

## History of the Crusades. Episode 307. The Baltic Crusades. The Lithuanian Conflict Part XII. The First Peace of Thorn.

Hello again. Last week we saw King Jogaila of Poland retreat from Prussia, having failed to take the city of Marienberg. Heinrich of Plauen and the remaining members of the Teutonic Order then successfully managed to retake all the castles, towns, and cities conquered by the invaders. After having been elected to the position of Grand Master of the Order, Heinrich was keen to launch an immediate invasion into the Kingdom of Poland, but instead was forced to bow to public pressure and commence peace negotiations with King Jogaila and Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania. We left last week's episode with the parties having signed a peace treaty at Thorn on the 1st of February 1411, a document which later came to be known as the First Peace of Thorn. Oddly, though, none of the parties to the agreement came away from the negotiations happy with the way things had turned out. We are now going to examine why the First Peace of Thorn left everyone feeling grumpy, confused, and upset.

Now, as we stated in last week's episode, it's probably not terribly surprising that the Teutonic Order was unhappy with the terms of the peace treaty. The Order had, after all, suffered a massive defeat at the battle of Tannenberg, and as such was likely to be the party forced to make the most concessions. One of the biggest concessions the Order was forced to make was an agreement to relinquish its claim to Samogitia. This was clearly a huge loss for the Order, which had been fighting to wrestle Samogitia into submission for a number of years. However, under the terms of the Treaty, Samogitia was to revert back to the Teutonic Order after the death of both King Jogaila and Grand Duke Vytautas. At this point in time, neither Jogaila nor Vytautas were young men, so the loss of Samogitia was tempered by the fact that, depending on the longevity of the current leaders of Poland and Lithuania, Samogitia may actually be back in the Order's hands in the not too distant future.

During the period in which Samogitia was out of the Order's control, the idea was that Lithuania would move in and take possession of the region, while King Jogaila would be the ruler of Samogitia in name only. Grand Duke Vytautas of course, was pretty happy with this arrangement, but King Jogaila, not so much. In fact, the only territorial gains made by the Kingdom of Poland under the Peace of Thorn was the ownership of some disputed territory in the borderlands, namely Kuyavia and Dobrin. But as William Urban points out in his book "The Last Years of the Teutonic Knights", this was a pretty empty concession as most Germans had already vacated those two regions well before the peace negotiations. So for a man who had won the Battle of Tannenberg and very nearly captured the entire country of Prussia, King Jogaila gained very little territory from the peace agreement.

And while we're still on the issue of territory covered by the First Peace of Thorn, even Grand Duke Vytautas was unhappy with the fine print in the provisions of the treaty which effectively granted Lithuania the governance of Samogitia. The trouble was, there was quite a bit of a disagreement about the actual boundaries of Samogitia, and which bits exactly the Order was handing over to Lithuania. To both Jogaila and Vytautas it was pretty obvious that Samogitia included all the territory along the Nemunas River. Grand Master Heinrich, however, was adamant that the mouth of the Nemunas River was actually in Prussia, not Samogitia. In fact, he even went so far as to claim that the stronghold of Memel, which was a considerable distance up the coast from the mouth of the Nemunas in the opposite direction of Prussia towards Kurland, was actually part of Prussia as well. So to the Grand Master, Prussia conveniently stretched along the Baltic

coastline past the mouth of the Nemunas River all the way up to the stronghold at Memel. Both Vytautas and Jogaila threw their hands into the air at this apparently ridiculous claim, but Grand Master Heinrich stood his ground and refused to hand over any of the strongholds inside Samogitia until the borders of Samogitia had been decided in his favor.

While everyone had their own particular reasons to be unhappy about the Samogitia part of the peace treaty, there was one part of the treaty which King Jogaila and Grand Duke Vytautas had reason to be pleased about, and that was the part which dealt with financial compensation. A large number of experienced and skilled fighters from the Teutonic Order had been taken prisoner following the battle of Tannenberg. Grand Master Heinrich was desperate to have these men back. While the massive death toll amongst the ranks of the Teutonic Order following their defeat, and the subsequent dip in the number of fighting men in Prussia, could in some respects be filled by the hiring of mercenaries, the Order needed experienced knights to lead the mercenaries in battle and to oversee the operation of the Order's many strongholds and convents. And just about all the experienced knights who had survived the carnage at Tannenberg were being held as prisoners. In fact, around 14,000 German captives, all up, were currently languishing in prisons across Poland and Lithuania, and the Grand Master was willing to pay just about anything to secure their release.

And when I say that the Grand Master was willing to pay just about anything. I mean, exactly that. The amount which the Grand Master agreed to pay in compensation for both a war indemnity and as a ransom for all the German prisoners was the absolutely gob-smacking amount of six million groschen. This was equivalent to around 20,000 kilograms of silver. Or, to put it another way, it amounted to the sum of 150,000 marks. As William Urban points out, for 150,000 marks you could buy 150,000 crossbows, or around 15,000 warhorses. Or to put it yet another way, Eric Christiansen points out in his book "The Northern Crusades", the amount was equivalent to 10 times the annual income of the King of England at that time. So whichever way you look at it, under the terms of the treaty, the Teutonic Order had agreed to pay an insanely large sum to the victors of the Battle of Tannenberg.

Now, this would have been an absolutely crippling sum of money to hand over even if the Teutonic Order had been flush with funds, but to put it mildly, the Teutonic Order was currently not flush with funds. It had just spent a massive amount of money hiring mercenaries to fight in the battle against the Polish and Lithuanian invaders, and it was currently handing over rather large sums of money in bribes to both King Wenceslas of Bohemia and Sigismund of Hungary to make sure they stayed on the Order's side. In addition, they also needed to replace all the war horses, artillery, and other equipment lost on the battlefield at Tannenberg. So all the cash reserves the Order usually had had already been spent, and there was no way that the Order could just wave a magic wand and conjure up six million groschen out of thin air.

The only way the Grand Master could possibly raise this amount of money would be to raise taxes, dismiss all his mercenaries, and virtually eliminate all military spending. This would mean deciding not to replace all the equipment lost at Tannenberg, and it would mean keeping the currently sparsely manned garrisons across Prussia exactly as they were. It would effectively mean that the Grand Master would need to abandon any plan to invade Poland at any time in the near future, and in fact it would also mean leaving Prussia vulnerable to any future invasions. This was completely unacceptable to the Grand Master,

who seems to have decided that he would find a way to pay the ransom / indemnity penalty and re-arm and equip the Teutonic Order at the same time.

If you are hearing the drums of doom beginning to sound out in the distance, that's because, despite my inability to insert sound effects into this podcast, the drums of doom are actually beginning to sound out in the distance. As William Urban states, and I quote "The indemnity ransom was the most important of many financial blows that were ultimately more deadly than the battle at Tannenberg" end quote.

Regardless of the fact that no one was really happy with the terms of the treaty which arose out of the First Peace of Thorn, the three parties to the agreement all eventually signed onto the provisions and returned back to their homes. William Urban points out that the treaty continued to cause disappointment and confusion once all the signatures to the agreement left Thorn, because they all departed with their own versions of the agreement, all of which were slightly different. Clearly, the best idea would have been for everyone to sign an original document, which would then be replicated word for word, with a copy being given to each signatory, but this didn't happen. Instead, each party made a copy of the treaty in the particular form to which they were accustomed to, meaning that, in the words of William Urban, and I quote "the texts were similar but not identical" end quote. Really, the First Peace of Thorn could serve as a master-class in how not to formulate a treaty to bring peace to warring powers.

With the question of the borders of Samogitia still not resolved, and with everyone carrying slightly different versions of the treaty away from Thorn with them, it's probably not going to surprise anyone to learn that the treaty signed at Thorn did not herald the end of bad feelings, conflict, and disagreement between the Teutonic Order, the Kingdom of Poland, and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Now, the person feeling most of the heat in the aftermath of the signing of the peace of Thorn was Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen. It seems that Heinrich was an optimistic sort of a man, a characteristic which probably served him well back when he decided that he could almost single-handedly hold back the tide of Polish and Lithuanian invaders who had crashed onto the shores of Prussia, but this characteristic was now about to become a liability.

To any sensible, realistic person, there was no way in the world that the Grand Master was going to be able to pay the installments of financial penalties agreed under the terms of the treaty, as well as maintaining the current level of mercenaries and re-arming and equipping the Teutonic Order to the level it was at prior to the Battle of Tannenberg. A sensible person with knowledge of finances and budgets would just sit down with the ledgers and accounts of the Order, then stand up, shake the head, and declare that it couldn't be done.

But Grand Master Heinrich was a can-do sort of a person. To Grand Master Heinrich, the question didn't even need to be asked. To Grand Master Heinrich, he could have his cake and eat it too. He could pay a massive amount of money to Poland, and keep paying vast numbers of mercenaries, and re-equip and rearm the Teutonic Order so as to prepare to reclaim the Order's honor at some stage in the future by invading the Kingdom of Poland and paying it back for its victory at Tannenberg.

When the date for the payment of the first installment of the indemnity / ransom began to approach, and the Order's bookkeepers and accountants began to chew their fingernails nervously and find other places they needed to be, Grand Master Heinrich declared that he had formulated a cunning plan to raise the enormous sum of money required. All he needed to do was to levy a tax on all the cities in Prussia. Rubbing his hands together in anticipation, he ordered representatives from cities across Prussia to travel to Osterode in February of 1411, where the Grand Master would explain the need to protect Prussia from her enemies, and would convince the cities to cough up the sums needed to send the first installment of money to King Jogaila.

There was one problem with this, though. Not every city was willing to do its patriotic duty and dig deep into its pockets for extra cash. Representatives from the city of Danzig, which I should remind everyone is now the city of Gdansk in Poland, I'm calling it Danzig at the moment because that's what it was called at this time in history, refused to raise the money. When the Grand Master held a further conference in Elbing to try to force Danzig's hand, the move backfired, as not only did Danzig refuse to back down, the city of Thorn decided to join it in rejecting the Grand Master's new tax.

Now Danzig and Thorn were two of the largest and most prosperous cities in Prussia, so the Grand Master really couldn't afford to back down and let them off the hook while placing the entire tax burden on the smaller, less wealthy, more loyal, remaining Prussian cities.

In fact, it was the lack of loyalty and patriotism being displayed, particularly by Danzig, which was making the Grand Master rather angry. In the days following the Battle of Tannenberg, Danzig, like most other cities, had pledged to surrender to the King of Poland. However, Danzig seemed to almost enjoy the experience of waving its white flag in Poland's direction. William Urban reports that when a Polish commander arrived in Danzig to accept the city's surrender and take up his position as its new governor, Danzig rolled out the red carpet for him. Musicians greeted his entry into the city, and the city's councilors personally showed him around all the streets, nooks, and crannies of the town to make him feel at home. And when it came time for the city to release itself from Poland and embrace Prussia once again, it exhibited a worrying lack of enthusiasm.

So Grand Master Heinrich decided that it was time to teach these Polish-leaning, tax-evading upstarts a lesson. It was time to hit Thorn and Danzig with a big Teutonic stick. The leading citizens and counselors of the city of Thorn decided that they didn't want to be hit with a big Teutonic stick, so they departed from the city and fled in exile to the Kingdom of Poland, leaving the remaining citizens behind to roll over and accept the Grand Master's new tax.

Danzig, however, didn't roll over, and didn't want to be hit with either new taxes or a big Teutonic stick. Instead, the councilors prepared the city's defenses, and blocked the gate leading into the town's castle in an attempt to eject the captain of the garrison of the castle, a Teutonic Order loyalist named Heinrich Reuss von Plauen from entering the castle. If you are wondering whether Heinrich Reuss von Plauen is related to Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen, yes, they are related. They are cousins. Anyway, the Grand Master's cousin wasn't able to make any inroads against the rebellious city councilors and merchants, and it wasn't until rumors started to circulate that trade goods would be confiscated and the harbor blockaded if things didn't settle down, that things started to settle down, and the rebels eventually surrendered on the 11th of April.

Despite the fact that they had surrendered, Heinrich Reuss von Plauen invited the rebel leaders into the castle, and when they complied, he arrested them. As the days passed without any of the men coming back out of the castle, concerned citizens and family members called upon the Teutonic Order to release them. However, when he was presented with a formal order from the Grand Master demanding that the hostages be released, Heinrich Reuss von Plauen was forced to admit that the men were all dead. They had, in fact, all been killed on the first night of their imprisonment. Instead of admonishing his cousin for his heavy handedness, Grand Master Heinrich gave him a slap on the back, then fined the city of Danzig an extra 14,000 marks on top of the new taxes he had levied.

So, has the Grand Master fixed the problem? Will all of Prussia now fall into line behind his grand plans for rearmament, revenge, and redemption? No, it won't. Join me next week as Grand Master Heinrich makes a number of critical missteps and miscalculations. Until next week, bye for now.

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