

History of the Crusades. Episode 253. The Baltic Crusades. The Prussian Crusade Part 19. So many “Master Konrad”s.

Hello again. Last week we saw busy Master Konrad, the new Master of the Teutonic Order in Prussia, subdue Nadrovia and Scalovia, with a view to using those regions as a base from which to push northwards into Samogitia. However, Master Konrad’s plans were put on hold when he was forced to race to the other end of Prussia to put down the Third Prussian Insurrection.

Now, the insurrection was sparked when an overly-eager castellan in the region of Pogesania attacked a bunch of Sudovians, causing the leader of the Sudovians, the famed warlord Scumand, to raise an army of Sudovians and Lithuanians, and rampage through Prussia in retaliation. Master Konrad was able to put down the insurrection without too much difficulty, but was now faced with a problem. The Sudovians hadn’t been properly subdued by the Order during the Second Prussian Insurrection, with the crusader army led by King Ottakar of Bohemia, whose aim had been to take over Sudovia once he had successfully defeated the pagans, forced to return home before the crusade even started, due to the weather. So, Sudovia had sort of been just left, unchecked. However the actions of Scumand, which had sparked another general pagan uprising in Prussia, had drawn attention back to Sudovia, and the fact that, really, there was no point going to war with Samogitia when the Sudovians were still making trouble back in Prussia. So, Master Konrad’s next task was to defeat Sudovia.

Now, before we turn to Sudovia we should just check in briefly with Duke Mestwin of Pomerelia. Remember Duke Mestwin of Pomerelia? He did his best to join the Second Prussian Insurrection on the side of the pagan Prussians, before being defeated and totally humiliated by King Ottakar of Bohemia. Now, we mentioned that Duke Mestwin went on to consolidate his rule in Pomerelia, learning from the many mistakes he made when joining the insurrection with no allies. That’s all well and good, but now Duke Mestwin has a problem. He has a daughter but no sons, and he has just taken a vow of chastity. With daughters unable to inherit, this will mean that Duke Mestwin will be the last in a long line of Pomerelian dukes, and when he dies Pomerelia will be leaderless and defenseless, and could quite possibly be invaded and taken over by the Teutonic Order. Deciding that the Teutonic Order would never take over his duchy, even over his dead body, Duke Mestwin made a will, leaving his duchy to Great Poland.

This was a bold and nearly unheard of move. William Urban points out in his book “The Prussian Crusade” that the Teutonic Order most probably had considered taking over Pomerelia after the death of Duke Mestwin, but the will made by Duke Mestwin put them in a bit of a bind. In order to secure Pomerelia they would now have to declare war on Great Poland, a Christian land which had provided support to the Order against the pagans in the past.

The interesting chess move made by Duke Mestwin stopped the Order in its tracks, but, as William Urban explains, at this point in time the Order couldn’t do much about Duke Mestwin and his pesky will, because they had to concentrate on the war with Sudovia. The war had started back in 1279, when the Order embarked on a major raid into Sudovia. The raid was a resounding success, with much booty scored, and many Sudovians killed. However, since that time the Order simply hadn’t had the resources needed to subdue the region. They had been kept busy with minor uprisings and general trouble-making. The

Prussians had attacked a mill in Elbing, then the Master had led an army into Warmia to capture a pagan stronghold, then there had been pagan raids around Kulm to deal with.

Now, we have come to the point where the two Crusades merge. In March of 1279, the Livonian Chapter of the Teutonic Order suffered a catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Lithuanians. As we saw back in Episode 251, Master Ernst, the Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, was killed along with 71 Teutonic Knights. Not long after this disastrous turn of events, Master Konrad, the Master of the Order in Prussia, also died, of natural causes. So now both the Order in Livonia and the Order in Prussia are Master-less. Grand Master Hartmann then decided to combine the command of the two regions, appointing another Konrad, Konrad von Feuchtwangen, to the position of Master of Livonia and Prussia, and dispatching him to Elbing in Prussia with the explicit instructions to prioritize, not subduing the Sudovians, but subduing the Semigallians and Samogitians, a move which would re-establish the land corridor between Prussia and Livonia.

Now, as we reported back in Episode 251, this new Master Konrad, a man with military experience in the Holy Land, arrived in Elbing with much fanfare, and immediately convened a war council, calling upon all the military leaders from the Order across Prussia and Livonia to provide him with detailed reports on the current state of play. However the reports seemed to curb his enthusiasm for action. The problem was, as usual, a lack of manpower. Master Konrad had brought a number of fighting men with him from the Holy Roman Empire, but really, without a big influx of crusaders, the Master realized he was limited in the campaigns he could undertake. So he decided to prioritize. Having heard from military leaders across the two territories, he decided that Livonia was the priority. Prussia was under no immediate threat, and the war against the Sudovians could be continued using small scale guerrilla warfare tactics. This would enable Master Konrad to concentrate on what he believed was the most important arena of combat: Livonia.

In order to concentrate more fully on the Livonian situation, Master Konrad decided he needed to check it out for himself. So, not wanting to leave Prussia leaderless during his absence, he petitioned Master Hartmann to appoint a new Master for Prussia, effectively reinstating the old system whereby Prussia and Livonia had a Master each. Manegold von Sternberg was appointed Master of Prussia in early 1280, and Master Konrad sailed to Livonia with a force of 30 knights. He arrived in Riga, then traveled up-river to Dunamunde, where Master Konrad inspected the castle and its defenses, before embarking on a full scale tour of wider Livonia, meeting local military commanders, inspecting castles, and getting to know the locals and the landscape. By the time Master Konrad had completed his extensive tour, he came to the same conclusion that had previously been reached by everyone else. The main threat in the region was the Semigallians, and it was to Semigallia that the Master's attentions now turned.

The Order's main stronghold in Semigallia was the castle at Mitau, and the defense of the region was greatly assisted by the castle at Goldingen in Kurland. The knights from Goldingen frequently went raiding out of Kurland into Semigallia, and the leader of the Semigallian pagans, a man called Nameiser, had his main stronghold at Doblen, which was located near Mitau, to its southwest. Master Konrad now turned his attentions on Doblen, deciding to gather a large army and attack the pagan stronghold. And he did exactly that. Men from Livonia, as well as troops led by the Bishop of Dorpat and fighters from Estonia, all assembled under Master Konrad's command, rode to Doblen and decided to besiege it, with Master Konrad ordering his men to construct a large siege engine. The engine was built and had been hauled over to the ditch which surrounded the

stronghold, when word came in that the Samogitians were approaching. So, in effect, a large pagan army was coming up on the Latin Christian forces from behind, while they were busy concentrating on besieging the Semigallian stronghold in front of them.

Master Konrad ordered the siege engine to be hastily deconstructed, then the Latin Christians gathered themselves into battle formation, and turned to confront the approaching Samogitian army. But Master Konrad was disappointed to find that the pagans didn't fight in the manner he was accustomed to seeing, from his experience of fighting Muslims in the Holy Land. The Samogitian army didn't assemble into a battle formation of its own. Instead the army split into small fighting units which scattered across the immediate region, with some units even stationing themselves in nearby swamps. This meant of course that Master Konrad couldn't use the tried and true tactics employed by the Latin Christians in the Holy Land, and everywhere else in fact, of amassing a large army into formation, then charging in to meet the opposing army, which had also formed up ready for battle. With the Samogitians having splintered and scattered, there was nothing to charge at, and Master Konrad, in the end, was forced to withdraw from Doblen, vowing to return again in the summer, to have another crack at the pesky pagans, with their weird and annoying battle tactics.

In the spring of 1281, Master Konrad was thrilled to finally welcome a bunch of crusaders to Riga. With his army bolstered by these additional forces, he set off to once again confront the pagans, this time sailing from Riga down the coast, then upriver to Mitau. The stronghold at Mitau wasn't large enough to accommodate the army so they camped outside. The next day they headed to the now Semigallian stronghold of Terwerten, and besieged it. While the Master's forces were busy constructing siege engines and settling in for a lengthy siege, additional forces arrived from Goldingen, meaning the total Latin Christian army now numbered around 14,000 men.

Despite the size of the army and the fact that a massive siege tower was constructed, an assault on Terwerten failed to breach its defenses. However, the attack was severe enough to prompt the Semigallians to offer peace terms. They promised to live quietly and pay taxes - so while they did not offer to convert to Christianity, they did state that they would no longer take up arms against their Latin Christian neighbors. Master Konrad initially rejected this offer, maintaining that he Semigallians couldn't be trusted to keep their word. However, after some gentle persuasion by the Prince of Rugen, who was the leader of the Crusader forces, and who intervened on behalf of the pagans, Master Konrad reluctantly agreed to terms. A peace treaty was formalized between the Latin Christians and the Semigallians of Terwerten, and the Master's army returned to Riga.

Now, before everyone gets too excited and starts thinking that this signifies peace in our time with the Semigallians, it doesn't. The treaty only covered the Semigallians of Terwerten and the surrounding region. The remainder of Semigallia is still at war with the Teutonic Order and the leader of the Semigallian army, Nameise, was so disgusted by this turn of events that he took himself off to exile in Lithuania and went on to fight the Teutonic Order in Prussia.

Now, by this time Master Konrad really had had enough of the freezing weather, the harsh living conditions, and the pesky pagans, and he requested to be relieved of his duties. Master Manegold had been coping quite adequately with the situation in Prussia, and Master Konrad again altered his previous stance on the division between Prussia and Livonia, petitioning Grand Master Hartmann to appoint a Master in Livonia who would

administer the Order's activities in Livonia under the direction of the Master of Prussia. So the Master of Prussia would oversee the Master of Livonia, who would act as a sort of sub-Master. In the spring of 1282, Master Manegold traveled to Livonia to inspect his new region of oversight and he assisted Master Konrad to select a new Master for Livonia, Willekin of Endorp. Then the careers of Master Konrad and Master Manegold went in opposite directions. Master Manegold returned to Prussia and was then summoned to the Holy Land to take part in the election of a new Grand Master for the Order. He was returning home from the Holy Land when he was lost at sea. So that was the end of the career of Master Manegold. In contrast, Master (or more accurately ex-Master) Konrad sailed back to the Holy Roman Empire without managing to get lost at sea, and spoiler alert, in around a decade or so, he will become Grand Master Konrad, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. But we're getting ahead of ourselves. We now have a new Grand Master to discuss, and a new Master of the Order in Prussia to appoint.

Now, the man who was elected in the Holy Land as the new Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, was a man called Burchard von Schwanden. Now, unlike many of his predecessors, Grand Master Burchard has pretty much no knowledge of the Baltic region and the Baltic Crusades. Because of this he will be relying heavily on the Masters in the Baltic region to administer their regions without a lot of oversight, and this in turn will lead to an increase in the power and autonomy of the Masters in the region, particularly the Master of Prussia, who will be overseeing the activities of the Master of Livonia. So the Master of Prussia is going to become quite an influential figure.

That begs the question, who is going to become the new Master of Prussia? Well, it's another Konrad. Remember two Master Konrads ago, Master Konrad had a Marshall who was also called Konrad? Well, Marshall Konrad had enjoyed a couple of military successes against the Sudovians, under Master Manegold, so Grand Master Burchard, clearly deciding that you can never have too many Master Konrads in Prussia, recommended that the Grand Chapter of the Order elevate Marshall Konrad to the position of Master Konrad. The Grand Chapter agreed, so now we have another Master Konrad. Now, this Master Konrad will enjoy quite a successful tenure as Master of Prussia, while also overseeing the Master of Livonia. Join me next week as Master Konrad hits the ground running, settling the dispute over Duke Mestwin's will, ending the war with Sudovia, and kicking off a new war against Lithuania. Until next week, bye for now.

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