the emperor ordered the expedition to march out, having immediate support of the Bohemian and pagan Lutici troops, already tested as allies in his earlier struggles with Poland<sup>37</sup>.

Spreading desolation, Henry II’s army arrived on 9<sup>th</sup> August at the stronghold in Głogów, where it was awaited by Bolesław and his men. Bolesław hid some of them, precisely archers, and provoked the enemy to fight. However, Henry, not falling into an ambush, forbade to attack<sup>38</sup> and ordered a further march towards Niemcza. His arrival there with the main forces was preceded by a vanguard in the form of twelve “legions”. They were supposed to prevent the reinforcements sent by Bolesław from reaching the stronghold in question, but those – only partially stopped – broke through to the stronghold under the cover of night and downpour<sup>39</sup>. The Polish ruler himself did not close himself in Niemcza, but stayed on the line of the Oder River, now in Wrocław, where he awaited further developments<sup>40</sup>.

Thietmar doesn’t explain why Henry directed the expedition to Niemcza in the “land of Ślężanie” (“pagus Silensi”)<sup>41</sup>. One can guess that in this way he

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, Henry II was represented by his namesake, the Duke of Bavaria, at that time still temporarily deprived of his authority, but just being restored for graces.

<sup>37</sup> Already during the first war with the Brave they were allies of Henry II (see Thietmar VI, 22 and 25–26). For more on this, see Paweł BabiŃ, *Wojskowość Słowian Polabskich*, vol. 1, Wrocław 2017 (Wrocławskie Studia z Historii Wojskowości, 5), pp. 144–147.

<sup>38</sup> Thietmar VII, 59.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*. Henry II stood in front of Niemcza “after three days” (see *ibidem*, VII, 60), but it is doubtful whether those three days passed after his departure from Głogów or after the aforementioned breakthrough of the Brave’s reinforcements to Niemcza. The second solution was more feasible for such a large army for logistical reasons.

<sup>40</sup> Thietmar VII, 64.

<sup>41</sup> A common translation of “*Silensi*” as ablativus from *Silensis* (“Silesian”) – see eg. Thietmar VII, 59, p. 554; cf. *Thietmari Merseburgensis Episcopi Chronicon*, ed. and transl. W. Trillmich, Darmstadt 1992, VII, 59, p. 421 (here: “Schlesiergau”); *Ottonian Germany. The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, transl. D. A. Warner, Manchester–New York 2001, p. 350 (here: “region of Silesia”) – in this particular case it is not appropriate, especially since it erroneously assumes the existence of Silesia as early as at the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. For more information on this matter see e.g. Stanisław Rosik, *Kształtowanie się Śląska (do 1163 r.). Czynniki integracji regionalnej*, “Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka”, 67 (2012), 4, 31–52; cf. *idem*, *The formation of Silesia (to 1163). Factors of regional integration*, [in:] *The long formation of the Region Silesia (c. 1000–1526)*, ed. Przemysław Wiszewski, Wrocław 2013 (Cuius regio? Ideological and Territorial

wanted to secure his way to Bohemia, especially if we assume that conquering this stronghold would only be a part of the plan to return to the Oder River, e.g. to besiege Wrocław. However, this plan is only a guess, so let's give up the temptation to make further speculations in this direction, especially that – what is worth emphasizing – for Bolesław just being deprived of Niemcza would be a severe loss. For the functioning of the then Polish statehood in the lands of the future Silesia individual tribal territories were still of key importance<sup>42</sup>, and strongholds were representative seats of the Piast rule in their area. The capture of Niemcza would thus reduce Bolesław's possession of the “pagus Silensi”, and could be for instance handed over to Oldřich from Bohemia, who personally supported the Emperor during the siege<sup>43</sup>.

However, the assumption about such plans cannot be strengthened by observing the further course of events, because more than three weeks<sup>44</sup> of fights for Niemcza – we come back to Thietmar's account – did not bring success to the attackers. The chronicler complains about the low morale of Henry II's people, who did not properly support his plans<sup>45</sup>. In addition, they were thwarted by a powerful relief that managed to break into the castle at night. Even when the Emperor's forces built siege machines, the inhabitants of the stronghold made similar ones, and soon burned those of the besieging with fire thrown from the ramparts<sup>46</sup>. When describing these incidents, the chronicler did not hide his admiration for the defenders, regarding not only their proficiency in the art of war, but also their attitude: moderation both in showing joy at success and sadness at failure. This praise of the knightly virtues is also reflected in the chronicler's emphasis on the ostentatious attachment of people of Niemcza to the Christian faith: they erected a cross against the storming pagan Lutici, trusting that they would win under this emblem<sup>47</sup>.

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Cohesion of the Historical Region of Silesia (c. 1000–2000), 1), pp. 41–64, esp. 55–57; see also below, footnote 55.

<sup>42</sup> Thus, the formulation of statements that Silesia was annexed to Poland or Bohemia at that time should be considered anachronistic (e.g. with regard to the effects of the “regnum ablatum” war mentioned by Thietmar, hypothetically dated 990, or the territorial acquisitions of Czech Bretislav I after his invasion to Poland in 1038/1039), see for example Lech A. Tyszkiewicz, *Przylączenie Śląska do monarchii piastowskiej pod koniec X wieku*, [in:] *Od plemienia do państwa. Śląsk na tle Słowiańszczyzny Zachodniej*, ed. Lech Leciejewicz, Wrocław–Warszawa 1991, pp. 120–152; Jan Tyszkiewicz, *Geografia historyczna Polski w średniowieczu. Zbiór studiów*, Warszawa 2003, p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> Thietmar VII, 63.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 60.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 60, 63.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 60, 63, VII, 60.

The chronicler, especially as a clergyman, was probably quite impressed by this behaviour, and although the aforementioned hope of victory may only be narrowed down here to repulse the Lutici assault, the message of this passage of the chronicle is not indifferent to an overall assessment of the attackers' attitude. For Thietmar had already expressed his regrets about Henry II's alliance with these pagans<sup>48</sup>. It may be assumed though that the chronicler, since he e.g. called those who instigated to break the alliance “evil”<sup>49</sup>, accepted its necessity<sup>50</sup>, but this cannot be regarded as certain. This is because in this case the condemnation may have concerned the very encouragement to abandon the Emperor, betrayal of whom was an evil in itself, even if it were to have a positive effect in the religious perspective, i.e. to break the controversial alliance.

We should recall that almost a decade earlier St. Bruno of Querfurt in his letter to Henry II compared him with the – after all, impossible – communion of “Christ with Belial”<sup>51</sup>. What is important, Thietmar testifies that such hostile religious sentiments against the Lutici were not only held by clergy, but also by imperial knights. One of them, a companion of Margrave Herman – already on their way to homeland after the siege of Niemcza – destroyed the sacred banner of the Lutici goddess with a stone. This incident cost Henry II a great deal of money, as he had to compensate the pagans for their loss with “12 talents”<sup>52</sup>. The chronicler by no means judged the decision of the ruler in this case, but the mere mention of this expense deepened the negative balance in the assessment of the expedition.

The theme of spiritual confrontation, highlighted in the image of repulsing the pagan assault by the defenders under the sign of the Cross, gains in clarity thanks to additional elements of the scenery of events painted on the pages of Thietmar's work, introduced as etymological digressions. The chronicler stresses that the Niemcza, literally: “Nemci”, or “Niemcy”<sup>53</sup>, gained its name from “the ours” who founded it<sup>54</sup>,

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, VI, 25.

<sup>49</sup> This allegedly took place after the siege of Niemcza was retracted, see Thietmar VII, 64.

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, p. 124.

<sup>51</sup> *Epistola Brunonis ad Henricum regem*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, [in:] MPH n.s., vol. 4, part 3, Warszawa 1973, pp. 101 ff. Cf. 2 Kor 6, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Thietmar VII, 64.

<sup>53</sup> The word “Niemcy” in Slavic/Polish stands for “Germans” (translator's note).

<sup>54</sup> Presumably, the name is connected with a foreign population (prisoners of war?) settled in this place to build this stronghold, see e.g. Marta Młynarska-Kaletynowa, Jürgen Schölzel, *Najdawniejsza Niemcza*, [in:] *Niemcza. Wielka historia malego miasta*, ed. Marta Młynarska-Kaletynowa, Wrocław 2002, p. 28.

while the name of the country, i. e. “Silensi”<sup>55</sup>, in which this stronghold is situated – the chronicler continues – was once taken from a certain great and high mountain, which in pagan times was worshipped by all the inhabitants because of its greatness and qualities (literally *qualitas*)<sup>56</sup>. It is not difficult to guess that it was Ślęża<sup>57</sup>.

In Thietmar’s view, therefore, the land of Ślężanie (*Silensi*) still breathes paganism because of its name, which was taken from the cult mountain being the focal point of the landscape, but, what is important, this paganism was already a thing of the past<sup>58</sup>. Thus, Niemcza appears as a special sign of the new, Christian reality in the landscape of the country, and at the same time was founded by strangers in the native Slavic environment, although by the chronicler called *expressis verbis* as “the ours”. This Saxon<sup>59</sup> origin of the stronghold became part of the foundation of a new order, alternative to the tribal one, and the paganism that was connected with it, which, however, once again (and paradoxically, because together with the Christian emperor) came here with the Lutici carrying their idols<sup>60</sup>.

In the context of these observations, Marian Z. Jedlicki’s classic statement today that the defense of Niemcza “must have been truly heroic, since such a fierce enemy of the Poles as Thietmar wrote [...] words of his appreciation”<sup>61</sup> towards defenders is worth a certain compliment. The praise given to the besieged had in

<sup>55</sup> Thietmar used Slavic names such as *Silensi* (*Cilensi*), *Diadesisi*/*Diedesi*, etc. both to describe the countries and the tribes living there and did not declinate these names by cases, see Stanisław Rosik, *Czy za pierwszych Piastów istniał pagus Silensis? O nowożytnej genezie dzisiejszych problemów interpretacyjno-translatorskich (na przykładzie badań nad wątkiem Ślęzy w Kronice Thietmara)*, [in:] *Editiones sine fine*, vol. 1, ed. Krzysztof Kopiński, Wojciech Mrozowicz, Janusz Tandecki, Toruń 2017, pp. 91–98. See also above, note 41.

<sup>56</sup> Thietmar VII, 59; the classical Polish translation spreads at this point a rather erroneous view that the reason for the cult of Ślęża was – as the translator added – its “purpose” to celebrate “pagan rituals” on it (see *ibidem*, p. 554). This interpretation blurs Thietmar’s clear interpretation on this point, indicating *expressis verbis* as the reason for worshipping a mountain its qualities (literally *qualitas*) and height – see e.g. Rosik, *Czy za pierwszych Piastów*, pp. 93–96.

<sup>57</sup> Then it was probably called “Ślęż” (*Slenz*), see e.g. Stanisław Rospond, *Ślęża* (1), [in:] *Słownik starożytności słowiańskich*, vol. 5, eds. Gerard Labuda, Zdzisław Stieber, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1975, p. 564.

<sup>58</sup> This is evidenced not only by the past tense used by the chronicler in this message, but also by the specificity of Thietmar’s treatment of areas already belonging to Christian monarchies, and in this case also those covered by the diocesan network, see e.g. Rosik, *Interpretacja*, pp. 86–90, 147 ff.

<sup>59</sup> Thietmar here speaks of the founding of the stronghold “by the ours” (“a nostris”), which points to the Saxons, but in fact it could also have been some other non-Slavic population, although most probably from the German area, see above, note 54.

<sup>60</sup> Carrying images of deities was a war custom of the Lutici see e.g. Thietmar VI, 22, as well as above, note 52.

<sup>61</sup> See the publisher’s comment in: Thietmar, p. 555, note 405.

its subtext first the German (Saxon) origin of their stronghold, and then – although not in the second place – a religious factor<sup>62</sup>: the topos, which dates back to the Constantinian tradition, of the hope placed on the Crosss, the emphasis of which made the defenders of Niemcza true knights of Christ, prudent and full of virtues. From the key perspective of the chronicle’s theological-moral interpretation of history, the effectiveness of their resistance against the Emperor’s forces acting in the company of worshippers of the diabolical Svarožic<sup>63</sup>, is not surprising.

It is the people of Niemcza who, on the literary created scene of events, present an attitude deserving the favour of Providence, with which the word about the joy of their ruler at the news of the end of the siege also clearly corresponds. The chronicler informs that while staying in Wrocław, Bolesław shared the joy with his soldiers in a mundane way, but also – and this should be emphasized – he had “joy in the Lord”<sup>64</sup>. This New Testament motif<sup>65</sup> appeared already earlier in Thietmar’s chronicle, even in the description of the conflict between Henry II and the Polish ruler, and at that time this topical joy was to overwhelm the German king’s circle of people because of saving him from danger<sup>66</sup>. This time, however, the joy was achieved by Bolesław, what indicates whose side, in the chronicler’s opinion, the race of Heaven was on<sup>67</sup>, and it is worth to emphasize this, considering his strongly unfavourable position towards this Piast<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> The importance of this world-view factor in the assessment of individual protagonists and whole peoples in Thietmar’s chronicle was pointed out over half a century ago by Lech A. Tyszkiewicz, *Motywy oceny Słowian w Kronice Thietmara*, [in:] *Studia z dziejów kultury i ideologii poświęcone Ewie Maleczyńskiej*, Wrocław 1968, pp. 104–118.

<sup>63</sup> The name of the devil (*diabolus*) was used for this deity by Saint Bruno in his letter to Henry II (see above, note 51). Similarly, Thietmar (VI, 23–25), characterizing extensively the cult of the Lutici – including the central role of the temple of Svarožic in Radogošč – also introduces a demonic element (e.g., the phrase „simulacra demonum” – *ibidem*, VI, 25) in the theological evaluation of idolatry, albeit limiting himself to defining Svarožic and other deities as “*deus/dea*”.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 64.

<sup>65</sup> Php 4, 4.

<sup>66</sup> Thietmar VI, 11.

<sup>67</sup> This division of joy into spiritual (“in Domino”) and “mundane” (“in seculo”) gains significant value already in the next verse, as it refers to a plundering expedition of more than 600 Bolesław’s warriors into Bohemia, who eventually fell into their own trap and were almost all killed (see *ibidem*, VII, 64). Thus, the “mundane” joy – ascribed in this episode to the Polish warriors – had to be reduced on the side of the Brave, but this fact did not overshadowed by the joy “in the Lord” that was only granted to him (especially since the chronicler is silent about the Brave’s participation in the unfortunate action, even in terms of inspiration).

<sup>68</sup> See e.g. Thietmar IV, 45, where Bolesław is denied the merits which would be indicated by the ‘greater fame’ sounding in his name; IV, 56, where Bolesław’s is a negation of his ‘good’, even by

A moral and theological dimension of the course of events is also clearly visible in Thietmar's story about the fate of the imperial expedition after the siege of Niemcza. It was ended in September, not only in the face of the failure of the assaults on the embankments and the burning of the siege machines, but also – mentioned as well in *Annales Quedlinburgenses* – a plague tormenting the imperial army<sup>69</sup>. Its march through Bohemia, and from there to the homeland, also proved to be very tedious, and particularly telling misfortunes were falling on the Lutici. Thietmar points out that they lost as many as two images of their goddess, the first one, as already mentioned, destroyed by a stone, and the second one during the crossing the Mulda River, consumed by its swamped waters, which took also an excellent troop of 50 warriors.

It is only after that information the chronicler goes on to the thread of the suffering that fell on the Saxons as they were retreating to their homeland, and this order of description of the misfortunes that afflicted the participants of the expedition brings to mind the way in which the guilt and punishment of the Heavens are hierarchised, already known from Thietmar's chronicle when presenting the order of disasters falling on the Empire after the liquidation of the Merseburg diocese in 981<sup>70</sup>. It is probably no coincidence that in his description of the return of the 1017 expedition to their homeland, Thietmar first mentions the scourges that plagued the Lutici as overt idolaters, and secondly refers to the Christians suffering for their sins, and he also communicates *expressis verbis*: "This expedition was undertaken to the loss of the enemy, but it has done much harm to **our victors** [emphasis – S.R.] due to our misdeed"<sup>71</sup>.

This is not, by the way, a surprising moment in Thietmar's narrative, who has often judged severely even the emperors themselves, including Henry II, precisely in his referencing to the supernatural sphere. Suffice it to recall that Thietmar has

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name, mother, of course Dobrava (the adjective 'dobra' in Slavic / Polish means good); VI, 12, where Boleslaus is a 'venomous serpent'.

<sup>69</sup> Thietmar VII, 63. See footnote 9.

<sup>70</sup> See above, note 7.

<sup>71</sup> Thietmar VII, 64: "Facta est haec expeditio ad perniciem hostis; sed crimine nostro multum lesit victoribus nostris". M.Z. Jedlicki's translation (see *ibidem*, p. 560) introduces here the plural form of the noun *crimen*, in the original being the singular, which immediately directs the interpretation towards many "crimes". It is also worth mentioning an attempt to translate this point in such a way, that this misdeed has harmed not "victors", but "victories" (see Strzelczyk, *Boleslaw*, p. 157), which would change the meaning of this sentence (by the way, in accordance with the described course of the expedition). However, it is definitely more convincing to derive the form "victoribus" here from the Latin word *victor* than *victoria*.

not hesitated to explain the reasons for the failure of Henry II’s earlier expedition to Poland (from 1015) with an episode proving that the German ruler undertook it, disregarding the warnings of Heaven<sup>72</sup>. However, in the description of the expedition of 1017 he did not decide on such a clear interpretation of the theological causes of the misfortunes plaguing it. And so, what specific misdeed is referred to in relation to it, one can only make guesses whose hypothetical ranking opens up the alliance of the Empire with the pagans<sup>73</sup>.

However, it cannot be ruled out that this crime (*crimen*) is generally a sphere of sin affecting the entire community of the Empire. For in the next sentence the puzzle is intensified, but at the same time it is conducive to this solution: “For what was not then possible for the enemies [to do] towards us, was later done by our misdeeds”<sup>74</sup>. Maybe this misfortune “completing the measure” was the ravaging of the lands between the Mulda and the Elbe by Bolesław’s men and the abduction of more than a thousand people<sup>75</sup>, mentioned in the next sentence, dated on 19<sup>th</sup> September, but these “our misdeeds” are already hard to speculate on in concrete terms. So it is probably better to stop at the conclusion that it was a general assessment of the moral condition of the subjects of Henry II<sup>76</sup>.

It’s not the end of enigmas in this quotation presented here piece by piece. For it is also striking with its recognition of the imperial army withdrawing to its own country after the unsuccessful siege of Niemcza as the winners, which is the leitmotiv of these reflections. Although there is no lack of mentions in the chronicle about other fights then waged with varying degrees of luck for both sides<sup>77</sup>, these episodes did not bring about a breakthrough that could have authorised such an optimistic verdict for the subjects of Henry II. Thus it remains to seek the explication of the genesis of the victory attributed to them in more promising directions, i. e. *memoria* (and propaganda) and diplomacy.

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<sup>72</sup> See Thietmar VII, 15, where it mention a prophecy disregarded by Henry II brought to him by some remarkably big villager.

<sup>73</sup> Less likely seems to be e.g. the already mentioned instigation of the Lutici by “bad” people to abandon Henry II (see *ibidem*, VII, 64).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*: “Quod enim tunc in nobis non licuit inimicis, peractum est postea criminibus nostris”.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>76</sup> Similarly, Thietmar (VII, 21) explains the defeat of the Germans in the country of Dziadoszanie (*Diadesisi*) generally by the guilt of the subjects of the Empire (he speaks precisely of “us” as culpable).

<sup>77</sup> It is worth to mention here, for example, the unsuccessful attack of Polish warriors on Bohemia and, on the other hand, the plundering of lands between the Elbe and Mulda by the Brave (see *ibidem*, VII, 64).



In this first respect, it is worth considering whether the answer is not already in the quoted sentence that it was only later – after leaving Bolesław’s lands by the expedition of 1017 – that vices of the subjects of the Empire done what the Poles were unable to do during the expedition itself. Therefore, the very fact that the imperial army was not broken up and Henry II was returning home safely should be considered as proof of victory. But this verdict is very questionable. For since the previous sentence says that the aim of the expedition was the perdition or defeat (*perniciēs*) of the enemy, and this was certainly not achieved, then at most we should talk about a still unresolved conflict. In this situation it remains for us to look closer at the circumstances of its conclusion.

The conclusion of the Peace of Bautzen took place on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1018<sup>78</sup>, but negotiations leading to this finale began as early as November previous year. First, Bolesław sent back young Liudolf captured during the fights to regain his warriors taken captive in return, but at the same time he was already investigating whether he could send a messenger to “regain the Emperor’s grace”. Henry, pressed by the requests of his “princes”, agreed to this<sup>79</sup>. Significantly, Thietmar, like *Annales Quedliburgenses*, indicates the Polish ruler as the party trying to stop the war, and so it was easy to say, especially at the Emperor’s court, that the reckless neighbour finally yielded to his majesty, and to declare the Emperor’s victory. In accordance with such a verdict, it is also the fact that Bolesław gave the hostages as a guarantee of keeping the agreement<sup>80</sup>.

Following this lead, we find reason to believe that Thietmar presented the expedition of 1017 in writing after the first requests of the Brave to end the war, which would explain describing “the ours” (for the chronicler’s) as winners already at the stage of the narrative about events not indicating the success of the Empire; maybe he did it “in advance”, and perhaps even unconsciously, because of his inclination towards presentism. However, the final effect of the negotiations in Bautzen did not make him euphoric: he considered that peace was established “non ut decuit, set sicut tunc fieri potuit” – “not as it should have been, but as it was then possible to conclude”<sup>81</sup>. The restraint of this assessment even gave rise to the conviction,

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<sup>78</sup> Thietmar VIII, 1.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, VII, 65.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem*, VIII, 1. In the next century, *Annalista Saxo*, a.a. 1018 (p. 352) pointed out that the hostages were exchanged by both parties, but given that he relied in this case on Thietmar’s account, it remains to be concluded that he “creatively” interpreted it.

<sup>81</sup> Thietmar VIII, 1.

repeated in historical science, that the real winner of the struggle against Henry II was The Brave<sup>82</sup>, and Thietmar, aware of this, deliberately kept quiet about the peace arrangements in order to conceal that they were disadvantageous to the Empire<sup>83</sup>.

In a fairly common opinion in historical science, Bolesław maintained Lusatia and Milsko, and the key to this statement is a reference to the supposed conclusions – supposed because with regards to the territories in question they were not drawn from the medieval sources<sup>84</sup> – of the Congress of Merseburg (1013), during which Bolesław, after paying his homage to Henry, received the “desired beneficiary”<sup>85</sup>, hypothetically identified primarily with these countries<sup>86</sup>. In the belief that the war of 1015–1018 was about their possession, the dispute about the decisions in Bautzen revolved around the question whether Bolesław kept these countries as a fief or without any obligations<sup>87</sup>. At present, the second option<sup>88</sup> prevails, which does not, however, close the discussion on the old, one might say, textbook-like, interpretations of the agreement in Bautzen.

First of all, it does not seem grounded to believe that Thietmar tried to hide the unfavourable conditions of the Peace of Bautzen for the Empire. We have to admit that in his detailed account of the course of the conflict, he gave enough grounds to believe that Henry II’s desire, being the *casus belli*, to take back from Bolesław the land considered by him to be illegally owned, was not achieved. Moreover, the fact that Bolesław defended his possessions was no secret to the main addressee of the work, i.e. the German elite who knew the described matters, like the chronicler, from current politics. Although, given the *casus belli*, it is hard to imagine that no

<sup>82</sup> See e.g. Gerd Althoff, *Ottonowie. Władza królewska bez państwa*, transl. Marta Tycner-Wolicka, Warszawa 2009, p. 173, also below, note 110.

<sup>83</sup> See e.g. Stanisław Szczur, *Historia Polski. Średniowiecze*, Kraków 2002, p. 73.

<sup>84</sup> However, an important premise in favour of this direction of search is the general indication in the sources nearest to the time of the events of territorial claims of the Empire as *casus belli*; see above notes 22 and 24.

<sup>85</sup> Thietmar VI, 91.

<sup>86</sup> For an account of the discussion see e.g. Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, pp. 139–143; Jarosław Sochacki, *Stosunki publicznoprawne między państwem polskim a Cesarstwem Rzymskim w latach 963–1102*, Słupsk–Gdańsk 2003, pp. 71–74. An extensive presentation of the older literature on the subject was provided by Jedlicki in: Thietmar, pp. 440–443, note 473. See also e.g. Althoff, *Ottonowie*, p. 168; Pleszczyński, *Niemcy*, 241; Urbańczyk, *Bolesław*, p. 231.

<sup>87</sup> For an overview of positions see, among others Jedlicki in: Thietmar, pp. 578–581, note 6; Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, p. 159; Sochacki, *Stosunki*, pp. 75 ff.

<sup>88</sup> See e.g. Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, p. 159; Szczur, *Historia*, p. 73; Eduard Mühle, *Die Pfanden. Polen im Mittelalter*, München 2011, p. 17; Tomasz Jurek, Edmund Kizik, *Historia Polski. Do 1572*, Warszawa 2013, p. 65.

territorial issues were discussed during peace negotiations, in the face of Thietmar's silence on the subject, it remains to be assumed that Bolesław maintained the lands to which the Emperor was claiming his right at the outbreak of war.

The hypothesis that they concerned Lusatia and Milsko – even if by the scholarly tradition, for which there is no equally strong alternative<sup>89</sup> – is still worthy of special recognition. Whereas, it seems less grounded to continue the consideration of a possible restoration in Bautzen of Bolesław's fief status in relation to Germany on account of his possession of Lusatia and Milsko (or other lands) in reference to the decisions of 1013. After all, the causes of the Polish-German War initiated two years later prove – according to Thietmar's account – that the Treaty of Merseburg lost its validity as a result of the Brave's disloyalty and his refusal to appear before the Emperor in order to possibly repair mutual relations. As neither in Bautzen nor later was there a repetition of acts of submission like those that had previously taken place in Merseburg, the discussion about the vassal and fief relationship of the Polish ruler towards Henry II has no source basis.

Indeed, the previous scholarly debate took into account the possible permanence, even if nominally, of the legal status established in Merseburg in 1013 also at the stage of the conclusion of the Peace of Bautzen<sup>90</sup>, but such a view reflects at most the alleged claims of Henry II at the time, and even minimized in relation to the outbreak of the war. After all, the reason for the war was the attempt to deprive Bolesław of certain lands of the Empire, which – assuming that they were the “beneficiary” granted to him in 1013 – meant the actual cancellation of the Merseburg arrangements in their supposed territorial scope. In a situation where, after a trial of strength, Henry II did not manage to deprive his opponent of the disputed areas, nor to force – which was of key importance in the world of the ritual of that time – him to humble himself before him in person (*deditio*)<sup>91</sup>, are not enough premises to state that the Merseburg decisions were sustained at the stage of the Peace of Bautzen (as far as we don't talk about possible Henry II's plans for the future).

Importantly, the Polish ruler's very refusal to appear before the Emperor in person forced the mode of swearing the peace by the envoys. It is possible that Henry II agreed to such a solution as early as in 1017, when – as already mentioned

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<sup>89</sup> Although there were also other suggestions (e.g. Moravia), see above, note 86.

<sup>90</sup> For an overview of positions see Sochacki, *Stosunki*, pp. 75 ff.

<sup>91</sup> See Zbigniew Dalewski, *Rytuał i polityka. Opowieść Galla Anonima o konflikcie Bolesława Krzywoustego ze Zbigniewem*, Warszawa 2005, p. 73; Althoff, *Ottonowie*, p. 170.

above – he sent his dignitaries to negotiate with the Brave. However, the Brave did not want to meet them in a foreign land at that time, and he finally reached his goal at the end of January of the following year, accepting an imperial delegation in Bautzen which was under his control. Its composition was listed in detail by Thietmar<sup>92</sup>, who did not, however, mention either Bolesław’s presence there or his being represented by envoys.

Thus, in the face of the silence of the medieval sources<sup>93</sup>, it remains to take both solutions into account on the basis of alternative hypotheses, but in favour of the possibility assuming a personal oath of peace by the Polish ruler, it can be indicated as its analogy with the way his first war with Germany was ended (1002–1005). According to Thietmar, he made the peace in Poznań with Henry II’s envoys in person, asking for their arrival<sup>94</sup>. In the case of Bautzen – if we believe the chronicler – the Brave similarly asked the Emperor to send his envoys. Their status was, after all, so high that Bolesław’s failure to receive them in person might have been badly perceived by the German elite, whose favours he cared about. He soon married Margrave Eckard I’ daughter, Oda, perhaps to strengthen the Peace of Bautzen<sup>95</sup>, and shortly afterwards the Saxons supported him in his Kiev expedition.

The plan to undertake this expedition should be considered as one of the possible reasons for Bolesław’s efforts for peace with the Empire. Its conclusion meant at the same time that Henry abandoned his alliance with Yaroslav the Wise, that one which resulted in an attack of Rus’ troops on an unknown stronghold in 1017, repulsed by the Brave’s garrison<sup>96</sup>. One can even suppose that the Saxons’ support for Bolesław’s Kiev expedition was also discussed in Merseburg, but this is also another example of filling the silence of the sources in this respect by theories, perhaps in an exaggerated way: there was still enough time to later agree on such cooperation, which was needed not before the summer.

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<sup>92</sup> Thietmar VIII, 1. Beside the already mentioned son-in-law of Bolesław the Brave, Margrave Herman, the chronicler mentions the Saxon graf Theodoric, the imperial chamberlain Frederick and two clergy figures: Metropolitan of Magdeburg Gero and Bishop of Halberstadt Arnulf.

<sup>93</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1018, They speak of concluding the peace by envoys, but that does not make it definite whether they were from both sides or only from the imperial side.

<sup>94</sup> Thietmar VI, 27.

<sup>95</sup> E.g. Szczur, *Historia*, p. 73; Jurek, Kizik, *Historia*, p. 65. Taking into account Thietmar’s report (VIII, 1) that Oda came to her husband’s country four days after making peace in Bautzen, it is worth considering the possibility that negotiations on this marriage of the Brave were already underway earlier.

<sup>96</sup> Thietmar VII, 65.

In the face of this – also observed in the other examples above – tendency to multiply *ex silentio* entities in the investigations of the Peace of Bautzen, it is worth to stress that the reading of the sources emerging in the current debate on the conflict that has ended as a result of this peace directs our thoughts primarily towards two of the issues already discussed here, which were the *casus belli*: 1) the attempts to take away from the Brave the lands which, according to the Emperor's side, were owned illegally and 2) to force the Polish ruler to appear before Henry II in order to ask pardon for his insubordination. Significantly, both of these matters did not ultimately get resolved according to the Emperor's wish, which is enough to explain Thietmar's rather pessimistic assessment of the Bautzen agreements.

On the other hand, however, there is no doubt that the years of fruitless struggle increased expectations for peace in Germany, and hence the very end of the war was received with relief in many circles, which is accurately reflected in a letter from Abbot Berno of Reichenau to Archbishop Gero of Magdeburg participating in the negotiations in Bautzen<sup>97</sup>. Neither did Thietmar question the very need for this peace, agreeing to a compromise that would mean real benefits for Bolesław. Taking into consideration such a state of medieval sources, it seems unreasonable to go beyond the scope outlined above in the discussion on the territorial dimension of the peace, but it is still worthwhile to reflect on the scale of submissiveness of the Polish ruler in the negotiations undertaken.

The Brave could not hope for a meeting with the Emperor as equals, and undoubtedly he could regard as a success the opportunity to make an agreement in the stronghold which was under his control and by envoys. So what did he gain by not appearing personally at the imperial court? First, a guarantee of his own safety. For Henry II – or more precisely for Thietmar, who probably expressed views close to the Emperor – the Brave remained a disloyal subject, moreover an ungrateful one not only because of his failure to reciprocate with his faithful service for the “beneficiary” granted him in 1013, but also his underestimation of recovering his son from Bohemian captivity<sup>98</sup>. In this situation, Bolesław may have been afraid that, if he appeared at the imperial court, he would be brought before the imperial tribunal and imprisoned, if only to force some compromises on him<sup>99</sup>.

<sup>97</sup> See Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, p. 150.

<sup>98</sup> See Thietmar VI, 10–12; see also – here in less detail – *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1014.

<sup>99</sup> Temporary imprisonment was then used as part of the general principles of demonstrating imperial grace to disloyal vassals, and it preceded the ritual of *deditio*, see Althoff, *Ottonowie*, p. 186.

Moreover, he could even expect the threat of an assassination attempt, bearing in mind what happened to him nearly 16 years earlier in Merseburg. Let us recall that then, in 1002, already after an agreement was made with Henry II, when leaving, he was attacked by a crowd, losing a few dozen people and barely his own life<sup>100</sup>.

However, the very concern for his own safety does not seem to explain unquestionably Bolesław's reluctance to go to the imperial court, if only because he could demand e.g. a guarantee of his inviolability in the form of hostages<sup>101</sup>. Therefore, it is worth considering the broader context of possible political benefits from the avoidance of personal appearance before the Emperor discussed here. In the case of such a visit, the natural course of things would be to restore the Polish ruler's subordinated status (e.g., on the basis of the 1013 treaty interpreted in science as a vassal one)<sup>102</sup>, and probably he was no longer interested in this, aware of his strength towards the Empire: after all, he defended his country twice before its invasion. It is difficult, however, to rule out any other form of dependence, manifested by paying tribute and providing armed reinforcements, but in this case rather from the whole dominion and out of respect for the universalist – Roman – prerogatives of the Emperor<sup>103</sup>.

One hundred years later, Gall Anonim, expressing political ideas circulating in Bolesław III Wrymouth's milieu, stressed the Polish ruler's consent to this kind of services, but at the same time his objection to attempts by the Emperor to interfere in the internal affairs of Poland. These were to be resolved by him relying on the advice of “his men”, i.e. in practice the elite of the Piast monarchy<sup>104</sup>. Similarly, the Brave himself also was to reply to Henry II in 1015, that he would consult with

<sup>100</sup> It was, by the way, the beginning of the sequence of Polish-German wars concluded in Bautzen. For a broad discussion of the events in Merseburg in 1002, taking into account the specificities of Thietmar's relevant narrative, see Pleszczyński, *Niemcy*, pp. 184–223.

<sup>101</sup> In this way, by sending hostages to Poland by Henry II, Bolesław was guaranteed the safety of his stay in Merseburg in 1013. See Thietmar VI, 91.

<sup>102</sup> In fact, Bolesław could have expected even less honourable treatment than in Merseburg in 1013, given the deliberate, as Thietmar (VII, 9) stresses, invitation in 1015 of his envoy Stojgniew for spectacular humbling of the rebellious German dukes in front of the Emperor's face before their restoration to grace. See Dalewski, *Rytuał*, p. 73.

<sup>103</sup> It is worth noting that, according to Thietmar (VIII, 33), from the Kiev expedition, Bolesław the Brave, supported by the Emperor's subjects, sent him – counting on further assistance – gifts accompanied by the assurance of his obedience, see Althoff, *Ottonowie*, p. 173.

<sup>104</sup> *Galli Anonymi cronicae et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. Karol Maleczyński, MPH n.s., vol. 2, Cracoviae 1952, III, 2.

“his” nobles (*principes*) whether to accept the Emperor’s demands<sup>105</sup>. This empowerment of the Polish elite was accompanied by putting the good of his own homeland before his vassal subordination to the Emperor, which is aptly illustrated by Thietmar’s account of Mieszko’s behaviour at the beginning of his father’s third war with Henry II. Although the son of the Bolesław was a vassal of the latter when he faced the choice of whether to show loyalty to his senior or obedience to his father ordering him to defend his homeland, he chose the latter duty<sup>106</sup>.

Thietmar, probably also expressing the views of the imperial court, read these behaviours of the Piasts as a rebellion against superior power. However, the indicated analogies to the story of Gall Anonim, in which – let’s add – Bolesław the Brave is portrayed as an ideal of a king, make it possible to show more clearly the possibility that the aim of this ruler in the final stage of the wars with Henry II was to breaking out of the status of a subordinate of the king of Germany – *vide*: Merseburg (1013) – in favour of a position that was already considered for him in the times of Otto III, ultimately most probably a royal one<sup>107</sup>. He finally cemented this state with his coronation in 1025, although he had already stamped his coins with the title *rex* between 1015 and 1020<sup>108</sup>. However, this Piast coronation was considered a usurpation by the German elite<sup>109</sup>.

<sup>105</sup> Thietmar VII, 9: “...Bolizlavus se ad excusandum vel inobedientiam ad emendandum a cesare vocatus in presentiam eius venire noluit, sed coram principibus suis haec fieri postulavit”. This sentence is difficult to interpret and it is worth mentioning that some researchers relate “suis” in this case to the Emperor (see discussion in: Thietmar, pp. 478 f., note 69), acknowledging that the Brave demanded an opportunity to explain himself before the dignitaries of Henry II. However, the broader context of Thietmar’s chronicle indicates that the Polish ruler at the time was striving to strengthen his position towards the Empire, with which the interpretation that he decided to rely on the advice of his own nobles in resolving his conflict with the Empire corresponds.

<sup>106</sup> Thietmar VII, 17. Of course, in this case we are dealing with a literary creation of Mieszko II’s statement to Henryk II’s envoys (see Pleszczyński, *Niemcy*, p. 248), but it seems quite probable that the young prince was put in the face of a dilemma as to who to serve: the emperor or the father?

<sup>107</sup> Before 1025, it seems safer to talk about the Brave’s aspirations to achieve the status above a princely one, but ultimately a royal; for a discussion on this, see e.g. Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, pp. 51–62, 84; Johannes Fried, *Otton III i Bolesław Chrobry. Miniatura dedykacyjna z Ewangeliarza z Akwizgranu, zjazd gnieźnieński a królestwa polskie i węgierskie. Analiza ikonograficzna i wnioski historyczne*, transl. E. Kaźmierczak and W. Leder, Warszawa 2000; Sochacki, *Stosunki*, pp. 69, 74; Pleszczyński, *Niemcy*, pp. 124–138, 304–317; Althoff, *Ottonowie*, pp. 147 ff.

<sup>108</sup> Stanisław Suchodolski, *Numizmatyka średniowieczna. Moneta źródłem archeologicznym, historycznym i ikonograficznym*, Warszawa 2012, p. 280.

<sup>109</sup> E.g. *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, a.a. 1025; also e.g. *Gesta Chuonradi II*, [in:] *Wiponis Opera*, ed. Harry Bresslau, MGH, Scriptores, Hannoverae 1915, 8 (pp. 31 ff.). For more details on this, see e.g. Strzelczyk, *Bolesław*, pp. 192–198; Pleszczyński, *Niemcy*, pp. 282–297.



Thus, we have a clear example of the collision of two “narratives” in politics, which dates back at least to the time of the third Polish-German war (although ideologically on the Polish side even to the Gniezno congress in the year 1000). Thus, paradoxically, the Peace of Bautzen could be treated by both sides as a confirmation of their own victory<sup>110</sup>, although in the case of Henry II it was achieved on the basis of a compromise. Not anywhere other than at the gates of Niemcza less than half a year earlier he had to accept the inability to break the military force of the Polish ruler during the trial, which turned out to be the last one in this respect. This state of affairs was sealed by the agreement in Bautzen. Sometimes the status of the Brave after its conclusion is considered that of a national sovereignty<sup>111</sup>. If so, however, it should be noted that still in the world of *Christianitas* at the time, the idea of the primacy of Rome, not only of the papacy, but also of the Empire renewed by the Ottons, has not become invalid.

## STRESZCZENIE

Tytułowe pytanie to pretekst do szerszej refleksji nad kształtowaniem narracji Thietmara z Merseburga o trzeciej wojnie między Henrykiem II a Bolesławem Chrobrym (1015–1018) i jej zakończeniu na mocy pokoju w Budziszynie. W opisie kulminacji wojennych zmagowań, czyli oblężenia Niemczy latem 1017 r. przez armię cesarską uwagę przykuwa moralno-teologiczna interpretacja zdarzeń. Thietmar, choć lojalny wobec Henryka II, nie taił podziwu dla obrońców grodu, podkreślając ich chrześcijańską postawę. W tym kontekście zaskakuje nazwanie uczestników wyprawy przez kronikarza zwycięzcami. Przebieg wyprawy temu przeczy. Mimo to nie wydaje się słuszne oskarżanie autora o propagandowe kreowanie literackiej rzeczywistości. Lepsze wyjaśnienie to przypuszczenie, iż doszła w tym momencie narracji do głosu ocena zakończenia całości konfliktu. O zawarcie pokoju według Thietmara poprosił Bolesław Chrobry, co wskazuje, iż stroną zwycięską było cesarstwo. Porozumienie zawarte w Budziszynie Thietmar oceniał z rezerwą: pokój nie taki, jaki być powinien, ale jaki dało się w ówczesnej sytuacji zawrzeć. Skłania to często badaczy do uznania, iż zwycięzcą trzeciej wojny między Henrykiem II a Bolesławem Chrobrym był właśnie ten drugi. Pokój w Budziszynie zawarto przez posłów wysłanych przez Henryka II a w dodatku w grodzie pod kontrolą Chrobrego. Mamy więc do czynienia z sytuacją, gdy obie strony mogły ogłosić zwycięstwo: Henryk, gdyż oczekiwał się prośby Bolesława o pokój, a Bolesław, gdyż uniknął stawiennictwa się przed Henrykiem II. Stan posiadania Bolesława Chrobrego ustalił się najpewniej już przed wybuchem trzeciej wojny z Niemcami, a zatem nie dziwi milczenie Thietmara w tej sprawie przy omawianiu postanowień pokoju z Budziszyna. Pokój budziszynski prawdopodobnie zawarto na zasadzie uznania *status quo*, a tym samym insynuowanie Thietmarowi celowego przemilczenia jego szczegółowych postanowień jest bezzasadne.

<sup>110</sup> The opinion that Boleslaw could feel like a winner in Bautzen is supported by e.g. Mühle, *Die Piasten*, p. 17; see also recently Urbańczyk, *Boleslaw*, pp. 269 ff.

<sup>111</sup> E.g. Jurek, Kizik, *Historia*, p. 65.

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