

## History of the Crusades. Episode 283. The Baltic Crusades. The Samogitian Crusade Part XV. Jogaila.

Hello again. Last week we saw tensions build between the Teutonic Order and the Lithuanians, culminating in a large scale invasion of Prussia by the Lithuanian leaders Kestutis and Algirdas in the year 1370. The Teutonic Order moved to counter the invasion, and a pitched battle, known as the Battle of Rudau, took place between the two forces. The result was a crushing defeat for the Lithuanians. I mentioned at the end of last week's episode that the defeat of the Lithuanians was so comprehensive that Lithuania would not stage any major offensives against Prussia for the remainder of the fourteenth century. There was, however, an additional reason why the Lithuanians will not be engaging in any wholesale military offensives against the Teutonic Order any time soon, that reason being the Lithuanian leadership structure was about to undergo some rapid and unexpected changes.

Before we turn to Lithuania however, we will take a quick look at how Livonia and Prussia fared in the years immediately following the Battle of Rudau. We last checked in on Livonia a couple of episodes ago, in Episode 281, with an unwell Master Wilhelm von Vrymersheim managing to avoid an ambush on his way home from attending a Grand Chapter meeting of the Teutonic Order in the year 1372. You might be happy to know that Master Wilhelm recovered from whatever ailment was afflicting him, and spent the years leading up to the Battle of Rudau overseeing the Livonian Order's attacks against the Lithuanians from their castle at Dunaburg, and attacks against the Samogitians from their castles in Kurland. You might also be happy to know that the totally awesome, super- heroic Robin von Eltz was elevated to the position of Marshall of the Teutonic Order in Livonia in the year 1375.

While things have generally been going well for the Livonian Chapter of the Order since Episode 281, finances were getting a little tight. Fighting the pagans on two fronts was an expensive business. Castles needed to be garrisoned, maintained, strengthened and supplied, and Livonia itself wasn't a particularly wealthy place, so it wasn't easy to raise taxes to cover the extra costs. Following the defeat of the Lithuanians inside Prussia, Master Wilhelm was able to concentrate his efforts on just one main field of conflict: Samogitia. But still the financial state of the Livonian Chapter of the Order became so dire that he wrote to Grand Master Winrich von Kniprode, describing exactly how much the pagan wars had been costing and asking for funds so that the fight could continue. The letter must have been rather persuasive and convincing, as the Grand Master sent Master Wilhelm the rather staggering sum of ten thousand marks to cover the costs to date and to safeguard against future costs. The sum of money was so large and so unexpected that, William Urban reports in his book "The Livonian Crusade", one officer in Livonia who received the sum was so nervous to be in charge of such a large amount of money that he was very much relieved after it had been

dispersed out of his hands to its next destination. So the Livonian chapter of the Order is now fully cashed up and is free to concentrate its efforts on fighting the pagans in Samogitia.

Likewise, the Prussian chapter of the Order is also mainly focusing its efforts on Samogitia. Following the Battle of Rudau, Grand Master Winrich no longer had to concern himself about possible Lithuanian attacks on Prussia, but the bad news for the Teutonic Order was that their victory at Rudau didn't really look like signaling the defeat of either the Lithuanians or the Samogitians. Despite their losses, the Lithuanians didn't appear interested in converting to Christianity, and although the Grand Master was able to lead a number of expeditions into Samogitia in the years following the Battle of Rudau, none of the attacks really achieved very much, so by the year 1377 the Teutonic Order had failed to occupy and secure any further territory inside Lithuania or Samogitia. Then in the year 1377 came an event which looked like it might change everything, because in the year 1377 the Grand Duke of Lithuania, the leader Algirdas, died.

Now, this event, as you might imagine, was going to have massive ramifications for Lithuania moving forward. Algirdas and Kestutis had ruled together for a period of over thirty years remarkably successfully, building Lithuania up, securing its borders and expanding it outwards, until by the time of Algirdas' death Lithuania was the largest state in Europe, although a little strangely it was also one of the most sparsely populated. As we've seen, Kestutis much ruled Lithuania proper, while Algirdas concentrated on his expansion into the Russian principalities. Algirdas had used marriages to shore up his alliances inside Russia. He married twice, both times to Russian Orthodox women, although all his children remained resolutely pagan. And he had quite a lot of children, with a total of seven sons. Like his father Gediminas before him, Algirdas chose to divide his territories up amongst his seven sons, choosing one of the younger ones, the twenty seven year old Duke of Vitebsk, to preside over the others as Grand Prince.

Who is this twenty seven year old Duke of Vitebsk, who now finds himself of stepping into Algirdas' shoes, with his six other brothers frowning and muttering angrily behind him, wondering how they are going to overthrow the young upstart? Well, his name is Jogaila or in Polish "Jagiella", and we're going to be hearing quite a lot about him, so let's take a closer look at him.

Now apparently, if you just sort of came across Jogaila on the street, you probably wouldn't have looked twice at him. He was certainly not a large muscely warrior-type person. In fact, William Urban uses two main words to describe him, those words being "quiet" and "introspective". He was fluent in Ukrainian, which was his mother's native language, so he was able to communicate effectively with many of his Russian subjects. Unusually, he

avoided alcohol, wasn't keen on parties or rowdy get-togethers (unless he could use them for diplomatic purposes), and he bathed and shaved daily, which was a gob-smackingly unusual way for a man to behave in medieval Europe. He was extremely cautious in warfare, but in kind of a good way. He wasn't flashy and didn't rush into conflict seeking glory, but he strategized, thought things through, and acted rationally and logically, with the result that he rarely made any mistakes on the battlefield. And his armies were often successful when they actually engaged in battle, which wasn't that often, as Jogaila wanted to make sure that he would win before risking his forces. This made him unpopular amongst many of the hotheaded, eager pagan warriors who were used to the bold leadership of Algirdas and Kestutis, who would often lead their forces on ambitious and risky campaigns. In summary, he was quiet, disciplined and self controlled, which are all great traits for a leader, although not perhaps for a leader of war-loving pagan Lithuanians in the Middle Ages, which is why even today, people are not quite sure what to make of Jogaila. He certainly divided opinions, with some Lithuanians, viewing him as a quiet anti-war weirdo who was a traitor to the pagan way of doing things, and others heralding him as a national hero. So he's an interesting man, which is good because we all like an interesting man.

So how is the death of Algirdas and the rise of young Jogaila going to fit in with the internal politics of Lithuania? Well, it was a little bit like a grenade going off in a small room. Kestutis and Algirdas had ruled together cooperatively and successfully for more than three decades, with Algirdas being acknowledged as the senior of the two men. Now one of Algirdas' sons was to inherit that title, making him the senior figure in the new Kestutis-Jogaila ruling partnership. William Urban states that, although Kestutis attempted to start the partnership off on a positive note by accepting Algirdas' decision to make Jogaila the Grand Prince of Lithuania, he made it pretty clear to Jogaila that he, Kestutis, didn't consider himself to be subordinate to his nephew, and that while he was happy to share power with Jogaila, on some occasions he expected the young man to defer to his uncle's experience and authority. Did Jogaila agree with this proposition? No, he did not.

So at the start of his rule, the twenty seven year old newbie Lithuanian ruler had three separate problems he was going to have to tackle. The first problem concerned his brothers: some could be trusted; some could be manipulated; and others needed to be forced back into line, and if necessary eliminated. Especially during the first few years of his reign, Jogaila knew that he would need to be constantly watching his back, as some of his more ambitious brothers may try to make a play for Jogaila's position.

The second problem Jogaila faced was the Teutonic Order. Like his father, Jogaila's heart and his priorities lay in the Russian principalities. He was itching to achieve what his father had been unable to do, to take the mighty Russian city of Moscow. But he couldn't

concentrate fully on affairs in Russia, with the Teutonic Order constantly nipping at Lithuania's heels from Prussia and Livonia, so he needed to sort them out.

The final problem Jogaila wanted to eliminate was Kestutis. Really, if he was honest about it, Jogaila would just rather that Kestutis didn't exist. Ruling Lithuania and the Russian Principalities would be so much easier if there was just one ruler, and of course, to Jogaila, there was no question about who that one ruler should be: that's right, Jogaila.

So, settle his brothers down; put the Teutonic Order back into its box; eliminate Kestutis; then extend his Russian holdings all the way to Moscow. That's a pretty daunting to-do list. Let's see how he goes about achieving all these goals.

The first thing Jogaila did sort of ticked all three of his boxes. Jogaila decided to go behind Kestutis' back and negotiate a peace treaty with the Teutonic Order, using one of his brothers as the conduit. The brother he chose to use was a man called Skirgaila, who, personality wise, was just about the polar opposite of Jogaila. Skirgaila was a people person. He enjoyed nothing more than drinking and partying hard with, well, just about anyone. He was multi-lingual, loved being the center of attention, was charismatic and likable, and he could lie like you would just not believe. The weird thing about Skirgaila that everyone knew that you just couldn't believe a single word that came out of his mouth, but they tended to like him anyway. Skirgaila could sit down and share a few ales with anyone: a nobleman from the Holy Roman Empire; a cleric from the Latin Christian Church; or a Prussian peasant; and after a few rounds of drinks, his companion would inevitably come to the conclusion that "Yes, this Lithuanian bloke is clearly not someone you could rely on, but I don't care. He's entertaining, he's personable, and maybe I should buy another round of drinks to share with him." So Skirgaila was an interesting choice for the role of diplomat appointed by Jogaila to travel to Prussia, to meet with representatives from the Teutonic Order, to make peace with Jogaila.

And let's just make that crystal clear: Jogaila wasn't seeking peace between the Teutonic Order and Lithuania; he was seeking peace between the Teutonic Order and Jogaila. One of the conditions that Skirgaila was authorized to offer was that Jogaila was prepared to agree not to go to the assistance of Kestutis, if Kestutis' forces or Kestutis' territory came under attack by the Teutonic Order.

Jogaila's official and public reason for seeking peace with the Teutonic Order was to curtail the activities of one of his brothers, the brother in fact, who was the most likely to stage some sort of an attempt to oust Jogaila from his position. This brother's name was Andreas. He was older than Jogaila and had been granted the rulership of Polotsk following Algirdas' death. Jogaila's plan was to force Andreas into exile, but before he could safely make this move he

had to ensure that Andreas would be blocked from forming any alliance with the Teutonic Order or the Tartar Khans which would provide him with the muscle he needed to overthrow Jogaila. So if anyone asked, Jogaila was negotiating with the Teutonic Order with a view to keeping Andreas in check.

Behind closed doors, however, the arrangements were much different. William Urban reports that, with Skirgaila as the intermediary, Jogaila negotiated treaties with the Teutonic Order in the years 1377, 1379 and 1381. The secret clauses in these agreements included the rather astonishing arrangement that Jogaila and his forces would operate on a sort of go-slow mode if called on by Kestutis to attack or oppose any Crusader forces. Similarly, if the Teutonic Order went on the offensive against Kestutis, Jogaila agreed not to come to his aid. In reality, this meant that for example, if the Crusader forces raided into Samogitia, they would naturally be countered by Kestutis' forces. If Kestutis, then requested Jogaila to bring a relief army into Samogitia, Jogaila would agree to do so, but then would find reason upon reason to delay, and would generally ensure that by the time he arrived in Samogitia he would be too late to be of any assistance.

Now clearly, the more this happened, the more likely Kestutis would be to get the idea that something fishy was going on. The members of the Teutonic Order were sworn to secrecy about this plan, but the whole existence of the arrangement emboldened the Crusaders, who knew that they could attack Kestutis and his forces without having to worry about Jogaila coming to his aid, and that they could raid into Samogitia, without again worrying that Jogaila would turn up to oppose them. In return, the Teutonic Order had Jogaila's back in relation to any attempt by any of his brothers to seek their assistance to overthrow him, and Kestutis' position overall was weakened. After a while, rumors began to circulate that there was something a little underhand about Jogaila's relationship with the Order, but when Kestutis asked his own son about what was going on, his son, who, incidentally was a close friend of Jogaila, soothed his father's concerns and told him there was nothing to worry about, so I guess it will come as no surprise to anyone to learn that Jogaila is about to make some waves in the Baltic region.

In fact, what he is about to do is a little less like making waves and more like launching a series of tsunamis. Join me next week as Jogaila launches himself into the politics of the Baltic region. Until next week, bye for now.

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