

## **A Devastated Land: Early Perceptions of Environmental Devastation during the Thirty Years' War**

***Kateřina Prařáková***

*University of South Bohemia in řeské Budějovice, řeské Budějovice, Czechia*

*e-mail: prazakova@ff.jcu.cz*

The Thirty Years' War is traditionally associated with enormous human losses, economic decline, and profound political transformations in Central Europe. It was also a period during which people gradually became more aware of the destructive impact of warfare on the environment. This contribution focuses on this issue and examines the extent to which, and in what contexts, early attempts to draw attention to the effects of military conflicts on the landscape, agriculture, and natural resources began to emerge in contemporary texts. The analysis is based on three distinct groups of sources. The first consists of the reports of an agent operating in Prague during the Bohemian Revolt. While sending detailed accounts of military and political events from Prague in 1619 and 1620, he also noted the despair of inhabitants living in devastated settlements as well as the spread of diseases. The second group includes contemporary printed newspapers, which regularly reported on military developments and increasingly carried accounts of burned villages, destroyed crops, the slaughter of livestock, and the transformation of inhabited landscapes into barren wastelands. The third source is Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's novel *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, which depicts the later stages of the conflict and offers a literary reflection on the extensive devastation of a land affected by decades of warfare. The contribution argues that, in addition to the traditional focus on population decline and economic damage, contemporary observers increasingly highlighted the destruction of landscapes, the decline of agriculture, the cruel treatment of livestock and the spread of disease. Although it would be inappropriate to speak of environmental thought in the modern sense, these reflections suggest an emerging awareness that war represented not only an assault on human society but also on the wider natural environment upon which that society depended.

