

Campaign

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Tannenberg 1410

Disaster for the Teutonic Knights



Stephen Turnbull • Illustrated by Richard Hook

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Stephen Turnbull • Illustrated by Richard Hook

Series editor Lee Johnson • Consultant editor David G Chandler

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Dedication:

To Barbara and Helena Clark.

Author's Note:

As almost every geographic location mentioned in the book has a Polish and a German name I have tried to use both throughout. At the first occurence I have chosen the Polish or German name dependent on the context. In most cases it has proved useful to refer to the contemporary German name first.

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KEY TO MILITARY SYMBOLS

XXXXX	XXXX	XXX	XX	X
ARMY GROUP	ARMY	CORPS	DIVISION	BRIGADE
III	II	I		
REGIMENT	BATTALION	COMPANY	INFANTRY	CAVALRY
ARTILLERY	ARMOUR	MOTORIZED	AIRBORNE	SPECIAL FORCES

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INTRODUCTION

The battle that was fought in the fields adjoining the villages of Grunwald and Tannenberg in present-day Poland in the year 1410 was one of the largest battles in medieval European history, and the memory of it is still capable of stirring fiercely nationalist emotions. This is most apparent from the fact that the battle has been given three different names. It is Grunwald to the Polish, Tannenberg to the Germans and Zalgiris to the Lithuanians. The conscious link made in World War I between the conflict of 1410 and the Russo-German battle of Tannenberg in 1914, fought nearby, further fuelled the fiery emotions generated by the battle. This reached its climax with Hitler and Stalin, both of whom saw the battle as a symbol of the supposed struggle between the Germans and the Slavs, between Communism and National Socialism. Both leaders shamelessly twisted and distorted the historical facts for political ends and to conform to their views of world history.

This book attempts to be a concise and unbiased account of the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald, the campaign that led up to it and its long aftermath. It is a remarkable story, and almost unique in military history in that Tannenberg, which was unquestionably the decisive battle of the 50-year-long war between the Teutonic Order and the united kingdom of Poland/Lithuania, was fought at the beginning of the conflict and not at its end. There can also be few other examples in history of a battle so decisively won and a subsequent campaign that so singularly failed to achieve its aims. Despite their crushing victory at Tannenberg, the Polish/Lithuanian army failed to capture Marienburg, key fortress and capital of the Teutonic state.

ORIGINS OF THE CAMPAIGN

The battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald involved three armies: those of the kingdom of Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Prussian state of the Teutonic Order. Although only a relatively small proportion of their army were actually fully armoured knights, I have employed the commonly used title of 'Teutonic Knights' as a general term signifying the total fighting force of the Teutonic Order.

LEFT This painting entitled 'The Return of the Crusader' by the 19th-century artist Karl Friedrich Lessing, captures two characteristic features of the knights of the Teutonic Order – the white mantle bearing a black cross and the full beard.

The Teutonic Knights

Throughout their stormy history, and long after their eventual secularisation in 1525, the brethren of the Teutonic Order have always been the most controversial brotherhood to call themselves 'Knights of Christ'. The Order was known as the 'Servants of St Mary of the German House' in its oldest set of rules. It had its origins in the siege of Acre in 1190



Teutonic Knights on the Prussian Crusade, the venture for which they were invited into Poland in the first place.

during the Third Crusade. German merchants from Bremen and Lübeck established a makeshift field hospital to tend the numerous sick and injured crusaders from the large German contingent. The brethren were committed to caring for the sick and assisting in the defence or recovery of the holy places in a similar fashion to the more numerous members of the Knights Templar and the Knights Hospitaller. In appearance the Teutonic Knights were distinguished from their sister orders by wearing a black cross upon a white robe and mantle. By 1197 the Order had received a charter of incorporation from the Pope, and when the German Emperor Frederick II took the cross in 1215 the Order's fortunes made a marked improvement.

In the face of Muslim resurgence, however, and domination by its two more powerful sister orders the Teutonic Order found itself unable to expand in the Holy Land. This and its distinct national identity had led to it developing a particular connection with Germany, and the Order's attention shifted away from the Holy Land. They first answered a request for help from King Andrew of Hungary, whose Transylvanian provinces were being attacked by the warlike Cuman tribes. The Teutonic Knights soon proved to be more of a nuisance than the Cumans, as having defeated the tribesmen they set up a colony of their own. They became so fiercely independent that the Hungarians described the Order as like 'a viper in the bosom'. Alarmed at the German colonisation King Andrew eventually resorted to force in order to expel them.

As their Transylvanian adventure was collapsing, however, the Knights received another request for military and religious assistance from a Polish nobleman called Duke Conrad of Masovia. He had found himself unable to cope with the heathen Prussians on his northern



Mounted Teutonic Knight as depicted on the municipal seal of Kulm (Chelmno) c. 1300.



Kwidzyn (Marienwerder), one of the greatest of the Teutonic castles.

EASTERN EUROPE, c.1386



borders who threatened his communications with the Baltic and were proving almost impossible either to conquer or convert. The Teutonic Order therefore entered Poland for the first time in 1222 at the express invitation of a Polish dignitary. In return for their services the Order would be granted the territories of Kulm (Chelmno) along the river Vistula (Wisla), and any further territories they conquered in the course of the operation. This was a repeat of the conquest and settlement scenario in Transylvania, but this time with official approval. The Order's Grand Master, Hermann von Salza, immediately recognised the opportunity he had before him and, with the support of Emperor Frederick II, the Pope issued the Golden Bull of Rimini in 1226, which set out in minute detail the constitution of the future state that the Order already intended to win for themselves.

RIGHT The fortress of Marienburg (now Malbork) headquarters of the Teutonic Order from 1309 and the primary objective of the Polish/Lithuanian invasion of 1410.



ABOVE A fresco, formerly in the cathedral of Königsberg, depicting knights of the Teutonic Order.

Thus began the Teutonic Knights' Prussian Crusade, and within a few years the inhabitants of the lands around Kulm had been converted. In 1230 Duke Conrad of Masovia kept his word and handed over the conquered territory to the Order. The Grand Master, always the diplomat, astutely had the prize declared the property of St Peter and the Order continued its territorial expansion at the expense of the pagan Prussians. In 1231 their army crossed the Vistula (Wisla) and within a few years the Order's first castles began to appear. Thorn (Torun) was built in 1231, Marienwerder (Kwidzyn) in 1233 and then Elbing (Elblag) secured the line of the Vistula in 1237. Also in 1237 the Sword Brothers, a rival military order with the patronage of the Bishop of Riga, combined with the Teutonic Order. Their territory in Livonia became an autonomous province of the Order so that by the time Hermann von Salza died in 1239 his Teutonic Knights controlled almost 100 miles of the Baltic coast in addition to a considerable area of the interior.

The ability of the Order to retain the territory conquered from its pagan neighbours was in marked contrast to the experience in the crusader kingdoms of the Middle East. There the conquered territories were gradually, but systematically, liberated by the neighbouring Islamic states. Two characteristics of the Prussian Crusade were the brutal behaviour of the combatants on both sides and a remarkably permanent programme of





Wall painting of Werner von Orseln, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights between 1324 and 1330, in the cathedral of Kwidzyn (Marienwerder). Von Orseln was murdered because of his accommodative tendencies towards Poland.

settlement and development by the Teutonic knights. This effectively transformed crusading into colonisation. The pagan princes of Prussia were gradually stripped of their lands and influence and, in place of their wooden fortresses, a huge network of castles was developed to protect the German settlers. At first these structures were timber but by 1283 when, according to the Order's chronicler, the conquest of heathen Prussia was complete, they were beginning to be replaced by the formidable brick structures seen today.

The conflict with Poland

With Prussia pacified the Teutonic Knights began to look further afield. To the east they targeted Lithuania in what was to be a long conflict. In the west they began to threaten their former Polish allies. The Order first looked to Pomerania, the capture of which would allow them to join their Prussian territories to Germany. In 1308 the German Margrave of Brandenburg came most fortuitously to their aid by attacking Danzig (Gdansk), the main port of Pomerania. He had been invited to do this by Polish rivals of King Wladislaw the Short. As the king was presently campaigning in Russia he asked for Teutonic help to expel the invader. The Teutonic Knights defeated the Brandenburgers, captured Danzig and also Dirschau (Tczew). Following their successful campaign the Order placed its demands for territorial concession before the Polish king. When the king refused to grant them anything the Teutonic Knights annexed Pomerania, cutting the Poles off from the Baltic. It was a decision that was to lead to a century and a half of conflict.

Despite its string of military successes, the Order's position faced a severe challenge from an entirely different direction. The whole concept and conduct of the military orders was being questioned at the highest ecclesiastical level. In 1307 Pope Clement V had authorised the arrest and suppression of the Knights Templar. Many of the charges laid against the Templars were evident nonsense, but this did not prevent them from being pressed and upheld, leading to the destruction of the Order, much to the alarm of the Teutonic Knights. They would have to face accusations that were more serious and much better substantiated. Seeking to distance himself physically from the scandal that daily threatened to erupt, the then Grand Master, Siegfried von Feuchtwangen, left Venice in 1309 (Acre had been abandoned in 1291) and established his headquarters within his Prussian territory at Marienburg castle¹. At first sight Marienburg might seem an unusual choice for the Order's headquarters. It lay at the western extremity of

¹ Now in the town of Malbork in Poland.

Teutonic Prussia, but as the Order now controlled Pomerania its position was far more central to their vision of a Teutonic state stretching from Germany to Livonia. The Grand Master's decision to move came not a moment too soon, because the following June Clement V issued a Bull that authorised a full investigation into the charges that had been made against the Teutonic Order, who had allegedly been 'waging war on such people against Christ, and with various cunning ruses'.

THE LITHUANIAN CRUSADES

Marienburg was to remain the symbol of the Order's greatness for the next two centuries, but its forbidding red walls concealed dissension within the Order. After a brave attempt to reach agreement with Wladislaw the Short, the peacefully inclined Grand Master Karl von Trier was forced to leave Prussia in 1318 when the majority of Knights refused to give up any of their territories. His successor, Werner von Orseln, also peacefully inclined, was murdered. With the fingers of criticism pointing at them from every direction, the Teutonic Knights decided to demonstrate to the Pope that they were carrying out their crusading role against Europe's pagans with efficiency and success.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was at that time the largest state in Europe, extending well into modern Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. It was also the home of the last pagan people in Europe, who fought fiercely under the protection of Perkun, the god of the thunderbolt, the greatest among many benevolent deities. Ironically, the first ruler of Lithuania, Mindaugas (1219–63), had allowed himself to be baptised to secure an alliance with the Livonian Order, but pagan rivals murdered him for his pains. The Lithuanians had skirmished intermittently with both Poland and the Teutonic Order for many years, but their military campaigns against their eastern neighbours had been much more successful. Most of their new subjects were Orthodox Christians, but the kingdom was hemmed in on two sides by Catholics: the Teutonic Knights, who barred their access to the Baltic Sea, and the kingdom of Poland.

The Teutonic Order's crusade against the Lithuanians became a 100-year war conducted with great cruelty on both sides. The Order's enemies were, conveniently, committed heathens, the fighting was bloody, and the plunder was enormous. Captured Teutonic commanders could expect little mercy and their fates included being burned alive or suffocated by smoke as they were sacrificed to the heathen gods. Equally, doomed Lithuanian garrisons often preferred death at their own hands to a crusaders' massacre.

One characteristic of the Prussian and Lithuanian Crusades was the willingness of secular 'guest' crusaders to join the Order in its endeavours. Such ventures were always temporary and often brief affairs. Some attempts at 'crusader tourism' were simply cancelled because of bad weather. In 1394 the Duke of Burgundy wrote to the Grand Master asking if there would be a crusade the following year. The Grand Master replied that it was impossible to guarantee any action, because so much depended on 'God's will and disposition, and also on the weather'. On the occasion when the Duke of Austria arrived having made a vow to go

Winfrich von Kniprode, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order between 1351 and 1382, under whose direction the Lithuanian Crusade was prosecuted with the greatest vigour. The statue is in the courtyard of the Middle Castle of Marienburg (Malbork).



on crusade before Christmas, the Grand Master put on a token crusade in case the weather did not improve!

Many of the guest crusaders believed devoutly in the 'ideals' that had given birth to the crusading phenomenon, encouraged no doubt by the knowledge that one reward would be the remission of an individual's sins. As early as the 1260s secular German knights had gone to fight in Prussia as a penance, grateful for the opportunity to discharge their obligation to God without having to travel to Palestine. There were collecting boxes to help finance crusades in every parish and regular reminders were issued from the pulpit. King John of Bohemia, who was to meet his death at Poitiers in 1356, encapsulated the popular view of the Order as: '... an unbreakable wall to defend the faith against the Lithuanians and their partisans, whoever they may be – pestilential enemies of Christ.'

To join such a noble undertaking was entirely in keeping with recognised chivalric principles and for many knights it was an opportunity too good to be missed. In addition to the blessings gained from crusading there was the prospect of the joyful rediscovery of the companionship of the international brotherhood of knighthood that the Hundred Years War had sundered. During the final siege of Vilnius some French knights even challenged the garrison to a joust!

The enthusiasm for the Lithuanian crusades grew as the fortunes of crusades against the Muslims declined, finally reaching their nadir with the battle of Nicopolis² against Bāyazīd's Turks in 1396. This campaign was such a total disaster that crusading activity in the Mediterranean theatre was drastically curtailed and never really recovered. Lithuania alone provided an outlet for a sinner's penitential fervour to be channelled into military activity. Boredom could also be a stimulus to crusading activity. Marshal Boucicault of France, himself a veteran of the defeat at Nicopolis, went to fight alongside the Teutonic Knights on three occasions during lulls in the Hundred Years War with England, 'because there seemed to him that there was a great lack of warfare in France at that time'. Whatever the motives of the visiting crusaders, there is no doubt that the Teutonic Knights took the whole business very seriously indeed. Even though they indulged the whims of some of their guests, they saw them essentially as self-financing mercenaries who made a valuable contribution to the war effort.

That Lithuania resisted the Teutonic Order for so long was in part due to the quality of its leaders. Grand Duke Gediminas (Gedymin) allied himself with the Archbishop of Riga against the Livonian Order and frequently denounced Teutonic aggression in letters to the Pope and other western leaders. But when Gediminas died in 1341 his son was unable to sustain the momentum and was deposed in 1345. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania then became a dual monarchy, with the strongest of Gediminas's brothers sharing power. Algirdas (Olgierd) bore the title of Grand Duke with his capital at Vilnius. Kestutis (Kiejstut) ruled western Lithuania from Volhynia in the south to Livonia in the north. Kestutis had to fight continually to protect his lands and is honoured in Lithuania as a national hero. When Algirdas died in 1377 the harmonious arrangement of the dual monarchy collapsed. His son Jogaila succeeded,



Silver statue of King Wladislaw Jagiello of Poland in the Chapel of St Casimir in the cathedral at Vilnius, Lithuania.

Chaucer's knight, whom his creator sent on a crusade to Lithuania with the Teutonic Order.

And at a knyght thenneſ wille begynne



**a knyght there was a worthy man
That fro the tyme that he first began**

only to be deposed by his uncle Kestutis. Jogaila sought an alliance with the Teutonic Order and under their protection the young man retook Vilnius. Kestutis was in turn deposed and strangled, but his son Vytautas (Witold) escaped from prison disguised in women's clothes. The rivalry of the two cousins, Jogaila and Vytautas, surfaces repeatedly in the story of the struggle between Poland/Lithuania and the Teutonic Order.

The 31-year rule of Grand Master Winfrich von Kniprode from 1351 to 1382 saw the Lithuanian crusades at their height. He took a ruthless and pragmatic approach to the Lithuanian problem, implementing a strategy of raids, disruption and gradual conquest. The methods were similar to those of the earlier Prussian crusade and owed much to the wild terrain over which the campaigns were fought. The Lithuanians also showed a remarkable capacity for copying any military innovation introduced by the Order and turning it against them. Thus the introduction of heavy siege weapons and subsequently gunpowder artillery gave the Order an advantage only briefly. As river transport was the only practical means of moving heavy cannon from place to place across the forested and swampy terrain, the location of Lithuanian castles upstream from the Order's strongholds meant that the transport of Lithuanian artillery to bombard the Knights' castles was considerably easier than movement of the Order's artillery in the opposite direction. The first appearance of cannon on crusade was in 1381, and in 1384 'counter-battery' fire put a Lithuanian trebuchet out of action by smashing its counterweight.

Such dramatic and sudden incidents were the exception, however, amid generally gruelling campaigns characterised more by long marches, cutting paths through trackless forest or wading through swamps led by local guides. Unaccompanied guest crusaders or those who failed to follow the tracks were likely to die of starvation or drown in a marsh.



Queen Jadwiga, whose diplomatic efforts did so much for the Polish/Lithuanian cause prior to her death at a tragically early age.

Transport by river was easiest and the majority of both Teutonic and Lithuanian fortifications were sited along the major waterways. However, the meandering nature of many rivers could slow an army's progress considerably. A 15th-century source described how the Memel (Neiman) River was so winding that boatmen could spend a day navigating one of its bends and then light their evening fire by walking the short distance over to the embers left in the previous night's camp. Heavy rain and snowfalls added to the difficulties. During the winter of 1323 common soldiers fell dead from the cold as they marched along, and armies often trudged through snowdrifts. When the snow and ice melted seas of mud made movement equally impossible. Ideal conditions for winter campaigning were a hard frost with little snow. Summer campaigning was possible once the ground dried, but sudden changes in the weather could

prove devastating. In 1332 an army was caught between two swollen lakes and in 1348 the retreat of the Lithuanians was cut off by the thawing of a river.

Caught in the middle were the ordinary peasants, whose fate may have been no more terrible than any of their contemporaries in Brittany or Normandy, but whose deaths were to give the Teutonic Knights their dreadful reputation for violence. In 1372 we read of a Teutonic raider that: 'he goes into the wilderness with a hundred picked men to plunder and harass the pagans ... entering four villages that were not warned of their coming and putting to the sword whoever they find beginning their night's sleep: men, women and children.'

High-ranking Lithuanian knights fared better when the western European practice of ransom became more widespread. Its introduction was partly stimulated by visiting crusaders and the Order quickly realised the potential for profit. Eventually, any Lithuanian over the rank of knight who was captured had to be handed over to the Order for a fixed sum assessed on a sliding scale of nobility. The Grand Master would then negotiate his release at a handsome price.

The conversion of Lithuania

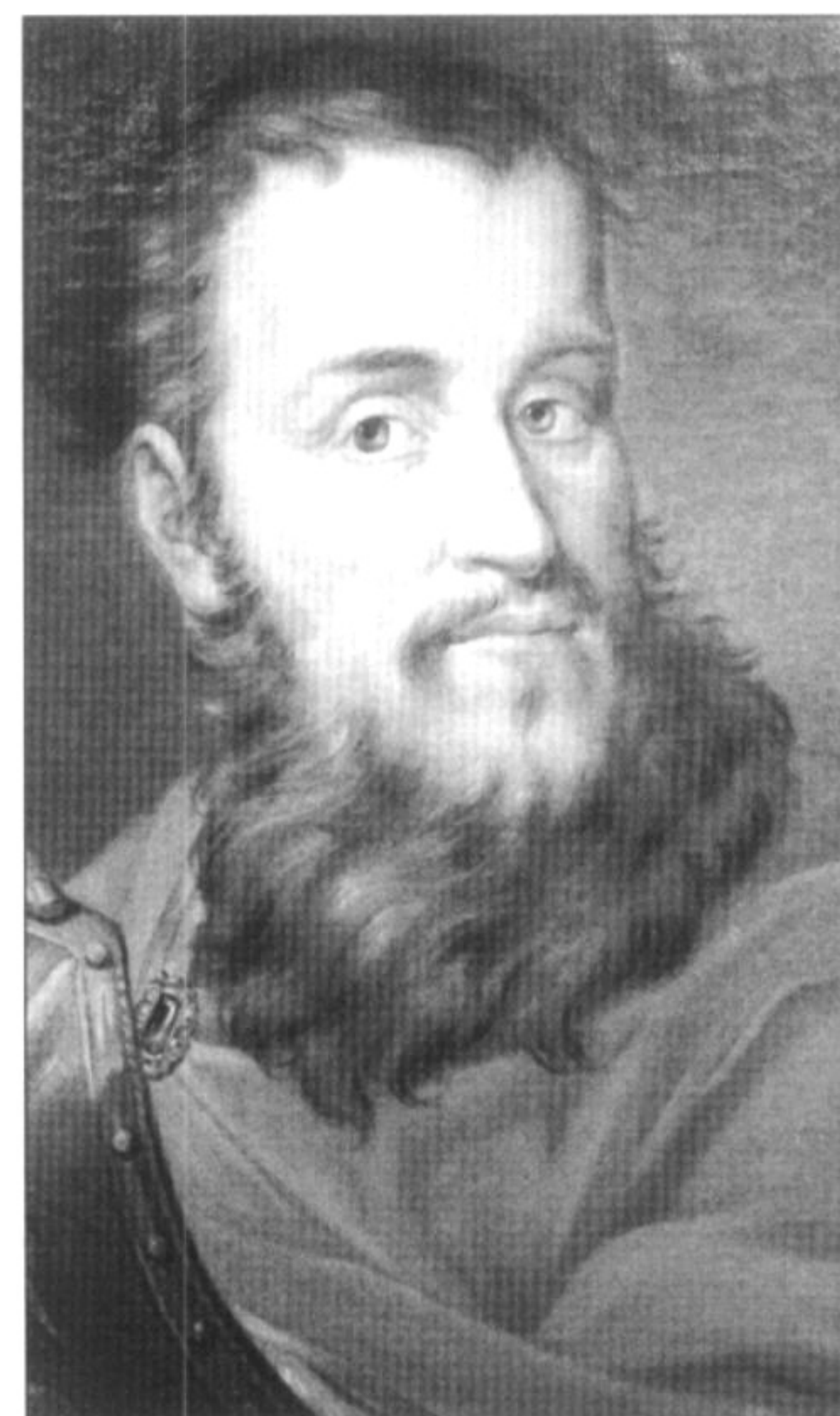
These bizarre international expeditions continued throughout the 14th century despite the conversion of Lithuania to Christianity – an event that transformed the nature of the struggle between the Teutonic Order and Lithuania. Furthermore, the alliance with Poland that was a direct result of this conversion altered irrevocably the balance of power in eastern Europe.

Poland had been a divided nation when the Teutonic Order first entered Prussia at the invitation of one of its feuding noblemen. It remained so until the time of Wladislaw the Short almost a century later. Wladislaw lost Pomerania to the Order but reunified the country and was crowned king of Poland in 1320. His successor, Casimir the Great (1355–70), continued his work, making Poland a force to be reckoned with. But even Casimir the Great balked at tackling the growing influence of the Teutonic Order and left it to his successors to restore access to the Baltic.

Having no son, Casimir designated Louis the Great, King of Hungary, as his heir. However, when Louis succeeded to the throne of Poland he found he could devote little time to Polish affairs. To make matters worse, Louis also lacked a male heir. Instead he had three daughters, and when he died in 1382 his second daughter, Mary (the eldest had already died), was chosen to rule Hungary, leaving nine-year-old Jadwiga in line for the throne of Poland.

However, at the age of five little Jadwiga had been married to William of Hapsburg, the son of Leopold II of Austria. Under no circumstances would the Poles tolerate being ruled by a German. Fortunately, Jadwiga's tender years meant the marriage had not been consummated, so there was still time to find her an alternative husband. The choice the Poles made was political dynamite. Jadwiga was to be married to Jogaila, the pagan Grand Duke of Lithuania.

Jogaila had ascended to the Lithuanian throne for the second time in 1386 at the age of 26, having deposed and strangled his uncle Kestutis and imprisoned his cousin Vytautas. Although he was a renowned warrior



King Wladislaw Jagiello, victor of the battle of Grunwald. The conversion of this former Grand Duke of Lithuania to Christianity in 1386 marked the beginning of a formidable alliance between Poland and Lithuania. (National Army Museum, Warsaw)



Silver statue of Grand Duke Vytautas the Great of Lithuania in the Chapel of St Casimir in the cathedral at Vilnius, Lithuania.

Jogaila soon realised that he could not hope to hold out indefinitely against his two mighty neighbours, Poland and the Teutonic Order. Conversion to Christianity, and the military alliance that would come with it, was only a matter of time. As conversion by the Teutonic Order was usually at the point of a sword, Poland was the more attractive option, and the promise of a pretty young princess was an added inducement. So in February 1386 Jogaila accepted baptism, a crown and Jadwiga to become King Wladislaw Jagiello of Poland. He took his new role as a Christian monarch very seriously, and proceeded to convert Lithuania with a fervour that the Teutonic Order would have admired. From his wedding to Jadwiga in Krakow, Wladislaw went straight to his old capital of Vilnius and decreed the abolition of the ancient gods. The groves of sacred oaks were felled and a cathedral founded in their place, while mass baptisms followed. Two strong peoples, the Polish and the Lithuanians, were now united against the Teutonic threat.

The 1386 conversion of Lithuania removed any justification for the continuance of the Teutonic Knights' aggressive expansion into Lithuania under the banner of a 'crusade'. The Order, however, had no intention of giving up the struggle. Far from diminishing, the military threat to the Order was greatly increased by the effective union of Poland and Lithuania. With regard to Lithuania's adoption of Christianity, the Teutonic Order's policy was to treat them as Saracens or, more realistically, to maintain the Lithuanian conversion was a sham. The claim was in some degree substantiated by the continued survival of pagan groups, including fierce Tartars from the Golden Horde, in the more far-flung regions of Poland/Lithuania. The Order's claims seem to have satisfied the many guest crusaders who continued to campaign at their side. Echoing these sentiments the chronicler Monstrelet notes in his commentary on Tannenberg that the King of Poland: 'had just recently pretended to become a Christian in order to win the Polish crown'. The Teutonic Knights also had the support of the House of Hapsburg, who maintained that William of Hapsburg, to whom Princess Jadwiga had originally been married, was her lawful husband. It was two years before the Pope gave his blessing to the Jadwiga/Jagiello union and confirmed the legitimacy of the conversion of Lithuania.

The new alliance is tested

Jagiello's cousin Vytautas (Witold), who had escaped when his father Kestutis was murdered, triggered the newly formed Polish/Lithuanian alliance's first crisis. Fleeing from Vilnius, Vytautas sought refuge with the Teutonic Order, who welcomed any opportunity to encourage dissension among their enemies. He was reconciled to Jogaila in 1383 and, when his cousin became king of Poland, Vytautas accepted baptism and the Christian name of Alexander. However, this did not stop Vytautas from attempting to capture Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, in 1389. When the attempt failed he appealed to his old allies the Teutonic Order to help him. With their 'crusade' in tatters, this was a wonderful opportunity for the Teutonic Knights. They drove a hard bargain with Vytautas before beginning a second siege on his behalf. Their army included Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby and later King Henry IV of England. He became the Order's most illustrious English guest, even if his role as a northern crusader was to be eclipsed by the fictional

character of Chaucer's knight. The chronicler notes that at the siege of Vilnius, Bolingbroke 'had many fine archers, who did much good'. Bolingbroke's second expedition of 1392 illustrates the financial benefits to the Order of these guest crusaders. Henry's retinue consisted of over 100 men, including six minstrels, at a total cost to the Lancastrian purse of £4,360. Much of this sum benefited the local economy through the purchase of silverware and the hiring of boats and equipment.

During his 1390 campaign Henry Bolingbroke also bought captured Lithuanian princes and then apparently took them back to England. Slavery was a common fate for captives, but the Christian crusaders only enslaved non-Christian captives. St Thomas Aquinas wrote that 'Christians may keep non-Christian slaves, whether they be Jews, heathens or Saracens'. Lithuania's Christian conversion should have ended the enslaving of the Order's victims. The Knights' continuance of the practice whilst maintaining that Lithuania's Christianity was a sham calls into question whether conversion, rather than aggrandisement, was ever the Order's primary aim.

Despite the efforts of Bolingbroke and his English crusaders, two years of attacks on Vilnius proved fruitless. Jagiello now made fresh overtures to Alexander Vytautas. These were accepted and a new and genuine co-operation began between the cousins. The resulting Polish/Lithuanian alliance was one of the most successful in medieval Europe, with its greatest achievement being the victory at Tannenberg/Grunwald. However, it is worth emphasising that to this point Wladislaw Jagiello, Alexander Vytautas and the Order had been involved in a three-way struggle; the eternal *entente cordiale* between Poland/Lithuania remains one of the period's abiding myths.

Meanwhile, Queen Jadwiga of Poland proved to be an able negotiator on her husband's behalf. Her first diplomatic success was a 16-year peace agreement concluded with her brother-in-law, King Sigismund of Hungary. Alliances with Germany and Bohemia further undermined foreign support for the Order. Negotiations with the Teutonic Knights themselves foundered, at least partly on the thorny issue of the return to the Polish crown of the province of Dobrzyn, which a pretender to the Polish throne had donated to the Order as security for their support of his claim. Sadly, Jadwiga died in 1399 aged only 26 to be mourned as a saint by the Polish people.

A significant development was the signing of a formal agreement between Jagiello and Vytautas in 1401 that recognised Vytautas as Grand Prince of Lithuania (this is the literal translation, although 'Grand Duke' is the popular term) and Jagiello as Supreme Prince. Essentially, Wladislaw Jagiello was King of Poland and supreme ruler of Poland/Lithuania, while Alexander Vytautas was his deputy. The document also confirmed a defensive alliance between the signatories, an arrangement that was to be severely tested in the succeeding decade.

The Samogitian prelude

Shortly after Jagiello and Vytautas signed their treaty the first sparks were seen of the conflagration that would erupt in 1410. The Samogitians, whose frequently disputed territory lay in western Lithuania, rebelled against the Teutonic Order. Samogitian territory effectively constituted a corridor between Teutonic Prussia and Teutonic Livonia and as such had



This bronze statue of Grand Duke Vytautas the Great of Lithuania depicts him in more martial mode. It is in Kaunas in Lithuania, a fortified city that was hotly contested during the Lithuanian crusades.



The great seal of Grand Duke Vytautas (Witold) of Lithuania, the commander of the Lithuanian army at the battle of Grunwald. The inscription reads 'Sigillum Alexandri alias Vitowdi Dei gra(tia) Ducis Lithwanie alie et cetera' (The seal of Alexander otherwise Vytautas by the Grace of God Duke of Lithuania and all other [territories]).

been bitterly contested. This situation demonstrated how much had changed in the region in the past half a century. Jagiello himself had originally ceded Samogitian lands to the Order in 1382, prior to his becoming king of Poland, as a reward for the Order's help against his cousin Vytautas!

By 1401 the situation had transformed and the Samogitian complaints against the Order were to become a *cause célèbre*. The rebels began several years of resistance to the Knights, openly supported by Vytautas. However, in 1402 another of Jagiello's brothers, Svitrigaila, defected to the Order and, although he speedily returned to the fold, the disorder caused prompted Jagiello and Vytautas to temporarily abandon their policy on Samogitia. Under the terms of the peace treaty they sought with the Order, agreed at Raciaz in 1404, Poland bought back Dobrzyn for a large sum. The Samogitian problem remained unresolved, however, and the Order attempted to brutally suppress them. In 1407 the Samogitians circulated an appeal for help through the courts of Europe and, after five years of peace, another rebellion began in 1409. The final straw came when the Order seized Jagiello's barges in Ragnit (Neiman in the present-day Russian enclave of Kaliningrad) transporting supplies to Samogitia. The shipment was needed because of the famine currently raging in Lithuania, but the Teutonic Knights claimed that weapons were hidden in the ships. The Order's spies also reported that Vytautas was urging the Samogitians to 'seize Königsberg and drown the Knights' and even 'that he had boasted that he would water his horses in the Rhine'!

The Order responded by declaring war on Poland on 6 August 1409. Within ten days they had attacked the Dobrzyn area and the Neumark frontier in the west but the campaign was indecisive. On 8 October an armistice, brokered by King Wenceslas of Bohemia, was signed that was due to last until St John's Day, 24 June 1410.

In the months of truce that followed both parties prepared for the inevitable showdown that would climax at Tannenberg/Grunwald. Envoys were sent on missions through the courts of Europe seeking support for their respective causes. The Polish envoys spoke earnestly of oppressive Teutonic clergy who 'take from us milk and wool, suck our blood and devour the meat from our bones' but the Polish/Lithuanian diplomatic effort proved much less successful than that of the Order. Even before the 1409 truce the Grand Master had guaranteed peace with the Kalmar Union of Scandinavia by selling the island of Gotland to Queen Margaret of Sweden.

A major plank of the Order's diplomatic offensive was naturally enough to appeal directly to former guest crusaders. The Order's agent, Dietrich von Logendorf, reported from London on 20 January 1410 that Henry IV had already met representatives from Poland/Lithuania, but had told them that he considered himself 'a child of Prussia'. He had enquired after the reasons for the Samogitian rebellion and received a catalogue of Teutonic brutalities, but had replied casually that he too ruled a large country and what would happen, 'if I were to lose it for every act of playfulness of my knights with someone's wife'?

Ultimately an iron ring of the Order's allies was forged all the way from Livonia in the north to Hungary in the south. Muscovy remained neutral,



A German woodblock print depicting Ulrich von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and the leader of the army at the battle of Tannenberg. The armour shown is from a later period but the white mantle with black cross and the coat of arms appear accurate.

but Lithuanian influence was strong in Novgorod and Pskov and Moldavia promised to send a unit of troops to aid Poland. On 15 February 1410 King Wenceslas of Bohemia, fortified by 60,000 florins from Marienburg 'in repayment of costs of friendly mediation', announced that he judged that Dobrzyn should go to Poland and Samogitia to the Order. Nevertheless, the Dobrzyn area was to be held in trust until Samogitia was ceded to the Knights. When Poland/Lithuania expressed dissatisfaction at the result, Wenceslas openly threatened to side with the Order.

By contrast Sigismund of Hungary negotiated with the Order in secret. In return for 300,000 ducats he would attack Poland from the south after the truce expired in June. Following a victorious war the Order would receive Samogitia, Lithuania, Dobrzyn and Kujavia, while Sigismund was to receive Moldavia and certain other border territories. Sigismund's only condition was that the Poles and Lithuanians must have provided 'a just and reasonable cause' for hostilities such as employing 'heathens or schismatics'.

Vytautas journeyed to Hungary for talks of his own in blissful ignorance of this treaty. His hosts tried to tempt him into an alliance against Poland. With Vytautas having returned to his lodgings to consider the matter, a severe fire broke out in the town. It was apparently unconnected with the diplomatic exchanges but, as Sigismund's secretary put it, 'almost half the town burned and Vytautas was nearly killed by the crowd of Hungarians. God and King Sigismund undertook to adjust the matter.' On his way back to Poland Vytautas was nearly captured, confirming his suspicions that the Teutonic Knights believed the truce did not apply to Lithuania. It was only when the Order began to fear that Lithuania might complete war preparations before they did that the treaty was formally extended to include Lithuania as well. Once Vytautas had returned home, plans began in earnest for an invasion of the Teutonic Order's Prussian state by Poland/Lithuania.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1190** The founding of the Teutonic Order in the Holy Land
- 1226** Golden Bull of Rimini
- 1228** The Order is granted Kulmerland (Chelmno) in Poland
- 1231** The castle of Thorn is built
- 1233** The first castle at Marienwerder (Kwidzyn) is established
- 1234** Papal permission is given for the Order to form a secular state
- 1237** The Sword Brothers of Livonia are absorbed by the Teutonic Order
- 1242** The Teutonic Order is defeated by Alexander Nevsky at Lake Peipus (the battle on the ice)
- 1291** The fall of Acre. The Order moves to Venice
- 1309** The Order's headquarters are moved from Venice to Marienburg (Malbork)
- 1370** Death of King Casimir III of Poland
- 1377** Accession of Jogaila as Grand Duke of Lithuania
- 1381** Deposition of Jogaila
- 1382** Deposition and murder of Kestutis and escape of Vytautas
- 1383** Reconciliation of Jogaila and Vytautas
- 1386** Wladislaw Jagiello is baptized and becomes king of Poland
- 1391** Siege of Vilnius
- 1401** Formal alliance between Poland and Lithuania
- 1404** Peace treaty between Poland/Lithuania and the Teutonic Order
- 1409** The Second Samogitian rebellion ends with another peace treaty

- 1410**
- Early June** The main force of the Teutonic Order concentrates near Schwetz (Swiecie)
- Mid-June** Polish troops assemble near Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) as a diversion. A detached force is sent to guard the Order's castles in case of a Lithuanian advance from the east
- 24 June** The truce with the Order expires
- 26 June** King Wladislaw Jagiello leaves Krakow
- 29 June** The Lithuanian army crosses the Narew River at Pultusk
- 1 July** The Polish army arrives on the south bank of the Vistula (Wisla) opposite Czerwinski. The army crosses and is joined by the Lithuanians. The Teutonic Order army advances to Kauernick (Kurzetnik)
- 3 July** The Polish/Lithuanian army leaves Czerwinski.
- 6 July** The allied army reaches the Wkra River
- 7 July** The allied army reaches Badzyn, preceded by marauders. Over to the west, the Polish diversionary army near Bromberg lures a detachment of the Teutonic army out of Schwetz
- 9 July** The allied army crosses into Prussia and assaults Lautenburg (Lidzbark)
- 10 July** The allied army is stopped at the fords of Kauernick (Kurzetnik). The decision is made to withdraw from Kauernick and bypass the Drewenz (Drweca) further upstream.
- 11 July** The allied army marches off in an easterly direction. The Teutonic army cross near Löbau (Lubawa). The allied army camps for the night somewhere between Wysoka and the castle of Soldau (Dzialdowo), which is not assaulted
- 12 July** King Wladislaw Jagiello receives a Hungarian emissary
- 13 July** The Polish/Lithuanian army marches to Gilgenburg (Dabrowno), which is captured and sacked by the Lithuanians that evening
- 14 July** The Polish/Lithuanian army rests all day near Gilgenburg. The Teutonic army reaches Tannenberg
- 14/15 July (night)** The Polish/Lithuanian army advances to Faulen (Ulnowo) and sets up camp
- 15 July The Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald**
- 16 July** The body of the Grand Master is sent to Marienburg
- 17 July** The Polish/Lithuanian advance resumes
- 18 July** Heinrich von Plauen reaches Marienburg
- 19 July** Burial of the Grand Master at Marienburg
- 26 July** Polish/Lithuanian army begins the siege of Marienburg
- 18 September** Lithuanians leave the siege lines
- 19 September** The siege of Marienburg is abandoned
- 21 September** Capture of Reden (Radzyn Chelminski)
- 10 October** Battle of Koronowo
- 9 November** Heinrich von Plauen is elected Grand Master
- 10 December** New truce established

- 1411** First Treaty of Thorn (Torun)
- 1416** Council of Constance
- 1422** Gollub War and the Treaty of Melno
- 1430** Death of Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania
- 1433** Capture of Dirschau (Tzcew) by Bohemian mercenaries
- 1434** Death of King Wladislaw Jagiello
- 1440** Formation of the Prussian Union
- 1446** Accession of King Casimir IV of Poland
- 1454** Poles defeated at Chojnice. The Thirteen Years War begins
- 1457** The fall of Marienburg (Malbork)
- 1462** Battle of Lake Zarnowiec
- 1466** Second Treaty of Thorn (Torun)
- 1525** Secularisation of the Teutonic Order

OPPOSING COMMANDERS



The coat of arms of the Republic of Lithuania bearing the device of the mounted knight with a shield of the six-pointed cross. This image was widely used on the Lithuanian flags at the battle of Grunwald.

The leader of the allied Polish/Lithuanian army at Tannenberg was **King Wladislaw Jagiello**. He acceded to the Polish throne in 1386 and his long reign (the longest in Polish history) was marked by constant warfare, chiefly against the Teutonic Order, of which the battle of Tannenberg was his crowning glory. King Wladislaw's age (he was 62) may help explain why he remained at the rear of his troops for practically the entire battle. However, under any circumstances the person of the king would not be exposed to unnecessary risks on the field of battle. His piety was noted from the moment of his conversion.

In his chronicle, Dlugosz devotes a section to the 'life, customs and sins of Wladislaw Jagiello the King'. He describes small, black and restless eyes, large ears, and an athletic body that came from his passion for hunting. Jagiello had the ability to endure extremes of cold and damp. He was also of sober habits with regard to alcohol but, according to Dlugosz, had a prodigious sex drive 'not only in permitted ways but also in forbidden ones'. Jagiello eventually died in 1434 from a cold caught while walking in the Moldavian woods to listen to the song of a nightingale. He was then 80 years old.

Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas (Witold) of Lithuania

Vytautas, honoured in Lithuania as Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas the Great, was Wladislaw Jagiello's cousin and intermittent rival. His campaigns for and against the Teutonic Order had given him immense military experience prior to Tannenberg, including fighting the Tartars of the Golden Horde on the vast southern steppes of the Lithuanian empire. Vytautas appears to have exercised a mobile and dynamic command at Tannenberg although he was only a few years younger than Jagiello. Much of the credit for the victory can be laid at his feet. He is elsewhere described as 'small, slim, energetic and fidgety' and of a volatile, impetuous nature. This personality trait is captured perfectly in the representation of him in Matejko's painting of the battle of Grunwald in the Polish National Gallery in Warsaw, where he takes centre stage along with the defeated Grand Master. Dlugosz adds that he was a lover of luxury and was ready to indulge in love affairs but drank sparingly of alcohol. A capable rider, he loved hunting and played chess during his quieter moments. Like his cousin he lived to a ripe old age, dying at 80 after a fall from his horse.

Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen

The commander of the Teutonic Order at Tannenberg was Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen. He entered the Order in 1380 and had an undistinguished early career. As *Fischmeister* (Fish Master) he was in charge of fish farming and collecting fishing taxes. In 1393 he became Bailiff of Sambia, and then Commander of Balga (now Wieszolaje near

Kaliningrad). His election as Grand Master in 1407 did not win universal approval. In fact his predecessor (his own brother Konrad von Jungingen), recommended that the Order should not appoint Ulrich as Grand Master because his extreme hatred of the Poles would lead the Knights to disaster. It was, nevertheless, Ulrich who was elected and who led the Order at Tannenberg, now aged about 50 and losing his sight but still famed as a great warrior. He died fighting bravely on the field of battle.

Heinrich von Plauen

Although not present on the field of Tannenberg, Heinrich von Plauen's role in the subsequent siege of Marienburg was crucial. He played a vital role in sustaining the Teutonic Order after the disaster at Tannenberg, culminating in the 1411 Treaty of Thorn that he negotiated as Grand Master. He was born around 1370 and came to Prussia as a crusader in 1391. Sometime in the next few years he entered the Order and in 1397 was adjutant to the Commander and House-Commander in Danzig (Gdansk) by 1398. After four years in this post he became Commander of Nessau (Nieszawa), and in 1407 took over the important castle of Schwetz (Swiecie). He was elected Grand Master on 9 November 1410 but fell foul of his colleagues, who suspected him of treachery.

OPPOSING ARMIES

Estimates in the chronicles of the total numbers of men who fought at Tannenberg/Grunwald vary enormously and more modern calculations based on population size, and often biased by political considerations, have failed to clarify the matter. The commonly accepted figures at the time of writing are 27,000 Teutonic Order troops outnumbered by the 39,000 who fought for Poland/Lithuania.

THE POLISH ARMY

It is possible to be more precise about the composition of the rival armies than of their overall sizes. In Poland the basic unit that fought at Tannenberg/Grunwald was the Banner. The 'Banner' (not to be confused with the flags or standards carried by the army) was subdivided into between 50 and 120 'lances' of two to five men each. A 'lance' consisted of an armoured knight and his escort, a group that varied according to the individual knight's income. Outfitting a three-man lance could cost the equivalent of 30 head of cattle. Efforts were made to even out the striking power of Banners by merging small units or supplementing them at the king's expense.

A Polish Banner was a family or district unit and, since the reign of Casimir the Great in the mid-14th century, the military duties of the nobility were based on a system of general mobilisation. Church estates, city and village authorities were all duty-bound to raise armed troops upon the royal call to arms. Poland had few foot soldiers and hardly any regular troops or mercenaries in peacetime. Under Polish practice the mobilised knights had to provide food for themselves, which was conveyed on campaign in numerous wagons that slowed the movement of troops considerably. The wagons were formed into *laagers* behind the lines as a fortified camp.

The Banners of the Polish army identified themselves using a system of heraldry similar to that in the rest of contemporary Europe, with some subtle differences. In Poland several families who belonged to the same clan or ancestral grouping could use the same coat of arms. A clan might also have a motto that was sometimes adopted as the clan's name. At Grunwald, for example, Florian of Korytnica of the clan Jelita, Cupbearer of Sandomierz and Castellan of Wislica, fought in the elite Great Banner of Krakow. His ancestor, another Florian, had been killed in the service of King Wladislaw the Short at the battle of Plowce against the Teutonic Order in 1311. Mortally wounded, Florian lay transfixed by three lances attempting to push his intestines back into his abdominal cavity. The king therefore gave Florian and his descendants three crossed lances on a red field as the clan's coat of arms and 'Jelita' (guts) as its motto and name.



The Tartars in action at Grunwald from the painting by Wojciech Kossak (1857–1942) in the Museum of Warmia and Mazuria, Olsztyn. The Tartars were led by Jelal-el-Din, an exiled Khan. As thanks for the service he rendered at Grunwald, Vytautas later supported Jelal-el-Din in his attempts to regain the leadership of the Golden Horde.

As King Wladislaw Jagiello was the supreme commander of the allied host, just before the invasion of Prussia he appointed Zyndram of Maszkowice, a nobleman of Krakow, commander of the Polish army. Zyndram, described as 'of mean stature but of great heart', therefore fought under the Great Banner of Krakow whose standard-bearer was Marcisz of Wrocimowice. The flower of Polish chivalry served in this Banner. The Polish vanguard at Tannenberg was commanded by Zbigniew of Brzezic, Marshal of the Crown and usually bearer of the King's royal pennon at the head of the army. At Grunwald the pennon, which marked the position of the king himself, was given to another and Zbigniew took command of a group of Banners. These included the Banner of St George (the Czech mercenaries) and the Banner 'Goncza', earmarked for opening a battle. The Polish army seems to have marched in good order, each Banner having its own musicians for signalling. There were occasions, however, when only the king's trumpeters were allowed to transmit orders: 'At the first blast of the trumpet before dawn the army got up and armed itself in rank or otherwise. On the second blast of the trumpet the horses were saddled, and on the third the army started out on the road, marching behind the Marshal at its head'.

Posilge, the chronicler of the Teutonic Order, testifies with dismay that the king hired mercenaries from Bohemia, Moravia and elsewhere who, 'spurning honesty and God went against the Christians to destroy the land of Prussia'. Jagiello managed to enlist two complete Banners of Czechs. One was under the command of Jan Sokol of Lamberg and serving under him was Jan Zizka, future hero of the Hussite Wars. The Moravians rode under the banner of John of Jicin while the Bohemians fought under the banner of Gniewosz of Dalewice who had hired them. A further mixed contingent of Czechs made up the Banner of St George. These mercenary Banners were stationed between the Polish and Lithuanian armies.

CASTLES OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER, 1410



THE LITHUANIAN ARMY

One major deficiency of the Polish army, a lack of light cavalry, was remedied during the Tannenberg campaign by the Lithuanian army. As Posilge puts it, King Jagiello 'gathered the Tartars, Russians, Lithuanians and Samogitians against Christendom'. Yet until the Lithuanian and Polish armies united on 1 July, it seems that Vytautas's army was barely an organised entity. It was only on 6 July he divided his army into Banners, ordering each unit to guard its flag and obey their leader. He also gave orders that in battle the poorer armed and mounted men were to be positioned in the centre of each Banner. While companies were to fight in



A knight of the Teutonic Order as depicted on the municipal seal of Kulm (Chelmno) in the years immediately prior to the battle of Tannenberg.

compact formation with little space between the ranks, there was to be ample distance between Banners. Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas led 40 Banners on the battlefield of Tannenberg. They included Ruthenians (whose lands corresponded to modern Ukraine) and Tartars. Of the Lithuanian Banners, 30 used the figure of Pogon, an armed man on a horse, with different coloured backgrounds on their flags. The other Lithuanian standards carried a device known as the Columns of Gedymin (the great Lithuanian ruler Gediminas), which may have originated from a representation of the sacred oak of the Prussians. One named Lithuanian duke at Tannenberg was Sigismund Korybutas, a younger brother of King Wladislaw Jagiello. The three Smolensk Banners formed a separate contingent under Vytautas's overall leadership. They were commanded by Prince Simeon Lingwen, a brother of King Wladislaw Jagiello, and fought under a flag displaying the Archangel Gabriel.

A contingent of Tartars (Mongols) from the Golden Horde fought under the command of Jelal-el-Din. He was an exiled Khan that Vytautas later supported in his attempts to regain the leadership of the Golden Horde as thanks for services rendered at Tannenberg. He was the son of Toqtamish, who had invaded the Russian principalities in 1382, burning Moscow, to bring the Russian princes back under Mongol control and ascended the throne of the Golden Horde.

THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

The military organisation of the Teutonic Order paralleled that of Poland with the 'Banner', made up of a number of 'lances', being the usual battlefield formation. A 'lance' usually consisted of one knight and up to seven other men, usually mostly crossbowmen. In the main the Banners were fielded by the various *Komturia* (commanderies) of the Order. In 1411 there were five commanderies in Pomerania, 11 in Kulmerland and ten in the rest of Prussia, each being associated with a particular castle. A commandery's Banner, consisting of the knights of the chapter and area under its rule, would be commanded by a *Komtur* (commander), although there were exceptions when various commanderies were combined.

The heart of the Order consisted of clergy and laymen, but brothers who were ordained priests were few in numbers. These 'priest-brothers' wore the characteristic white mantle with the black cross. A Teutonic lay brother was not an ordained priest but lived as a monk and fought as a knight. The average Convent had about a dozen knights (12 signifying the number of Christ's apostles) and up to 60 sergeants, but these numbers varied greatly. All the lay brothers had taken the monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and so participated fully in all aspects of the Order's life, but only the knights among them wore the white mantle with the black cross. Because of their renunciation of individuality this was the sole heraldic display that they were allowed. They had neither coat of arms nor seal of their own. There were also secular members of the Order, who had not taken the three vows. Instead of a cross they wore the Greek letter 'tau', shaped like the letter 'T', on their mantle. The lower-born sergeants wore a grey, rather than a white, mantle but there was often little to choose between them and their knightly brethren in fighting ability.

Apart from these details, the equipment and armour in the Teutonic army was surprisingly uniform. Each man was issued with two shirts, one pair of breeches, two pairs of boots, one simple overcoat, one sleeping bag, one blanket, one breviary (containing the service for each day) and one knife. He could be provided with four horses but they were not his own and belonged to the monastery/castle to which he was attached. Every man wore his hair closely cropped, while the clergy had a tonsure and the lay brothers wore beards – a characteristic feature of the Teutonic Order.

It is important to note that only a small percentage of the Order's army at Tannenberg consisted of heavily armoured and mounted 'Teutonic Knights' clad in the white mantle with black cross. During the battle 203 were killed and few fled or were captured; their total number cannot have been much more than 250. The bulk of the Prussian knights who fought at Tannenberg lived on the Order's lands but were not actually members of the Order. The towns also fielded contingents and armed peasants were also recruited. The Order's knights from Livonia had a certain amount of autonomy and fought under their own banner.

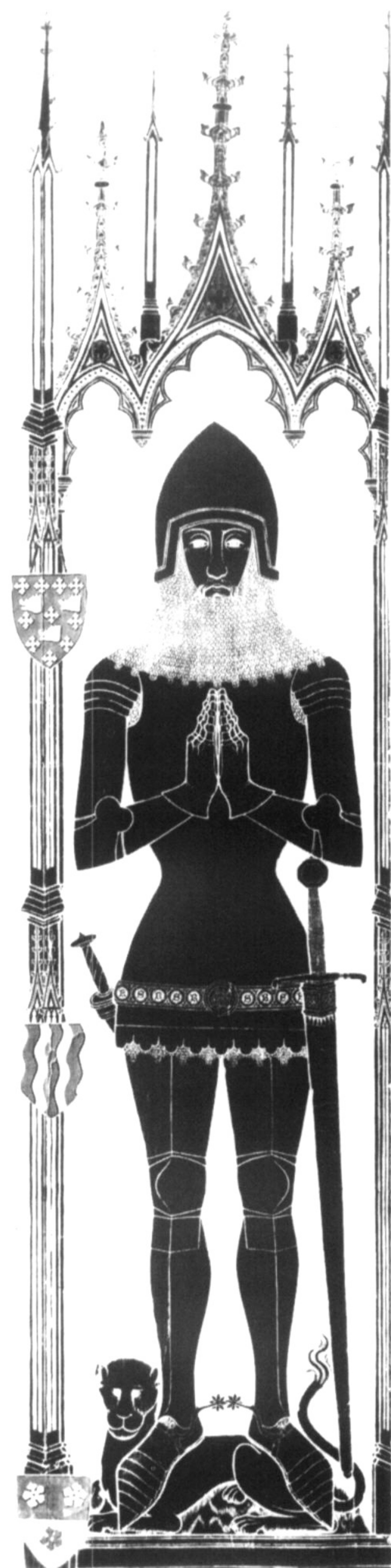
Hired knights were known as *Knechten* if they were recruited in Prussia, but mercenaries were also recruited from elsewhere. In 1409, the year before Tannenberg, a letter from the Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen states that the Order has sent for 'guests', which probably means guest crusaders, and for Genoese crossbowmen. Otherwise the sources of supply for the Order's mercenaries were similar to those for the Polish/Lithuanian army. Bohemian mercenaries fought on both sides.

The comparatively few guest crusaders at Tannenberg would never, of course, have regarded themselves as mercenaries. In his account of Tannenberg (sadly full of errors) the chronicler Monstrelet tells us that: 'among them were the master of Prussia and a nobleman from Normandy, Sir Jean de Ferriere, son of the seigneur de Vieuville, and also from Picardy the son of the seigneur du Bois d'Annequin'.

The majority of 'guests' at Tannenberg were German-speakers from Westphalia, Frisia, Austria, Swabia and Bavaria. They fought under their own banners and also under the flag of St George, although this had the colours reversed from the conventional red on white. The chronicler Dlugosz writes that 'they were very courageous and valiant, and practically all of them died, but a few saving themselves by flight'. As an example of their heraldry, the Austrian knights fought under the banner of the Grand Master's right-hand man, the *Grosskomtur* Konrad von Lichtenstein. Two Hungarian nobles also fought for the Order – the Count Palatine Miklos Garai and Stibor the Voivode of Transylvania with 200 mercenaries.

The most recognisable heraldic device amongst the German troops at Tannenberg would have been the black cross on a white field. This took several forms: The Grand Master's personal banner showed an eagle displayed on a gold cross. A similar but smaller flag led the vanguard in the same manner as the Polish 'Goncza' banner. The German equivalent of the Great Banner of Krakow was a huge black cross on white. The knight-brothers traditionally wore the white mantle, which must have been something of an inconvenience in battle.

As a result of the Order's previous conquests, some of the knights who fought for them at Tannenberg were of Polish descent. Duke Konrad VII 'the White' of Schweidnitz (Olesnica) and Duke Casimir V of Stettin (Szczecin) are but two who were taken prisoner after the defeat.



The guest crusaders who joined the Teutonic Order in their defence of Prussia against the Polish/Lithuanian invasion would have worn armour similar to that depicted in this brass.

Arms and armour at Tannenberg/Grunwald

The Teutonic Order had drawn guest crusaders from all over Europe to fight at its side and this led to a diffusion of ideas concerning defensive armour. It is therefore not surprising to find that, apart from Lithuania, which had historically been subjected to other influences, the main difference in arms and armour within the two armies was based on rank, rather than nationality. The styles of armour worn by Polish and Teutonic Knights would not have looked markedly different from each other, and this would have been quite recognisable to the combatants at Shrewsbury in 1403 or Agincourt in 1415. To avoid confusing friend with foe on the battlefield King Wladislaw Jagiello ordered his men to tie straw to their sleeves as a field sign.

For a senior knight on either side the predominant style of helmet would have been a bascinet with a hinged visor and an aventail of mail as the trend moved progressively towards complete plate armour. Some 'great bascinets' may also have been seen. Plate defences for arms and legs would now have been almost complete. The coat of arms would have appeared on a tight-fitting surcoat along with the shield. Poorer knights would have worn simpler body armour of brigandine, often with the accompaniment of iron plates sewn on in strategic places in the German fashion. A 'chapel de fer' or 'kettle-hat' (a war hat of iron looking similar to a World War I British helmet) was a cheap alternative to the bascinet. Knee defences may have been the only plate worn by poor knights apart from a simple helmet, but only the poorest knights wore coats of mail alone.

The armour of the Lithuanian knights was very different in appearance. Here the influence was undoubtedly eastern and we see the predominance of mail and also of lamellar armour; the contrast even more marked by the lack of surcoats. Like the simpler German armours, the mail coats were reinforced with iron plates. The most noticeable feature was the distinctive helmet, which was rounded and conical in shape tapering to a point and with an aventail of mail. Mail was also used to protect the legs with leather boots also much in evidence. The Tartar contingents in Vytautas's army dressed very much in the traditional Mongol fashion, with heavy coats and boots.

The horses of the most prominent knights were covered with magnificent caparisons on which their heraldic devices were displayed. The key weapon for use in mounted combat was the lance, but this could be supplemented by sword, mace or battle-axe.

Foot soldiers were armed with bows, crossbows, axes and swords. The majority of the Teutonic Knights' foot archers were equipped with the crossbow. The best crossbows were composite bows of goat horn, sinew and wood and the Order probably stockpiled about 4,500 crossbows and over 1,000,000 bolts in Prussia alone. The Order's armies fielded hundreds of crossbow-equipped infantry and good crossbowmen, such as the Genoese, were among the most sought-after mercenaries. Both sides had artillery, although cannon played little part in the campaign after torrential rain had soaked the battlefield. The guns were simple hooped iron bombards transported on rudimentary gun carriages.

OPPOSING PLANS

THE POLISH/LITHUANIAN PLANS

In December 1409 King Wladislaw Jagiello and Grand Duke Vytautas held a council of war in Brzesc Litewski (Brest Litovsk) during which it was decided to launch a major offensive against the Teutonic Order when the truce signed that October expired in the summer of 1410. One of the participants in the meeting was 'the emperor of the Tartars', as Dlugosz styles him. Although allies, tensions remained between Poland and Lithuania as their objectives were very different. Poland's aim was to regain the lost province of Pomerania and with it access to the Baltic while Lithuania sought to recover Samogitia. Nevertheless, their common overwhelming desire to crush the Teutonic Knights bound them together. The cousins' conflicting objectives were therefore put to one side in one decisive effort that, if successful, would yield up both prizes. They aimed to achieve this in an invasion of Prussia, with the ultimate objective being the capture of Marienburg, the Order's headquarters. The strategy was not for separate incursions from Poland and Lithuania but for one massive assault of their combined armies in a lightning strike northwards.

THE ORDER'S PLANS

The Order's plans were confounded by the brilliant prelude to the campaign launched by Poland/Lithuania while the truce was still officially in place. To divert the Order's attentions from the true objective of their advance, the allies planned that the Lithuanians would launch diversionary attacks to the north towards Tilsit and Memel (Klaipeda). Similar raids were to be made by Polish forces across the frontier into Pomerania. The combination of the two operations would mask the army's true intentions of advancing due north towards Marienburg. This smokescreen of activity made it impossible for the Order to plan a decisive riposte and they had little choice but to monitor the Polish/Lithuanian movements in an effort to ascertain the true objective of the allied campaign. The Order's main forces were therefore concentrated at Schwetz (Swiecie) west of the Vistula (wisla). This central position would allow the Order to respond swiftly to a threat at almost any point along their frontier.

THE TANNENBERG CAMPAIGN

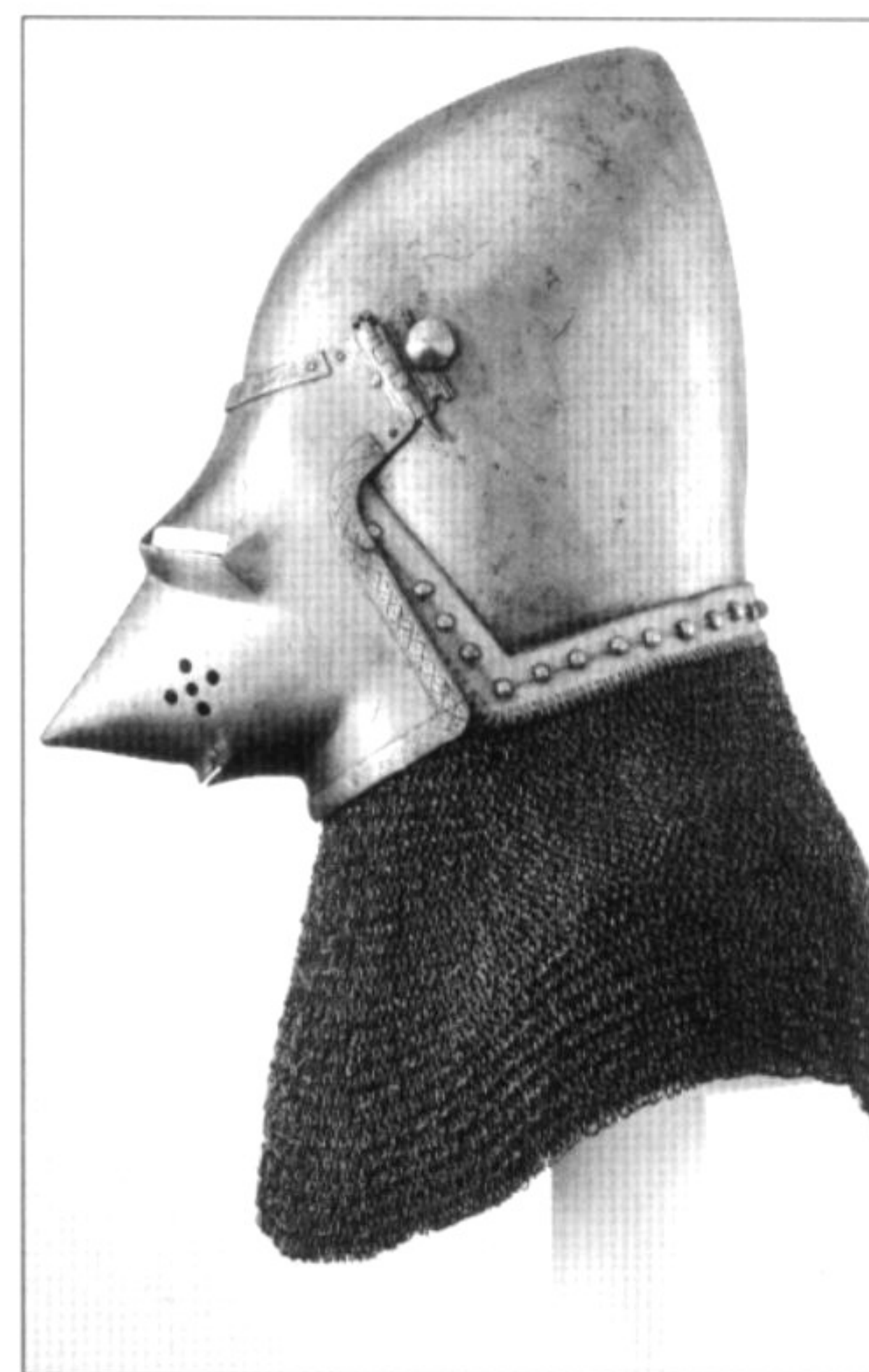
When King Wenceslas of Bohemia summoned Jagiello to Breslau (Wrocław) to hear his final mediation verdict, the Polish king ignored the summons and began a mobilisation of troops instead. Great hunting parties were organised to provide meat for curing and strategic grain dumps were established. Roads and bridges were repaired and open competition began between Poland/Lithuania and the Order to recruit mercenaries from Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia and Germany. In a final diplomatic effort, Vytautas came to an agreement with the Livonian branch of the Order that each side would give the other three months' notice of any hostile advance.

Meanwhile the Teutonic Knights were also arming; but when in May the Grand Master ordered the Livonian Master to attack Lithuania, he received the embarrassed reply that the Master had to give Lithuania the required three months notice. It was not until June that the Livonian brethren were able to comply by sending a regiment to serve alongside the Order. However, it was in Livonia's interests that Lithuania should be engaged elsewhere while it planned its own actions against Novgorod and Pskov.

The reports now coming in to the Order's headquarters were very confusing. The Grand Master first heard that bridges were being built in the vicinity of Plock, upstream on the Vistula towards present-day Warsaw. On 14 June there came a report that the Lithuanian army was on the march and was going to attack Ragnit (Niemn). Yet on the same day a conflicting report stated that they were gathering in the east along the Narew River and were probably going to attack Osterode (Ostroda). At the same time Polish troops were noted around Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) just across the border from western Prussia. The confusion that these apparently conflicting reports caused the Teutonic Order's senior officers was precisely the effect the allies had hoped for.

Von Jungingen therefore detached a task force under Grand Marshal Friedrich von Wallenrode and sent them to Soldau (Działdowo) and Lautenburg (Lidzbark) to guard against Vytautas's apparent advance across the Narew. Meanwhile, he remained at Schwetz with additional reinforcements. On 27 June the commander of Königsberg reported that the Ragnit commander's speculation was confirmed. A large Lithuanian force was devastating northern Prussia as far as Memel (Klaipėda). Had an invasion of Prussia begun and if so, where would the main blow fall? Alternatively, was this to be the strategy of the Polish/Lithuanian alliance – a mass of small-scale attacks to gradually wear down the Order? At no point since the alliance between Poland and Lithuania had they ever attempted an invasion of the heartland of the Order in Prussia. Indeed, the last armed clash between the Teutonic Knights and Poland had been in 1332!

The Tannenberg/Grunwald campaign may be said to have begun when the October truce expired on St John's Day, 24 June 1410, although the diversionary raids had already been under way for some time. King



A visored bascinet with an aventail of mail, North Italian c. 1380-1400. (Board of the Trustees of the Royal Armouries IV 470)

Wladislaw Jagiello left Krakow on 26 June and three days later a rider arrived asking for Polish troops to provide a screen for the Lithuanian forces to cross the Narew at Pultusk. Jagiello at once dispatched 12 Banners of mounted men. The plan was for the Lithuanians to join the Poles at the rendezvous at Czerwinsk on the northern bank of the Vistula on 2 July. Czerwinsk was 50 miles from the Prussian frontier and would allow a rapid advance. Screened as the rendezvous was by neighbouring forests and the castle of Plock a few miles downstream, it was hoped that the muster might go unnoticed. Both armies needed to cross wide rivers on route but a pontoon bridge was already being built at Czerwinsk.

The muster at Czerwinsk, 2 July 1410

On arrival at Czerwinsk part of the Polish army, with King Wladislaw Jagiello at their head, crossed to the northern bank where other units, including mercenaries and troops from Masovia, were already waiting for them. Vytautas and his army arrived the same day and, with a great show of pomp, his cousin rode to meet him. The Tartar contingent also arrived and as pagans were a godsend to Teutonic propagandists who would later characterise Tannenberg as a Christian defeat at the hands of pagan hordes.

The Poles completed the crossing of the Vistula on 2 July and on Thursday 3 July the combined armies of Poland and Lithuania began their momentous advance northwards. On 5 July envoys from King Sigismund of Hungary arrived in Jagiello's camp. After consulting Vytautas, the king stated that his demands from the Order were the restitution of Dobrzyn, the renunciation of Samogitia and the payment of war costs to be assessed by Sigismund. The following day, with the envoys present to be suitably impressed, Vytautas arranged a march-past of the Banners of his army in front of his cousin.

By the time the armies reached Jezow on 6 July columns of smoke could be seen in the distance. According to Dlugosz, this was the result of marauding by advance parties of 'Lithuanians and Tartars' who, unable to understand the inhabitants, had failed to realise they were still in Poland. The Hungarian envoys left the following day. Destructive diversionary raids continued all along the frontier from Memel to Pomerania and the Polish commander at Bydgoszcz even managed to lure out a part of the Order's main body at Schwetz and defeat them. The Grand Master still did not know where the main blow would come but on 7 July the allies reached the Prussian border.

The one thing that might prevent the Polish/Lithuanian alliance from moving against the Order was the danger of an attack in its rear by Emperor Sigismund of Hungary, so contacts with Hungarian envoys continued almost to the day of the battle itself. The Polish/Lithuanian army crossed the somewhat ill-defined border on 9 July 1410, but just before doing so Jagiello assembled a large part of his army and, weeping openly, invoked the Almighty to witness that it was the Order not he who gave cause for war. The great banner of Krakow was raised, and with the troops singing the hymn *Bogurodzica* (Mother of God) the invasion of Prussia began.

By all accounts the advancing army wreaked havoc as it swept through Prussia. Depending on the point of view the reports of their atrocities can be taken as evidence either that they equalled the Teutonic Knights in



Effigy of the Margrave Rudolph IV of Baden-Durlach, who died in 1348, in Lichtental, Germany. His armour is contemporary with the period when the Lithuanian Crusade was at its height.

THE POLISH/LITHUANIAN INVASION OF PRUSSIA, JUNE–JULY 1410



brutality or that the Order's propaganda machine equalled that of the Poles. So frequent are the references to the looting and desecration of churches that there must be some factual basis but even this is nothing remarkable by most medieval standards. As noted earlier, the chroniclers could always blame the pagan Tartars if evidence of atrocities was in controvertible. An early incident at Lautenburg (Lidzbark), however, demonstrates the official attitude. According to Dlugosz, two Lithuanians found guilty of looting a church were ordered to erect their own gallows and then hang themselves in full view of their comrades. This created a tremendous impression on their Polish allies. 'The Grand Duke instilled so much terror in all the knights that they shook like leaves before him,'

In this crude 16th-century German woodcut crossbows, a speciality of the Teutonic Order, are being used against cavalry.



wrote Dlugosz. There were no further disciplinary problems after that, nor even grumbling about the pace of the march.

The fords of Kauernick (Kurzetnik), 10–11 July 1410

The Grand Master soon realised that the allied army was heading almost due north for a direct attack on Marienburg. It was likely that they would cross their last barrier, the River Drewenz (Drweca), a tributary of the Vistula, at the fords of Kauernick (Kurzetnik). This was an ideal location to halt the invasion. A strong castle owned by the Teutonic Knights commanded the heights above the river, from where Polish/Lithuanian movements could be observed and anticipated. Leaving 3,000 men in Schwetz under Heinrich von Plauen to guard against a Polish attack from the west, the Order's army accordingly hurried to Kauernick in force. The Order's troops drove stakes into the river and fortified the western bank with crude artillery and archery emplacements.

It seems extraordinary that the allies should have chosen such a strong defensible position to attempt their crossing but at least they now knew where their enemies were. The Polish army camped near the river and skirmishers reconnoitred the area. They returned with 50 horses captured in a brush with the enemy outposts and reported on the strength of the opposition. After a council of war and a final attempt, through Hungarian intermediaries, at a negotiated settlement, King Wladislaw Jagiello decided not to attempt to force a crossing. Instead the allies would bypass the Drewenz eastwards towards its headwaters; no major rivers would then stand between the Polish Lithuanians and Marienburg. Although the area was no longer densely forested, vestiges of the ancient wilderness remained and the Teutonic Knights knew every path through them; a mass of winding tracks connected tiny villages and the terrain was strewn with lakes and streams. The inhabitants certainly did not regard the Polish/Lithuanian force as an army of liberation from some notional Teutonic yoke and the predations of the Tartar scouts only strengthened this view. However, at this point the Hungarian envoys assured the Poles that they need not fear an attack on their rear because the emperor's neutrality had been bought with gold from both sides.



As the allied armies withdrew the Teutonic Knights marched parallel to them, shadowing every movement. The river soon turned sharply north and the Knights decided to cross the river themselves and deploy astride the road to Marienburg. The Polish/Lithuanian alliance could then be forced into a battle on ground of the Order's choosing.

Having left Kurzetnik the allied army headed east away from the river, halting for the night somewhere between the village of Wysoka and the castle of Soldau (Dzialdowo), one of the fortresses to which von Jungingen had sent troops. The Tartar scouts reported no sighting of the Order's army, which was still beyond the Drewenz. The Polish/Lithuanian army made no attempt to take Dzialdowo³ and after a Mass on Sunday 13 July they marched north towards the village and castle of Gilgenburg (Dabrowno).

The Order's scouting parties watched the invading forces and the Grand Master marched along the Drewenz once the direction of the allied advance was clear. As the Polish/Lithuanian army moved north from Dzialdowo, the Order crossed the river at Lubawa and force-marched to deploy near the crossroads at a little village called Tannenberg.

The Polish/Lithuanian army was now only five miles to the south, resting on the banks of Lake Dabrowno beside the village of the same name. Dabrowno (Gilgenburg) lies on a very narrow neck of land between two lakes. That evening the Lithuanians in the vanguard stormed the fortress of Gilgenburg. According to Dlugosz the Lithuanians were provoked into a premature attack by the garrison. But according to the *Chronica Conflictus* the attack was on the orders of the king. Posilge described the scene around Gilgenburg as follows: 'They conquered the

The castle of Schwetz (Swiecie) the main rendezvous point for the Teutonic army prior to the Tannenberg campaign. The commander of Schwetz was the hero Heinrich von Plauen.

town and burnt it down and they slew the young and the old and they and their heathen allies committed unspeakable murders. And they besmirched the churches and cut off the breasts of young girls and women and horribly tortured them and let them be led away into servitude. They also did many shameful things with the sacraments; whatever they came across in the churches, they tore to pieces with their hands and trod it underfoot, and they did it in jest.'

It was indeed fortunate that the allies had the Tartars to blame. So much booty was taken at Gilgenburg that it slowed the allied advance, giving the Order even more time to bait its trap. On hearing of the defeat at Gilgenburg, the Grand Master flew into a rage and determined to crush the invaders in battle. Despite his rage, however, he prudently sent orders that the 3,000 men at Schwetz (Swiece) castle under the command of Heinrich von Plauen should march north to strengthen the defences of Marienburg.

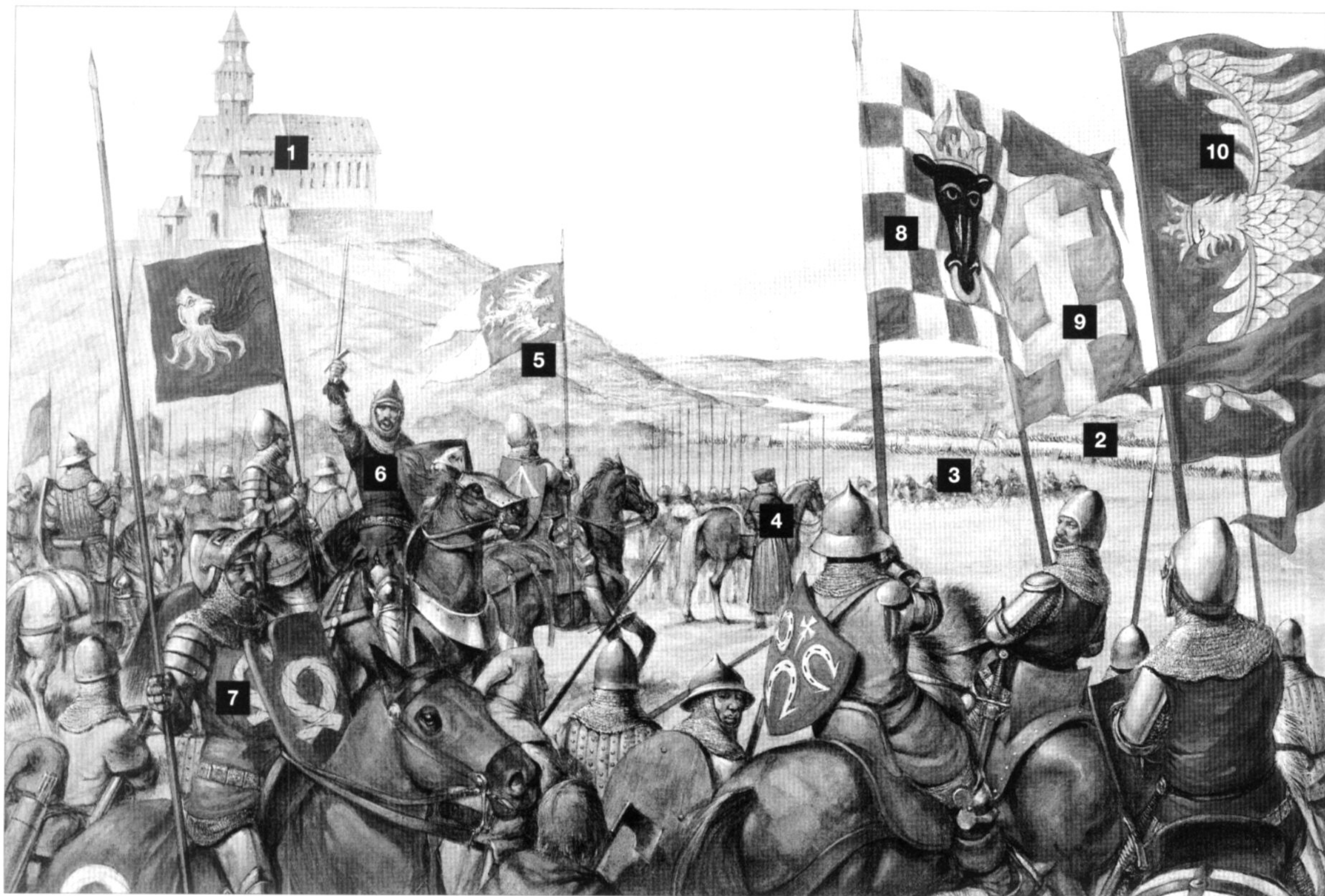
On 14 July the allied troops rested near Dabrownno. During the night sentries reported seeing an image of a king fighting and defeating a monk on the moon, which was taken as a good omen. In the small hours of the July night the allies moved off through fog and rain in a pre-dawn march. They marched in several columns over the only passable roads and approached the settlements called Ludwigsdorf (Lodwigowo) and Faulen (Ulnowo). The royal camp was pitched on the southwest bank of Lake Lauben (Lubien) with the Lithuanian camp somewhere to the north. Less than two miles to the northwest, clad in their white mantles, the ranks of the army of the Teutonic Order were waiting for them between the villages of Tannenberg and Grunwald.

The wide Vistula (Wisla) River near Plock, crossed by the Polish army prior to the invasion of Prussia. Away from recognised crossing points such as Czerwinski the Vistula represented a formidable barrier.









THE STAND OFF AT THE FORD OF KAUERNICK (KURZETNIK), 10 JULY 1410 (pages 38–39)

When the Grand Master realised that the allied army was heading almost due north for Marienburg, he guessed that they would cross their last barrier, the river Drewenz (Drweca), at the fords of Kauernick (Kurzetnik). One of the Order's fortresses (1) (here based on an excellent reconstruction in Robert Sypek's *Zamki i obiekty maromne*) dominated the ford from the heights above the river. The castle lay on the southern bank of the river and commanded the crossing but to further hinder the invaders' progress the Order drove stakes into the river and fortified both banks, erecting crude artillery and archery emplacements (2). The Polish army reconnoitred the position at the ford and a detachment of Polish knights made a wide sweep to ascertain the strength of the enemy. They rode under the banner of the Kuyavian district – split, a black eagle on a gold field and a white lion on a red field beneath a crown. They returned with 50 horses captured in a brush with the enemy outposts (3). King Wladislaw Jagiello (4) assesses the enemy strength at the ford for himself, clad in a heavy coat but no armour. His bodyguards accompany him and his presence is proclaimed to friend and foe alike by the royal pennon bearing the white Polish eagle (5). It has been entrusted to a knight bearing the coat of arms of Ogonczyk, landowners in the district of Leczyca. At the head of the Polish vanguard rides Zbigniew of Brzezcie, Marshal of the Polish kingdom (6), who would

normally have carried the royal pennon. His shield, surcoat and banner bear a white lion's head on a blue field. His armour is largely of plate construction with a bascinet and mail sleeves. His horse wears a metal chamfron to protect its face and a peytral to protect its chest. The knight in the left foreground bearing the arms of a rolled white kerchief on a red field is Sedziwoj of Ostrorog, the Voivode of Poznan (7). The arms are those of the clan of Nalecz. It is possible that his horse's red caparison bearing his arms conceals barded armour. The three flags carried by the group of knights on the right are of interest. The first is the spectacular banner of the district of Kalisz, a crowned auroch's head on a red and white chequered field (8) carried by a knight bearing the coat of arms of the Belina clan, which was concentrated in the Kalisz district in Greater Poland. Next to him flies the banner 'Goncza' with a double gold cross on a blue field (9). This was the banner of the Polish vanguard at Tannenberg. The third standard-bearer is Jan Ligeza of Bobrek, Voivode of Leczyca, who carries the precious Great Banner of Krakow with the white Polish eagle on a red field (10). Although not visible in this scene Ligeza's coat of arms was a black donkey's head on a red field. Despite the show of force at Kauernick, after a council of war King Wladislaw Jagiello decided not to attempt to force a crossing in the face of such formidable opposition. Instead the army turned away to the east in order to bypass the River Drewenz at its source.
(Richard Hook)



THE BATTLE OF TANNENBERG

The morning of Tuesday 15 July 1410 dawned bright and clear and King Wladislaw Jagiello was on his way to Mass when first reports of the enemy presence reached him. It appears that no precautions had been taken against a surprise attack. The king was nonplussed, but then a close confidant of his arrived and then another messenger. Both urged the king not to tarry in a tone lacking the deference due to a sovereign, so Jagiello immediately despatched riders to his 'dearest brother' Vytautas requesting him to make ready and order his knights for battle. He then returned to his prayers and was on his knees when another messenger rushed in to interrupt him with the news that the enemy was already deployed in battle array.

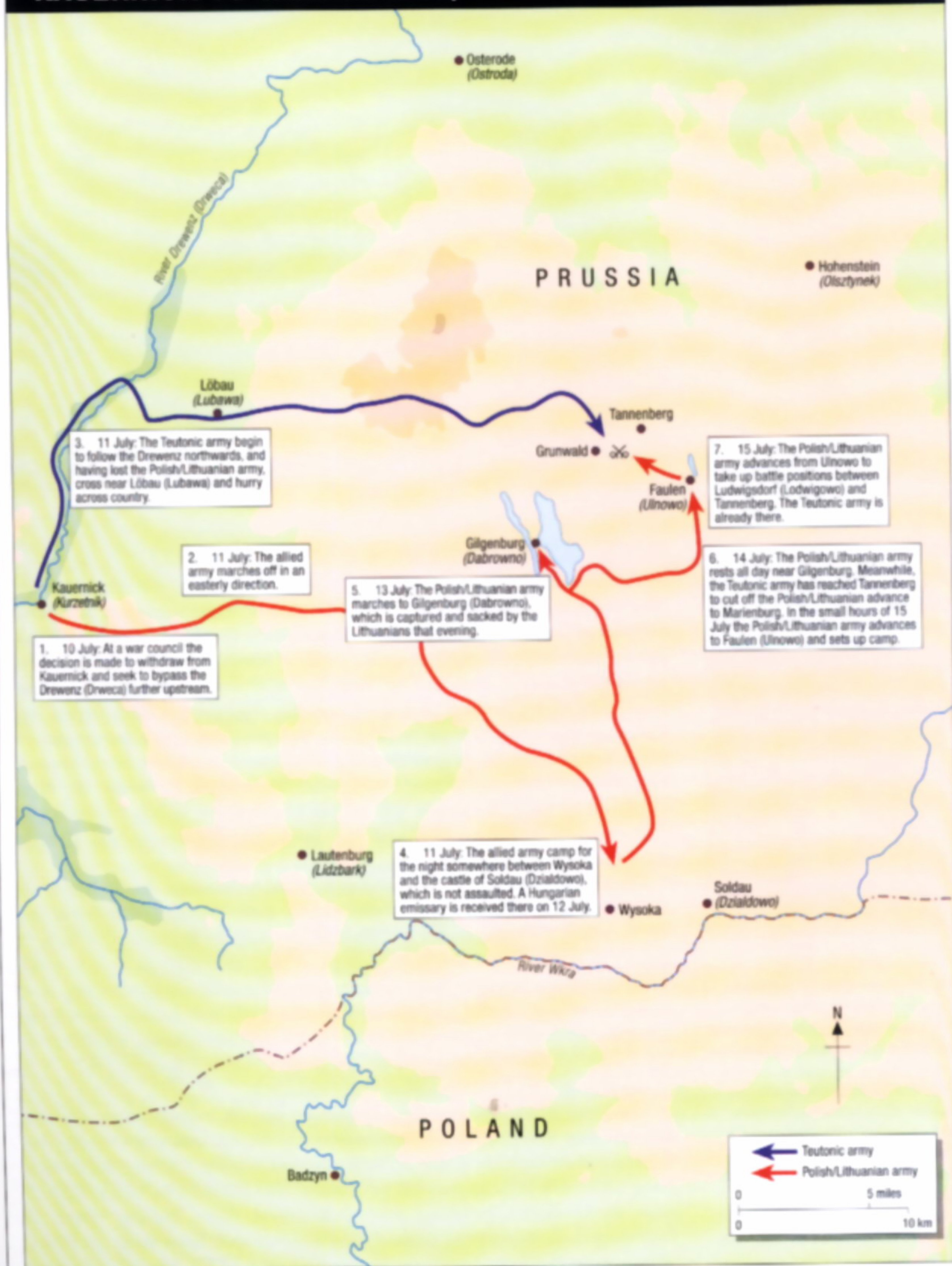
Zyndram of Maszkowice was sent forward to arrange the Polish army while the king remained at Mass. Grand Duke Vytautas deployed the Lithuanians. Dlugosz makes it clear that the vigilant Vytautas sent various messengers to his cousin, having noticed that only the vanguard of the Polish army was ready for battle. Most were still in bivouac and resting, and, most alarmingly, some wagons and troops were still on the road from Gilgenburg. An early enemy attack could have caused chaos, but although the Order's army was deployed for battle they apparently suspected a trap in the wooded and hilly position and held back.

As King Wladislaw Jagiello was still at prayers a long pause ensued. Finally, after hearing two Masses and with the earnest entreaties of his cousin ('Brother! This is the day of battle, not prayer!') ringing in his ears, King Wladislaw Jagiello donned his armour and left his tent. In accordance with tradition, he knighted several hundred men, 'belting' them by fastening their heavy belts around their armour and 'fired them for battle, with a short but firm harangue, reminding each of his dignity'. The King

ABOVE Czerwinsk on the Wisla, the site of the river crossing by the Polish army and their linking up with the Lithuanian forces.

TOP The ford at Kauernick (Kurzetnik) where the Teutonic army successfully challenged a Polish/Lithuanian crossing, looking down from the castle hill. The river can be seen in the middle distance but the site of the ford is obscured by the trees on the left.

KAUERNICK TO TANNENBERG, 10-15 JULY 1410





The ruins of the castle of Kauernick (Kurzetnik). It was unfortunate for the Polish army that the direct route to Marienburg crossed the River Drewenz at the ford commanded by this formidable fortress.

then made his last confession from the saddle and went to inspect his army. Changing to another horse, he ordered all non-combatants to withdraw to the previous position near Faulen (Ulnowo). Fast horses had been prepared along the route back to Krakow for his use in the event of defeat. With his closest retainers in attendance, the king took up his position on the conical hill that was to be his command post for the ensuing battle.

The challenge

The stage was now set for the most theatrical incident of the whole campaign which, although the stuff of chivalric legend, is well documented. While both armies were still ordering their ranks, two messengers from the Grand Master rode up to King Wladislaw Jagiello and thrust two swords into the ground as a challenge to fight. The heralds were recorded as bearing the coats of arms of Sigismund of Hungary and Casimir of Stettin (Szczecin). The image of the swords has become a symbol of Tannenberg and sculptures based on the swords appear around the site as direction markers and memorials. The king described the incident himself in a letter sent to his wife after the battle: 'After we had stood and watched each other for a time, the Grand Master sent two swords over to us with this message: "Know you, King and Vytautas, that this very hour we shall do battle with you. For this, we send you these swords for your assistance". We replied, "we accept the swords you send us, and in the name of Christ, before whom all stiff-necked pride must bow, we shall do battle". At which, with the troops standing in full order, we advanced to the fray without delay.'

Dlugosz wrote of a battle 'in the fields of Grunwald and Tannenberg' and the general position of the battlefield is easy to determine. The modern memorial lies almost at the centre of the irregular triangle formed



TOP The crossing point on the Drewenz (Drweca) at Kauernick successfully defended by the Order in 1410, forcing the allies to take a longer route to Marienburg.

ABOVE The town gate and tower of Noew Miasto Lubawskie, on the Drewenz near Kauernick. After the stalemate at Kauernick, the Polish army marched past the town on their way to Tannenberg.

by the small villages of Lodwigowo (Ludwigsdorf), Stebark (Tannenberg) and Grunwald.

Both armies deployed along a northeast–southwest axis. An important depression, almost certainly the ‘valley’ mentioned by Dlugosz, ran along the line of the modern Tannenberg–Ludwigsdorf road. This road, almost invisible from the monument, marks the battle’s frontline. King Wladislaw Jagiello’s command post during the fighting was on the small conical hill approximately the same distance to the southeast of the modern road as the monument is to the northwest. Jagiello moved forward to this point early on the morning of the battle, from the previous night’s camp about a mile away near Ulnowo on Lake Lubien.

Although no one knows for certain exactly how the rival armies deployed, it is likely that the Polish/Lithuanian army was arrayed in front of Jagiello’s command post in three lines of wedge-shaped formations up to 20 or more men deep. They reached from south of Ludwigsdorf to the Tannenberg/Ulnowo road in the north, with the Poles on the left wing and the Lithuanians on the right. The Czech mercenaries were deployed between them, but the Czech leader, Jan Sokol, stayed with the king throughout the battle. As no mention is made of Jan Zizka in the subsequent reports, we may assume that he also remained at the command post.

The Order’s army deployed on a similar southwest–northeast axis possibly with their left wing anchored on Tannenberg village. It is likely that the Grand Master’s command post was on the high point, now occupied by the monument, with a rear guard and the *laager* of wagons located around Grunwald village near the Tannenberg road. The view from the present-day monument gives an excellent all-round view. Beyond

the Grunwald–Ludwigsdorf road lay forests so this marked the southern edge of the battlefield. Armoured knights in the Order's front lines screened the Teutonic artillery, archers and dismounted light riders. The major Polish sources agree that the bulk of the Order's elite troops were arrayed on the Knights' left flank against the Lithuanians.

Visibility from much of the field was, and remains, poor because of the uneven and wooded terrain. However, several higher places, including those occupied by the rival commanders, allowed much better observation. The battlefield was also a great deal wetter than it is today, with numerous small ponds and marshes that have long since disappeared. To the northwest between Grunwald and Tannenberg was an area of boggy ground, and it is significant that the area just on the Polish side of the modern Stebark–Lodwigowo road is known in Polish as 'the valley of the great stream' along which a brook ran in a northerly direction before emptying into the Marozka river near Lake Lubien.

The attack of the Lithuanians

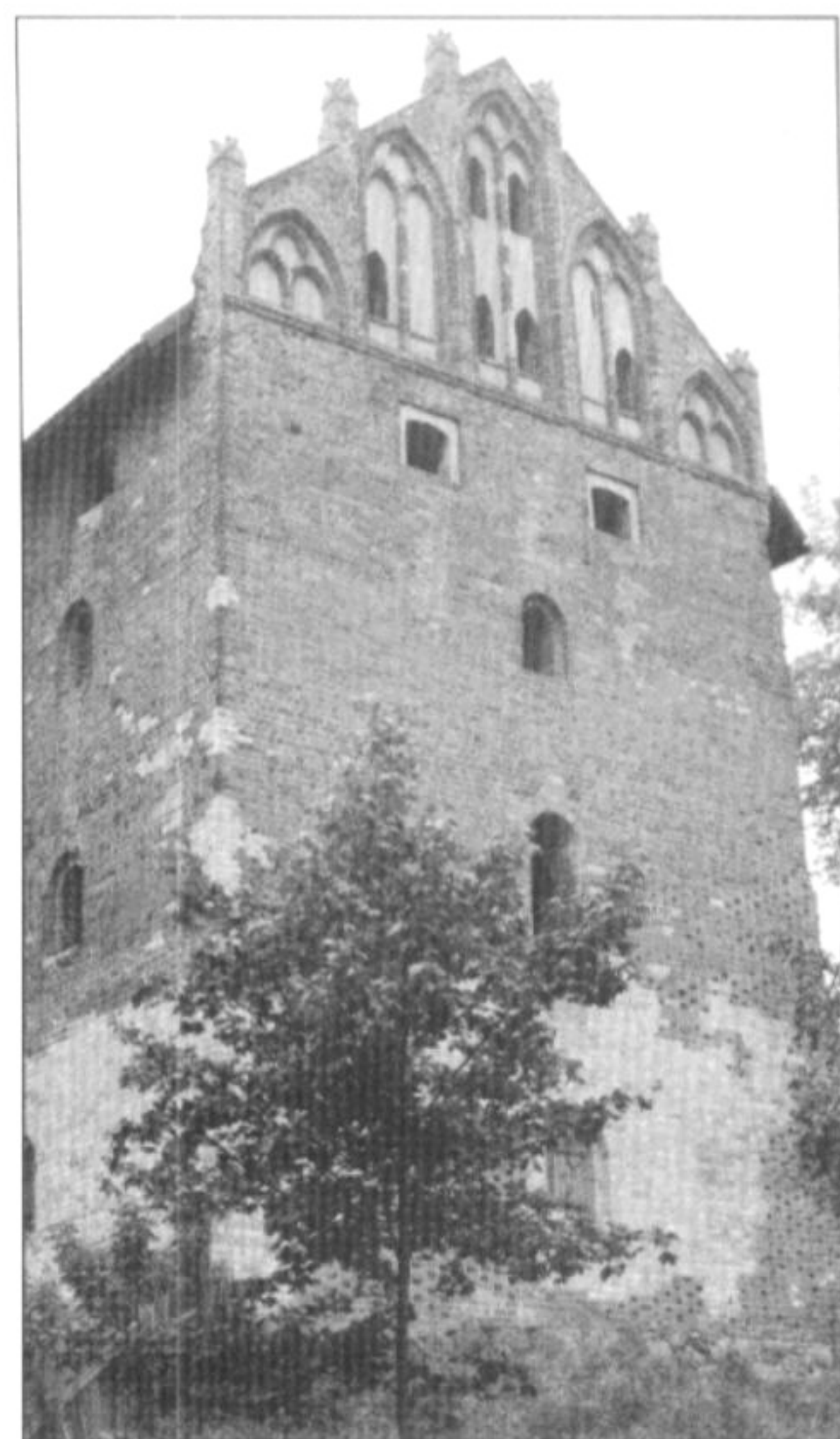
By the time the battle of Tannenberg actually began, at around 9.00am, the Order's army had been drawn up in battle array for three hours. They had been arranged with great military precision and were now, according to Posilge, 'broiling in the sun' inside their armour, so the beginning of the battle proper must have come as something of a relief.

The Order now re-deployed its forward ranks, which triggered the beginning of the battle. They clearly wanted the Poles to attack first against their prepared positions, after which they would launch a devastating counterattack. While the heralds were still with the Polish army, the Order was observed to be regrouping and retiring a certain distance to 'provide more space'. This was probably to clear a field of fire for the Order's previously masked artillery, which fired two salvoes as the opening shots of the battle. Another chronicler explains the Order's regrouping (and their failure to launch an earlier attack) by the fact that they had prepared pits in front of their lines covered in earth, advancing Poles would fall into them. The elaborate gestures of the challenge with the swords and the unmasking of the guns were therefore ruses to persuade the dilatory Poles and Lithuanians into launching the requisite frontal assault on an army that had enjoyed the leisure to prepare its positions.

Unfortunately for the Order things did not go according to plan. The wet weather had dampened the Teutonic powder and their field artillery was ineffective. In the *Chronica Conflictus* we read: 'Before the battle began a light and warm rain fell that washed the dust off the horses' hoofs. But just before the rain the enemy fired twice with cannon balls, not causing any damage despite having many of them.'

Ineffective or not, the firing drew an immediate response from the allied army. Grand Duke Vytautas on the right wing observed the temporary disorder in the ranks of the Teutonic Knights and charged. He did not, however, charge into the centre of the Order's lines, where the pits are supposed to have been dug, but against their left flank. A hail of bolts and arrows from the crossbowmen and archers met them. Meanwhile the Polish knights in the centre sang their battle hymn and, with lances poised, prepared to support the Lithuanians.

We may never be able to reconstruct with certainty the events that followed the initial Lithuanian charge because the Order's leaders did



The Polish/Lithuanian army camped near the castle of Soldau (Dzialdowo) before moving up to Gilgenburg. Soldau surrendered to the Poles after the battle of Grunwald.



The ford area on the Drewenz near Lubawa, the place where the Teutonic Order's army crossed the river to cut off the diverted Polish army.

THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

- 1 Teutonic Cavalry
- 2 Teutonic infantry
- 3 Cannon
- 4 The Teutonic Order's camp
- 5 The Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen
- 6 The banner of the Order
- 7 The reserve force
- 8 The guest crusaders



2. 6.00am Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen moves forward to his command post, the site now occupied by the memorial to the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald.

2. 6.00am The Teutonic Order's cannon are deployed and pits are dug in front of the army, probably in the centre.

1. 6.00am The army of the Teutonic Order draws up in battle array. The cavalry deploy as the first line, masking the Order's cannon deployed behind.

7. 6.15am The Czech mercenaries deploy in the center, between the Polish and Lithuanian wings.

Note:

In his account of the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald, Dlugosz mentions the presence on the field of 51 Polish Banners and 40 Lithuanian Banners. Although the heraldry of the Polish Banners is known, scholars have been able to identify the likely positions on the battlefields of only 12 of the Banners, not including the king. Of the Lithuanian Banners only a few identifying coats of arms are known. Information on the precise deployment of the Teutonic Order is even sparser as there were almost no survivors to record it. The most likely arrangement of the Polish Banners was a wedge formation. A source dating from 1477 suggest that the front rank of a wedge would be 3 knights, followed by 5, 7, 9, and 11 knights. The remainder of the Banner would be drawn up in successive ranks of 11 knights each behind this five rank wedge, with the Banner's standard-bearer in the centre of the first of these secondary lines. Depending upon the size of the Banner these formations could be 20 or more men deep.

10. 8.15am Two heralds arrive from the Teutonic army and thrust two swords into the ground in front of King Jagiello as a challenge to combat.

8. 6.30am After hearing Mass, and at the urgent request of his cousin, King Wladislaw Jagiello leaves his camp near Lake Lauben (Lubien) at Faulen (Ulnowo) and advances to join his army. He takes position on a small hill behind the left wing of the army.

BATTLE OF TANNENBERG – THE FINAL ADVANCE AND DEPLOYMENTS

15 July 1410, c. 6.00–9.00am, viewed from the south, showing the initial deployments of the allied Polish/Lithuanian army and of the troops of the Teutonic Order.

11. 8.45am The Teutonic cavalry begins to re-deploy, possibly as a ruse to induce the Polish/Lithuanian troops to attack. However, it is also possible that the cavalry were simply withdrawing to give their cannon a clear field of fire.

6. 6.15am The Smolensk contingent takes up position on the left of the Lithuanian main body.

9. 6.30am Having urged Jagiello to join his army with the words; 'Brother! This is the day of battle, not prayer!' Grand Duke Vytautas takes position with his Lithuanian troops.

5. 6.15am Moving forward from their camp, the Lithuanian contingent deploys as the right wing of the allied army.



4. 6.15am The Polish army moves forward from its overnight camp on the shore of Lake Lauben and deploys for battle. The Poles form the left wing of the allied army.

POLISH/LITHUANIAN ARMY

- A Kalisz District
- B Poznan District
- C Zbigniew of Brzezine
- D Goncza Court Banner
- E Nadworna Court Banner
- F Great Krakow
- G Wielun District
- H Halicz District
- I Sandomierz District
- J Czech Banner of Jan of Jicin
- K Czech Banner of Gniewosz of Dalewice
- L Czech Banner of St George
- M King Wladislaw Jagiello and the King's bodyguards
- N Prince Simeon Lingwen - the Smolensk Banners
- O Prince Sigismund Korybut - left wing of the Lithuanian Banners
- P Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania

XXXX
JAGIELLO
Polish

XXXX
VYTAUTAS
Lithuanian



not survive to give their version of the battle than ensued. The *Chronica Conflictus* says only that: 'They met with a turbulent and incredible speed of horses, where both the opposition and our own army kept on fighting from the top of the valley downwards.' Dlugosz' account is similar and he adds the interesting detail that the battle had observers: 'At this very moment both armies, giving their war cries, met right in the middle of the valley where six tall oak trees were occupied by many people – it is unknown whether they were the king's people or supporters of the Teutonic Knights – to follow the first battle of both armies. During the conflict there was such a noise of breaking spears and the clash of metal swords that the roar was heard by people a good few miles away, as if a huge boulder was tumbling down.'

The Lithuanian retreat

There was then a dramatic and controversial development, because after an hour of bitter hand-to-hand fighting the Lithuanians gave ground and retreated at full speed. The Order's knights, including most of the visiting crusaders, pursued them for many miles elated at what they thought an early and easy victory. The panic this caused infected the Czech mercenary Banners deployed alongside the Lithuanians. They began to retreat until Vice-Chancellor Mikolaj Traba of Wislicz, Archbishop of Halicz, halted them.

This event has been interpreted as everything from a panicked Lithuanian rout to a perfectly executed feigned retreat in the finest Mongol/Tartar tradition. The latter interpretation is the one favoured by Lithuanian commentators, but there are several questionable aspects to the 'false retreat' theory. First, the withdrawal appears to have been

Lake Lauben (Lubien), where the Polish/Lithuanian army encamped on the night before the battle of Grunwald. The royal camp was pitched on the southwestern bank with the Lithuanian camp somewhere to the north. Less than two miles to the northwest the army of the Teutonic Order was waiting for them between the villages of Tannenberg and Grunwald.

carried out by the entire Lithuanian army, rather than just one unit as in the classic Genghis Khan model. Second, the counterattack when it came was late in the afternoon when some, at least, of the Lithuanians returned. This seems rather late to be the swift riposte to a precipitate Teutonic pursuit. Finally, the result was not a light cavalry envelopment of the Order's troops but the shattering of the allied right wing and apparent widespread panic – hardly the desired outcome.

One positive result for the allies was that many of the Order's knights, including the majority of their 'guest crusaders' were distracted and dispersed in the pursuit or looting the allied baggage train. When these stragglers later attempted to return to the Knights' lines they were either captured or perished under Polish swords. The *Chronica Conflictus* tells us: '... the pursuing enemy, thinking it was their victory, started to get away too far from their Banners, so the roles had changed and they themselves were being chased. And when they wanted to return to their side, the king's people separated them from their Banners, killing and taking some as prisoners. The survivors regrouped with their Banners and fought again ...'

Nevertheless, according to Dlugosz, some Lithuanians fled all the way to their homeland, spreading rumours of a disaster. These must have been a minority, however, because the Lithuanian army was to reappear later in the day with considerable effect. He goes on to praise the Smolensk contingent: 'In this battle only the Russian knights from Smolensk, being under their own three Banners, deserved the glory not only for their effort in fighting, but also for not deserting. But despite their brave fight, as one standard-bearer was killed without mercy and their colours trampled, the other two were still fighting as true men and knights would.'

The right flank of the allied army was now seriously threatened, but the three Smolensk Banners stood firm and although one was decimated the other two managed to cut their way through to join the Poles.

Meanwhile the rest of the allied army advanced into action undaunted by the apparent defeat on their flank. It also appears that Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas never left the field. According to Dlugosz, Vytautas: '... throughout the battle galloped amidst the banners, replacing the exhausted and the fallen by new forces, he watched with utmost alertness as fortunes swayed between the combatants.'

Vytautas's rapid movements round the battlefield gave him a better idea of what was going on than anyone else, and he sent urgent messages to the king for him to show himself to the troops and encourage them. Suddenly, and as if aware of Vytautas's concern, the Teutonic Knights struck at the Polish lines, aiming in particular at the Banner of Krakow on the Polish right wing. One knight

Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania urges his cousin, King Wladislaw Jagiello, to abandon his prayers and make ready for battle. The words put in his mouth by the chronicler are; 'Brother! This is the day of battle, not prayer!'









THE LITHUANIANS AND TARTARS CLASH WITH THE TEUTONIC LEFT WING, 9.00AM (pages 50–51)

The Teutonic Knights' heralds were still with the Polish army when the front ranks of the Order's army were seen to be redeploying to clear a field of fire for the previously masked artillery. This fired two salvos as the opening shots of the battle. Grand Duke Vytautas decided to take advantage of the temporary disorder in the ranks of the Teutonic Knights and led the troops of the Polish/Lithuanian right wing in a charge against the left wing of the Order's army. A hail of bolts and arrows from the crossbowmen and archers met the Lithuanian advance. The Lithuanian troops engaged the Order's cavalry in a furious melee on the wet and muddy field of Tannenberg. Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas commanded 40 Banners including Ruthenians (whose lands corresponded to modern Ukraine) and Tartars. Whereas the armour and equipment of the Polish knights was similar in appearance to their western 'crusader' counterparts, that of the Lithuanian knights was markedly different showing clear eastern influences. The absence of heraldic surcoats amongst the Lithuanians reveals the predominance of mail and lamellar armour. Probably the most characteristic feature was the distinctive rounded and conical helmets (1). These were usually supplemented with a mail aventail and mail was also used to protect the legs although leather boots are also noted. The personal banner of Grand Duke Vytautas is carried by his standard bearer (2); the design is taken from the modern replica in the Vytautas Military Museum in Kaunas. The three Smolensk Banners formed a distinct contingent within Vytautas's wing of the

army and were commanded by Prince Simeon Lingwen, a brother of King Wladislaw Jagiello, fighting under a flag displaying the Archangel Gabriel (3). The figure of Pogon (4), an armed man on a horse, appeared on the flags of 30 of the Lithuanian Banners with different coloured fields. The strange white iconic device displayed on a red field (5) is 'the columns of Gedymin', which may be derived from a representation of the oak sacred to pagan Lithuanians. Gediminas (1257–1341) was the grandfather of both Jogaila (Wladislaw Jagiello) and Vytautas and the sacred oak was the symbol of his royal house. A Tartar bowman (6) fights from horseback clad in traditional Mongol fashion with heavy coat and boots. The Tartar contingent was led by Jelal-el-Din, son of Toqtamish. At top left a Teutonic Knight carries the banner of the Komtur (Commander) of Königsberg (7), one of the Order's most important castles. It was on the Order's left that most of the 'guest' crusaders fought. The most distinguished guests came from the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order which owned lands in modern Latvia and Estonia. The chronicler Dlugosz identifies the banner with horizontal yellow, white and red bands carried by the foot soldier (8) as that of the Livonian knights. The eagle banner (9) is that of Markward von Salzbach, Commander of the castle of Brandenburg (Pokarmin or Uszakowo in modern Kaliningrad), captured at Tannenberg by Grand Duke Vytautas and executed. After an hour of bitter hand-to-hand fighting the Lithuanians fled in apparent disorder, although debate continues as to whether this was a feigned retreat. The Lithuanians would return to the battle later to deliver a telling final blow. (Richard Hook)

These two swords at Czerwinsk commemorate the crossing of the Wisla at this point, and also the dramatic incident just prior to the battle of Grunwald when two swords were presented to King Wladislaw Jagiello as a challenge to do battle with the Teutonic Knights.



fought his way through to Marcisz of Wrocimowice, the standard-bearer, and the most important flag in the Polish army slid from his grasp. The Teutonic Knights saw the flag fall, but their elation was short lived as another Pole seized the standard and held it aloft again. The fighting continued with great intensity, as 'the Polish knights started to fight, even more eager to wipe out this disgraceful indignity, completely defeating the enemy's forces'.

The advance of the Grand Master

From the vantage point of his hilltop command post, Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen saw what appeared to be the entire Polish army engaged in the centre. Seizing the moment, he led 16 Banners of armoured knights into battle. Although one Banner consisted of survivors of the Lithuanian attack, the other 15 were fresh units that had taken no part in the battle up to that point. This new attack was, therefore, launched by almost a third of the Order's original force, and thus posed a grave menace to the Polish king, whose forces were already committed.

THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

- 1 Teutonic Cavalry
- 2 Teutonic infantry
- 3 Cannon
- 4 The Teutonic Order's camp
- 5 The Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen
- 6 The banner of the Order
- 7 The reserve force
- 8 The guest crusaders



8. 11.00am **The Teutonic Order launches an attack against the Polish main body. The Great banner of Krakow is a particular target of this assault.**

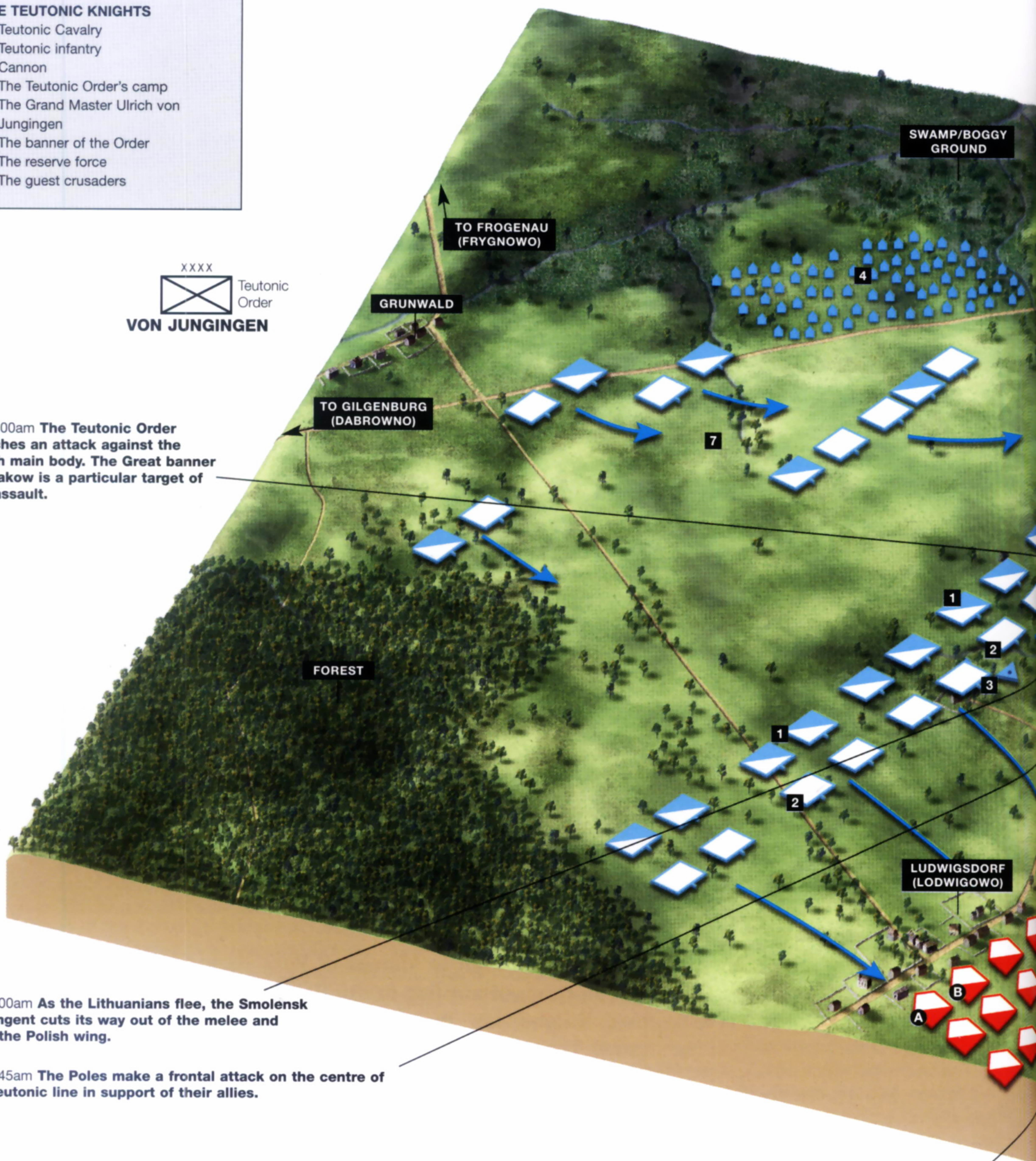
7. 11.00am **As the Lithuanians flee, the Smolensk contingent cuts its way out of the melee and joins the Polish wing.**

6. 10.45am **The Poles make a frontal attack on the centre of the Teutonic line in support of their allies.**

5. 10.45am **Unsettled by the apparent Lithuanian rout, the Czech mercenaries begin to retreat but rally.**

BATTLE OF TANNENBERG – THE LITHUANIAN CHARGE

15 July 1410, c. 9.00–11.00am, viewed from the south, showing the charge of the Lithuanians against the Teutonic left wing. In response the Teutonic right wing charges the King Jagiello's Polish troops.



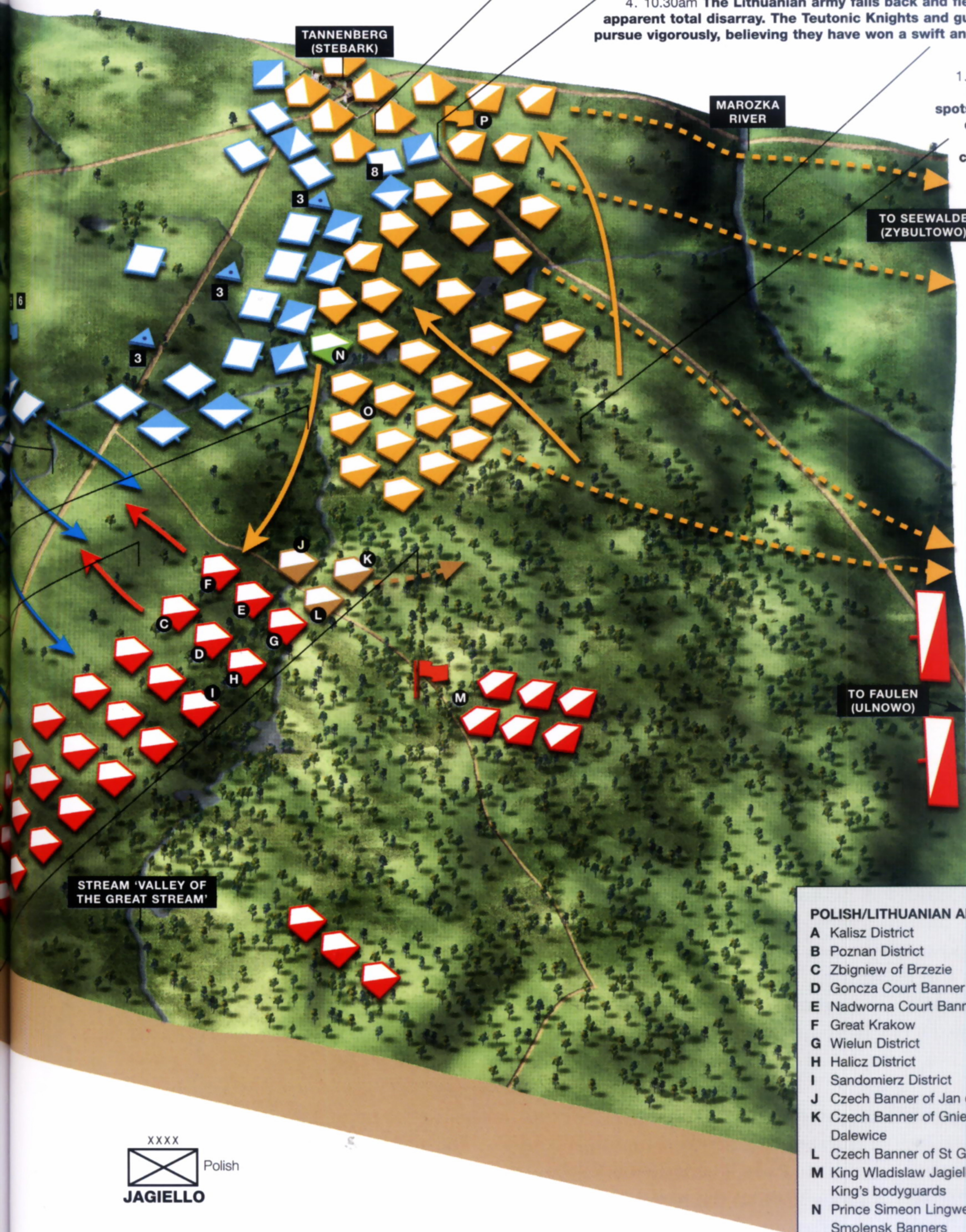
3. 9.30am As the Lithuanians close with the Teutonic left wing a fierce hour-long hand-to-hand melee erupts on the northern edge of the battlefield around Tannenberg.



2. 9.15am Grand Duke Vytautas leads a charge by the Lithuanians against the Order's left wing near the village of Tannenberg

4. 10.30am The Lithuanian army falls back and flees the field in apparent total disarray. The Teutonic Knights and guest crusaders pursue vigorously, believing they have won a swift and easy victory.

1. 9.00am Grand Duke Vytautas spots the apparent disorder in the Teutonic army caused by their regrouping.



POLISH/LITHUANIAN ARMY

- A Kalisz District
- B Poznan District
- C Zbigniew of Brzezie
- D Goncza Court Banner
- E Nadworna Court Banner
- F Great Krakow
- G Wielun District
- H Halicz District
- I Sandomierz District
- J Czech Banner of Jan of Jicin
- K Czech Banner of Gniewosz of Dalewice
- L Czech Banner of St George
- M King Wladislaw Jagiello and the King's bodyguards
- N Prince Simeon Lingwen - the Smolensk Banners
- O Prince Sigismund Korybut - left wing of the Lithuanian Banners
- P Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania





The direction of the Grand Master's advance is most interesting, because he did not launch a frontal assault, but swung to the left past Tannenberg and then turned south to hit the Poles in their right flank. This may have been to avoid the mysterious 'pits' dug immediately in front of their own lines, or possibly to collect survivors among their own men and strike the Poles where the Lithuanian rout had left them most vulnerable.

It soon became clear that the primary target was the Polish king himself, because the Teutonic Knights came swooping down in to the melee that already raged in the depression just forward of Jagiello's command post. As one unit of the Order's knights was apparently heading straight for the Polish king, he called for troops to come to his aid. The commander Mikolaj Kielbasa told the king's messenger that if his unit, already heavily engaged and fighting under the distinctive *Nadworna* (court) banner, redeployed they would lead the king's enemies straight to him.

The Teutonic Knights were clearly unsure of the king's position. Jagiello's bodyguard hurried to surround him and his lesser banner was furled to conceal his whereabouts. The king was for fighting, however, and was about to ride down and join in the melee when a Czech knight seized his bridle. Jagiello was furious, but at that moment the approaching Teutonic Knights changed direction and wheeled towards the centre of the melee. The chronicler tells us that the Poles who were engaged in the vicinity saw knights approaching from their rear and first assumed that the

This detail from Wojciech Kossak's painting of the battle of Grunwald shows the Polish knight Andrej of Teczyn pressing home a charge against the knights of the Order.

OPPOSITE The most famous painting of the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald is by Jan Matejko (1838-93). It hangs in the National Museum in Warsaw. In this detail from the huge canvas we see a warrior clad in scale and mail armour in the midst of the fighting.









THE DEATH OF THE GRAND MASTER,
APPROXIMATELY 2.00PM, 15 JULY 1410 (pages 58–59)
 Shortly before midday Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen led 16 Banners of armoured knights into battle sweeping to the left past Tannenberg and then turning south to strike the Polish right flank. The Teutonic Knights swept down into the melee already being fought out in the shallow valley just forward of King Wladislaw Jagiello's command post. One group of Knights seemed to be heading straight for the Polish king, who called for troops to come to his aid. The Poles rallied after bitter fighting and the hunter in turn became the hunted, as the white-clad Knights were surrounded by Polish horsemen. Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen now became a prime target. The Grand Master (1), already under attack, wears the characteristic long white mantle with black cross over his armour. The caparison of his horse bears his personal arms, an elaboration of the usual black cross on white of the Order, which was repeated on his personal shield. The standard bearer holding the Great Banner of the Grand Master (2) hurries to his aid. Grand Master Von Jungingen tried desperately to cut his way out of

the melee but was wounded in the face and the chest before meeting his death from a lance driven through his neck. The Polish knight delivering the fatal lance-thrust is Dobieslaw of Olesnica (3), identified by his arms of a white cross on a red field with a white 'w' device. The backdrop to their duel is the black cross on white that was the banner of the Teutonic Order (4). Other Polish knights, identifiable from their banners, engage in the melee behind. Marcin of Slawsko held the title of Assistant Master of the Pantry for Poznan and his standard bearer (5) carries the boat device of the clan of Lozdzia. The yellow banner with a wreathed maiden (6) of Krystyn of Ostrow is also visible. Duke Konrad VII 'the White' of Schweidnitz (Olesnica) was a Polish nobleman who fought for the Teutonic Order at Tannenberg; his standard bearer (7) is fleeing from the Poles. The knight in the foreground (8) carries the dramatic red and white banner of the city of Kulm (Chelmno). The knights of the Lizard League of Kulm would later be accused of betraying the Order in its hour of need. Alongside the Kulm standard-bearer rides a sergeant of the Order (9) identified by the black 'T' on his grey mantle. (Richard Hook)



Grunwald looking southeast from the monument, the probable site of the Grand Master's command post, towards the Polish lines. The fighting was concentrated along the line of the modern road, which runs just beyond and is largely concealed by the trees.

Lithuanians had returned to the fight. But the joy was short-lived when they saw the newcomers clash with their comrades. There was momentary panic, but the Poles rallied and the melee continued.

One enemy knight, however, was more observant than the others. He detached himself from the melee and charged directly at the king, who must by now have left the hillock. King Wladislaw Jagiello couched his lance and counter-charged the German, named as Lupold von Kokeritz (or Dypold von Kockritz), wounding him. The king's secretary, Zbigniew Olesnicki, then charged in from the side, struck the knight with the butt of a broken lance shaft, his only weapon, and knocked the German to the ground. King Wladislaw Jagiello aimed his lance at the man's forehead and the guards and footsoldiers then finished him off. Apparently, later in his life Zbigniew Olesnicki's confirmation as a bishop proved difficult due to his participation in mortal combat – small thanks for the man who saved the life of the king of Poland!

The Lithuanians return

The single combat around the king resulted in a brief pause in the fighting for those knights in sight of the incident. It also proved the Order's high-water mark in the battle as the earlier illusory return of the Lithuanians now proved all too real. With the central melee still at its height, Grand Duke Vytautas, who seems to have been everywhere throughout the battle, hurled his horde of light cavalry against the rear ranks of the Order. Dlugosz says: 'Polish troops as well as any other detachments that may have been defeated previously, fought a relentless and victorious battle against the enemy's sixteen Banners. At first they met with some resistance, but the king's troops were in greater numbers and all the enemy were either killed or taken prisoner.'

THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

- 1 Cannon
- 2 The Teutonic Order's camp
- 3 The Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen
- 4 The banner of the Order

11. 4.00pm **The Teutonic army disintegrates and flees the field. The Polish/Lithuanian pursuit begins.**



9. 4.00pm **The Poles and Lithuanians break through the lines of the Order's army and sack the Teutonic camp.**

10. 4.00pm **Large numbers of the Order's troops flee back towards the camp where they are trapped and killed.**

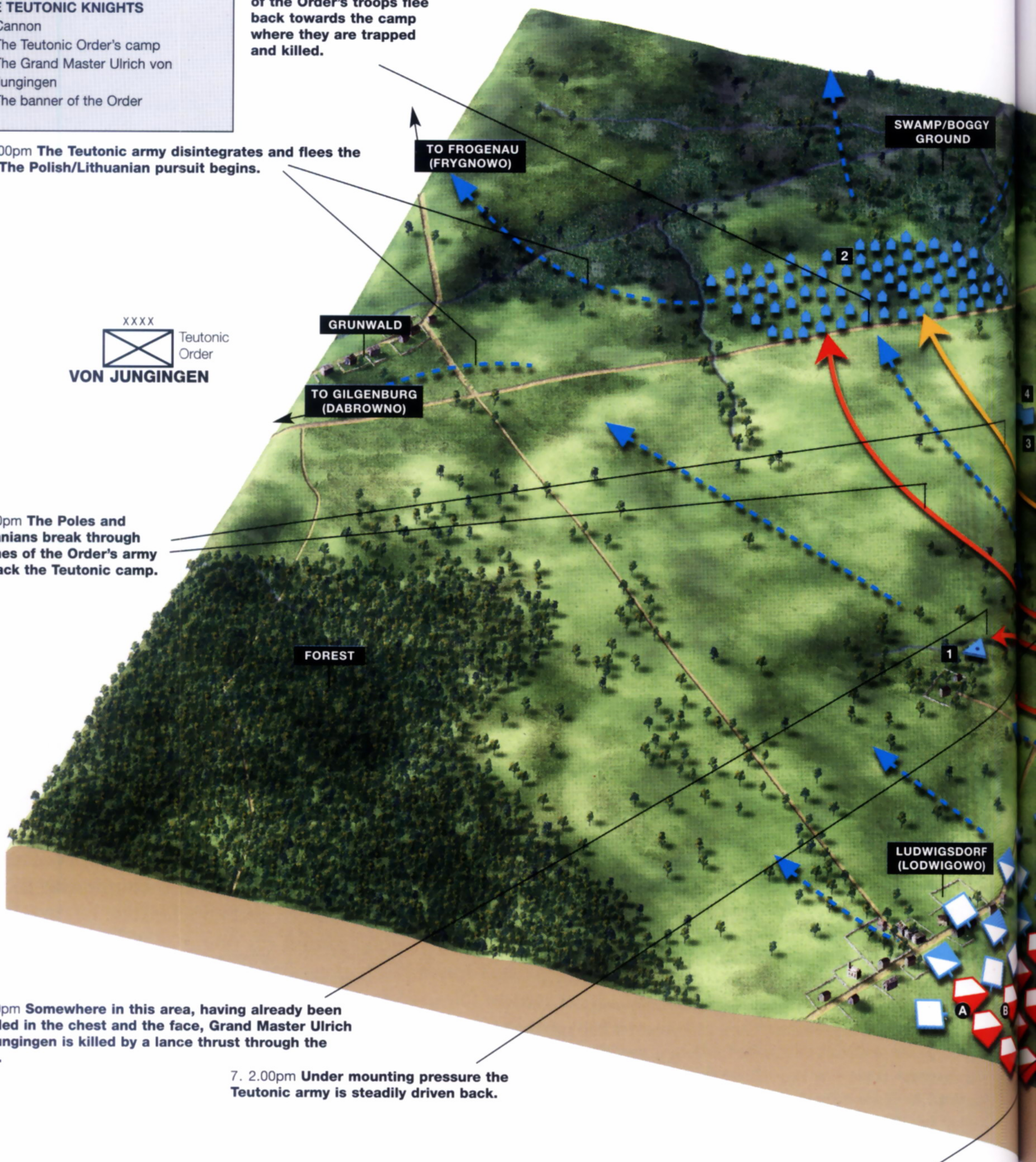
8. 3.00pm **Somewhere in this area, having already been wounded in the chest and the face, Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen is killed by a lance thrust through the throat.**

7. 2.00pm **Under mounting pressure the Teutonic army is steadily driven back.**

4. 11.30am **King Wladislaw Jagiello's bodyguards prevent him from joining the existing melee.**

BATTLE OF TANNENBERG – DESTRUCTION OF THE TEUTONIC KNIGHTS

15 July 1410, c. 11.00am–4.00pm, viewed from the south, showing the Grand Master's charge against the Polish right flank, the return of the Lithuanians and the rout of the Order's army.



1. 11.00am Gathering the Teutonic Knights' reserves, the Grand Master leads almost a third of the Order's army north towards the village of Tannenberg.

2. 11.15am Survivors of the Lithuanian attack and those who did not pursue join the Grand Master.

3. 11.30am Swinging south the Grand Master's force advances towards the melee taking place in front of King Wladislaw Jagiello's command post.

6. 1.00pm The Lithuanian army returns to the field and charges back into the melee, decisively tipping the scales against the Teutonic Knights.

5. 11.45am The Teutonic Knights charge into the Polish right flank. One group head directly for the Polish king, but the attempt on his life is beaten off.



TO SEEWALDE
(ZYBULTOWO)

MARZKA
RIVER

TO FAULEN
(ULNOWO)

STREAM 'VALLEY OF
THE GREAT STREAM'



POLISH/LITHUANIAN ARMY

- A Kalisz District
- B Poznan District
- C Zbigniew of Brzeznie
- D Goncz Court Banner
- E Nadworna Court Banner
- F Great Krakow
- G Wielun District
- H Halicz District
- I Sandomierz District
- J Czech Banner of Jan of Jicin
- K Czech Banner of Gniewosz of Dalewice
- L Czech Banner of St George
- M King Wladislaw Jagiello and the King's bodyguards
- N Prince Simeon Lingwen - the Smolensk Banners
- O Prince Sigismund Korybut - left wing of the Lithuanian Banners
- P Grand Duke Vytautas of Lithuania



It is this point that forms the subject Jan Matejko's famous painting of the battle of Grunwald that hangs in the National Museum in Warsaw. In the centre stands Vytautas, his figure dominating the scene, while his cousin the king commands from a hill in the rear. But the other prominent figure in the composition is the Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen, caught within the encircling move and a prime target. Von Jungingen desperately tried to cut his way through the Lithuanian ranks, but was wounded in the face and the chest and met his death with a lance-thrust through his neck. His assailant is named in some accounts as Dobieslaw of Olesnica. *Chronica Conflictus* says: 'The knight Dobieslaw of Olesnica, who had a cross on his coat of arms, with his spear lowered, set off by himself towards the enemy. But a knight from the Prussian cavalry who was in charge of the standards and some other troops blocked his way and also managed to divert Dobieslaw's spear just above his head. Seeing that his blow was unsuccessful, Dobieslaw started to return to his army as it was unwise to continue the duel in view of the enemy's predominance. But during his swift return, he found his enemy pursuing him, wounding his horse. Thanks to the nearby presence of his Polish knights, he could join them in safety.'

Dlugosz does not confirm that Dobieslaw did indeed kill the Grand Master, but whoever his nemesis, the terror on the Grand Master's face is captured by Matejko as he desperately fights off his assailants with his long white cloak streaming out behind him. The image of St Stanislaw, patron saint of Poland whom many claimed to have seen in a vision on the battlefield, also appears in the painting.

The rout of the Teutonic Knights

The death of the Grand Master marks a turning point in the battle. Under pressure and leaderless the Teutonic Knights began to give way, turning to make their escape back to the camp near Grunwald village.

This view is from the line of the modern road, where the bulk of the fighting took place, looking southeast towards the Polish lines. King Wladislaw Jagiello's command post occupied the hill in the right background.

OPPOSITE Another detail from Kossak's painting showing Teutonic Knights at Grunwald. The Bull's head motif identifies the Commander of the castle of Graudenz (Grudziadz) while the double crosses are the badge of the borough of Brundsberg (Braniewo).





The road between Stebark (Tannenberg) and Lodwigowo (Ludwigsdorf) runs along the shallow valley at the centre of the battlefield. This view is northeast towards the village of Tannenberg.

According to Posilge, 'Tartars, heathens and Poles' cut down hundreds of fleeing men at this stage. Many more died when they reached the apparent safety of their wagons as the commoners, recruited or press-ganged into the Order's service, turned against their masters and killed the returning knights. The *Chronica Conflictus* noted that: 'When the enemy realised that they would not escape alive, they started to form a circle of defence out of their wagons. But soon even that could not save them from the swords. More were killed here than at any other place on this battlefield.'

Meanwhile, King Jagiello followed his advancing army as far as the enemy camp, which he rode through and ascended a hillock to the rear where he dismounted, fell to his knees and thanked God for the victory. His men helped themselves to the contents of the Order's headquarters: 'They found wagons loaded with handcuffs and shackles which the enemy had made ready for the Polish prisoners. The other wagons were full of torches soaked with tallow and tar as well as arrows prepared the same way to wound the defeated. But thanks to their faith in God, the Poles were putting them into their own chains and handcuffs ... It took only a quarter of an hour for the king's army to loot a few thousand wagons.'

The king obviously did not object to the division of spoils but he ordered that the numerous casks of wine should be smashed so that his men would not get drunk on the contents and incapacitate themselves in the event of the enemy rallying: 'Some of them [the wagons] were full of barrels with wine, which soon became a good source to quench the thirst of an army of tired and sun-scorched men. All started to scoop up some wine with any means they could, some with their helmets, others with their gloves and even with their shoes. But the Polish King Wladyslaw, in fear of his army becoming drunk and unable to fight any more, ordered them to smash all the wine barrels. Then all could see a red stream of wine mixed with blood of the slain men and their horses, covering this great battlefield that reached down to the meadows of Tannenberg village.'

OPPOSITE Jan of Tarnow, wielding the morning star, was one of three members of the Leliwa clan to fight at Tannenberg. From Kossak's painting.





A reproduction medieval cannon at Gniew (Mewe). Cannon were present at Tannenberg but appear to have played little part in the battle. This may have been due to the wet weather that preceded the battle. However, the reorganisation of the Order's ranks, which prompted the Lithuanian charge, is believed to have been carried out to clear a field of fire for the artillery.

The king's determination to keep his men sober suggests that he was unaware of the magnitude of his victory, although the fleeing enemies were being pursued for several miles: 'The king's army after capturing the enemy's camp, could see the sun reflecting off the enemy's armour as they were running away. While they were still pursuing those who were escaping, the Polish troops entered some swampy terrain. It was not difficult to capture the remaining small groups, as they were not putting up any resistance to being caught. The king's orders were to take them prisoner.'

The pursuit was only abandoned at about 8.00pm. One Knight of the Order who met his death during the flight was Heinrich von Schwelborn, Commander of Tuchel (Tuchola). Dlugosz remarks on his pomposity that he had commanded two naked swords to be carried ahead of him as he rode off on campaign, having

sworn that he would not put the swords back in their scabbards until they were stained with Polish blood. On the retreat: '...disgracefully fleeing from the field of battle ... he was overtaken and wretchedly beheaded, receiving a mortal but deserved punishment ... for he was neither permitted to die honourably in battle, nor to save his wretched life bereft of dignity through flight.'

Hundreds of Teutonic troops, almost half their strength, now lay dead and 14,000 prisoners had been taken. According to the *Soldbuch*, the payroll book of the Order, only 1,427 men including 77 archers straggled back to Marienburg to claim their pay. With the exception of Werner von Tettingen, who escaped from the field, all of the Order's high command met their deaths either during the battle of Tannenberg or shortly after it. Markward von Salzbach, Commander of Brandenburg (Pokarmin), Heinrich Schaumburg the Voigt (bailiff) of Sambia and Jurge Marschalk the companion of the Grand Master were executed by order of Vytautas for their 'insulting behaviour after captivity'. Details are given in respect of Markward von Salzbach, who 'once at a meeting at which both were present he had within the hearing of Vytautas called his mother a harlot and a dirty old woman'. The king asked Vytautas to relent, but Markward proved as arrogant as ever, so 'the Lithuanians and Ruthenians took him out into the corn and cut off his head'.

King Wladislaw Jagiello's camp was newly pitched for the night about a quarter of a mile down the road towards Marienburg. His troops were hungry and tired, but all night long groups of soldiers returned from the chase. Fresh prizes, prisoners and their standards were presented until a pile of captured banners lay at the feet of the king, who remained awake throughout the night. Told of the Grand Master's death, confirmed by the trophy of the reliquary he wore round his neck, Jagiello expressed genuine sympathy and 'wonder at so unusual a change of fortune, or rather at the smothering of human haughtiness and the feeling of superiority'.

During the night of 15 July the battlefield lay in darkness, strewn with the corpses of the fallen. Local peasants doubtless wandered among the scene of carnage, looting the dead and finishing off the wounded. At one

spot on the battlefield the wood from the broken lances had virtually created a ridge of its own. The horror of this field still resonates in the words of Posilge's chronicle: 'The army, both cavalry and infantry, was routed completely, losing lives, goods and honour, and the number slain was beyond counting. May God have mercy upon them.'

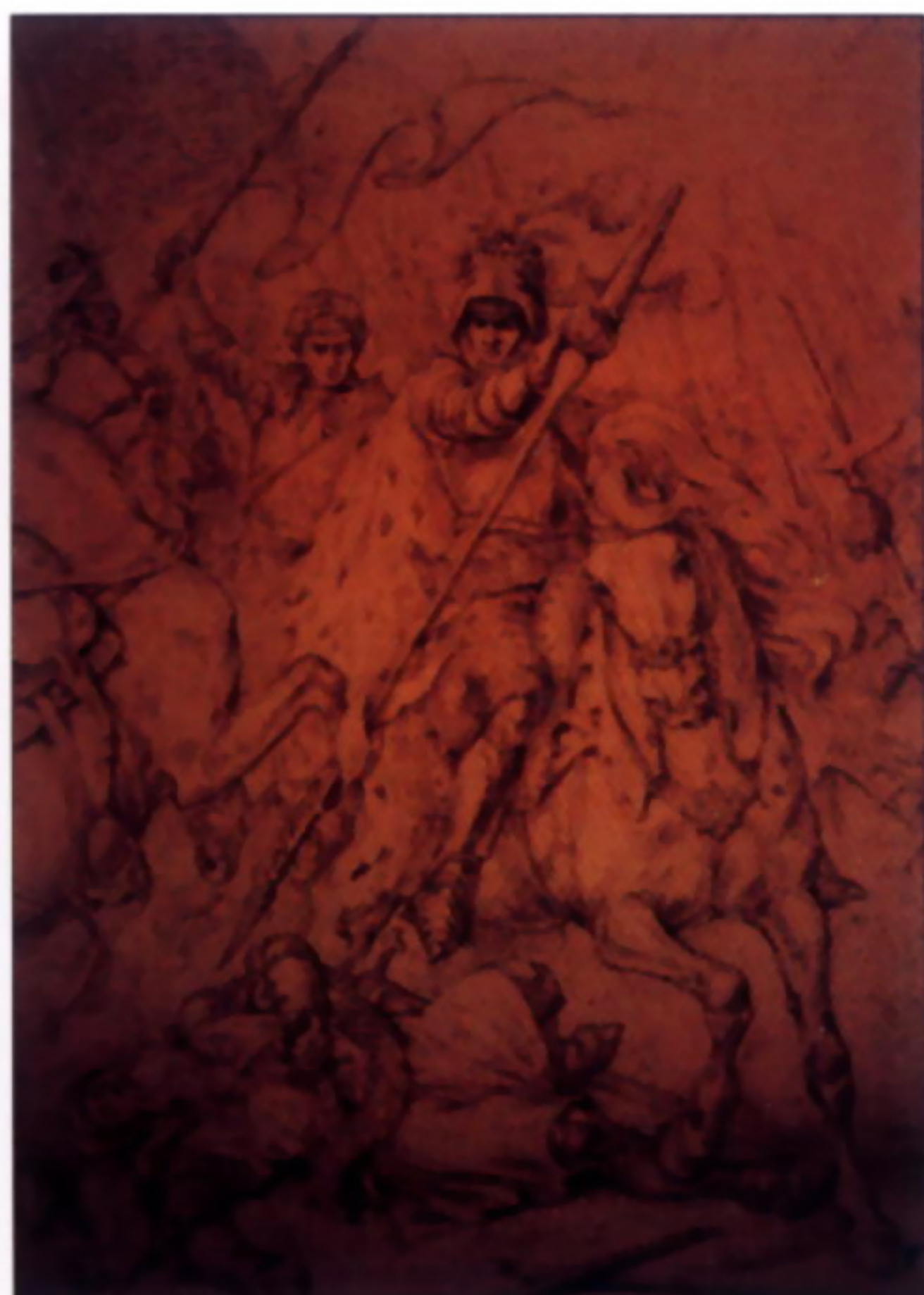
The following morning the bodies of the fallen Grand Master and other dignitaries of the Order were dressed in purple and shrouded in clean white sheets to be loaded reverently on to a wagon that was granted safe conduct to Marienburg. Posilge records the burial of the Grand Master in St Anne's chapel within the castle on 19 July. The other bodies, friend and foe alike, were buried in grave pits on the site and three requiem masses were said in a tent chapel bedecked with the captured banners with the entire Polish/Lithuanian army in attendance. Thereafter the king and Vytautas held a state banquet attended by Polish and Lithuanian dignitaries and some of the most important prisoners of war, including the 'Polish renegades' Duke Konrad VII of Schweidnitz (Olesnica) and Duke Casimir V of Stettin (Szczecin). Rewards for service had to wait until later although we know that Janko Sushyk, who fought in the Banner of the Halicz District, received two villages in recognition for his services at Grunwald, 'over which he had poured his blood'.

Following the feast, Jagiello ordered all the prisoners to be brought before three scribes and listed by name, origin and status. The knights were made to swear to present themselves at Krakow on 11 November. The commoners swore that they would present themselves when summoned and thereafter nearly all the prisoners were set free. The exceptions were the two Pomeranian dukes noted above; Duke Casimir V of Stettin (Szczecin) remained in captivity for a year. Dlugosz writes: 'Not without the greatest disgrace to his personal fame and his name, overcome by some accursed lust for gold which flamed up inside him, did he brand his family and offspring with disgrace. He planted his sword inside his own entrails, inside his own fatherland and the Polish kingdom ...'

Bas relief at Grunwald showing the Teutonic infantry on the left. The role of the infantry in the battle is largely overlooked by the contemporary chronicles but we do know that crossbowmen were highly valued by the Order.







LEFT Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas is the focus of Matejko's painting, although he appears dressed more for the court than the battlefield.

ABOVE The battle of Grunwald depicted heroically in a drawing in the National Army Museum, Warsaw.

BELOW A view of the hill where King Wladislaw Jagiello had his command post during the battle.

Christofer von Gersdorff (the bearer of the banner of St George of the hired knights) and the few remaining elite Knight-brothers were also imprisoned lest they return to supplement the Teutonic Knights' decimated numbers. In the letter King Wladislaw Jagiello sent to his wife he noted that: 'Among the numberless dead we ourselves had few losses ... We cut down the Grand Master and the Marshal Schwartzburg and many of the Komturs, forcing many others to flee ... The pursuit continued for two miles. Many were drowned in the lakes and the rivers, and many killed, so that very few escaped ...'

THE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

The Polish/Lithuanian allies had won the battle; now they had to win the war. But despite their crushing victory over the Teutonic Order on the battlefield, ultimate triumph in their conflict proved elusive. On the morning of 16 July, however, the victory must have looked total. Thousands of the Order's troops and their allies lay dead alongside the corpse of the Grand Master. The alliance's key objective – the capture of Marienburg – and even the total extinction of the Order's Prussian state must have seemed an inevitability. Almost unbelievably, however, the Order was to survive.

On 17 July, with the earth still fresh on the newly dug graves and the trophies of the Teutonic banners sent on to Krakow, the Polish/Lithuanian army left behind the villages of Grunwald and Tannenberg as it marched on towards its ultimate goal. However, some vestiges of the Order's military talents had escaped the destruction at Tannenberg and that this was overlooked would prove a dreadful error.





OPPOSITE The death of the Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen at the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald, from the Matejko painting. The Grand Master was actually dispatched by a lance thrust through the neck.

The site of the death of the Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen to the west of the monument at Grunwald.

Full of confidence, the Polish/Lithuanian army had rested for two days before marching on. Now, with Marienburg little more than 60 miles away, it dithered. Having suffered casualties of between 4,000 and 5,000 killed and 8,000 wounded a somewhat slower advance is understandable. The force that marched on Marienburg probably consisted of some 15,000 Poles and 11,000–12,000 Lithuanians. However, they achieved a march rate of only nine miles a day, although none of the three fortresses on their route – Hohenstein (Olsztynek), Osterode (Ostroda) and Christburg (Dzierzgon) – offered any resistance.

The perhaps understandable but fatal delay allowed the Order's hero Heinrich von Plauen to reach Marienburg with around 2,000 (some sources say 3,000) men. According to some accounts the Grand Master himself despatched von Plauen to Marienburg earlier in the campaign, once Polish/Lithuanian intentions were clear. However, other sources contradict this and praise von Plauen for taking the initiative once news of the defeat at Tannenberg reached him. If true, his decision went beyond mere bravery because he risked the loss of his castle of Schwetz to save Prussia, and to save Prussia he had to save Marienburg.

This remarkable man, who was soon to become Grand Master himself, undoubtedly saved the Teutonic Order from annihilation. He had fought many battles in the past but Marienburg was the greatest challenge of his career. The garrison had already received news of the defeat at Tannenberg before von Plauen reached them and also of the disgraceful cowardice of other fortresses that had simply surrendered. At Danzig the Polish king was officially welcomed and escorted through the streets with musical accompaniment. Therefore, the Marienburg garrison was itself inclined to surrender. The Polish delay gave von Plauen breathing space and he arrived in Marienburg on 18 July. Through a superhuman effort he rallied his men and strengthened the



defences, augmenting his own forces with 200 Danzig seamen and 1,427 stragglers from the Tannenberg disaster. His force had ample stocks of food and armaments and messages were sent round Prussia and Livonia that the Order may have lost a battle, but it hadn't lost the war. 'Come and join us,' he urged, 'against the Saracens!'

The siege of Marienburg, 18 July–19 September 1410

On 24 July von Plauen sent messengers to King Wladislaw Jagiello, requesting safe conduct for a peace delegation. The victorious king replied that he would be in Marienburg the next day and that he would hand over any necessary papers then. Understanding the Polish King all too clearly, Heinrich von Plauen ordered the town outside Marienburg's walls burned to deprive the Poles of any shelter and to ensure a clear field of fire from the castle. The homeless citizens sheltered inside the castle. Arriving on 26 July, the Poles and Lithuanians commenced a night bombardment. Meanwhile 'Lithuanians and Tartars' (the expression consistently used by Posilge) raided and foraged as far as Danzig.

Thus began a long and rather leisurely 57-day siege, during which the overconfident Jagiello behaved as if Prussia were already his. He appointed commanders to posts in the castles that had surrendered, distributed estates to Polish dignitaries and ceded northern Prussia to Vytautas. This area included the four castles of Königsberg, Balga, Brandenburg and Ragnit, none of which had surrendered. Nevertheless, Vytautas wrote that the following year he would raise a large army and conquer the rest of Prussia with his cousin's help. Even as the siege of Marienburg continued, however, diplomatic efforts were under way that would rob the Poles of almost all they had won.

When the news of Tannenberg reached the courts of Europe there was stunned disbelief. Had the Teutonic Knights, in whose company so many had enjoyed the sport of Lithuanian man-hunting, really been annihilated? Despite Tannenberg, Sigismund of Hungary refused to accept that the Teutonic Order was beaten. Sigismund remained loyal to his secret agreement with the Order and, although his initial plans had been frustrated, he despatched a letter to Marienburg. It was read in public and caused great jubilation, because it exhorted all Prussian knights and cities to stand firm with the Order in its hour of need. Much encouraged, Heinrich von Plauen sent an envoy to Prague who was warmly welcomed by Sigismund's brother King Wenceslas and received a generous loan to enable the Order to recruit mercenaries. The king promised that by St Michael's Day (29 September) a combined Bohemian and Moravian army would be on its way to relieve Marienburg.

Dlugosz states that the Poles were 'inexperienced and negligent' in allowing the garrison of Marienburg to hold out against them for so long and for permitting the Order to communicate so freely with the outside world. On one occasion an elderly priest, allowed to leave for Danzig, smuggled out 30,000 Hungarian ducats to recruit mercenaries. Late in August, precisely as their three-month truce with Lithuania ended, 500 men from the Livonian branch of the Order under Landmarshal Bern von Hevelmann landed at Königsberg. However, no sooner had the army left Livonia than the Master heard rumours of a Lithuanian alliance with Novgorod and Pskov. By the time the troops landed at Königsberg a further ten-month truce had been agreed.



The chapel of St Anne at Marienburg (Malbork) where the Grand Master was buried after the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald.



Heinrich von Plauen is shown on the right of this wall painting in Kwidzyn cathedral. He defended Marienburg heroically and effectively negated all the gains made by the Poles at Grunwald.



The Middle Castle at Marienburg, the site of the successful defence under Heinrich von Plauen, seen from the southeast. The Poles directed their main efforts against this side of the castle but were unable to breach the outer walls.

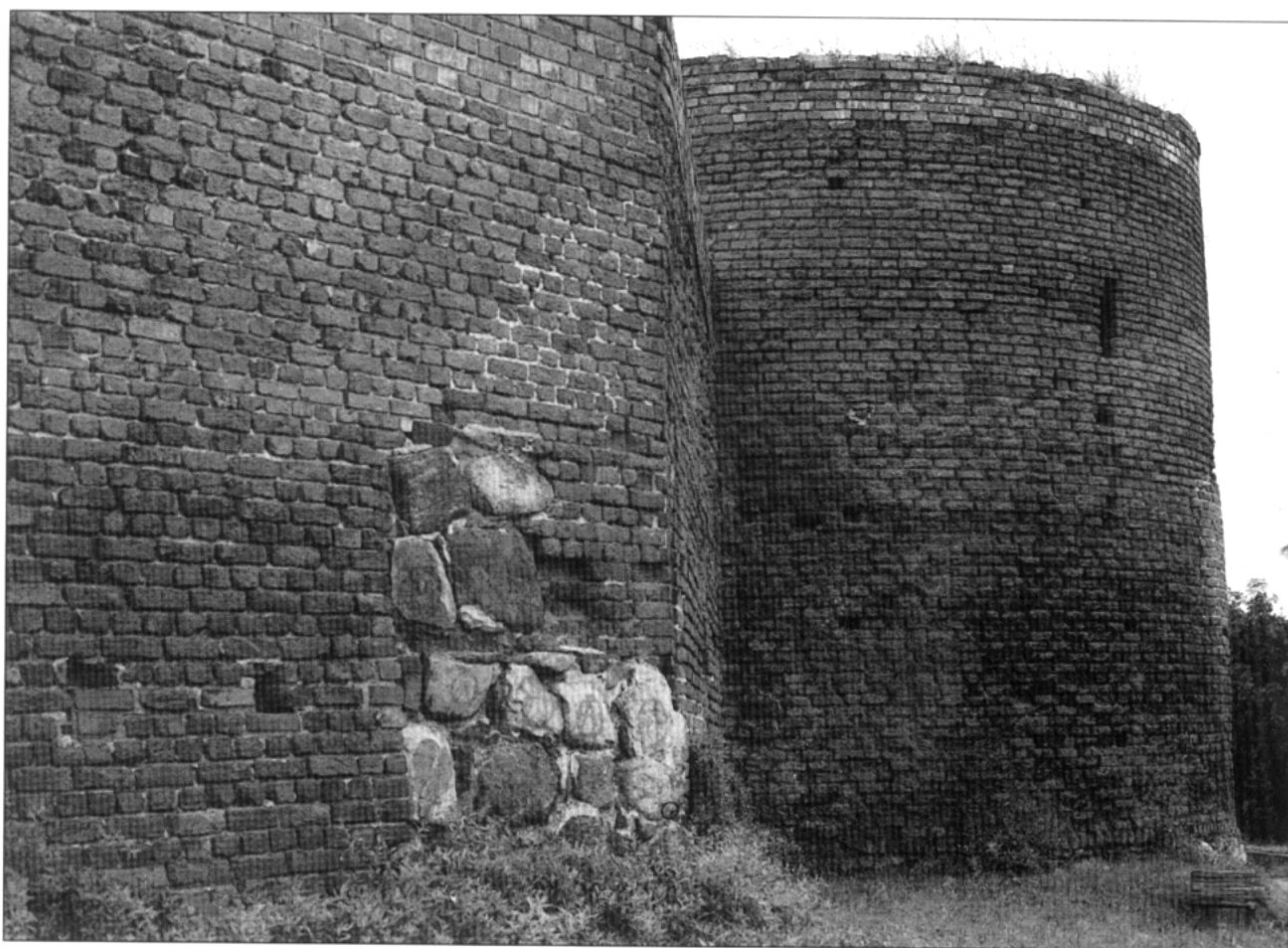
Grand Duke Vytautas corresponded with the expeditionary force and eventually met von Hevelmann on 8 September. The Commander of nearby Goldingen (Kuldiga) offered to mediate with Heinrich von Plauen. He was allowed to enter Marienburg with a 50-man escort and stayed there for several days. All this won the Order valuable time.

News that Sigismund of Hungary was preparing to move against him now reached Jagiello's ears. The representatives of the Prussian cities and castles who had surrendered, urged him to continue the siege lest all Prussia revert back to Teutonic control. However, many Polish nobles wished to return home for harvesting and winter seeding; the prospect of a Czech and Hungarian invasion also worried them. Vytautas was concerned that the Livonian brethren might take advantage of his absence and a devastating epidemic of dysentery had broken out in the Lithuanian camp. Naturally, the mercenaries wanted paying and the closest source of funds lay inside Marienburg in the form of potential loot. All these factors, and a shortage of ammunition, finally forced the king to abandon the siege on 18 September. The Lithuanians were the first to leave, followed by the troops from Masovia and then King Wladislaw Jagiello himself broke camp on 19 September. Polish garrisons were left behind at Elbing (Elblag) amongst others and the castle of Reden (Radzyn Chelminski) was captured on 21 September during the withdrawal. Mercenaries including the Czech Jan Zizka then garrisoned Reden. Once King Wladislaw Jagiello had crossed the Drewenz (Drweca)



ABOVE **A Lithuanian knight depicted on the plinth of the statue of Grand Duke Vytautas in Kaunas. A devastating epidemic of dysentery in the Lithuanian camp was a major factor in the abandonment of the siege of Marienburg in 1410.**

ABOVE, RIGHT **Chelmno (Kulm), headquarters of the Lizard League, who were blamed for the defeat at Tannenberg.**



into Dobrzyn he dismissed his troops. After the crushing victory at Tannenberg, it was an ignominious end to the campaign.

THE ORDER STRIKES BACK

Just as the conquered Prussians had warned, as soon as their army departed the Polish gains rapidly began to slip from their grasp. Heinrich von Plauen did not violate the truce but military support for the Order came from elsewhere. The moment the Polish king crossed the border, knights from Livonia joined the commanders of Ragnit and Balga to secure the northern Prussian territories. With their support the captured towns began to throw out their new Polish garrisons. Over to the west the Voigt (Bailiff) of Neumark (the small area of Order territory on the German border) moved into Prussia with 'pilgrims' and mercenaries. Within two weeks only four Teutonic fortresses remained in Polish hands and Jagiello rapidly made efforts to recruit a new army. He even retained in service a unit of courtiers 'who demanded discharge from the service'. News from the south was more encouraging, however; of the foreign sovereigns who had pledged to invade Poland, none had actually done so. They were preoccupied with the election of a new Holy Roman Emperor, a contest won by Sigismund of Hungary on 20 September.

This allowed Poland to concentrate its resources against the new Teutonic threat. They successfully intercepted the relief column from Neumark on 10 October at Koronowo. This 'mini-Tannenberg' was another battlefield triumph for the Polish monarch, who displayed great generosity in allowing his prisoners to go free. An angry official of the Order then reported to von Plauen that the released 'pilgrims' were now refusing to fight on their side.

However, Polish and Lithuanian raiding continued long after the withdrawal from Marienburg but did little to alter their fortunes. On 23 October 1410 the acting Commander of Osterode (Ostroda) reported

Vytautas the Great reaches the Black Sea. In this 19th-century painting the hero of Grunwald is shown in exultant mood. At this point Lithuanian hegemony extended from the Black Sea to the Baltic. Here Vytautas's personal banner is shown as the mounted knight motif.



that an enemy force had burned the villages and mills around Neidenburg (Nidzica) and were expected to return the next day. The records are full of reports of repeated attacks on Prussian communities, that 'the heathen Lithuanians and Tartars' were setting fire to wooden churches, treading holy vessels underfoot and even 'washing their clothes in the font'. There were also atrocities against women and children and priests were murdered. The ravages and foraging caused real suffering and financial loss within the Order's territory.

Heinrich von Plauen was elected Grand Master on 9 November. He immediately began to circulate letters abroad exhorting all true Christians to fight against the 'heathens and servants of Satan'. When no foreign help appeared, von Plauen decided to take up arms himself. The Council of the Order urged him to negotiate instead and the result was a truce from 10 December 1410 until 11 January 1411. Von Plauen met King Wladislaw Jagiello at Raciaz for three days of negotiations. The talks came to nothing, so in spite of the truce von Plauen sent out more pleas for military help against the 'infidel Tartars, jailers, heathens, schismatics, monsters and evil spirits in defence of the oppressed Christians'. Any pilgrim who responded would be given money in addition to 'the recompense they will gain in heaven'.

This call for aid was no more successful and only Sigismund made a token invasion of Poland. When the truce expired, therefore, von Plauen crossed the Drewenz and invaded Dobrzyn. Yet this military venture also ended with negotiations, conducted on an island in the Vistula near Thorn (Torun). They led to the historic First Treaty of Thorn.

After the disaster at Tannenberg, for Heinrich von Plauen to save the Order at Marienburg had been an outstanding achievement. At Thorn the Order demonstrated that its vast international network, including not only its own brothers but also numerous former 'guest crusaders', could yield comparable diplomatic triumphs. Sensing the mood of the moment, Heinrich von Plauen withdrew the concessions he had been forced to make immediately after Tannenberg.

The new negotiations culminated in the Treaty of Thorn in 1411. This allowed the Order to keep all that it had held before 1409 except (temporarily) the province of Samogitia. It was a modest loss for so great a defeat. The clause that required both sides to strive to convert infidels in their territories was clearly aimed squarely at Vytautas's pagan remnants. More serious for the Order, however, was the huge indemnity it had to pay, which practically bankrupted it. Silver crosses and other church furnishings had to be melted down to raise a sum of £850,000—ten times the average income of the King of England.

With their military might decimated, territories devastated and their coffers emptied, the Teutonic Order, nevertheless, managed to survive. In spite of their diplomatic victory the outlook remained grim. Taxes were astronomical and marauders continued to raid their castles. On 4 September 1412, a year later, Heinrich von Plauen wrote to a colleague in Hungary that 'this year the winter grain was so ruined that the land can hardly be provided for'.

The loss of 200 knights and thousands of footsoldiers had severely weakened their fighting strength. Faced with continuing Polish aggression mercenaries provided the only quick solution. By December 1410 no less than 7,500 mercenaries had arrived in Prussia to strengthen the Order's forces. However, as was sometimes the case with mercenaries, they fought only when it suited them and not at all while they remained unpaid. In 1411 one group of mercenaries in Danzig seized a ship on the Vistula and took up piracy. In the aftermath of Tannenberg, Jagiello had immediately released most of the mercenaries, reasoning that they would do him greater service pursuing their pay claims with their defeated and impecunious employer.

The Order's next crisis erupted when Thorn and Danzig, the two largest cities in Prussia, refused to pay the new tax, levied to meet the indemnity. Von Plauen's had no sympathy with rebellious cities, particularly, in Danzig's case, when the city had welcomed the Order's enemies with open arms while he was risking his life to reinforce Marienburg. When news reached Thorn that von Plauen intended to



The ruins of the castle of Thorn (Torun) enthusiastically demolished by its own citizens in 1454 as part of the resistance to the rule of the Teutonic Order.



The tomb of Jan Garbowa, a Polish knight killed at the battle of Chojnice in 1454. The Polish defeat at Chojnice prolonged the campaign against the Teutonic Order.

enforce the payment of taxes its leading citizens fled to Poland. By contrast the Danzigers stood firm, but von Plauen blockaded the port and seized Danzig's assets held elsewhere. A few summary executions helped crush the tax revolt.

The last years of von Plauen, 1411–13

Not long after crushing the tax rebellions in Thorn and Danzig, von Plauen faced a new revolt from within the Order's own ranks. Georg von Wirsberg, Master of the robes, harboured ambitions to become Grand Master and aimed to force the issue of his election by hiring Bohemian mercenaries to invade Prussia. In return, King Wenceslas of Bohemia would be made protector of Prussia and the Teutonic Order would swear allegiance to him. Such a complex plot was difficult to conceal and von Wirsberg was arrested, tried and convicted before his peers at a meeting of the General Chapter and sent to prison, where he stayed until 1429.

Wirsberg's fellow conspirator, Nicholas von Renys, was beheaded without trial, but not before Heinrich von Plauen had accused him of a perhaps even greater betrayal. It was alleged that at Tannenberg he betrayed the Order by lowering his banner and leading the knights of Kulm away from the battlefield. Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen had fallen trying to reverse the panic caused by this treacherous act.

This allegation that the Order had been 'stabbed in the back' during its hour of peril was dynamite, but von Renys was no ordinary Teutonic Knight. A secular knight of Polish descent, otherwise known as Mikolaj Rynski of the clan Rogala, he was one of the joint founders in Kulm in 1397 of a mysterious organisation called the Lizard League. A society or fraternity that operated openly within the Teutonic Order, the League's overt aim was defence against lawlessness. The Lizard League (the name derived from their chosen symbol) had a hidden agenda, however. In its most moderate form it sought exemption from the obligations to the state that Polish nobles were beginning to enjoy. In its most extreme form the League envisioned the complete secession of Kulmerland (the Chelmno district) from the lands of the Order and its return to the Polish crown.

Von Renys' involvement in von Wirsberg's planned *coup d'état* exposed the threat from the Lizard League for the first time. It was also the source of the most persistent Tannenberg conspiracy theory; that the Order had not been out-fought or overwhelmed by numbers but had been betrayed by the Lizard League. This view found its most eloquent expression in 1862 in *Das Deutsche Ordensland Preussen*, by the 19th-century German nationalist Heinrich von Treitschke: 'When, now, the Lizard Knights of Kulmerland treacherously lowered their flag, the result was the first signal victory gained by the Slavs over our nation. The slaughter was unexampled in the history of the north. Innumerable corpses – tradition says a hundred thousand – were strewn upon the field; the flower of German nobility perished; of the great chiefs of the Order only one escaped death; while the Tartars and the Cossacks practised their hideous tricks of mutilation upon the Grand Master's body.'

There may have been some truth in these allegations. The Lizard League was almost certainly responsible for the 'threatening dispatches' sent from Kulm to the defenders of Marienburg in the aftermath of Tannenberg urging them to surrender. 'May God never forgive them'

wrote the chronicler. Later in his work von Treitschke blames the corruption of 'Lizard poison' for the decision of the Prussian Union members to secede from the Order. But there is no evidence, other than the outburst by Heinrich von Plauen in 1411, of actual treachery on the field of battle.

After the execution of von Renys the remaining members of the Lizard League fled to Poland. Free of them at last, in 1413 Heinrich von Plauen seized the military initiative and sent Chief Marshal Kuchmeister von Sternberg, the general defeated at Koronowo, on an offensive into Poland. Von Sternberg had such grave misgivings about the campaign, however, that he ordered his army home after only 16 days. This was defiance of a very different kind from tax rebels or conspirators, but when von Plauen summoned a council to discipline von Sternberg it deposed von Plauen instead! He was first reduced to a minor commandery post at Engelsburg (Pokrzywno). But when it was discovered that his brother had been intriguing with the Poles to restore him to the Grand Mastership he was placed under close confinement in the remote and windswept castle of Lochstädt where he lived off black bread. The hero who had saved Prussia died nine years later, a broken man.

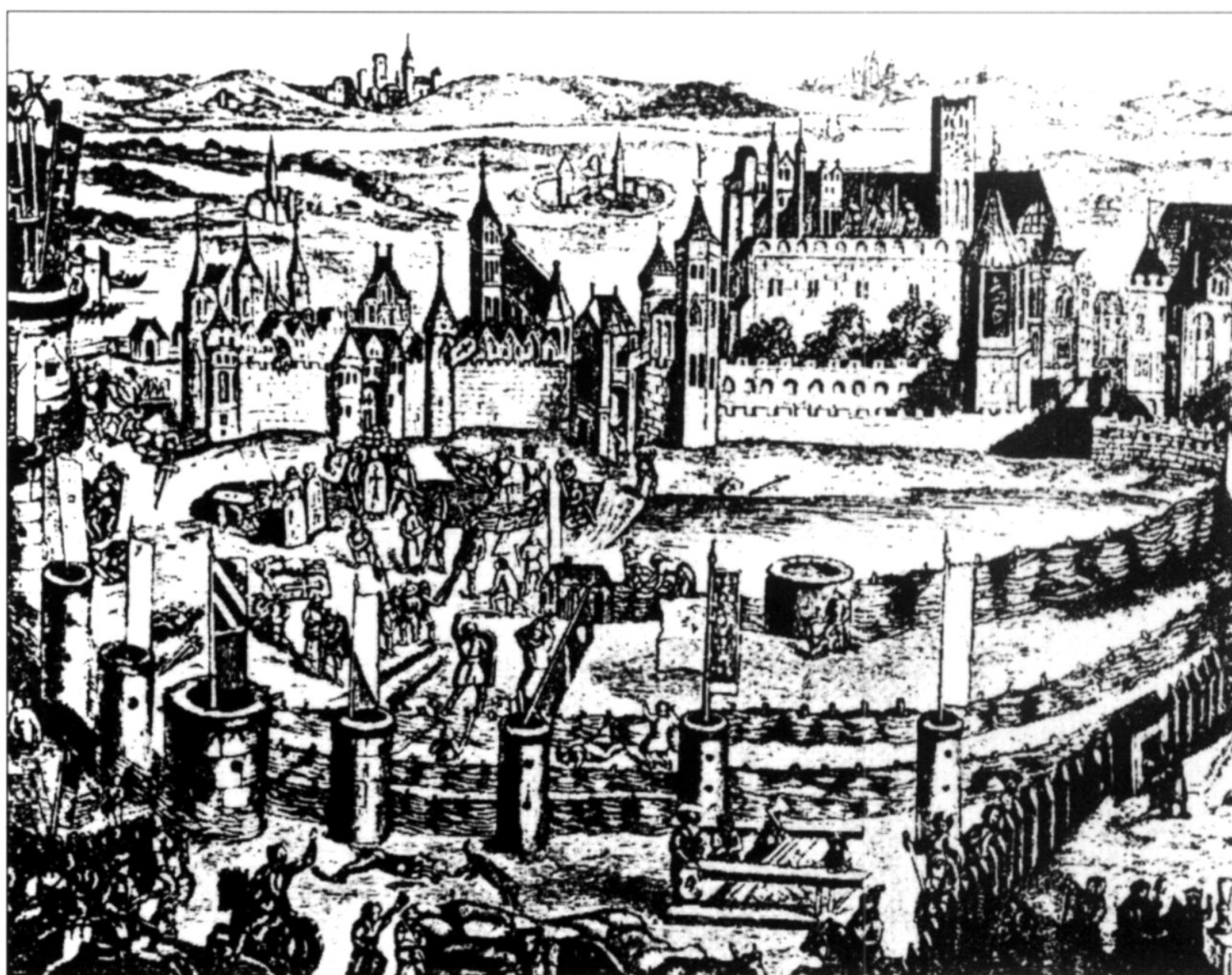
AFTERMATH

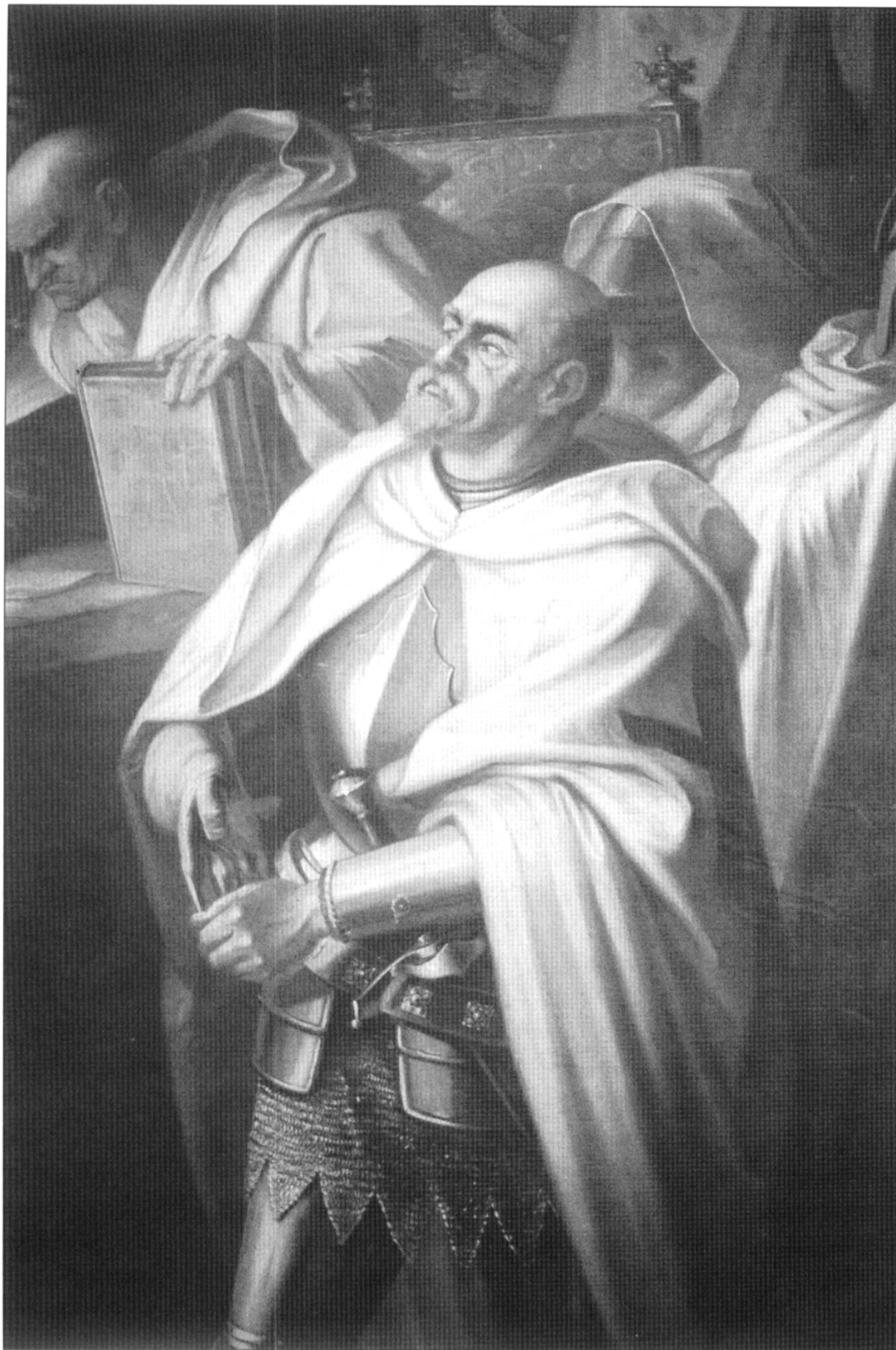
Even if not immediately apparent, the wound inflicted on the Teutonic Order by Jagiello and Vytautas at Tannenberg was a mortal one. The only question was how long it would take for the victim to die. Neither Jagiello nor Vytautas lived to see the final eclipse of the Teutonic Order, but they must both have realised before their deaths that its destruction was inevitable and that they had played a decisive role in it.

In spite of the deep injustice of the treatment of Heinrich von Plauen, von Sternberg's instincts to avoid war were probably sound. Of the arenas in which the Order could stage a fight-back after 1414, the political was the only one in which it could reasonably expect any success, as the Treaty of Thorn had demonstrated. Within a few years the repercussions of both Tannenberg and Thorn were felt in debates in the highest circles of the Catholic Church.

In 1416 the Pope presided over the Council of Constance, where matters of international politics were discussed alongside church affairs. Its most notorious decision was to burn the Czech reformer Jan Hus, but the rivalry between Catholic Prussia and Catholic Poland was also discussed. Once again the Teutonic Knights executed a diplomatic conjuring trick. With tortuous logic, Catholic Poles and Lithuanians were tarred with the same brush as the Muslim enemies of other crusading brethren. Although

A German woodcut of the siege of Marienburg in 1457. The view is across the castle towards the River Nogat and the details of the Middle Castle and High Castle are clearly shown. The eventual fall of Marienburg came about largely because of the treachery of the mercenaries who were supposed to be defending it.





Heinrich Reuss von Plauen, whose victory at Chojnice in 1454 prolonged the contest between Prussia and Poland. He then defended the town of Marienburg after the castle had fallen.

their opponents were at pains to highlight the huge distinction between the situations in Prussia and the eastern Mediterranean, in the end the Council considered there were more important issues to address. The Order left Constance well satisfied and returned to Prussia more determined than ever to uphold the rights granted to it by the Treaty of Thorn.

Diplomatic triumphs aside the harsh reality was that the Teutonic Knights could no longer muster the military might to enforce any treaty. When King Jagiello of Poland demanded the Order's western territories in 1418, the waving of documents in his face for four years ultimately achieved nothing and in 1422 Poland/Lithuania invaded Prussia once again. As in 1410 the armies assembled at Czerwinsk on the Vistula and

The palace of the Grand Master at Marienburg, captured in 1457 by the Bohemian mercenaries who were supposed to be defending it.



another wars of sieges began, but with few siege guns in evidence. The Poles first besieged the fortress of Löbau (Lubawa) and then marched to Reisenburg (Prabuty), which they subsequently destroyed. As the king's siege guns were still in transit he abandoned the idea of an attack on Marienburg and led his army south, besieging Gollub (Golub Dobrzyn) and Schönsee (Kowalewo). Finally, worried at imminent outside interference, the king accepted a truce on 17 September.

The so-called 'Gollub War' had lasted only two months but several Prussian castles had been taken. The Order's response, by contrast, had been lamentable throughout with confusion at the top and blind panic at the bottom. On 6 August the Commander of Elbing reported that his levies had deserted because of lack of supplies. The Commander of Christburg had only 20 men and 'felt lost'. There were no mercenaries in Schwetz but 100 unarmed peasants had arrived, who held starvation at bay by labouring in the town ditches for pay. Only guest crusaders could have helped the Order but so rapid was the Polish advance that the war



Grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen is forced to sign the second Treaty of Thorn (Torun), which finally accomplished the objectives set by King Wladislaw Jagiello when he set out on the Grunwald campaign half a century earlier.

was over before two German contingents reached Prussia. They wintered there and went home, the last guest crusaders ever to serve with the Teutonic Knights. In future the Order would have to rely on mercenaries whom it could scarce afford to pay, or levies from its territories whom it could scarce afford to trust.

During the 1430s the veterans of Tannenberg/Grunwald passed away. Grand Duke Alexander Vytautas of Lithuania died in 1430 to be followed in 1434 by King Wladislaw Jagiello of Poland, after the longest reign in Polish history. His successor was the child king, Ladislas III, who became king of Hungary and met his death in battle against the Turks at Varna in 1444.

In 1433, the year before King Wladislaw died, Poland and Lithuania launched a further offensive against Prussia, following active negotiations with the Hussites of Bohemia. Although their religious views differed greatly the Polish king recognised that he and the heretical rebels shared a common enemy. In their most audacious act a Hussite army marched into Prussia alongside the Poles. They captured Dirschau (Tczew) on the

Vistula and, after an abortive siege of Danzig, marched defiantly to the sea where they symbolically filled their water bottles with the brine of the Baltic.

The Thirteen Years War

In 1440 the Knights' territories themselves began to disintegrate. In that year representatives from the towns of Danzig, Thorn and Elbing met at Marienwerder and founded the Prussian Union as an alternative government to the Teutonic Order. The Order was powerless to stop them. The Order's chronicler colourfully described one of the Union's leaders, Hans von Baisen, as 'a poisoned lame dragon' but the Union nonetheless grew in strength as the Order declined. Something akin to paranoia developed among the brothers. Fed by spies, informers and rumours, stories spread of plots to eliminate the Union's commanders. In an extraordinary episode in January 1454 the Grand Master was obliged to send a letter to von Baisen assuring his rival that he had not paid an assassin to murder him!

That same year the Union went on to the offensive, attacking and burning the Order's castles, among them its first castle at Kulm. In February 1454 the citizens of Torun besieged Thorn castle and, when the Knights withdrew, they enthusiastically demolished the entire edifice brick by brick. Within a month every Prussian fortress of the Order except Marienburg and Stuhm (Sztum) was in Union hands. Some of the Order's senior officers decided it was time to cut and run. The hated commander of Elbing was given safe conduct but then ambushed by a band of Bohemian mercenaries seeking the reward offered for him, 'dead or alive', by the Elbingers. Although badly wounded the commander escaped and made it to Marienburg.

Von Baisen was already on his way to Krakow to offer Prussia, 'which used to belong to the crown of Poland', to King Casimir IV and to make his personal submission to the Polish monarch. The formal incorporation

The city of Torun (Thorn), location of the signing of the two famous treaties of the same name. The Treaty of Thorn signed in 1411 allowed the Order to keep all that it had held before 1409 except, temporarily, the province of Samogitia. It was a modest loss for so great a defeat. By contrast, the second Treaty of Thorn in 1466 saw all Order territory west of the Vistula and Nogat rivers ceded to Poland, in addition to Kulm, Marienburg and Elbing, as the autonomous province of Royal Prussia. What was left of Teutonic lands, now called East Prussia, was given back to the knights but as a fief of the Polish crown with the Grand Master swearing an oath of fealty to King Casimir IV.





'Save the East', an election poster of the German National People's Party (DNVP) in 1920, depicting a Teutonic Knight being threatened by a Pole and a Socialist. It is a graphic example of the way in which the events of the crusades were used by both Poles and Germans to demonise each other through their propaganda.

of the Union with Poland (von Baisen was made Viceroy of Prussia) sparked renewed conflict between Poland and the Order known as the Thirteen Years War.

Casimir IV crossed the border, took Stuhm and began a siege of Marienburg with one eye on the town of Konitz (Chojnice) far off in the west of Pomerania. Konitz owed its importance to the fact that it constituted the geographic link between Prussia and Germany. The Order made great efforts to save the vital base, hiring 8,000 mercenaries, including many Czechs, against whom the small Polish regular army then besieging Marienburg was powerless to act. King Casimir called a mass levy of the gentry of Greater Poland, who demanded concessions from the king before they would march. On 9 September 1454 this half-trained army was completely defeated and the king himself narrowly escaped capture.

The battle of Chojnice may not have changed the course of the war, but it certainly prolonged it. Königsberg and most of the towns east of the Vistula reverted to the Order, heartened by the performance at Chojnice of Heinrich Reuss von Plauen. A descendant of the hero of 1410 of the same name, he had revived some of the ancient glories of the Teutonic Knights. The city of Danzig and the towns of the districts of Kulmerland and Warmia remained loyal to the Polish king, but even here there were elements sympathetic to the Order. Various factors would help prolong the war for 12 more years. One was the power of the city of Danzig, which devoted all her energies to breaking the power of the Order. When Denmark intervened on the side of the Teutonic Knights in 1456, a Danziger fleet defeated a combined Danish/Livonian squadron off the island of Bornholm.

But the key factors were the determination of King Casimir IV and the self-interest of the mercenaries who appeared in increasing numbers on both sides. The Polish king had an advantage in that he could reward the gentry of Poland with political concessions. Mercenaries demanded cash and, as the Order's fortunes declined once more, their dependence on mercenaries drained their finances. On 11 February 1454 the Commander of Thorn reported that his men had been under bombardment day and night and were collapsing with fatigue. He added that 'some of the mercenaries which your Grace sent us jumped over the walls, others crept into corners'. If they were not paid mercenaries would seek recompense from the villagers. In December of the same year Bishop Caspar of Pomerelia notified the Grand Master of the depredations of mercenaries in a certain village. They arrived on Sunday night 'speaking Czech', breaking into the houses and making off with all manner of goods.

The fall of Marienburg

The end of the Hussite Wars left thousands of tough, veteran troops available for employment as mercenaries. The most dramatic impact of these Czech-speaking mercenaries was a result of a failure to pay them. In 1455, claiming that their own men had threatened to 'chop them into pieces', the mercenary captains descended upon the Grand Master Ludwig von Erlichshausen and demanded payment. Unable to raise the cash to pay his immense mercenary bill, the Grand Master pledged more than 20 of his towns and castles, including Marienburg itself, to the soldiers.

The mercenaries still demanded cash and in June 1456 the captains returned and informed the Grand Master that if the commander of Elbing failed to produce the money raised by pawning that fortress they would no longer negotiate, 'even if an angel came down from heaven'. To exacerbate the problem, Danzig was paying the mercenaries large bribes not to settle. The depredations of the mercenaries themselves helped guarantee the Order had no money to pay them. The requisitioning of fodder for their horses rapidly degenerated into the plundering of houses and one mercenary captain gave the peasants in what was now 'his' territory eight days to pay him rent, after which he would use fire and sword against them.

It was not long before mighty Marienburg itself became a mercenary target. In August 1456 a group of Bohemians supposedly guarding the fortress broke into the malt-house and attacked and robbed five officers

EASTERN EUROPE AFTER THE SECOND TREATY OF THORN, c.1466



of the Order. Two of the latter jumped from a high window rather than remain in the building with these ruthless ruffians. One Austrian mercenary captain, returning in high dudgeon from a meeting with the Grand Master, attacked a senior officer and stole his keys, after which he made off with the man's valuables. With a contempt learned during the religious wars in Bohemia, the Czech mercenaries knocked over the crucifix in Marienburg's chapel 'and ran up and down with blasphemous shrieks of delight'. In the nearby castle of Mewe (Gniew) Knights of the Order were humiliatingly tied in their cells and had their beards forcibly shaved, which in some cases took off their lips as well. In desperation, the Grand Master offered the mob the contents of the chapel, but jewels failed to buy them off. With the upper hand, the mercenaries now shunted the Grand Master from cell to cell and the portions of food served to the brethren grew smaller and smaller. One

mercenary even protested indignantly that the beer they now had to drink was warm!

The last act of this farce began on 16 August 1456 when the Bohemian mercenary captain supposedly defending Marienburg, the spiritual home of the Teutonic Knights, organised its sale to King Casimir IV of Poland at a knockdown price. It took almost another year for the sale-cum-siege to be completed. At Whitsuntide in 1457 Marienburg finally fell into Polish hands not after a successful siege of the great fortress but when the Grand Master's Bohemian mercenaries literally threw him out and admitted a group of Polish and Prussian Union soldiers through the gate. The Grand Master was allowed to escape with his life, although his route was carefully stage managed so that he could be exhibited along the way. He eventually arrived in Königsberg where the magistrate of the city, overcome with compassion, presented him with a barrel of beer.

Just one flicker of Teutonic resistance remained at Marienburg. The castle had fallen, but the town held out for a further three years under the Burgomaster, Bartholomäus Blome, and Heinrich Reuss von Plauen of Chojnice fame. They were the last heroes of the Teutonic Order in Prussia and the fall of Marienburg marked the demise of the Order's 200-year hegemony in Prussia.

The Poles again defeated the Order at the battle of Zarnowiec in 1462 and on 19 October 1466 the second Treaty of Thorn was signed. From that moment on every castle in Prussia became a Polish possession. In addition to Kulm, Marienburg and Elbing the territory west of the Vistula and Nogat rivers was ceded to Poland as the autonomous province of Royal Prussia. What remained of Teutonic lands, now called East Prussia, was returned to the Knights but only as a fief of the Polish crown and, in rags and tears, the Grand Master swore an oath of fealty to King Casimir IV. His capital was transferred to Königsberg and only the Order's Livonian territory to the north remained independent.

The bitter legacy of these events would have repercussions down the centuries. 'You may break the treasure-chest of iniquities,' exclaimed Heinrich Reuss von Plauen when his enemies destroyed one of the castles of the Teutonic Knights, 'but you may rest assured that your children's children will bewail your deeds'. His words proved prophetic for the German-speaking peoples did not forget this reversal of fortunes, and three centuries later the 'Partition of Prussia' was used as justification for the Partition of Poland.

As for what should be done with the knights themselves, an obvious solution was to relocate them to that part of Europe actually threatened by a genuine non-Christian enemy. It took until 1497, however, before such a campaign was attempted and this a disastrous effort on behalf of the Polish crown against a rebellious Wallachian, during which the Grand Master died of dysentery. In the election that followed the Order chose Duke Frederick of Saxony as a protest against kowtowing to the Polish crown. Margrave Albrecht of Brandenburg, under whose guidance the Order became a secularised entity, followed Frederick in 1511. The black cross disappeared from the white mantle and shield and the state of the Order of the Teutonic Knights finally disappeared. Thus, the Reformation achieved what Wladislaw Jagiello had not at Tannenberg.



The monument at Grunwald, built in 1960 for the 450th anniversary on the site of the Grand Master's headquarters during the battle. Its huge blocks depict stylised warriors' faces.



The myth develops

As personal memories of Grunwald/Tannenberg faded into history, so the myths that surrounded the Order grew. Chroniclers from both sides recounted tales increasingly coloured with nationalistic bias. Monstrelet, who continued the work of Froissart and was steeped in the tradition of the crusading knight, wrote of Tannenberg as follows: ‘... they assembled again facing one another, that is, the king of Poland and the two other kings named above on one side, with some 600,000 warriors, against the grand master of Prussia and several great Christian lords, who were beaten by the Saracens. And there were some 60,000 or more dead left on the field ... It was generally said that their cause was lost through the fault of the constable of the king of Hungary, who was in the second echelon of the Christians and fled with all the Hungarians. But the Saracens in no way won their fame and victory without loss, for in addition to 10,000 Poles, 120,000 of their men were also killed ...’ Although difficult to top such a catalogue of mistakes and exaggerations the *Lübeck Chronicle* proves it possible, reckoning the Order’s enemies at 5.1 million men!

As the centuries passed even the understanding of the term ‘Prussia’ was transformed from that of 1410. The Prussian state that arose through the efforts of such men as the Great Elector did not look back to any extinct order of chivalry. The Enlightenment regarded the Lithuanian Crusades with scorn and under Frederick the Great the castle of Marienburg remained a decayed ruin. Attitudes in Germany changed only during the nineteenth century influenced by works such as Heinrich von Treitschke’s 1862 essay, *Das Deutsche Ordensland Preussen*, a political tract that argued for German unification under Prussian leadership. To von Treitschke the Teutonic Order had been a bulwark against the Slavonic east, and: ‘In the unhappy clash between races inspired by fierce

The view from the monument looking northeast towards the village of Grunwald. The site of Poland’s greatest military victory, the battlefield is today a place of pilgrimage.



The museum at Grunwald partly blends into the hill and contains numerous artefacts and mementoes of the battle.

mutual enmity, the blood-stained savagery of a quick war of annihilation is more humane, less revolting, than the specious clemency of sloth, which keeps the vanquished in the state of brute beasts.'

His views were widely disseminated and von Treitschke found his conclusions accepted by Russians, Poles and Lithuanians alike. Yes, they agreed, the Teutonic Knights whom they had defeated at Grunwald had been a German bulwark erected against them. Yes, their actions had been blood-stained and savage but what von Treitschke labelled good and noble they saw as equally savage and cruel. Their point was driven home through literature and art. The Polish novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz depicted the Teutonic Order as black-crossed servants of the Devil and puts into King Wladislaw Jagiello's mouth the words: 'The enemy is indeed unrighteous in his dealings, but he bears the cross on his cloak ...' In Eisenstein's film *Alexander Nevsky*, Teutonic Knights are shown throwing Russian babies into the flames. Although caricature, this image of the Teutonic Knights as the incarnation of evil satisfied propagandists until Adolf Hitler's Third Reich provided a reality far more horrific.

In the meantime German nationalist sentiment harnessed and built on the Order's mythology. In 1902 the Kaiser attended a festival to mark the restoration of Marienburg, where participants dressed as noble Teutonic Knights. His letter to Edward VII, reminding him of the crusading exploits of his predecessor Henry IV, seems to have stirred no latent crusading zeal in the breast of the British monarch!

A decade later the misconception of Tannenberg as some sort of racial struggle between Germans and Slavs was twisted yet further. In August 1914 the Germans destroyed General Samsonov's Russian army, killing some 70,000 Russian soldiers and capturing at least that number. The initial report described the battle as taking place 'in the vicinity of Ortelsburg-Gilgenburg' (i.e. between Szczytno and Dabrowno) until

a certain Lieutenant-Colonel Hoffman pointed out the propaganda potential of the name of a tiny village located within the vast combat zone. This new 'battle of Tannenberg' was soon being represented as some sort of historic retribution for the defeat of 1410.

If by 1914 the story of Tannenberg had already been grossly distorted, the ideological clash of Nazism and Stalinism stripped it of any last vestige of reality as the myth of Tannenberg was bent to the purpose of the respective propaganda machines.

Tannenberg/Grunwald today

Today the battlefield of Grunwald is a Polish shrine, with a striking sculpture erected in 1961 to commemorate the 550th anniversary of the battle. The battle's true historical significance remains mired in controversy. The devastating losses inflicted on the military strength of the Teutonic Order undoubtedly proved fatal in the long term, but the short-term effects of the defeat were largely negated by the Polish/Lithuanian failure to successfully prosecute the siege of Marienburg. It would take 50 more years of conflict to finally crush the Teutonic state. Tannenberg/Grunwald was one of the largest battles fought in medieval Europe. Five years later on the other side of Europe another epic battle was fought at Agincourt, similarly cherished by its victors out of all proportion to its significance. Perhaps an appreciation of the degree to which the English perception of Agincourt is distorted by viewing it through the eyes of Shakespeare can bring one to a better understanding of what Grunwald means to the average Pole. All battles are fought twice, once on the battlefield, then again interminably in the hearts of men.

THE BATTLEFIELD TODAY

As Grunwald has such symbolic significance in Polish memory it is not surprising that the battlefield is exceptionally well preserved and attracts thousands of visitors every year. It is located on the road between Grunwald and Stebark. Grunwald village itself lies off the road and contains nothing of relevance to the battle. Beside the car park is a snack bar and two souvenir shops and a paved footpath leads up the hill to the monument and museum, the latter being cleverly and unobtrusively built into the hill. There are several memorials along the way, with the main feature being two enormous abstract sculptures beside an orientation model showing the disposition of the rival armies. The souvenir shop happily sells without bias models of Poles, Lithuanians and Teutonic Knights!

The museum contains an excellent display, taking the visitor through the campaign. There are also dummies wearing armour of the period and a film show. It is possible to walk across the full extent of the battlefield using the paths that are marked from the monument in all directions and, with the help of a car, it is even possible to retrace the course of the entire campaign. Czerwinski on the Wisla has a monument to commemorate the muster there. At Kurzetnik (Kauernick) the ruins of the old Teutonic castle look down on the crossing point. The castle of Dzialdowo (Soldau) is currently being restored. There is almost nothing left of nearby Dabrowno (Gilgenburg) although it makes a good place to stay the night. Passing through the Grunwald area one can visit Marienwerder (Kwidzyn) castle and the magnificent Marienburg (Malbork), surely one of the most impressive castles in the whole of Europe. Now fully and sensitively restored, it is a wonderfully atmospheric place, best viewed at sunset, for which an overnight stay in the wing of the castle that has been converted into a hotel is highly recommended!

A visit should also be made to the Polish National Museum in Warsaw to see Jan Matejko's famous painting of the battle of Grunwald. It is enormous and highly detailed and well repays time spent viewing it. Next door is the superb Museum of the Polish Army with portraits and paintings related to Grunwald and original armour and weapons, including a Teutonic shield used at Tannenberg. One of the more poignant items on display is the reliquary worn round the neck of Ulrich von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, removed from his body on the battlefield. There is also a famous memorial statue to Grunwald in Krakow.

Finally, local enthusiasts recreate the battle of Grunwald on the site every year. As 2010 will mark the 600th anniversary there may well be something special planned. Please visit the author's website at www.stephenturnbull.com for any news.

FURTHER READING

Primary Sources

There are three important primary sources. *Chronica Conflictus* by an anonymous chronicler is published in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum* (Leipzig 1866). The *Historiae Polonicae* of Canon Jan Dlugosz (1415–80) appears as *Joannis Dlugossi seu Longini Historiae Polonicae – Opera Omnia* in the same series. Although the latter work provides the most complete account of the battle, Dlugosz was born five years after the battle. His father is said to have fought at Grunwald but he died in 1425 when the future chronicler was only ten years old. Dlugosz nevertheless probably made good use of eyewitness accounts from survivors at court and also drew on *Chronica Conflictus*. On the German side, the most complete account is that of Johann von Posilge, *Chronik des Landes Prussen 1360–1419*, published in *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, but as almost the entire Teutonic high command perished at Tannenberg there were few eyewitnesses left to advise him.

Secondary sources

A recent and highly detailed account in English of the events surrounding the battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald is *Tannenberg and After: Lithuania, Poland and the Teutonic Order in search of immortality* by William Urban (Lithuanian Research and Studies Center, Chicago 1999). For an excellent account of the crusades around the Baltic see Eric Christiansen's superb study *The Northern Crusades* (Revised Edition by Penguin 1997). The history of the Teutonic Order is also discussed in Michael Burleigh's *Prussian Society and the German Order* (Cambridge University Press 1984) and William Urban's other four books *The Prussian Crusade* (University Press Washington 1980), *The Livonian Crusade* (University Press Washington 1980), *The Baltic Crusade* (Northern Illinois University Press 1975) and *The Samogitian Crusade* (Lithuanian Research and Study Center, Chicago 1989). The use of Tannenberg and the Teutonic Knights by the propaganda machines of both Hitler and Stalin is the subject of Michael Burleigh's article 'The German Knights: Making of a modern myth' in *History Today* July 1985 pp. 24–29. The remarkable polemic *Das Deutsche Ordensland Preussen*, by the 19th-century German nationalist Heinrich von Treitschke, may be read in translation as *The Origins of Prussianism* by E. and C. Paul (Allen and Unwin 1942).

The battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald is placed into its Polish context in Norman Davies's celebrated work *God's Playground: A History of Poland* Volume 1, while a very brief account of the battle appears in Hans Delbrück's *The Art of War* Volume 3. Fuller accounts are Joseph Jaktas 'The battle of Tannenberg' in *Baltic Review* XX (1960) pp 18–37 and Geoffrey Evans *Tannenberg 1410:1914* (London 1960), which adds the 1914 struggle. A very detailed work in German with valuable source material is Sven Ekdahl *Die Schlacht bei*

Tannenberg 1410 (Duncker and Humblot, Berlin 1982). The campaign is described from the Lithuanian point of view in Constantine Jurgela *Tannenberg* (Lithuanian Veterans Association New York 1961).

The armour, equipment and heraldry of the opposing sides is covered in two superbly illustrated bilingual books, both of which are highly recommended. The first is by Andrzej Klein, Nicholas Sekunda and Konrad A. Czernielewski and is entitled *Banderia apud Grunwald: Polish Banners at Grunwald*. Volume 2 by Andrzej Klein and Piotr Nowakowski is *Banderia apud Grunwald: Teutonic Banners at Grunwald* and both are published by Alexander of Lodz, Poland (2000).

The author's volume in the Osprey 'Fortress' Series, *Crusader Castles of the Teutonic Knights* (2003) complements this work and contains detailed descriptions of the Order's castles and much information about their siege warfare. For more on the knights of Europe at the time of Tannenberg see the author's *The Knight Triumphant* (Cassells 2001).

For fictional accounts based on solid fact, Henryk Sienkiewicz's classic novel appears in English as *The Teutonic Knights*. It is out of print but copies may still be found and the chapters about Grunwald are most vivid. Another novel that covers the events very well and has a stirring account of Grunwald is James Michener's *Poland*.

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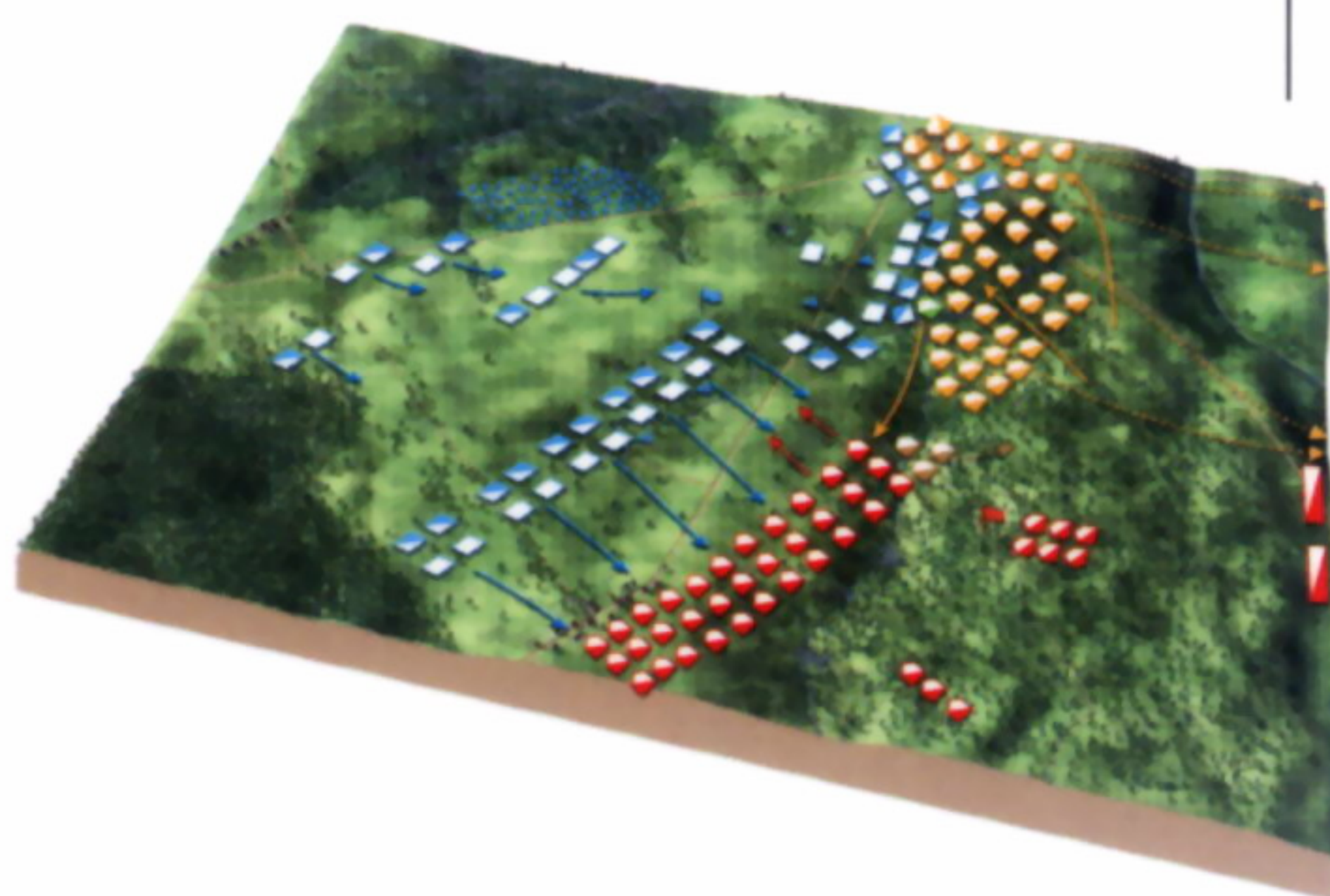
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Tannenberg 1410

Disaster for the Teutonic Knights

By 1400 the long running conflict between the Order of Teutonic Knights and Poland and Lithuania was coming to a head, partly as a result of the Order's meddling in the internal politics of its neighbours.

In June 1410, King Wladislaw Jagiello of Poland invaded the Order's territory with a powerful allied army including all the enemies of the Teutonic Knights – Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Bohemians, Hungarians, Tartars and Cossacks. This book recounts how, when the armies clashed on the wooded, rolling hills near the small village of Tannenberg, the Teutonic Knights suffered a disastrous defeat from which their Order never recovered.

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