

## *The Prokop Guardian Company – Volunteers within the ‘Order of the Chalice’*

### **The Order of the Chalice**

Behind the grand posturing and magnificent facades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire there exist a myriad of tensions amongst its diverse and different races, politics and beliefs. Some of the constituent parts accept the recent relaxations of the Hapsburg governance as an eventual means to self-determination, but others want to see the process accelerated to achieve eventual proper independence as soon as possible. Among these factions, most have limited ability for co-ordinated planning and follow an almost random path of rebellion and occasional violent action. One group stands out – the Order of the Chalice – the best of the home-rule groups in the northern lands of the old Empire of Czechs, Bohemians, Slovaks and Moravians.

Proclaiming themselves as the rightful successors of the Hussite movement of the fifteenth century, the Order is a broad mix of people to suit their various needs – competent speakers and authors promoting the public aims for independence include doctors, merchants, professors and civic dignitaries, while the secretive undertakings are carried out by all manner of volunteers – pro-independent soldiers and policemen, tradesmen, students and clergy, men and women of all classes. They have a main ambition – the ‘*Common Aim*’ – full independence for the free people of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia under a new government system of their own choosing.

But the Order has not only followed the ideals of its fifteenth century forefathers – it has ended up mirroring the same passions of belief that have led to similar internal factions growing away from the original core of the central moderates.

- ❖ The **Calixites** are the moderate Centrists who follow the original Prague Party doctrines to reach the *Common Aim*.
- ❖ The **Taborites** believe in more radical actions and measures to reach the Order’s *Common Aim*.
- ❖ The **Orebites** from the Eastern boundaries of the Empire favour local actions, believing the *Common Aim* can be achieved quicker across a regional patchwork.
- ❖ Finally, the ‘**Orphans**’ are almost complete anarchists along with some criminal

elements, difficult to control, often putting personal agendas before the *Common Aim*.

Foreign liberal-minded volunteers have been drawn to the Order too – sponsoring with funds or other material support or joining the ranks to be directly involved, with British, French, Dutch and Scandinavian friends, and Americans too. It is even rumoured that the Russians, via the interactions of the *Okebrana*, supply the Order with arms and equipment.

Direct actions have included boycotts, blockades, strikes, marches, hunger strikes for imprisoned members of the Order, arson, robbery, blackmail, assault and kidnap. Some deaths have been attributed to the actions undertaken by the Order, but in reply, the Calixites have proclaimed either this was in pursuit of the *Common Aim* against the Hapsburg Imperialists, or were the random isolated actions of unruly ‘Orphans’. Such responses encourage criticism and condemnation from those quarters the Order sometimes seeks support from. What is well known is that many members of the Order are experts in their craft of rebellion, dissent and disobedience. Clever enough to adapt to changing circumstances, the most adept of the Order’s membership form the special units that undertake the Order’s missions.

These Guardian Companies are well-led, often by a principle member of the Order, and follow the approximate structure of the Hussite War-Wagons of old. As well as the Leader and his Lieutenant, there should always be two specialist ‘*Marksmen*’, several ‘*Crossbowmen*’ for stealth and range attacks, a similar number of ‘*Soldiers*’ for close physical attacks with their peculiar Moravian flails, maces, warhammers and pole-arms, and uniquely two ‘*Pavisers*’ or shieldmen, who often protect the leaders and specialists – a role especially suited for the women members of the Order who wish to play their part but abhor violence. Drivers with transport are often added too, depending on the needs of the missions.

The Order’s Companies are often named after places, heroes and characters from the Hussite past and while they tend to operate nearly always in civilian attire or disguises, the Order does sport its own uniform – another unique trait that sets it apart from the other rebellious groups.

## The Prokop Guardian Company

**Professor Dobrovsky** is one of the Order's Principles and a founder of the entire movement, who assisted in drafting the Manifesto of the *Common Aim* and is the historical expert of the Bohemian Kingdom and the Magriavate of Moravia. He also maintains a discreet link to the Imperial Russian Consulate in Olmutz, where he's able to gain financial and logistic support from Baron Nikolaev Repnin. Dobrovsky is a 'Taborite' – but he would also admit to his 'Orebite' tendencies, favouring Russian support over Western aid and interests. It is because of that preference he has agreed to raise a Neo-Hussite special detachment to travel to the eastern reaches of the Hapsburg Empire to satisfy questions and demands from his Russian backer. While Dobrovsky would generally remain in his office and library, he has no qualms about following his comrades too.

**Vaclav Frik** is Dobrovsky's appointed leader-in-the-field, a very capable explorer, hunter and collector with a highly regarded reputation in Central Europe that permits him great freedom and leeway. The Hapsburg authorities know of his preferences for '*bome rule*' and so prefer to maintain an observation of his tours and exploits. He in turn exploits that, playing a 'double' game where his publicised expeditions, lectures and visits often mask the true purpose of the Order's various missions. A clever man, he has a wide network of friends and allies across many nations who support him and help where they can. He is always accompanied by at least one of his three 'Old Campaigners' – Brenek, Zednik and Nedov – his loyal trusted sergeants from many previous travels. And Frik is devoted to the *Common Aim*.

The venerable and quite elderly **Bishop Dudik** is another well known historical authority on Moravia. As the Benedictine Abbot of Raigern, Bishop Dudik has travelled far and wide, from France to Sweden, to Rome and Russia. Like Dobrovsky, he proclaims a preference to the East and closer kinship with Russia than anyone else – a stance that has surprised some of his Calixite comrades. Dudik is a master at strategy and planning, and the Order's authority on a potential opposing force – the *Teutonic Order*. The Bishop may not have the agility or capabilities of his younger compatriots, but he has an amazing resilience, a calming inner strength, and a vast knowledge of the classics, as well as that of the legends and mythology of these lands.

Old **Tutor Zermak**, a quiet elderly gentleman, said to have been the personal teacher for many young princes and princesses throughout the German lands, provides the Company with its knowledge and information. And if that wasn't enough, it turns out Tutor Zermak is a capable physician with some useful, if not a little outdated, medical expertise too. Like many of the Order's intelligentsia, he abhors the idea of violence himself, but has accepted that others in the Order will use it to achieve the *Common Aim*. He just hopes his presence can influence his compatriots to not be too indiscriminate. There is never a time when you will find him without some old tome or manual, leafing through the pages seeking more insight, and Tutor Zermak is always the first to start up conversations with the townsfolk and villagers the Company meets.

Another learned professional with the Company is **Professor Vincenc Prasek**, an accomplished engineer and a not-so accomplished inventor – so he teaches in Prague University instead. Whereas the Bishop stands for all that is classical, Prasek embraces all that is modern. Indeed the two are the bookends that bring together the various elements of the Company and both are loyal, in their own ways, to Frik. Prasek enjoys tinkering, applying new methods or items to situations – and he absolutely adores miniature bombs and grenades. He will assist in the fight if he has too, but often as a peripheral asset, sniping or bombing or assisting others where he can. And like many of the Company, he enjoys a good debate and has a quick wit to match. As he once stated to Bishop Dudik, "*you have God and I have Archimedes, you have a crucifix and I a chronometer, you rely upon your Bible, while I am still writing mine*".

**Brenek, Zednik and Nedov** are the 'Sergeants' of the Company, loyal and trusted companion travellers who have spent decades in Frik's service. With a natural air of confidence and ability, these three have protected and guided all of the Company at its most difficult times. As accomplished outdoor adventurers, they are competent scouts and hunters, well versed in trapping and foraging. One of the three will always be at hand, acting as a bodyguard to Frik. All three are pledged to the *Common Aim*.

**Jaromir Hajek** is a student, a diarist and at barely twenty years of age, one of the typical young recruits to the Order. With that fervent patriotic passion and idealism, Hajek is an accomplished Marksman, from years of hunting in his

childhood with his uncles. He is easily overawed by those he now finds himself with, but he has an insatiable appetite for knowledge. He craves the rewards for his people if they can achieve the *Common Aim* and sees it as his duty to quest and fight for it. He just hopes he is alive when it is delivered – for it is a surety that they will win – so that he can help form the democratic government his kinsfolk deserve.

**Jan Rezek** is a wanted man. Once a jovial and friendly performer, a circus acrobat and student from the Tabor Gymnasia, Rezek is now a reserved and secretive individual, another peripheral member of the Company who specializes in assassination. He is one of the few ‘Orphans’ tolerated by Frik and Dudik and allowed near to the Prokop Company. Reputed to have murdered a Hapsburg army Field Officer in an unseemly and inhumanly barbaric manner, Rezek has never offered a defence or an explanation of his side of the story. But all know he is a very capable executioner. The idealist student Hajek is one of the few who seeks out his companionship when Rezek is permitted to travel and remain with the Company.

Then there is the stone-and-brick carrier **Dusan Pojar**, or as he is often called ‘the *Golem*’. With amazing strength and stamina, Pojar is one of the more redoubtable ‘Soldiers’ of the Company. As well as a mighty reputation amongst his comrades and a ferocious temper, his appearance can be quite intimidating to those who meet him for the first time. Battered, bruised and burned from hundreds of encounters, the nickname ‘Golem’ is well suited. And yet he is known for his gentle protectiveness of the simpler folks they meet, especially the children. Along with an incredible repertoire of songs and stories, Pojar is a well-liked and valuable compatriot.

**Albert Mocker** is a widower, clerk and translator for a reputable merchant bank in Prague, who balances his periods of employment with his ‘voluntary work’ and his ‘archaeology trips’. In reality, these excursions away from the office are the times when he supports the Prokop Company as one of its expert Pavisers. As another well-learned and literate member of the Order, he too pledged his oath to the *Common Aim* with the adjunct he would never take a life. Instead, he is one of the incredibly brave sect within the Order who would willingly sacrifice their own lives to protect their comrades, hence he fearlessly stands alongside the fighters of the Company.

**Anna Trestik** too is one of the Prokop Company’s Pavisers. At eighteen years of age, her older brother pledged along with her to join the Order, he as a marksman, while both remain students at Prague University. Young Anna has some form of Gift – fearless in the face of terrors that drive older men mad. Her innocence perhaps provides an edge for the others that no weapon or skill can provide. So when Anna’s parents made their objections known once they had learned just what their children had joined, it was the Company Leader Frik himself who pledged his own honour and life to them to act as her guardian. In time Professor Prasek crafted a ladies parasol with the new fireproof and bullet-resistant Vulkanite material made in the Skoda Fabrik Works in Pilsen. So, now not only has Anna proven to be an expert Pavisers but also a quite capable medical student too, devoted to the safety, care and treatment of her new friends.

In addition to these notable members, the Prokop Company, along with many of the other companies of the Neo-Hussite Order, will always have Marksmen, Crossbowmen, Soldiers and Pavisers in its ranks, often the numbers of whom depend upon the task or mission at hand.

**Marksmen** favour proper firearms, often securing imperial military rifles when they can, but they are expected to have a propensity in any form of firearm.

The **Crossbowmen** prefer stealth and the hunt, to carry out the ranged silent kill and are the more lethal and ruthless fighters.

The **Soldiers** provide the bulk of any company, and always favour fighting up close into contact. With a varied range of adapted Moravian hand weapons – flails, maces, picks, warhammers, and axes – the Soldiers are proficient in melee combat and know how to temper their weapons with silver or gold, garlic oil or holy water, be they blessed weapons or plain iron or wood. When circumstances require it, they can fashion those hand weapons into their pole-arm equivalents to gain more reach and a greater strike.

Finally, the **Pavisers** – the bravest of all – who protect anyone and everyone with their altruistic self-sacrifice and devotion. No company should ever set out without them, for their presence and fortitude will always inspire their comrades around them to strive for the quest for the *Common Aim*.

## The 'Prokop' Guardian Company

Figure	Plk	FV	SV	Spd	Cst	Talents / Powers	Basic Equipment
Prof. Dobrovsky (Order Principle)	3+	+1	+1	+0		Leadership +1, Iron Will, Meticulous Planning,	Lined coat, Pistol, Sabre
Vaclav Frik (Hunter & Collector)	2+	+2	+3	+1		Leadership +2, Marksman, Hunter,	Brigandine, Hunting Rifle, Pistol, Sabre
Bishop Beda Dudik (Old Sage/Expert on Teutonic Order)	3+	+0	+0	+0		Leadership +1, Meticulous Planning, Inspirational	Lined coat, Crucifix, Censors, Holy Wafers
Tutor Zermak (Occult Historian & Folklore Expert)	3+	+0	+0	+1		Fearless, Medic. <u>Power:</u> True Grit	Lined coat, Censors, Holy Wafers, Stakes
Prof. Vincenc Prasek (Engineer Expert)	4+	+0	+0	+0		Iron Will, Erudite Wit, Engineer	Brigandine, Pistol, knives, various Grenades
Milos Brenek (Sergeant of Company)	3+	+3	+1	+1		Tough, Fortitude	Brigandine, Mace or Axe or Flail pole-arm*
Josef Zednik (Sergeant of Company)	3+	+3	+1	+0		Tough, Fearless	Brigandine, Flail, Axe, Warhammer pole-arm*
Pavel Nedov (Sergeant of Company)	3+	+2	+2	+0		Marksman, Fearless	Brigandine, Military Rifle, Knife,
Jaromir Hajek – the Student-Diarist (Expert Marksman)	4+	+1	+3	+1		Marksman, Fanatic, Erudite Wit	Brigandine, Military Rifle, Pocket Pistol
Standard Marksman	5+	+0	+2	+0		Marksman	Lined coat, Military Rifle, Knife
Jan Rezek – the Circus Acrobat & Assassin (Expert Crossbowman)	4+	+1	+2	+2		Marksman, Stealthy, Fanatic,	Lined coat, Crossbow, Knife
Standard Crossbowman	5+	+0	+1	+0		Stealthy	Brigandine, Crossbow, Knife
Dusan 'Golem' Pojar (Flail Carrier)	4+	+3	+0	+0		Fortitude, Berserker	Brigandine, Mace or Axe or Flail pole-arms*
Standard 'Soldier' (Flail Carriers)	4+	+2	+0	+0		Tough	Brigandine, Flail, Axe, Warhammer pole-arms*
Mocker the Clerk (Expert Pavisier)	2+	+3	+0	+1		Fearless, Fortitude, Erudite Wit	Lined coat, Shield^
Anna Trestik (Expert Pavisier)	2+	+2	+0	+2		Fearless, Impervious, Medic	Lined coat, Shield^
Standard Pavisiers (Shielders)	3+	+1	+0	+1		Fortitude	Lined coat, Shield^

\* The Moravian weapons can include handheld maces, flails, axes and warhammers, and then there are pole-arm equivalents of these same items too. Use **Halberd** stats (+3/-2) for the pole-arms, handheld versions of the Moravian weapons use Sabre/Sword stats (+2/-1).

^ The Shield or Pavise, is an item of kit these Neo-Hussites take time to specialize in. Some prefer Bucklers, small shields often used in fencing, some prefer proper war shields from an earlier era, while others carry innocuous everyday objects that they can use or have adapted as shields, such as Anna Trestik's parasol made of the new Vulkanite material. These special Neo-Hussite Shields act as +2 Rating for Armour, but more importantly, if the Pavisier is in base contact with another figure who is the target of enemy shooting or fighting, and if the Pavisier passes a Pluck test, they intercept and may deflect the incoming attack.

### Further Options:

Paversers can be enhanced even further – let them have ‘**Harden**’ or ‘**Strengthen**’ Powers for those friends that they touch & protect.

Repeating Crossbows replace standard Crossbows. Rezek can replace his Crossbow to Hand Crossbow. But, nearly all Crossbowmen will always shun the use of proper firearms.

Tutor Zermak can be empowered to act as more of a Mystic – add Powers like ‘**Clouding Men’s Minds**’ or ‘**Mesmerism**’, but to remain in keeping with Zermak’s passive non-combative character, no offensive Powers are permitted – even ‘Reflection’.

Remember Bishop Dudik can provide the ability to bless weapons and items. While rifle bullets and crossbow bolts can be blessed or washed in Holy Water, the crossbow bolt has the added benefit that specific wood known to be deadly to unholy creatures can have considerable lethal effect too.

Professor Prasek can craft explosive traps and infernal devices to confound the enemy. He will also have a fervent interest in Arc technology if it’s encountered, already having some familiarity with electricity and its generation, and plenty of ideas in harnessing its potential.

### *Some of the Known Guardian Companies of the Order of the Chalice*

The **Calixites** are the moderate Centrists majority who follow the doctrines of the original Prague Party, and hope to draw all of the Order together one day so that all help reach the *Common Aim*.

- ❖ **Tachov Company** (one of the largest forces, mainly based in Prague)
- ❖ **Horice Company**
- ❖ **Nebovidy Company** (mainly Slovaks)
- ❖ **Rohac Company**
- ❖ **Aussig Company** (some of whom are also Taborites)

The **Taborites** are now a sizeable minority from all over the lands, who originally hailed from Tabor, from the cells and their supporters established in that city, and who all believe in more radical action to reach the Order’s *Common Aim*.

- ❖ **Prokop Company** (mostly Taborites, some Calixites too)
- ❖ **Zelivsky Company**
- ❖ **Lipany Company** (mostly Taborites, some other factions are represented)

The **Orebites** hail from the Eastern boundaries of the Empire and favour more local actions there and elsewhere, believing the *Common Aim* can be achieved far sooner with a cascade of such actions across a wider regional patchwork.

- ❖ **Kravar Company** (unusually, has a large number of Scots Volunteers)
- ❖ **Olomouc Company**

Finally, the ‘**Orphans**’ are almost complete anarchists compared to the other three Order factions, many criminal elements and deserters from the Imperial military make up the ‘Orphans’, who often put personal agendas before the *Common Aim*, unorthodox yet innovative but still difficult to control.

- ❖ **Zatec Company** (nearly all criminals)
- ❖ **Zizka Company**