

BATTLE REPORT LEIGNITZ 1241



Leignitz Battle Report

The battles Leignitz and Mohi both took place in 1241 and were the two major Battles in which the Mongols literally destroyed the central European armies of the Poles, Silesians and Hungarians. Following these victories, the Mongols were on the way to Vienna when in 1242 they received news of the death of Ogedei Khan, which required them to turn back eastwards in order to choose a successor. Historians have often speculated on what fate would have been inflicted on the rest of Europe had not the Great Khan died.

The Mongol forces at Leignitz were commanded by Kaidu, and the European forces by Henry II 'the pious' who apparently had six toes on one foot, which enabled his body to be recognized after the Mongols had finished with him! For the Leignitz game to be 'a game' and not simply a Mongol walkover, in the terrain layout I deliberately included features which would make the European position more defensible eg. Rivers, woods, slopes and the moderately sized walled town of Leignitz itself which could have played a key part in the actual battle.



Initial Deployment.

All the Silesians and their Teutonic allies deployed all their forces on the table first. This was to recognize the Mongol army consisting primarily of light cavalry would have outscouted their less mobile opponents. The mostly bow-armed town militia were obviously deployed within and on the walls of their besieged town – the Mongol assault troops equipped with siege towers and scaling ladders being then deployed against them. These were the first Mongol forces on the table, the rest of the Mongol army being deployed as, when, and where the Mongol Commander in Chief (Trevor) felt they would be most effective.



To Battle!

It seemed only fair that the Silesians had the first move. On the right flank Dave G and Barry slowly advanced their defensive line forwards. With their crossbowmen protected by pavises and taking advantage of the woods and raised ground, they established a very strong defensive line. With one command of Silesians and two commands of Teutonic infantry with the Teutonic Knights and sergeants held in reserve, this was a very formidable force with strength in depth. On the other wing, however, with the same area of ground to cover Paul H was given Henry II and only two commands of Silesians. His task was made even harder by virtue of the fact that the Silesian knights and dismounted men at arms had virtually no missile troops. Against Mongols this was always going to be a challenge – like fighting the battle of Thermopylae without Spartans!



In the centre of the allied line was Chris our resident defensive expert, sitting comfortably behind his walled town with his 'D class' militia bowmen manning the walls. Chris's complaints about the quality of his loyal troops were noted, and for the next game I must remember to give Chris Leonidas and his 300 even if it is an American Civil War game!

With Dave M leading the Mongol 'captive' assault troops against his beloved walled town, Chris was somewhat appeased when he realized that the troops he was facing were in fact no better, or rather, just as bad as his own.

Across the entire width of the table the hordes of Mongol cavalry soon appeared and descended upon their opponents with rapid speed. On both flanks the initial waves of light cavalry were successfully checked by the strong defensive lines of the Silesians. The crossbows were giving as much as they got to the Mongol horse archers, and although both sides were taking significant casualties through missile fire no initial tactical advantage was achieved. However, more Mongol reinforcements were soon committed including large numbers of heavy cavalry, especially against Paul now out numbered troops on the Silesian left wing. In the centre Mark had committed large numbers of Mongol light cavalry against Dave G and his Teutonic infantry which were proving very tough and impenetrable, with crossbowmen behind pavices supported by spearmen. Richard and Barry were slogging it out on the right wing. Barry's Silesians were slowly giving ground under the hail of Mongol arrows, but his line was holding strong as Richard's Mongols were made to suffer for every slight advance.



In the centre the walls of the town remained unbreached as Dave M, despite numerous attempts lost the ability to throw a 5 or 6 on a D6. As a result the battering ram kept bouncing off the gate as his assault troops were shot from the walls. However, Chris's focus on his very successful defense of his front wall had left the side walls without archers, which could have supported the Silesian infantry fighting to the sides of the town. Simon and Kevin were able to shoot the fight out of the Silesian heavy infantry and cavalry. This took some time thanks to stubborn resistance, but by early afternoon, and without reinforcements the Silesian left wing was beginning to weaken. The greater mobility of the Mongol forces allowed them to focus their troops, and therefore their attacks, at particular points of weakness – shifting cavalry units quickly to where they were needed most. The much slower Silesians were unable to respond and move quickly enough once their defensive lines were penetrated.

As the Teutonic Knights and sergeants began their threatening advance in the centre Trevor allocated the last Mongol reinforcements to Mark to counteract this danger. This was in some ways a frustration to Richard who would have liked just a few units of Mongol heavy cavalry to punch a hole through Barry's stubborn right wing. However, the scene was now set for the showdown between the heavy cavalry 'kettle heads' of both sides to meet head on.



The Teutonic knights initially achieved great success – smashing through the Mongol light cavalry and slaughtering Dave M's assault troops. But their penetration into the enemy ranks left them surrounded and some poor dice rolling sealed their fate! In the main heavy cavalry confrontation the greater number of Mongols was to tip the balance in their favour. This was also helped by me not clearly stating that mounted units cannot shoot when charging into contact. With the do or die charge of the Teutonics decisively checked the Silesians were forced into defensive mode.

With the eventual collapse of the Silesian left, the Mongols were able to sweep around the back of the town and assault the undefended rear walls with scaling ladders. Dave M finally succeeded in smashing through the front gate (about time!), and eventually sent a unit of Mongol heavy cavalry into the town. Dave G was then faced with the unpleasant task of fighting off Mongol attacks from in front and behind – his fate was sealed! On the Silesian side only Barry still stood firm though somewhat battered, still facing Richard's exhausted light cavalry. A Mongol victory – most certainly, but a game that was in my humble opinion full of 'what ifs' and opportunities for both sides and could have unfolded very differently.



Paul K.