

Episode 259 – History Of The Crusades

Episode 259. The Baltic Crusades. The Livonian Crusade Part 42. Archbishop Friedrich of Riga.

Hello Again. Now, before we start this week's episode, you may notice when you get to the end of this episode that the outro is different. The three large bongos, or tolling bells, at the end of the talk have been replaced with three chants of Sanctus, in the Gregorian chant style with which the Crusaders would have been very familiar. This all came about due to a request from a listener called Marcus, who uses the podcast to fall asleep to, and who kept being woken up by the bongos. I conducted a short poll on the podcast Facebook page about the situation, and discovered that quite a few people use the podcast to fall asleep to. But, there were also quite a few people attached to the three tolling bells as well. The poll supported removing the bongos by a narrow margin, so I have removed them, but I have put in their place three chants of Sanctus, which is probably a more appropriate way to end the podcast than with three giant bongos, which a few of you pointed out sound like gongs instead of bongos anyway. OK, on with the episode.

Last week we saw Pope Boniface VIII appoint his personal chaplain, Isarnus Tacconi, to the position of Archbishop of Riga in an attempt to resolve the civil conflict in Livonia. Archbishop Isarnus turned out to be a popular and amiable man who attempted to play the role of peacemaker in the region. However, despite his best attempts to arbitrate the conflict, a number of outstanding issues remained unresolved, and Pope Boniface ended up transferring Archbishop Isarnus to the position of the Archbishop of Lund in the Kingdom of Denmark. Then, Pope Boniface was kidnapped, and died not long after, meaning that not only was there now no longer anyone in the position of the Archbishop of Riga, there was no longer anyone in the position of Pope. Master Gottfried of Livonia took full advantage of of this situation. Knowing there would be no-one to stop him, he forced the Bishop of Dorpat and senior figures in Estonia to sign an agreement, placing them on the side of the Order should conflict break out once again between the citizens of Riga and the Teutonic Order. As William Urban points out in his book "The Livonian Crusade", this was viewed as a virtual declaration of war by the Teutonic Order against the City of Riga. But, as Master Gottfried was well aware, there was little anyone could do about it. Winter had set in, meaning that sea travel was out of the question until the spring and, even if a representative from Riga managed to make their way to Rome, they had to wait for a new Pope to be elected. And even once that had occurred, it's likely that the new Pope would have a pretty long to-do list handed to him, filled with urgent matters, and a spat in far away Livonia was likely to be at the bottom of any such list.

However, one man was in Rome at this time, and was willing to help. Archbishop Isarnus of Lund happened to be in Rome. He heard about the issues and, in March of the year 1304, he issued a declaration which he hoped might resolve things. OK. Now, I'm going to read the declaration to you. It's quite long, but it's also quite clever, so I think it's worth reading out in full. OK, here it is. And I quote.

"In the name of God, we, Isarnus, by permission of the Divinity, Archbishop of Lund, Primate of Sweden, formerly Archbishop of Riga, arbiter selected by the religious men, the Master and Brothers of St Mary of the Germans in Livonia on the one part, and the citizens and city of Riga on the other, to decide all questions of war and discord among them, have decided to resolve the mutual damages by compensation, so that both sides will be

absolved and quit. The Order is to return all property, both that which is farmed and that which is not, which formerly belonged to the citizens of Riga and in their territory. Moreover, between the city and the property of the Order, the Order shall build at its cost a thick wall nine feet high, without bordering the streets or open spaces of the city, and the brothers can only live in that area, and they may have only one rear door, four feet wide and six high, through which one man can go to buy or obtain food for the brothers. Besides the gate that the Brothers had in the city wall before the quarrel began, they cannot have any other, not even in the Church. More than twenty Brothers and as many servants shall not be permitted to live in the city, nor may they hold a Chapter meeting or assembly, except once each year, and no more than 50 brothers may attend." End quote.

So, here Isarnus is telling the Teutonic Order in Livonia to return all the property which rightfully belongs to the citizens of Riga, and then he tells the Order that it must build a walled compound for itself inside Riga. And the only place the Teutonic Knights can live inside Riga is in this compound, which is to house a maximum of 20 brothers. There are also restrictions on the number of knights who can be invited into the compound, so assemblies are only to be held once a year, and no more than 50 knights can attend such a gathering. So essentially Isarnus is indicating to the people of Riga here that no-one from central Europe can wave a magic wand and resolve their problems. In the meanwhile, Isarnus has put a lid over the conflict, and has reduced the likelihood of violence breaking out in the city, by restricting the access of the Teutonic Order to the city.

William Urban points out that it seems that the citizens of Riga got the message. They made a couple of attempts to make peace with the Order, the most notable of those attempts being their abandonment of their alliance with the Lithuanians, although they did keep a Lithuanian garrison on standby inside Riga in case of trouble.

Now, not long after the people of Livonia received the declaration made by Isarnus, a new Archbishop of Riga was appointed, a man called Friedrich von Pernstein, a 34 year old man from Bohemia who enjoyed strong ties to King Wenceslas of Bohemia.

Now, there are three things we need to note about King Wenceslas of Bohemia before we move on. Firstly, this isn't the guy from the Christmas Carol. Good King Wenceslas who looked out on the feast of Stephen to do nice things to the peasants and had that event enshrined into a Christmas Carol was the King of Bohemia in the tenth century, some four centuries before this King Wenceslas, which is Wenceslas the Second of Bohemia. The second thing you need to note is that, despite not being the guy from the Christmas Carol, this King Wenceslas is actually quite a big deal. He not only succeeded King Ottaca to become King of Bohemia in 1278, in the year 1291 he became the Duke of Krakow and, nine years after this momentous event he became the King of Poland. Not content with being the King of two important kingdoms, in the year 1301 King Andrew III of Hungary died with no heirs, and, you guessed it, King Wenceslas managed to score that kingdom as well, making himself probably the most powerful Bohemian king of all time. So take that, Christmas Carol guy.

The third thing you need to know about King Wenceslas II of Bohemia is that, in addition to being a well-respected and very powerful monarch, reigning over three kingdoms, he enjoyed close ties to the Teutonic Order. So, when King Wenceslas' buddy, the Franciscan friar Friedrich, was named Archbishop of Riga, Master Gottfried of the Teutonic Order in Livonia rubbed his hands together in delight, hoping that the new Archbishop would side with the Order against the pesky merchants and citizens of Riga. But if Master

Gottfried was eagerly looking forward to Archbishop Friedrich arriving in Riga, Archbishop Friedrich himself didn't seem to share this enthusiasm. He lingered in Rome until the Baltic Sea froze over, then he decided to pop over to Moravia to visit his family on the way to Livonia. So he didn't arrive in Riga until the spring of 1305. By that time the fragile peace which Archbishop Isarnus had forged via his declaration had broken down, with the Teutonic Order inflaming the situation by purchasing the Cistercian monastery at Dunamunde.

What was the big deal about the Order purchasing the monastery at Dunamunde? Well, we all know that Dunamunde was located at the mouth of the Daugava River where it emptied into the Baltic Sea, and whoever controlled Dunamunde pretty much controlled the shipping entering and leaving the river, meaning of course that the Teutonic Order could use their new base at Dunamunde to prevent ships from entering the Daugava and traveling upriver to Riga. To put it another way, the Order now possessed the ability to blockade the city of Riga.

Not surprisingly this development caused some disquiet in Riga, and that disquiet quickly degenerated into violence. Riots erupted in the streets, and the citizens attacked anyone they came across who looked like they might be sympathetic to the Teutonic Order. Then the city's militia prepared for war.

Into this mess walked the new Archbishop of Riga, who had picked a particularly terrible time to turn up fresh-faced from central Europe, all ready to begin his first day at his new job. The citizens of Riga immediately cornered Archbishop Frederick and explained to him the devastating blow they had just received via the Teutonic Order taking over Dunamunde. They filled his ears with their side of the story, and by the end of the briefing the new Archbishop seemed to be thoroughly convinced of the righteous position of the merchants and citizens for Riga, and of the terrible wicked ways of the knights of the Teutonic Order. For a man whom the Order was looking forward to welcoming as the new Archbishop due to his ties to King Wenceslas and his likely favorable treatment of the Order, this was an astonishing development. Archbishop Friedrich didn't even seem to attempt to listen to the Order's side of the story, let alone try to conciliate the dispute between the parties. No, what Archbishop Friedrich did was to write a stinging letter to the new Pope, Pope Clement V, detailing the terrible acts of the knights of the Order, and the awful, awful things they had done.

Actually, the first part of the Archbishop's letter to Pope Clement is worth reading out, because it will give you an idea of how one-sided the new Archbishop's position was. OK, here we go, and I quote.

"Friedrich, Archbishop of Riga by the grace of God and the apostolic chair, writes on behalf of ourselves and the vassals of our Church and the citizens of Riga, about Brother Gottfried, Master of the Teutonic Knights in Livonia, and the brothers of the aforementioned Teutonic Knights subject to him, because of numerous and grave damages done for a long time against our Church by the Master and brothers of the Teutonic Knights who illegally subjected our vassals and citizens to their authority and also the lands of Theodoric Bishop of Dorpat and the vassals of the King of Denmark, something which is legally impossible". End quote.

The letter then goes on to accuse the Knights of the Order of ignoring the arbitration is Archbishop Isarnus, of harassment and extortion, and of the illegal occupation of castles

and other property belonging to the Bishops. The letter failed to mention any factors at all that might paint the citizens of Riga in a bad light, and didn't even attempt to cover the Order's side of the story. With the letter safely on its way to Rome the citizens strengthened their legal ties to their pliable new Archbishop, renewed their alliance with Lithuania, and prepared once again to go to war against the Teutonic Order.

Now, I guess the people of Livonia at this stage were holding their collective breaths waiting to see what the Papal response to the Archbishop's rather harsh letter would be. Well, it would have been very unhealthy for them to hold their breaths because Pope Clement V had a lot on his plate at this time, and dealing with conflict in far away Livonia was nowhere even close to being on his list of priorities. He was in the process of moving the papal seat from Rome to Avignon, a move that would end up being neither wise nor temporary, and would see the ushering of seventy years of the Avignon papacy, a period marred by mismanagement, incompetence and corruption which the papacy would really rather forget about if it could.

After a year of having waited eagerly for a response to his letter, and having never received one, Archbishop Friedrich decided he'd better find out what was going on. He sailed to Lubeck then made his way to Avignon in France. He was in Avignon when some explosive news came in. Philip The Fair, the King of France, had just ordered the arrest of every single knight who was a member of the Templars, and had charged them with a range of grievous crimes, including heresy. Avignon, and in fact the whole of Europe, was in an uproar. Archbishop Friedrich guessed that he had timed his visit to Avignon perfectly, and that he could somehow tie his grievance with the Teutonic Order to the general downfall and disgrace of the Order of the Templar Knights. But he guessed incorrectly.

Pope Clement was all in a dither about the Templars, and indicated to a disappointed Archbishop Friedrich that the issues against the Templars would need to be heard and resolved before the issues regarding the Teutonic Order could even be considered. So the Pope set the year 1311 as a tentative date upon which the General Council would meet to address the concerns raised in the Archbishop's letter; a date which was two full years away.

Archbishop Friedrich found himself some accommodation in Avignon, and settled into wait for a couple of years, until his matter could be heard. Not surprisingly, the charges leveled at the Templars sent shock-waves through the Teutonic Order, and Grand Master Siegfried, who had been based at Venice, decided that it might be a good time to transfer the headquarters of the Teutonic Order to Prussia. This was initially resisted by the knights, who had hoped to return to the Holy Land, but the Grand Master ended up getting his way, renovating and expanding the castle at Marienberg to house the Grand Master's residence and the administrative base of the Order.

While Archbishop Friedrich is twiddling his thumbs in Avignon, events in Livonia are moving on without him. The war between the Teutonic Order and the city of Riga kicked off once again, with the citizens of Riga winning the first battle, after Lithuania invaded Livonia and worked with the Rigans to defeat the Teutonic Knights. Master Gottfried took this defeat very badly. So badly in fact that he died shortly afterward, not from physical cause but, as William Urban puts it, and I quote "grief and mortification" end quote. The new master, Gerhard von Jork, took office in 1309, and indicated that he would be happy

keeping the dispute on Riga on hold until the matter could be heard and arbitrated in Avignon in 1311.

However, everyone's attentions are about to be diverted from their current problems, as trouble is brewing on the horizon, trouble which will engage the Grand Master from his new base in Marienberg, and will engage Master Gerhard of Livonia, because the Samogitians are on the war path.

Join me next week for our first episode on the Samogitian Crusade. Until next week, bye for now.

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