

The Battle of Tannenberg in 1410: Strategic Interests and Tactical Implementation

LTC (GS) Dr. Martin Hofbauer

On July 15, 1410 the united Polish-Lithuanian Army destroyed the army of the Teutonic Order in the Battle of Tannenberg.

Political and Strategic Framework Conditions

The Teutonic Order¹ dates back to the time of the Third Crusade (1189-1192). Around 1190, during the siege of Acre in the Holy Land an order of nurses was founded. This order was converted in 1198 into an order of knights, the so-called Teutonic Order. It was confirmed a year later by Pope Innocent III.² The Order acquired its first properties in Palestine, Armenia and Cyprus, and from 1200 on also in Germany. Eventually it spread over large parts of Europe. The competition with older orders of knights in the Kingdom of Jerusalem as well as the failed crusades prompted the order to look for a new field of activity.³

¹ For the history of the Teutonic Order see for example: Boockmann, Hartmut, *Der Deutsche Orden. Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte*. Munich 1982. – Militzer, Klaus, *Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*. Stuttgart 2005. – Ziegler, Uwe, *Kreuz und Schwert. Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*. Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 2003. – A number of sources offers: *Quellen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*. Ed. by Walter Hubatsch. Göttingen, Frankfurt/M., Berlin 1954 (= *Quellensammlung zur Kulturgeschichte*, p. 5).

² *Quellen zu Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, no. 1, pp. 26-31: *Narratio de primordiis ordinis Theutonicici – Die Gründung des Deutschen Ordens*.

³ *Geschichte der Deutschen Länder. „Territorien-Ploetz“*. Volume 1: Die Territorien bis zum Ende des alten Reiches. Ed. by Georg Wilhelm Sante. Würzburg 1964, p. 560.

In 1225-26, Duke Konrad I of Masovia from Poland invited the Teutonic Order into the Chełmno Land in Prussia to assist him in fighting the still pagan Old Prussians in the north.⁴ After intensive negotiations, a missionary war was started in 1231.⁵ Some 50 years later, in 1283, the conquest of Prussia was essentially completed.⁶ The confirmation issued by Emperor Frederick II in the Golden Bull of Rimini (1226)⁷ and the document issued by Pope Gregory IX (1234)⁸, in which he put the Chełmno Land and Prussia under the protection of the church, promoted the independence of the Teutonic Order and gave it a task, that of fighting and converting the pagans to Catholicism.

In addition to Prussia, the Teutonic Order quickly gained a foothold in Livonia. Since 1202, a separate crusaders' order, the so-called Livonian Brothers of the Sword, had been waging a missionary war and expanding settlements there. After a crushing defeat at the hands of the Lithuanians in the Battle of Saule in 1236, the remaining brothers joined the Teutonic Order. This meant that the Order ruled a second major piece of territory in the northeast of the Baltic region.⁹

The new territory in Lithuania, however, did not have a direct land connection to Prussia and was divided by the region of Samogitia. This region of Samogitia was to later play an important role. Because: In the future, the strategic interests of the Teutonic Order were focused on the conquest of Samogitia,¹⁰ the most important land

⁴ Boockmann, *Orden*, p. 68.

⁵ *Quellen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, no. 6, pp. 54-55: In 1230, Konrad I, Duke of Masovia and Kuyavia, ceded the Chełmno Land to the Teutonic Order in exchange to a promise of mutual assistance.

⁶ Ekdahl, Sven, *Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Quellekritische Untersuchungen*. Band 1: Einführung und Quellenlage. Berlin 1982 (= Berliner Historische Studien, 8), p. 3. – Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 120.

⁷ *Quellen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, no. 5, pp. 46-51: Privileg Kaiser Friedrichs II. für den Deutschen Orden. Rimini 1226 März. – Boockmann, *Orden*, pp. 80-85.

⁸ *Quellen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, no. 8, pp. 72-79: 1234 August 3. Rieti. Pope Gregory IX takes the Chełmno Land, which had been given to the Teutonic Order, and what else would be further wrested from Prussia under the protection of the Apostolic See as property of Saint Peter, bestows it on the Order, reserves the establishment and remuneration of dioceses, and demands an annual interest to be paid to the Roman Church for the recognition of the papal fief. . – Boockmann, *Orden*, pp. 90-92.

⁹ *Geschichte der Deutschen Länder*, Vol. 1, p. 563.

¹⁰ Also called: Lower Lithuania, Samaythen, Žomaiti, Žemaitija, Latin: Samogitia.

connection for the Order. The operational and tactical means for implementing them were the almost annual pagan wars, journeys to Prussia.¹¹

The relations with the neighbors were of crucial political importance. The relations with the Christian Kingdom of Poland in the south were initially neutral, sometimes even positive. It was only when the Teutonic Order conquered Pomerelia – the land west of the Vistula – and Gdańsk in 1308-1309 that the relations deteriorated noticeably. The territorial disputes resulted in the first armed conflicts between Poland and the Teutonic Order. The situation was not stabilized until the Peace of Kalisz was concluded in 1343.¹² Politically, it was impossible to achieve a permanent balance. There was, however, a long period of peace between the two powers, during which Prussia and Poland prospered.¹³

The relations with the neighbor in the east, Lithuania, were another story. Year after year, the Order conducted crusades against pagan Lithuania, above all against Samogitia, with crusaders from the Empire and the whole of Western Europe regularly taking part in them. The country was in an almost permanent state of war.¹⁴

The establishment of the Polish–Lithuanian Union of 1386 changed the situation completely. In a spectacular wedding, Jadwiga, the daughter of the King of Poland,¹⁵ married Jagiełło (Jogaila), the Grand Duke of Lithuania, who later became King of

¹¹ Boockmann, Hartmut, Artikel „Deutscher Orden“. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 3. München, Zurich 1978-1998, pp. 768-777, especially pp. 773-774.

¹² Benninghoven, Friedrich, *Unter Kreuz und Adler. Der Deutsche Orden im Mittelalter. Ausstellung des Geheimen Staatsarchivs Preußischer Kulturbesitz anlässlich des 800jährigen Bestehens des Deutschen Ordens*. Berlin 1990, pp. 145-148.

¹³ Ekdahl, *Schlacht*, p. 3-4. – Boockmann, *Orden*, pp. 138-150.

¹⁴ For the journeys to Prussia see: Paravicini, Werner, Article “Preußenreise”. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 3. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 197.

¹⁵ Jadwiga (Hedwig), King of Poland: Born presumably on February 15, 1374, died on July 17, 1399, at the age of just 25. She is buried in the Cathedral Church of Kraków. She was the daughter of the King Louis the Great of Hungary and Elizabeth, Queen of Poland. When she was only four years of age, she was betrothed to William, the son of Leopold III, Duke of Austria. After her father's death (in 1382), the marriage contract was dissolved. She herself was crowned King of Poland. At the instigation of the Polish lords, Jadwiga married Jagiełło, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. She made several attempts to mediate between the Polish-Lithuanian Union and the Teutonic Order. Labuda, Gerard, Article “Hedwig”. In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 4. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 1986.

Poland under the name of Wladyslaw II.¹⁶ The treaty between the two houses stipulated that Jagiełło had to endeavor to regain the lost territories for the Polish crown and that the Grand Duke and his people would be baptized. The result of this was the evolution of a double-state (a new entity) whose power extended from the borders of the Holy Roman Empire to Moscovy and the Black Sea.¹⁷

On the one hand, the Teutonic Order had already been engaged in fierce military conflicts with the two countries. On the other, Lithuania had converted to Christianity, thus taking away the legitimacy of a crusade against non-Christians. As a consequence, the German King imposed a ban on fighting the pagans in 1395 and the Pope followed suit in 1404. This did not, however, prevent the Teutonic Order from continuing the crusades.¹⁸

The smoldering conflict over the strategically important territory of Samogitia initially remained unsolved – the strategic aspect of the powers involved. The order still coveted this region as it wanted to establish a territorial connection between its Prussian Order State in the south and the land it possessed in Livonia in the north.¹⁹ The

¹⁶ Wladyslaw II. Jagiełło, Grand Duke of Lithuania and King of Poland: Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1377 to 1434 and King of Poland from 1386 to 1434. He was born around 1351-52 and died on June 1, 1434. Jagiełło became the Grand Duke of Lithuania in 1377. During the civil war and invasion of the Teutonic Order, he struggled to save his rule. In 1385, he concluded the Kreva Act with the Polish lords. In the winter of 1386, Jagiełło went to Kraków and entered his first marriage with Jadwiga. He had himself baptized beforehand. In doing so, he became King of Poland. In 1387, Wladyslaw II. Jagiełło laid the foundation for the Christianization of Lithuania. In 1392, a civil war forced him to entrust his cousin Vytautas with the governorship of the Grand Duchy. Several unions/ treaties in 1401, 1413 and 1432 defined the relations between Poland and Lithuania. Ochmanski, Jerzy, Article "Jagiełło, Jagiełłonen". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 5. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, pp. 274-276.

¹⁷ For the Polish-Lithuanian Union: Ziegler, Kreuz, pp. 155-158. – Boockmann, *Orden*, pp. 170-173.

¹⁸ Miethke, Jürgen, "Heiliger Heidenkrieg. Theoretische Kontroversen zwischen dem Deutschen Orden und dem Königreich Polen vor und auf dem Konstanzer Konzil". In: *Heilige Kriege. Religiöse Begründungen militärischer Gewaltanwendung: Judentum, Christentum und Islam im Vergleich*. Ed. by Klaus Schreiner with cooperation from Elisabeth Müller-Luckner. Munich 2008 (= Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, 78), pp. 109-125. Here especially: pp. 111-112. – Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 159.

¹⁹ This land connection was the only possibility for the Teutonic Order to attain a unified territory. – In the Early and High Middle Ages, it was not unusual for the ecclesiastical and noble rulers to have scattered and fragmented properties and estates. As a result of the so-called territorialization process in the Late Middle Ages, increasingly large and coherent dominions (*Landesherrschaft*) evolved. Against this background, it is easier to understand the efforts of the Teutonic Order to get a hold on the strategically important land connection of Samogitia.

Lithuanians, however, were anxious to foil these plans. They wanted to conquer Samogitia so that they could advance to the Baltic Sea themselves.²⁰ The major ports on the Baltic coast remained an attractive long-term objective for the Poles, too.²¹

Under the Treaty of Salynas of 1398, Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, ceded this territory to the Order for tactical reasons. The reason was that, at the time, the Lithuanians had to concentrate their forces for the fight against the Tatars in the east. Nevertheless, the Order did not succeed in subjugating Samogitia despite mounting several crusades.²² In 1409, an uprising against the rule of the Order broke out in Samogitia – supported by Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. This event marks the beginning of the so-called “Great War” of 1409 to 1411 between the Teutonic Order and Poland-Lithuania.²³

The Great War and the Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald in 1410

When the Teutonic Order prepared for a major campaign against Samogitia in 1409, Vytautas, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, openly sided with the insurgents. Wladyslaw II. Jagiełło, the King of Poland, in turn supported the Grand Duke of Lithuania as agreed under the treaty of the union between the two countries – thus, as political allies.²⁴

Ulrich von Jungingen, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, realized that it would not be possible to confine the conflict to Samogitia, as it would also prompt the powerful neighbors, Lithuania and above all Poland, to go into action. So, the army of

²⁰ Access to the sea was here the main strategic objective.

²¹ Ekdahl, *Schlacht*, p. 4.

²² Boockmann, *Orden*, pp. 174-175. – Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 159. – Ekdahl, *Schlacht*, p. 5. – Miltzer, *Geschichte*, p. 116.

²³ This war is notably called the “Great War” in Poland. For the “Great War” and the Battle of Tannenberg / Grunwald see also: Ekdahl, Sven, *Die „Banderia Prutenorum“ des Jan Dlugosz – eine Quelle zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410*. Untersuchungen zu Aufbau, Entstehung und Quellenwert der Handschrift. Göttingen 1976 (= Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, 104). – Turnbull, Stephen, *Tannenberg 1410. Disaster for the Teutonic Knights*. Oxford, New York 2003 (= Campaign, 122). – Devries, Kelly; Martin Dougherty; Iain Dickie; Phyllis G. Jestice, Christer Jorgensen, *Die großen Schlachten des Mittelalters*. (German translation of *Battles of the Medieval World 1000-1500* by Karin Schuler). Stuttgart 2007. – Markov, Walter; Heinz Helmert, *Schlachten der Weltgeschichte. 2.*, überarbeitete Auflage 1983).

²⁴ Miltzer, *Geschichte*, p. 143.

the Order launched a pre-emptive invasion of Poland, devastating the border areas. Poland was forced to enter a cease-fire that was negotiated for a period of nine months and meant to apply until July 4, 1410. Both sides used the cease-fire to prepare for a great clash in the following year.²⁵

To wage a successful campaign, both opponents needed foreign assistance from international powers. Both parties had an extensive international network to help them. The Grand Master of the Teutonic Order relied on getting support from King Wenceslaus IV of Bohemia and Sigismund, King of the Holy Roman Empire. They did not comply with the requests and did not provide any military support. Monetary payments and well-meaning words alone were not enough, however. After the expiry of the cease-fire, the Order found itself in a new, unfavorable situation in which it was no longer able to take offensive action – as it had done before – and was forced to adopt a defensive strategy, which it was not used to.²⁶

In contrast, the other side, that is the Polish-Lithuanian side, achieved important diplomatic successes: The Land Master of the Livonian knights was talked into agreeing to a moratorium, a so-called standstill agreement. This meant that the Lithuanians did not need to fear an attack against their rear from the north. Moreover, the King of Hungary gave assurance that the alliance he had concluded with the Teutonic Order in March 1410 was no longer in effect and that he would not come to the aid of the Order with a large army.²⁷

These results were of vital importance at the political-strategic level. Politically, the Teutonic Order was isolated; strategically, it was in an unfavorable position; and militarily, it did not receive sufficient support from possible allies. Besides, the military initiative rested with the Polish-Lithuanian side.

The Poles and Lithuanians used large-scale diversions to deceive the leaders of the Teutonic Order and to leave them in the dark about their true intentions. For this purpose, Vytautas sent Lithuanian forces off towards Memel. Wladyslaw had his forces assembled along the border with Pomerania and raid the area. The Order was to be

²⁵ Militzer, *Geschichte*, p. 144

²⁶ Militzer, *Geschichte*, p. 144.

²⁷ Heveker, Karl, *Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg*. Gräfenhainichen 1906, p. 18.

made believe that this was where the main attack would be launched.²⁸ The main army of Poles and Lithuanians, however, assembled near Czerwinsk on the Vistula. This area was an equal distance away for both the Poles and the Lithuanians – and it was a safe and well-protected place for crossing the Vistula.²⁹

The unified army was commanded and controlled as follows: King Wladyslaw II. Jagiełło was the commander-in-chief of the unified royal army. Zyndram z Maszkowic, a nobleman from Kraków, was the commander-in-chief of the Polish army. And Grand Duke Vytautas remained commander of the Lithuanians.³⁰

In late June 1410, Poles and Lithuanians had merged according to plan before setting off north on July 2. The diversion was successful. Ulrich von Jungingen, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, had not yet assembled his army as he still had no idea of the intentions of the unified army.³¹ It was quite late before the Grand Master felt compelled to withdraw his army from Pomerania and redeploy it to Kauernick on the river Drwęca. There, he established a strong line of solid defenses with palisades and guns.³²

The unified army - of Poles and Lithuanians – reached the border on July 9 and invaded Prussia. In the course of eight days the army had covered a distance of 90 km. The following day, on July 10, they also reached the Kauernick area, where they saw the Order army in a favorable position on the other side of the river. The Polish king decided not to cross the river, but to make a wide detour of the opponent. From July 10 to 14, the two armies moved eastward and northward.³³

The Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in turn tried to regain the initiative by marching through the night in order to surprise the Polish army. The surprise was

²⁸ Turnbull, *Tannenberg*, p. 31.

²⁹ King Władysław II. Jagiełło and Grand Duke Vytautas had planned the campaign in this way in December 1409 during a meeting in Brest-Litovsk. Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 170; Turnbull, *Tannenberg*, p. 33.

³⁰ Turnbull, *Tannenberg*, p. 41.

³¹ Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 170.

³² Turnbull, *Tannenberg*, pp. 35-36.

³³ On the way, the Polish king had the town of Gilgenburg destroyed and its inhabitants slain; eventually he advanced to the site of the future Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald. Turnbull, *Tannenberg*, p. 37; Militzer, *Geschichte*, p. 144.

successful, but the Grand Master did not dare to launch an immediate attack. This was the initial situation as the Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald began on July 15, 1410.³⁴

All contemporary accounts of the battle from people who fought in it are embellished for propaganda.³⁵ So, it is difficult to reconstruct the exact course of the battle.³⁶ For instance, present-day literature contains considerably different estimates of the sizes of the two armies. The figures for the Teutonic Order range from 11,000³⁷ to 27,000.³⁸ The Order's knights made up only a small share and could not have numbered much more than several hundred. Then, there were mounted followers, mounted crossbowmen, infantry and artillery.³⁹ Like on the Polish-Lithuanian side,⁴⁰ there were a considerable number of mercenaries. There is evidence that there were 3,700 mercenaries on the Order's side.⁴¹ The overall figures for the Polish-Lithuanian army range from 20,000 to 39,000 fighting men.⁴² There is no doubt about the numerical inferiority of the Order army, which is reflected in the buildup of the two contingents.⁴³

The Polish king deployed his army in three lines. On the left wing, there were the Poles, reinforced by knights from Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Hungary. On the right wing, Grand Duke Vytautas commanded Lithuanians as well as Tatarian and Russian detachments, all of which had lighter arms and suits of armor than the heavily armed knights of the Order.⁴⁴ Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen initially deployed his army in three lines as well. However, when he saw the long front of the enemy army, he

³⁴ Militzer, *Geschichte*, p. 144.

³⁵ Boockmann, Hartmut, Article "Tannenberg, Schlacht bei" In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 8. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, pp. 458-459.

³⁶ Ekdahl, *Banderia Prutenorum*, p. 144-150. – Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 167.

³⁷ Markov, *Schlachten*, p. 162; Boockmann, *Tannenberg*, p. 459; Already: Heveker, *Schlacht*, p. 28.

³⁸ For example: Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 171.

³⁹ For the artillery of the Teutonic Order in the 14th and early 15th century: Schmidtchen, Volker, *Die Feuerwaffen des Deutschen Ritterordens bis zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Bestände, Funktion und Kosten, Dargestellt anhand der Wirtschaftsbücher des Ordens von 1374 bis 1410*. Lüneburg 1977.

⁴⁰ *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen*, no. 35.1, p. 290.

⁴¹ Boockmann, *Tannenberg*, p. 459.

⁴² Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 171. This book notes a higher number of soldiers. The overall figures for the Polish-Lithuanian army is mentioned up to 60,000; Marcov on the other side mentioned only 17,000 men. Markov, *Schlachten*, p. 162; See also: Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 164.

⁴³ Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 169; Markov, *Schlachten*, p. 161; Boockmann, *Tannenberg*, p. 459.

⁴⁴ Markov, *Schlachten*, p. 162.

reorganized his force into two lines. He thinned out his own lines, but broadened the line-up so as to avoid being bypassed by the enemy.⁴⁵

The actual battle took place on July 15, 1410 between the villages of Tannenberg and Grünfelde,⁴⁶ which is why it is referred to as “of Grunwald” in Polish history books. The Order army had already marched during the night to surprise the Polish-Lithuanian army, and succeeded in doing so. But Ulrich von Jungingen did not dare to launch an immediate attack. Cautioned, Wladyslaw Jagiełło waited and kept his troops in the cool shadow of a forest while the Order troops stood under arms in the summer sun for several hours.⁴⁷ It was only after messengers of the Order had symbolically handed two swords to the Polish king that he ordered his army to line up.⁴⁸ Fighting began around noon.⁴⁹

Lithuanian troops together with Russians and Tatars advanced on the right flank until they were stopped by Order knights. Thereupon, the Lithuanians made a maneuver that might well have decided the outcome of the battle. They retreated in a bogus withdrawal, leaving the Order forces thinking that they had won the battle.⁵⁰ As they took up the pursuit of the retreating enemy, the Order knights dissolved their own battle order. Polish units pushed forward into the emerging gap, enveloping the left wing of the Teutonic Order and finally destroying it.⁵¹

As the battle went on and the situation changed several times, Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen himself joined the action with his reserve. Although he broke through the lines of the Polish main army several times, he eventually failed because of

⁴⁵ Markov, *Schlachten*, p. 162.

⁴⁶ A specifically Prussian view of events is provided by the continuation of the “Chronik des Preußenlandes” by Johann von Posilge: *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellungen*. Volume 2. Spätmittelalter 1250-1495. Ed. by Jean-Marie Moeglin and Rainer A. Müller. Stuttgart 2000, no. 35.1, pp. 288-293.

⁴⁷ Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 171.

⁴⁸ *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen*, no. 35.1, p. 291

⁴⁹ The beginning of the battle of Tannenberg / Grunwald is also vague: To Stephen Turnbull the battle began at 9 o'clock. Turnbull, *Tannenberg*, p. 45.

⁵⁰ Ekdahl, Sven, „Die „Flucht der Litauer“ in der Schlacht bei Tannenberg“. In: *Litauisches Kulturinstitut. Jahrestagung 1998*. pp. 147-168.

⁵¹ Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 175.

its superiority. The Grand Master was killed and with him the majority of the Order knights.⁵² The Polish-Lithuanian side also suffered heavy losses.⁵³

The Consequences of the Battle

With regard to the number of fighting men involved, Tannenberg was one of the largest battles in Europe in the Middle Ages.⁵⁴ The defeat did “not sound the death knell for the Teutonic Order, but it was a disaster for it.”⁵⁵ In addition to almost all its leaders, the Order lost nearly a third of its knights from Prussia. In the weeks that followed, nearly all the Order's territory fell into the hands of the Polish-Lithuanian army, and only the Order's headquarters, Marienburg Castle, was able to hold its ground. Heinrich von Plauen, who later became the Grand Master, hastily organized a defense that held off the attackers. After two months, King Władysław of Poland was forced to abandon the siege. The lost territory quickly fell back into the hands of the Teutonic Order.⁵⁶

Six months later, on February 1, 1411 the First Peace of Thorn was concluded. The Teutonic Order lost hardly any of its territory. Samogitia, however, was given to Grand Duke Vytautas and the King Jagiełło of Poland at least for their lifetimes. After fighting flared up repeatedly between Poland-Lithuania and the Teutonic Order in 1414 and 1422, the border was finally defined in the Treaty of Lake Melno. And Samogitia was given to Lithuania for good.⁵⁷

The financial burdens, in particular those incurred to attain the release of hostages, however, posed a problem after 1410. The claims filed were in the order of

⁵² *Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen*, no. 35.1, p. 292.

⁵³ Devries, *Schlachten*, p. 175. – Markov, *Schlachten*, p. 163.

⁵⁴ Vollmann-Profe, Gisela, “Vom historiographischen Umgang mit Niederlagen – die Schlacht von Tannenberg in preußischen Chroniken des 15. Jahrhunderts.” In: *Vom vielfachen Schriftsinn im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Dietrich Schmidtke*. Ed. by Freimut Löser and Ralf G. Päsler. Hamburg 2005 (= Schriften zur Mediävistik, 4), p. 607-622; Here p. 607.

⁵⁵ Militzer, *Geschichte*, p. 144.

⁵⁶ Militzer, *Geschichte*, pp. 144-145.

⁵⁷ Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 173.

6,000,000 Groschen⁵⁸ or 260,000 Gulden⁵⁹ and are considered the reason for the future financial difficulties of the Order.⁶⁰ Hartmut Boockmann, a German historian specialized in the Middle Ages, comes to the following predication: Despite the defeat in 1410, despite the First Peace of Thorn and despite the financial burdens, we should not allow ourselves to be deceived. Most of the reasons for the slow decline of the Teutonic Order are to be found in Prussia itself.⁶¹

Summary: Regional Powers – International Networks

Both the Teutonic Order and the Poles and Lithuanians were regional powers. Although they were regional powers, they nevertheless had extensive international networks which they used for their political purposes. This was reflected in two ways: At the political-diplomatic level, both sides – the Teutonic Order and the Kingdom of Poland – asked leading European dynasties for support. Success in the preparations for the Great War varied accordingly.

The high degree of internationalization was also evident among the “fighting men on the ground”. Not only knights and mercenaries from Western Europe fought for the Teutonic Order, there is also proof that Poles and Lithuanians were among them. And there were even “German” knights fighting for the Polish-Lithuanian side.

Limited effect of the actual battle – but long-term changes in the general political climate to the disadvantage of the Teutonic Order

In the short term, the outcome of the Battle of Tannenberg had little impact on the balance of power on the ground. The Teutonic Order was soon able to re-conquer the lost territories. And the First Peace of Thorn was also very favorable for the Teutonic Order. In the long term, however, the political balance in East Central Europe shifted. Poland became stronger and stronger as a regional power. The Polish-

⁵⁸ Ekdahl, *Schlacht*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Boockmann, *Orden*, p. 179.

⁶⁰ Ziegler, *Kreuz*, p. 173; Boockmann, *Tannenberg*, p. 459.

⁶¹ Boockmann, *Orden*, p. 179; See also: Vollmann-Profe, *Umgang*, p. 618.

Lithuanian Union boosted this development. The Teutonic Order increasingly lost influence as a result of these political changes.

The importance of political and strategic interests – and the limited relevance of religious convictions

The Teutonic Order used the fight against pagans to justify its annual campaigns in Lithuania. It remained by this line of argument even after the Polish-Lithuanian Union was formed; that is after the Lithuanians were baptized. Besides, the Order fought against Christian Poland – and vice versa. This demonstrates that the Teutonic Order used religious or ideological reasons to justify its crusades. This attitude was basically held by both sides. Of course there is the possibility that such considerations did indeed have an influence although it is difficult to say exactly what. Political and strategic interests, however, had priority. They basically determined the considerations of the parties to the conflict.

Problems and solutions

Ostensibly, the “Great War” was about the Order’s claim to the Lithuanian region of Samogitia. The importance of this dispute must not be overestimated. Because: The real reason for the conflict was that the three regional powers in the Baltic area fought for their supremacy. To attain a short-term solution to the conflict, both sides resorted to negotiations and diplomatic means. In the longer term, however, a military conflict seemed almost unavoidable. A preemptive war was therefore a proper instrument – in the image of the past.

Bibliography:

- Benninghoven, Friedrich, *Unter Kreuz und Adler. Der Deutsche Orden im Mittelalter. Ausstellung des Geheimes Staatsarchivs Preußischer Kulturbesitz anlässlich des 800jährigen Bestehens des Deutschen Ordens*. Berlin 1990.
- Boockmann, Hartmut, Article "Deutscher Orden". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 3. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 768-777.
- Boockmann, Hartmut, Article "Tannenberg, Schlacht bei". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 8. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 458-459.
- Boockmann, Hartmut, *Der Deutsche Orden. Zwölf Kapitel aus seiner Geschichte*. Munich 1982.
- Deutsche Geschichte in Quellen und Darstellungen*. Vol. 2. Spätmittelalter 1250-1495. Ed. by Jean-Marie Moeglin and Rainer A. Müller. Stuttgart 2000.
- Devries, Kelly; Martin Dougherty; Iain Dickie; Phyllis G. Jestice, Christer Jorgensen, *Die großen Schlachten des Mittelalters*. (German Translation of *Battles of the Medieval World 1000-1500* by Karin Schuler). Stuttgart 2007.
- Ekdahl, Sven, "Die „Flucht der Litauer“ in der Schlacht bei Tannenberg". In: *Litauisches Kulturinstitut. Jahrestagung 1998*. 147-168.
- Ekdahl, Sven, *Die „Banderia Prutenorum“ des Jan Dlugosz – eine Quelle zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Untersuchungen zu Aufbau, Entstehung und Quellenwert der Handschrift*. Göttingen 1976 (= *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*, 104).
- Ekdahl, Sven, *Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Quellekritische Untersuchungen*. Vol. 1: Einführung und Quellenlage. Berlin 1982 (= *Berliner Historische Studien*, 8).
- Geschichte der Deutschen Länder. „Territorien-Ploetz“*. Vol. 1: Die Territorien bis zum Ende des alten Reiches. Ed. by Georg Wilhelm Sante. Würzburg 1964.
- Heveker, Karl, *Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg*. Gräfenhainichen 1906.
- Labuda, Gerard, Article "Hedwig". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 4. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 1986.
- Markov, Walter; Heinz Helmert, *Schlachten der Weltgeschichte*. 2., revised Auflage 1983.

- Miethke, Jürgen, "Heiliger Heidenkrieg. Theoretische Kontroversen zwischen dem Deutschen Orden und dem Königreich Polen vor und auf dem Konstanzer Konzil". In: *Heilige Kriege. Religiöse Begründungen militärischer Gewaltanwendung: Judentum, Christentum und Islam im Vergleich*. Ed. by Klaus Schreiner with cooperation from Elisabeth Müller-Luckner. Munich 2008 (= Schriften des Historischen Kollegs, 78). p. 109-125.
- Miltzer, Klaus, *Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*. Stuttgart 2005.
- Ochmanski, Jerzy, Article "Jagiello, Jagiellonen". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 5. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 274-276.
- Paravicini, Werner, Article "Preußenreise". In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*. Volume 3. Munich, Zurich 1978-1998, p. 197.
- Quellen zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*. Ed. by Walter Hubatsch. Göttingen, Frankfurt/M., Berlin 1954 (= Quellensammlung zur Kulturgeschichte, 5).
- Schenk, Frithjof Benjamin, "Tannenberg / Grunwald". In: *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte I*. Ed. by Etienne Francois and Hagen Schulze. Munich 2001. p. 438-454.
- Schmidtchen, Volker, *Die Feuerwaffen des Deutschen Ritterordens bis zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Bestände, Funktion und Kosten, Dargestellt anhand der Wirtschaftsbücher des Ordens von 1374 bis 1410*. Lüneburg 1977.
- Turnbull, Stephen, *Tannenberg 1410. Disaster for the Teutonic Knights*. Oxford, New York 2003 (= Campaign, 122).
- Vollmann-Profe, Gisela, "Vom historiographischen Umgang mit Niederlagen – die Schlacht von Tannenberg in preußischen Chroniken des 15. Jahrhunderts". In: *Vom vielfachen Schriftsinn im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Dietrich Schmidtke*. Ed. by Freimut Löser and Ralf G. Päsler. Hamburg 2005 (= Schriften zur Mediävistik, 4), p. 607-622.
- Ziegler, Uwe, *Kreuz und Schwert. Die Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens*. Cologne, Weimar, Vienna 2003.