

**The Teutonic Knights
War in the North - A Brief Synopsis**

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1.0 Introduction

The Crusades were a series of military initiatives supported by the Church of Rome intended to promote both religious and economic interests. Initially, these efforts were directed at restoring Christian access to Jerusalem and the adjoining areas sanctified by the presence of Christ, which had been denied by the controlling Moslem Turks. Later these initiatives expanded to include interests outside of the eastern Mediterranean. Between 1095 and 1291, thousands of crusaders left their Western European homes, assumed vows and fought on behalf of the Church against Moslems, heathens and Eastern Christians.

Three notable military and religious orders arose from the Crusades: the Poor Fellow-Soldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon, commonly known as the Knights Templar; the Knights Hospitaller, also known as the Order of Hospitallers or Hospitallers; and the Teutonic Knights of St Mary's Hospital at Jerusalem, or the Teutonic Order.

Officially recognized by the Catholic Church in 1129, the Knights Templar were particularly noted for their fighting ability. Initially purely and solely a military order, the Templars built fortifications across Europe and the Holy Land that ultimately resulted in control of a large and influential economic infrastructure. Under pressure from King Philip of France, the Order was disbanded in 1312 by Pope Clement V.

The Knights Hospitaller were founded in 1023 in Jerusalem to provide care for poor, sick and injured pilgrims to the Holy Land. Following the First Crusade in 1099 when Western Christians conquered Jerusalem, the organization transitioned into a religious and military order charged with the care and defense of the Holy Land. The Order was weakened by Napoleon's capture of Malta in 1798 and became dispersed throughout Europe. It regained strength during the early 19th century as it redirected itself toward humanitarian and religious causes. In 1834, it was renamed the Sovereign Military Order of Malta headquartered in Rome.

2.0 Foundation of the Order

The third great order was the Teutonic Knights of St Mary's Hospital at Jerusalem, the Teutonic Knights or the Teutonic Order.

In the later part of the twelfth century, large numbers of German-speaking pilgrims and crusaders traveled to Jerusalem. Unlike other Europeans in Palestine, these travelers spoke neither Old French nor Latin. To resolve the associated problems and to properly care for these travelers, Pope Celestine II ordered the Knights Hospitaller to take over management of a German hospital, to place a German speaking prior in charge and to staff the hospital with only German speaking brothers. This established a tradition of a German-led religious institution in 12th century Palestine, which was fortified when several prosperous merchants from the northern German cities of Lübeck and Bremen provided funding for a field hospital to support the siege of Acre in 1190. Toward the end of the Third Crusade (1187-1192), the Teutonic Knights were formally recognized by the Church when Pope Celestine III officially sanctioned them sometime between 1190 and 1192.

In 1198, the Order became a military organization as well as a relief organization when it received papal orders to take and hold Jerusalem for Christianity and to defend the Holy Land against the Muslim Saracens. The Order finally and permanently changed its primary emphasis during the rule of Grand Master Hermann von Salza, the fourth Grand Master of Order (1209 to 1239), to that of a military order.

3.0 Organization

The Teutonic Order, unlike the Knights Templar and Hospitallers was comprised of members of a singular national character. The two classes within the Order, knights and clergy, were both necessarily German living semi-monastic lives in accordance with Augustinian rules. The knights, all of whom were of noble birth, were required to take an obligation vowing to devote themselves to the care of the sick and to fight the enemies of the Faith. In addition, the Order was supported by volunteers, serving either for religious reasons or because they were paid for their service. All members lived in common, sleeping in dormitories on small and hard beds, and eating plain meals together. They attended daily church services and recited prayers in private. They were not permitted to leave or to write or receive letters without permission of their superior. Their clothes, armor, and the harnesses of their horses were unadorned; all gold, jewels, and other costly ornaments were strictly forbidden. They possessed the best of arms and well bred horses. (Note 1)

The Teutonic Knights owed their allegiance to the Papacy and The Holy Roman Emperor. Their patrons were the Virgin Mary, Elizabeth of Hungary and St. George. Their uniform in their mission of combat came to be the white tunic with a black cross. Their motto was: "Helfen, Wehren, Heilen" ("Help, Defend, Heal")

The Grand Master (Hochmeister) who was only elected from the class of the knights was the highest officer of the Order. Despite this high position, in practice, he only was a kind of first among equals. The Grossgebietiger were high officers with authority over the whole order, appointed by the Grand Master. There were five officers:

- The Preceptor, or Grand Commander (Grosskomtur), the deputy of the Grand Master was responsible for the general supervision of the clergy and serving brethren, and presiding in the absence of the Grand Master
- The Treasurer (Tressler), received and paid all the money that passed through the hands of the Order
- The Grand Hospitaler (Spitler), superintended the hospitals
- The Trapier, supplied the knights with their clothing and armament
- The Marshal (Marschall), was the chief of military affairs

At their peak, the Order employed a three-tiered administrative system to govern their widely dispersed domain. The Grand Master served both as the highest officer in the Order and as one of three district Masters (Landkomtur) assuming responsibility for the districts on the south side of the Baltic Sea. The two other Masters governed in Livonia and in Germany. At the lowest administrative level were twenty commanderies, each of which was assigned to one of the three districts.

4.0 Early History – Recognition and Reward

The Order grew and gained recognition, power and support because of its ability to adapt, its willingness to enter into battle and its capable fighting skills. Its leaders proved to be skilled in completing its early mission, providing care for pilgrims and in managing hospitals, but they also proved capable in combat and in their political skills. Established in 1190 to provide support for pilgrims traveling to Palestine, by 1291, the Order had relocated to the north and become crusaders for the Faith in northern Europe having obtained all the rights and privileges necessary to accomplish that transition.

The Order began to fulfill its initial purpose in July 1191 when a Christian army led by Philip Augustus, King of France, and Richard the Lion Hearted, King of England, captured the city of Acre, now in northwestern Israel. There Henry de Walpot, the first Grand Master of the Order, purchased a site and built a church and hospital. These buildings were gradually expanded as they added lodgings for the members of the Order, pilgrims, and soldiers enlisted to assist the knights in the field. There the Order helped control the port tolls of Acre and the associated tariffs. It was here the Order established its first headquarters.

In 1197, the Teutonic Knights were awarded the Cistercian Monastery in Palermo, Sicily, which became the preceptory or chief house of the Order in Sicily. There they also obtained privileges and tax exemptions from Henry VI, the Holy Roman Emperor. Gradually other properties were granted to the Order.

In 1211, Andrew II of Hungary enlisted their services to defend Hungary against the neighboring Cumans and granted them Burzenland, a district in Transylvania, but, in 1224 after the Knights petitioned Pope Honorius III to place the district directly under the authority of the Papal See rather than that of the King of Hungary, Andrew expelled them. Of note, the Germans who were settled there under the governance of the Teutonic Knights were allowed to remain establishing a German presence that continues to this day in modern Romania.

In 1214, the Holy Roman Emperor, Frederick I, decreed that the Grand Master should be considered a member of the Imperial Court, and in 1221, Emperor Frederick II, by an Imperial Act, placed the Teutonic Order under his special protection. This provided the Teutonic Knights with huge economic advantage. They were exempted from all taxes and dues, and had free use of all pastures, rivers, and forests in Frederick's dominions.

In 1220, the Knights purchased Montfort (Starkenber) Castle, northeast of Acre. This Castle, which defended the route between Jerusalem and the Mediterranean Sea, temporarily became the seat of the Grand Master in 1229. In 1271, they had to return to Acre following the loss of Montfort to the Muslims.

In 1226, Emperor Frederick II elevated Grand Master Hermann von Salza to the status of Reichsfürst, or "Prince of the Empire", making the Grand Master the equal of other senior princes. Grand Master von Salza was awarded this honor and the power and prestige that went with it for several reasons. First, von Salza successfully mediated a dispute between Frederick, the Holy Roman Emperor, and Pope Honorius. Second, it was reward for having escorted

Frederick during his visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher where he had been crowned King of Jerusalem.

In 1291, when Palestine finally fell to Islamic control under Saladin, the German Knights returned to their lands in Germany. There they assumed the function of protecting the boundaries of Christendom in the East of Europe from pagan incursions and actively engaging in crusades into the lands of the pagans for the purpose of Christianization.

5.0 Northern European Crusades

By the end of the twelfth century, except for the peoples of northeastern Europe who resided on the eastern and southeastern coasts of the Baltic Sea, most of Europe was converted to Christianity. To the west and south of these Baltic peoples were Western Christians, to the east, Eastern Christians. Economic interest, coupled with the desire to Christianize the pagan inhabitants, created fertile ground for action. This condition was amplified by another interest of the Church of Rome, which wanted to prevent the Orthodox Church from making inroads into the Baltic lands. The Pope granted all Crusaders who fought in northeastern Europe, eternal salvation just as he had granted it to all those who participated in the Crusades in the Holy Land, a meaningful incentive to enter into the fight.

5.1 Sword Brothers

Independently from the Teutonic Knights, efforts to subdue and Christianize the inhabitants of the Baltic region had begun as early as the late 12th century when Meinhard, an Augustinian monk, accompanied some merchants up the Western Dvina River (Daugava) on a mission in an attempt to convert the people. There a church building and the first Christian community were established. Following this initial success in 1198 Meinhard's successor, Bishop Berthold, established a military force to more aggressively convert the local populace. Berthold's effort coincided with the declaration of the Fourth Crusade by Pope Innocent III and is considered the beginning of the Baltic Crusade. The next bishop, Albert, made notable progress in Livonia establishing the city of Riga in 1201, which formed a base for economic activity. Riga grew quickly due to demand resulting from the Crusades and merchants looking for a stable base from which to trade in the Baltic region.

In 1202, Albert established the Livonian Brothers of the Sword, or Sword Brothers, a crusading order. Following receipt of an official blessing from Pope Innocent III in 1204, by 1208 this order had forcibly converted the Kur and Lett peoples on the eastern coast of the Baltic to Christianity. (Note 2) Importantly, the Sword Brothers learned important lessons of value in conquering and converting the local peoples. The harsh climate of Livonia presented challenges but, over time, the Sword Brothers learned to use the climate to their advantage. They waited for cold to battle as winter ice and snow facilitated travel versus that offered by the soggy soils the rest of the year. In addition, they learned to take advantage of the tribal structure of the native peoples. These unorganized tribes were regularly engaged in battle with each other for local power, a characteristic that the Crusaders effectively used by pitting one tribe against the next. (Note 3) Battles continued in the eastern Baltic between the Sword Brothers and the native populace for several decades but, in 1236, following the defeat of the Livonian Brothers of the Sword by the Lithuanians at the Battle of Saule, in 1237, the order merged into the Order of the

Teutonic Knights. With this merger, the Teutonic Knights obtained both new members and considerable possessions.

5.2 Order of Dobryzn and the Entrance of the Teutonic Knights into the North

There was also another order formed in the region. In the early thirteenth century, Christian, the bishop of Prussia, formed the Order of Dobryzn, a Christian order, to battle the heathen Prussian peoples that lived on the southern side of the Baltic Sea adjacent to Kuhm (Chelmno), a fiefdom Christian had received from Conrad, the Polish duke of Masovia. However, Christian and his Order were not successful in subduing the Prussians. As a result in 1226 Conrad invited the Teutonic Order to come to his assistance and fight against the Prussians granting to them some of the frontier towns in his territory along with all lands as it should conquer. Further, he allowed the Teutonic Knights use of Kuhm as a base for their campaign. Grand Master Hermann von Salza readily accepted, considering Prussia to be a good training ground for the Teutonic Knights in preparation for the wars against the Muslims. Von Salza used Conrad's offer to the maximum benefit of the Order requesting that Frederick, the Holy Roman Emperor, provide a legal basis for the Order's presence in Kuhm. The result was the Golden Bull of Rimini. Through this charter, Frederick legitimized not only the lands to be granted by Conrad to the Teutonic Knights but also those that the Order was to conquer from the Prussians. Later in 1234, von Salza also secured the same authority from Pope Gregory IX, which provided both a religious and a secular foundation for the Order's Prussian state. In 1235, the Teutonic Knights assimilated the smaller Order of Dobryzn.

In 1229, the Order began their conquest of Prussia. They already possessed Kuhm, from which they advanced, building fortresses as they progressed to ensure their conquests would endure. (Note 4) Although fighting between the Knights and the Prussians was ferocious, the Teutonic Knights, supported by significant donations waged a successful campaign resulting in a rapid increase in their territories. Domination also led to increased westernization: the Castle of Marienburg, soon to be the home for the Order, was built and fortified and the Order drew up laws and regulations for the administration of justice and established the foundation for commerce through the coining of money. The fortified places eventually developed into cities and towns. The clergy worked to convert the population to Christianity. All native Prussians who remained unbaptized were subjugated, killed, or exiled. By 1260, the Teutonic Knights controlled the eastern bank of the Vistula from Kuhm to its mouth, and the northern shore of the Baltic from the mouth of the Vistula on the Baltic eastward to Konigsberg in the modern day Kalingrad Oblast part of Russia. In 1284 the Teutonic Order succeeded in defeating Prussia and its peoples disappeared as a distinct tribe as they were assimilated into the neighboring societies of Poland, Germany and Lithuania. The Order was now in possession of all the land on the Baltic Sea between the Vistula and the Gulf of Finland.

By the beginning of the 14th century, these conquests had fundamentally changed the character of the Order. It lost any connection with the East: after the fall of Acre in 1291, the Grand Master (whose seat had been at Acre, while the German Master (Deutschmeister) had controlled the Order in Germany) moved first to Venice, and then, in 1309, to Marienburg on the Vistula. With the accession of large territories, the Order became a governing aristocracy; the original care for the sick, and even the later crusading zeal of the period of conquest, gave way, when conquests were gained and administration was needed, to the military and political realities of

governing their frontier state. The statutes of the Order were altered to suit the new conditions, and a whole system of administration arose.

5.3 Excursions against the Turks, Russians and Lithuanians

In 1240, the Duke of Poland requested the assistance of the Teutonic Knights in his fight against the Turks who were attacking his lands from the south. The Order accepted and took part in a series of fierce battles. While the Order was engaged in these fights, the Duke of Pomerania, formerly an ally of the Order, changed positions and sided with the Prussians against the Knights. In the battles that followed the Order defeated the Duke but, after several years of peace, in 1243, the Duke resumed hostilities, this time with more success. The fighting continued for several years until a peace was agreed upon through the mediation of the Duke of Austria.

On April 5, 1242, the Teutonic Knights invaded the Republic of Novgorod, a Russian Orthodox area located near modern day St. Petersburg. Their intent was to convert Orthodox Russia to Catholicism. The Russian Orthodox Church by then had become quite powerful and Moscow was now one of the three primary centers of Christianity, the other two being Rome and Constantinople. The invasion of Novgorod was a significant failure as the Knights suffered a disastrous defeat in the Battle on Lake Peipus, known in Russia as the Battle of the Ice, at the hands of Prince Alexander Nevsky and this plan had to be abandoned. The defeat ended the campaigns against Russian territories for the next century and established a defined boundary between the German controlled Baltic lands and Russia that lasted for centuries.

In 1252, the Teutonic Order continuing its battles with the Baltic peoples captured the Lithuanian city of Memel, which cut Lithuania off from the sea and established Germanic control of the entire Baltic Sea. In 1253, they surrounded Duke Mindaugas of Lithuania at which time he agreed to accept Christianity. At that point all Lithuanians except for those in Samogitia, which refused to recognize Mindaugas as their leader and continued to fight the Order, like their Prussian relatives before them, fell into the Christian realm. The conversion proved temporary since, in 1263, Lithuania reverted to its pagan faith following Mindaugas' assassination. (Note 5)

5.4 Control of the Baltic – Acquisition of Pomerelia

At the beginning of the 14th century, a dispute between Pomeranian nobles and the King of Poland afforded the Order an opportunity to expand their lands. Pomerelia, the area between Pomerania and Prussia (often historically referred to as the Polish Corridor), had connection to royalty within Poland and allegedly also within Brandenburg. After the death of King Wenceslaus of Poland, Duke Wladyslaw I of Poland claimed the duchy but, since many Pomeranian nobles opposed his claim, they enlisted the support of Brandenburg. Brandenburg using its possible historical claim as justification attacked in 1306 and, by 1308, had occupied all of Pomerelia except for the city of Danzig. The Polish Duke unable to defend Danzig employed the services of the Teutonic Knights. The Order evicted the Brandenburg force from Danzig in September 1308, but afterward refused to return the town to Polish control and slaughtered the town's inhabitants. In the Treaty of Soldin on September 13, 1309, the Teutonic Order purchased Brandenburg's claim to the castles of Danzig, Schwetz, and Dirschau. (Note 6)

There were three significant effects related to the control of Pomerelia. Two were positive, but one was enduringly negative. The first positive was that control of Pomerelia allowed the Order

to connect their lands with the borders of the Holy Roman Empire allowing reinforcements and supplies to travel without interruption from Western Europe to Prussia. The second positive was that, in 1309, as noted earlier, the Knights were able to relocate their headquarters from Venice to Marienburg. This relocation safely distanced the Order from the reach of secular powers within Europe, which allowed the Order to avoid the persecution and abolition that the powerful Knights Templar experienced. The third effect, and the negative one, was that Poland, which had generally been an ally of the Order against the Prussians and Lithuanians, was now very much an adversary. Although the war with Poland that started in 1309 after the Order refused to return Danzig to Poland was finally settled by the Treaty of Kalisz in 1343, hostilities continued. In the Treaty, which largely favored the Order, some territory was returned to Poland but the Order retained Kuhn and all of Pomerelia, and with it territorial continuity with the Holy Roman Empire. However, in the long run, not only were the Teutonic Knights confronting a Lithuanian enemy, they now faced an adversarial Poland.

The capture of Pomerelia and the city of Danzig did begin a new phase in the history of the Teutonic Knights. They now managed a powerful feudal state. By 1309, when the Order's Grand Master established his residence at Marienburg, the Order governed Prussia, the eastern Baltic lands of the Livonian Knights (i.e., Courland, Livonia, and, after 1346, Estonia), Pomerelia, as well as its long held lands in central and southern Germany. The Order imposed strict regulations on its lands. Only Christians were allowed to settle. The masters of all non-Christian slaves and servants were required to send them to be instructed by the clergy in the Christian religion. German was the only language permitted. The ancient languages of the country were outlawed. Prussians were not allowed to open shops or taverns. (Note 7) During the following century the Order demonstrated its power by constantly, although unsuccessfully, trying to conquer and convert heathen Lithuania, by actively protecting the merchant cities of the Hanseatic League, and by expanding its territories through purchase and conquest.

In 1398, the Order added Gotland, an island in the Baltic Sea off of the coast of Sweden, to their territory after a successful invasion. The invasion and possession of the island resulted from an agreement entered into between the Order and King Albert of Sweden in which Albert pledged the island to the Knights in return for ending the piracy that was based on the island. In 1407, the Teutonic Order reached its greatest territorial extent controlling the entire southern coast of the Baltic Sea including lands of Prussia, Pomerelia, Samogitia, Courland, Livonia, and Estonia.

6.0 Defeat/Decline

Several factors contributed to the decline of the Teutonic Knights. One was the on-going hostility both with Poland, still remembering the betrayal of the Order in Pomerelia and unhappy that its access to the Baltic Sea had been cut off, and with Lithuania, whose territory the Knights continued to attack and pillage even after its conversion to Christianity. The Lithuanians were finally converted to Christianity in 1386 following the baptism of their Grand Duke Jagiello (Jogaila). His conversion was to support his marriage to Queen Jadwiga of Poland, after which he became Wladyslaw, King of Poland. The marriage resulted in a personal union between these two enemies of the Order, which created a formidable opponent for the Teutonic Knights. The conversion of Lithuania marked the end of the last pagan state in Europe and, importantly, eliminated the rationale for the Knights attacking their neighbor to the east.

6.1 Military Decline – The Battle of Tannenburg

Initially, the Order successfully managed to play the Polish King, Jagiello, and his cousin the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Vytautas (Witold), against each other but hostilities continued and a rebellion against the Order in Samogitia in 1408 resulted in a joining of forces between Poland and Lithuania. The culmination took place at the Battle of Tannenburg, a town then in southern Prussia, now in northern Poland, where a combined Polish-Lithuanian army, led by Vytautas and Jagiello, decisively defeated the Order in what is argued to be the greatest battle of the Middle Ages. The Order did hold Marienburg Castle, its headquarters, which came under attack following Tannenburg and, in the resulting treaty, the First Peace of Thorn signed in 1411, its losses were minimal but the Knights' reputation as invincible warriors was forever changed. The Teutonic Order had begun its decline.

6.2 Political Decline – A Changing World

There were several factors in addition to its military defeat that led to the decline. These factors both predated and post-dated the defeat in battle at Tannenburg. The Order's ability to draw new members was hindered by the Hundred Years War, which was now occupying the attention and resources of most of Europe. Additionally, there was an emerging sentiment by the peoples of Eastern Europe opposed to the eastward advance of German civilization. The Hussite movement amongst the Czech peoples provides a noteworthy example. This religious movement resulted in a forced exodus of German students from Prague just one year before the defeat of the Order at Tannenburg.

Above all, however, the primary factor was that the Order had lost touch with its subjects. The Order was too removed from its people and it had no popular support. A religious order, largely composed of foreign born immigrants, it was unable to permanently rule over areas whose residents had developed national feelings and whose native aristocracy did not support its governance. The cities and their citizens were forced to pay high taxes for which they received little benefit and in which they received no representation within the government. The Order behaved selfishly establishing a monopoly for itself in amber, a staple for trade in the Baltic, as well as in other commodities. Eventually the local aristocracy established an organization, known as the Prussian League, to assert its own interests. The League largely sympathized with Poland because Poland was an adversary of the Order and because, unlike the Order, Poland seemed to offer them opportunity. (Note 8) Evidence of arising issues and problems with the authority and power of the Order began to appear. Internal dissention also arose. Austrian and Bavarian knights feuded with those from the Rhineland, who likewise bickered with Low German-speaking Saxons, from whose ranks the Grand Master was usually chosen. The western Prussian lands of the Vistula River Valley and the Brandenburg Neumark were attacked by the Hussites during the Hussite Wars and the Knights sent to battle the invaders were turned back by the Bohemian infantry. The Order received an even stronger blow when many knights of the Order viewed the reformist doctrines of John Huss favorably. Several knights even accepted the teachings. (Note 9)

In 1454, the Thirteen Years War began when the gentry and towns people of western Prussia, revolted against the Order. At first, Casimir, King of Poland, who had long had hostile intentions against the Order, quietly threw all his weight into the cause of the rebels, but later openly declared war, and laid claim to the dominions of the Knights in Prussia and Pomerania,

formally annexing them to the kingdom of Poland. The Grand Master petitioned the traditional supporters of the Order for assistance, but without success. The Kings of Denmark and Sweden excused themselves based on the distance of their territories from the conflict. Ladislaus, King of Bohemia and Hungary, would not participate since he was about to marry his sister to Casimir, the Polish King, and the religious dissensions of Bohemia and the attacks of the Turks upon Hungary demanded his available funds and the full attention of his troops. Lastly, the Muslim capture of Constantinople in 1458 stunned the European powers and inhibited action. (Note 10)

Much of Prussia was devastated in the Thirteen Years War. During the war, the Order had to return Neumark to Brandenburg and, at the war's end, in the Second Peace of Thorn in 1466, the Order ceded all of West Prussia including its Capital, Marienburg, Thorn, and Danzig to Poland. The Order's vast lands were now significantly diminished and all it retained in the area was East Prussia. More importantly, the Treaty made the Order the vassal of Poland. Henceforth the Grand Master would sit in the Polish diet on the left of the king, and half of the knights of the Order were to be Polish. The Grand Master acknowledged himself the vassal of the King of Poland, with the title of Prince and Councilor of the Kingdom. In 1497, the Pope and the King of Aragon deprived the Order of their possessions in Sicily. The Order moved its headquarters to Konigsburg (Kalingrad).

6.3 The Order Leaves the East

In 1515, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I made a marriage alliance with Sigismund I of Poland ending all support for the Order by the Holy Roman Empire and, in 1525, when Grand Master Albert of Brandenburg converted to Lutheranism, the Order's remaining Prussian territories were secularized and the Protestant Duchy of Prussia became a fief of Catholic Poland. At that point, the Order no longer had a presence in Prussia.

7.0 Post Defeat

Internal problems had arisen earlier. Neither the Master of the Livonian province nor the German Master would recognize, or follow, the authority of a Grand Master who was a Polish vassal and, in 1466, the German Master assumed the role of Prince of the Empire. After 1525 when the Order left Prussia, the Order did remain in possession of, and governed, its lands in Germany and in Livonia but, in 1561, like Grand Master Albert in Prussia had done earlier, the Livonian Master established Courland as a hereditary fiefdom of Poland and the Order was confined to Germany alone. The Order possessed but twelve German districts along with six notable non-German districts. One by one, the Teutonic Knights would lose control of each.

The secession of Utrecht (1580) meant the loss of its territories in the Netherlands. Louis XIV secularized the Order's possessions in France. The Treaty of Lunéville (1801) took away its possessions on the west bank of the Rhine and, in 1809, Napoleon transferred its possessions on the east bank to his allies at which time the headquarters moved to Vienna. After 1810, the Teutonic Knights thus retained only the district in the Tyrol and the district in the Austrian States.

In 1834, the Emperor of Austria officially reinstated the Order in Vienna but the military character was explicitly removed. The Order was now purely religious with a charitable and

ministerial mission. The Emperor also expanded the Order to include women. In 1871, Pope Pius IX approved new rules for the priests of the Order and, since that time, the office of Grand Master has been held only by priests. Today, the Order includes lay persons but knighthood is purely ceremonial. Currently, the headquarters of the Order are located at Singerstrasse 7 in Vienna where it maintains a church and an archive of the Order. Branch houses also exist in Bavaria, Hesse, and the Italian Tyrol.

8.0 A Lasting Legacy

The effect of the Teutonic Knights has been long lasting. Formally established to provide safety, support and relief to the German peoples traveling to the Holy Land, the Order served that mission well maintaining a hospital and fighting against the Moslem enemy during the Crusades. When the Holy Land was lost, they shifted their focus and directed their energy against the heathen peoples on the southern and eastern side of the Baltic Sea. There they became a major player in European politics building forts, castles, churches and cities, many of them the well-known Baltic cities of today. They were reliably prepared to enter into conflict to protect their interests as well as those of the Faith.

The Teutonic Knights and predecessor Christian Orders conquered and controlled the entire southern perimeter of the Baltic Sea from Brandenburg to the Gulf of Finland. They improved commerce and brought Western Christianity to the area. Their defeat at the Battle of Lake Peipus by Alexander Nevsky is a mark of national pride to the Russian people. The battles the Knights fought gave the nations of today the foundation for each one's identity. The heroes in the battles with the Teutonic Knights are today's national heroes in Poland and the Baltic States.

As with most powers, they formed alliances, supported their allies and fought their enemies. They protected the Hanseatic League, which opened and dominated commerce across northern Europe from England to Russia. Their political, military, religious and economic activity and influence largely helped define much of northeastern Europe today. The list of accomplishments is extensive. Economically, they controlled an extensive domain, not only in the Baltic but elsewhere in Europe as well. They set the stage for what has become a centuries long battle for control of the area of northern Europe between the east and the west.

In the end, however, the Teutonic Order was doomed. It lacked the flexibility to allow it to adapt to a changing European climate. Exclusively German, it was unable to establish a connection with the non-German peoples inhabiting its domain. Hierarchical by design, it could not understand or address the needs of a merchant class or deal with emerging national feelings. Ultimately, for these reasons it failed, leaving behind a three hundred and twenty-five year legacy in the Baltic region, the effects of which are still in place today.

Footnotes

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Appendix A Map from Wikipedia

