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Different points of view on the Battle of Grunwald/ Tannenberg 1410 from Poland and Germany and their roots in handwritten and printed traditions¹

Abstract

The essay deals with a number of differing views from Poland and Germany on the Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg 1410 and describes their roots in handwritten and printed traditions. Particularly important is the consideration of the propaganda on both sides, which began immediately after the battle and is in many ways still in effect. The medieval scheme *rex iustus – rex iniquus*, which derived from the Augustinian world of ideas, was an important propaganda tool for the Poles, while the Teutonic Order above all denounced the participation of “heathen” in the Polish and Lithuanian armies. The paper also takes into account other aspects of the differing viewpoints.

Key words: Grunwald – Tannenberg – Battle of 1410 – Teutonic Order – Poland – Germany – traditions – propaganda.

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Like any significant historical event, the famous battle between the Teutonic Order in Prussia and the allied armies of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on 15 July 1410 has led to different interpretations and judgements. Pride of the victors and mourning or sadness of the vanquished faced each other through the centuries and mingled with “national” and political points of view. Thus, early on, a veil of theses emerged that has to be evaluated in order to try to arrive to the facts. For that reason, it is necessary to examine the handwritten and printed sources and traditions.

This essay only deals with Poland and Germany, not Lithuania and other countries involved in the battle. It should also be emphasized that as a Swedish historian I try to adopt an “impartial” stance. In this brief overview, only a few points from the extremely rich tapestry of questions can be mentioned and discussed. They have been selected according to subjective criteria and could be multiplied many times over. These are by no means in-depth studies.

The names Grunwald and Tannenberg

Recent archaeological research with metal detectors has shown that the major combats of the battle were fought south and east of the village of Grünfelde (in Polish Grunwald)². The old thesis of the Prussian historian Johannes Voigt in 1836 that the main battlefield is located south and east of the village of Tannenberg (in Polish Stębark)³, which is three kilometres away, has remained undisputed by both German and Polish historians for more than 180 years, but has now definitely been proven wrong⁴. Voigt's reference to the description in the *Annales* of the famous Polish chronicler Jan Długosz is incorrect⁵.

² S. Ekdahl, *Battlefield Archaeology at Grunwald (Tannenberg, Żalgiris). A Polish-Scandinavian Research Project during the period 2014-2017*, “Przegląd Historyczny” 2018, vol. 109, no. 2, pp. 239-266; idem, *Slagfältssarkeologi vid Grunwald (Tannenberg/Żalgiris) (1410). Ett polsk-skandinaviskt forskningsprojekt under åren 2014-2017*, “Studia Maritima” 2018, vol. 31, pp. 253-292.

³ J. Voigt, *Geschichte Preußens von den ältesten Zeiten bis zum Untergange der Herrschaft des Deutschen Ordens*. Vol. 7: *Die Zeit vom Hochmeister Ulrich von Jungingen 1407 bis zum Tode des Hochmeisters Paul von Rußdorf 1441*, Königsberg 1836 (reprint Hildesheim 1968), pp. 81-83 and the map “Plan der Schlacht bei Tannenberg” (drawn by Oberstleutnant Fischer) at the end of the book.

⁴ A detailed analysis of the problem can be found in an article by S. Ekdahl, *Aufmarsch und Aufstellung der Heere bei Tannenberg/Grunwald (1410). Eine kritische Analyse*, [in:] *Krajobraz grunwaldzki w dziejach polsko-krzyżackich i polsko-niemieckich na przestrzeni wieków. Wokół mitów i rzeczywistości. Tradycje kulturowe i historyczne ziem pruskich*, ed. J. Gancewski, Olsztyn 2009, Biblioteka “Mrągowskich Studiów Humanistycznych”, Historia, no. 1, pp. 31-103, here pp. 31-44.

⁵ Joannis Dlugossii, *Annales seu Cronicae incliti Regni Poloniae*. Lib. 10-11: *1406-1412*, ed. C. Baczkowski [et al.], Varsaviae 1997, pp. 83-87. Cf. J. Voigt, *Geschichte Preußens...*, p. 78.

There are many early sources that refer to the area of Grünfelde as a battlefield⁶, for example a letter from the Polish king Władysław Jagiełło to Bishop John II of Pomesania (Johannes Ryman) of 16 September 1410, according to which the battle (of the Poles) had been fought ... “in loco conflictus nostri, quem cum Cruciferis de Prusia habuimus, dicto Grunenfelt”. Of importance is also the investiture of Iwan Suszik z Romanowej with two villages in the country of Halicz by Jagiełło on 17 July 1410, based on merit in the “Prussian battle” (in Polish “w bitwie pruskiej”) in which he had been wounded. The original document in Russian language is lost, but a Polish translation has survived. The investiture was drawn up in the army on the battlefield at the villages of Tannenberg and Grünfelde (in Polish “u Wssi Thanembriku y Grymwaldu”). It thus seems that the word “wald” (forest) instead of “feld” (field) already at this time, just two days after the battle, was of linguistic importance. Later it was reused in the chancellor’s office in Cracow. In the annals of the monastery Miechów we find an early and correct Polish translation of “Green Field” (in German Grünfelde). It says that the battle had taken place “prope civitatem Dambrowno [in German Gilgenburg] in campo dicto Grindwald vulgariter Zelone Pole dicto”. Also significant are four parchment documents dated 20 December 1410, in which mercenaries of the Teutonic Order, captured by the Poles, sign up to pay the king a ransom or return to captivity. The “field called Grunwald” (“in campo dicto Grunwald”) is designated here as the place where they were captured in the battle⁷.

An early source of the Teutonic Order also mentions Grünfelde as the battlefield. The Anniversary Book of the *Kommende* Maastricht in the *Ballei* of Altenbiesen states that the battle took place “apud illud dictum Veirtichhube et quondam villam nuncupatam Grunenvelt”. The mention of Vierzighufen (“Veirtichhube”), in Polish Wierzbica, relates to the fact that this estate of the Order was internationally well known and could thus contribute to the identification of the place of the battle. In addition, the camp of the Poles was set up nearby during the days before the battle, as a contemporary chronicler reports: “Fixit [King Jagiełło] tentoria sua non longe a civitate Gilgenborg, prope campum, qui dicitur Virzighuben”⁸. Incidentally, this important

⁶ For the following see S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Quellenkritische Untersuchungen*. Vol. I: *Einführung und Quellenlage*, Berlin 1982, Berliner Historische Studien, 8, pp. 127-156, 181-196 (there will be no second volume of this book, rather, many essays have been published. See www.ekdahl.de); idem, *Grunwald 1410. Studia nad tradycją i źródłami*, transl. M. Dorna, Kraków 2010, pp. 131-157, 179-192.

⁷ The four documents are excellently reproduced in colour and provided with explanations in *Grunwald. 600 lat chwaly. Katalog wystawy*, ed. J. Grabowski, Warszawa 2010, pp. 128-131 (the image texts for the illustrations on pp. 129 and 131 have been confused in error).

⁸ *Franciscani Thorunensis Annales Prussici (941-1410)*, ed. E. Strehle, [in:] *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit bis zum Untergange der Ordensherrschaft*, ed. T. Hirsch,

source has never been discussed or even mentioned by historians before me. Otherwise, there is talk of “Tannenberg”, for example, in the well-known contemporary Prussian chronicle of Posilges continuator. This has a logical explanation, because the deployment of the army of the Teutonic Knights led over that village and not over Grünfelde⁹. When Heinrich von Plauen, successor of the fallen Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen, built a St Mary’s Chapel within the triangle Tannenberg-Grünfelde-Ludwigsdorf in 1411, the name of Tannenberg was transferred to the battle and the area around the Chapel was called “Streitplatz” (Battlefield). It was a highly symbolic step because the tent with the Chapel of the Teutonic Knights had stood there during the actual battle.

In this way, the two names “Grunwald” and “Tannenberg” have been preserved through the centuries in Poland and Germany. In Eastern Europe, the Polish designation was translated in the respective national language. The Lithuanians (in modern times) speak of “Žalgiris” (which is a translation of “Grünwald” i.e. green forest), the Belarusians mostly of “Hrunval’d” and the Russians of “Grjunval’d”, both meaning “Grünwald”. In Western Europe and the USA the German name was taken. Noteworthy is the fact that the victory of the German 8th Army over the Russian Narew Army at the end of August 1914 in reference to the events of 1410 also got the name “Battle of Tannenberg”. In the words of Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg in his memoirs, “the painful memory” of the German defeat had to be replaced¹⁰. “Tannenberg” played a similar role during the Second World War as it was used as an alias for the actions of the security police (SS) and security forces (SD) in occupied Poland in the fall of 1939¹¹.

The naturalized terms “Grunwald” and “Tannenberg” cannot be easily changed and it would be pointless to try. If, however, the battle should be given a new name now, after more than 600 years, “Battle of Grünfelde” would be justified with regard to the area where the main battle(s) took place. The Poles could easily retain their traditional name “Grunwald”.

M. Töppen and E. Strehlke, Leipzig 1866, *Scriptores Rerum Prussicarum*, 3, p. 314.

⁹ *Johann’s von Posilge, Offizials von Pomesanien, Chronik des Landes Preußen (von 1360 an, fortgesetzt bis 1419)*, ed. E. Strehlke, [in:] *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, pp. 79-388, here p. 315.

¹⁰ P. von Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben*, Leipzig 1920, p. 85. Detailed presentation: S. Ekdahl, *Tannenberg/Grunwald – ein politisches Symbol in Deutschland und Polen*, “Journal of Baltic Studies” 1991, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 271-324, here pp. 283-284, 310; also in: *Deutscher Orden 1190-1990*, ed. U. Arnold, Lüneburg 1997, Tagungsberichte der Historischen Kommission für Ost- und Westpreußische Landesforschung, 11, pp. 241-302, here pp. 292-293.

¹¹ H. Krausnick, *Die Einsatzgruppen vom Anschluß Österreichs bis zum Feldzug gegen die Sowjetunion. Entwicklung und Verhältnis zur Wehrmacht*, [in:] H. Krausnick, H.-H. Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges. Die Einsatzgruppen der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD 1938-1942*, Stuttgart 1981, Quellen und Darstellungen zur Zeitgeschichte, 22, pp. 26-27, note 38.

The St Mary's Chapel

The only visible remnant today with reference to the battle are the ruins of the St Mary's Chapel, which was built in the middle of the triangle Tannenberg-Grünfelde-Ludwigsdorf in 1411 by Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen and consecrated on March 12, 1413¹². Polish in-depth archaeological research after the Second World War led by Romuald Odoj has proved that the first wooden building was replaced by one made of stone¹³. When Polish and Lithuanian armies again invaded Prussia in 1414 it was burnt down by the enemies. There are several contemporary written sources that mention the chapel, including the important chronicle of Posilge's continuator. A papal bull of John XXIII on October 6, 1412, tells us that it was erected "under the name and in honour of the mentioned glorious Virgin for the salvation of the souls and the rest of those believers, who perished and passed away in this way"¹⁴. Posilge's continuator provides the same information¹⁵.

Over time, the original purpose of the chapel faded and was replaced by the assertion that Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen had fallen right there. The chapel was built in his honour, as the cartographer Caspar Henne(n)berger wrote in 1595¹⁶. It was a simple and understandable interpretation, which was then spread throughout Prussia/Germany. Thus, on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the coronation of Frederick III from Brandenburg to King Frederick I in Prussia in 1701, a large memorial stone was erected for the fallen Grand Master in the midst of the chapel ruins¹⁷. In English translation, the German inscription reads: "Here, in battle for German spirit and law, Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen died a hero's death on 15th July 1410". During Polish

¹² For the following see R. Odoj, *Kaplica na Polach Grunwaldu*, "Komunikaty Mazurski-Warmińskie" 1962, no. 4, pp. 737-752; S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 191-192, 324-344, 361-369; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 188-189, 302-320, 361-341.

¹³ R. Odoj, *Archäologische Forschungen auf dem Schlachtfeld von Grunwald/Tannenberg (1410)*, "Fasciculi Archaeologiae Historicae" 2014, vol. 27: *Weaponry as a Mirror of the Epoch*, pp. 57-72, here pp. 63-67.

¹⁴ S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 191-192; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 188-189; idem, *Bulle des Papstes Johannes XXIII. Mit Indulgenzerteilung an diejenigen, welche die auf dem Schlachtfeld von Grunwald (Tannenberg) errichtete Kapelle des Deutschen Ordens an bestimmten Festtagen besuchen werden*, [in:] *Polen im Zeitalter der Jagiellonen 1386-1572 (Schallaburg 8. Mai-2. November 1986)*, ed. F. Stolot, Wien 1986, Katalog des Niederösterreichischen Landesmuseums, Neue Folge, 171, p. 523.

¹⁵ *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, p. 341: the Chapel was built "gote zcu lobe und synir libin muter, und yn eyn heil erin selin, dy do geslagin wordin von beydin teylin yn dem stryete".

¹⁶ C. Henne(n)berger, *Ercleru[n]g der Preüssischen grössern Landtaffel oder Mappen...*, Königsberg in Preussen 1595, p. 448.

¹⁷ G. Conrad, *Der Gedenkstein für den auf dem Schlachtfelde von Tannenberg gefallenen Hochmeister Ulrich von Jungingen*, "Oberländische Geschichtsblätter" 1903, vol. 5, pp. 100-103.

excavations in the 1980s, the big upright slab of 1901 was laid down outside the chapel wall with the inscription side facing the earth (1984). The inscribed text had been chiseled away in 1960 on the orders of a communist functionary¹⁸.

On the German side, no doubts have been raised about the above interpretation. By contrast, the views of Polish historians and archaeologists were and are divided. Many joined the thesis of the Germans, such as Stanisław Herbst¹⁹ and R. Odoj²⁰, while others expressed doubts. This is the case with Stefan M. Kuczyński²¹, but especially with Andrzej Nadolski. In the summary of his book *Grunwald. Problemy wybrane* (Grunwald. Selected problems; Wodzisław Śląski-Łódź 2010) Nadolski states:

We stick to our thesis, which is also represented by Sven Ekdahl, that the camp of the Teutonic Order was located where the Knights later built the chapel in honour of the ‘fallen Christians’ and not in honour of the place where Ulrich von Jungingen died, as supposed by some authors, including St. Herbst²².

Thanks to the investigations of R. Odoj we know that the place chosen for the chapel in 1411 was unfavorable, because the terrain was steep there with a 15% incline, which represented a particular challenge in the construction²³. In other words, there must have been a special symbolic reason for this choice. According to Herbst and Odoj, the Grand Master was killed in action here²⁴, while I represent another view: in my opinion, Heinrich von Plauen has chosen exactly the place where the tent with the chapel of the Teutonic Knights stood during the battle. My arguments for this interpretation shall however not be presented here, as this essay mainly deals with German and Polish perspectives²⁵.

¹⁸ S. Ekdahl, *The Battle of Tannenberg-Grunwald-Žalgiris (1410) as Reflected in Twentieth-Century Monuments*, [in:] *The Military Order's. [Vol.] 3: History and Heritage*, ed. V. Mallia-Milanes, Aldershot and Burlington 2008, pp. 175-194, here pp. 177-178; idem, *Prologue: The Battle of Tannenberg and its political circumstances*, “Journal of the Monastic Military Orders” 2012, vol. 4, pp. 11-28, here p. 27.

¹⁹ S. Herbst, *Uwagi o bitwie Grunwaldzkiej (potrzeba nowej hipotezy)*, “Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie” 1958, no. 3, pp. 193-196.

²⁰ R. Odoj, *Kaplica...*, op. cit.

²¹ S.M. Kuczyński, *O miejscu zgonu w. mistrza i kilku sprawach innych*, “Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie” 1960, no. 2, pp. 153-161.

²² A. Nadolski, *Grunwald. Problemy wybrane*, [second ed.], Wodzisław Śląski-Łódź 2010, p. 251-252.

²³ R. Odoj, *Archäologische Forschungen...*, pp. 64-65. In earlier works he has given the slope as 10%.

²⁴ The results of the archaeological investigations with metal detectors from 2014 onwards led to Odoj revising his earlier views before he died in 2018. In his essay *Archäologische Forschungen...* (2014, p. 65), he had already cautiously expressed himself: “There must have been a very important reason to build the chapel right here”.

²⁵ S. Ekdahl, *Aufmarsch und Aufstellung...*, pp. 45-47.

The problem of the “Gentiles” as opponents of the Teutonic Order

As members of a Christian military order with the Holy Virgin Mary as patron saint, the Teutonic Knights had from the beginning the obligation and task to fight against the gentiles, or the “heathen”²⁶. They considered themselves a shield of the Catholic faith against unbelievers. In 1283, when the native Baltic population in Prussia had been subjugated, the Order turned to another difficult task: to also subjugate the Lithuanians. The famous notorious campaigns in Lithuania (“Litauerreisen”) from now on formed the ideological justification for the existence of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. That is the reason why the Order continued fighting even after the Christianization of the Lithuanians by the Poles in 1387 and despite the prohibitions of the Roman and Bohemian king Wenceslas IV (1394) and Pope Boniface IX (1403). Only their defeat at Tannenberg/Grunwald brought the Knights into a defensive role, from which they could not free themselves. After that, voices in Poland and other countries, which demanded transplantation of the Order to other frontiers of Christianity, increased.

Not only the indigenous Baltic people, but also the Orthodox Russians and Muslims like Tartars and Turks were considered enemies. The former were called “Schismatics”, the latter “heathen” or “Saracens”. As justification for the seizure of Polish grain deliveries to starving Lithuanians in June 1409 – a major reason for the outbreak of war – the propaganda of the Knights in Western Europe after the defeat of 1410 asserted that weapons for arming 300 “Saracens” had been hidden in the grain. That was a deliberate exaggeration to justify the measure by the Grand Master²⁷. The Tartars in the army of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Witold (in Lithuanian Vytautas) were a real threat and have played an essential role in the battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg. Długosz’s statement that it was only about 300 Tartars is a protective claim to trivialize the embarrassing fact for the Christian world of the use of “pagans” against the Order of the Knights²⁸. Repeatedly, Russians are also mentioned as enemies in the

²⁶ For the following see S. Ekdahl, *Christianisierung-Siedlung-Litauerreise. Die Christianisierung Litauens als Dilemma des Deutschen Ordens*, [in:] *Die Christianisierung Litauens im mitteleuropäischen Kontext. Sammlung von Vorträgen. Materialien zur internationalen wissenschaftlichen Konferenz, gewidmet dem 750. Jubiläumsjahr der Taufe des Mindaugas, König von Litauen. Vilnius, Museum für Angewandte Kunst, am 26. und 27. September 2001*, ed. V. Dolinskas, transl. K. Berthel, I. Daugvilaitė, I. Tumavičiūtė, Vilnius 2005, pp. (173), 189-205 – also in Lithuanian, *ibidem*, pp. 173-188: *Krikštijimas, apgyvendinimas, lietuvų reisai...*

²⁷ S. Ekdahl, *Die Beschlagnahme der polnischen Getreidelieferung für Litauen in Ragnit durch Hochmeister Ulrich von Jungingen im Juni 1409. Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des “Großen Krieges” 1409-1411* – essay for a commemorative publication in print.

²⁸ As for the Tartars, see S. Chazbijewicz, S. Moćkun, *Tatarzy pod Grunwaldem*, Grunwald 2012.

written sources of the Order. Incidentally, in the war against the Order in 1414, Grand Duke Vasilij I of Wladimir and Moscow sent 8000 men to support the Polish and Lithuanian armies²⁹.

In the propaganda of the Teutonic Knights after the defeat in 1410, the “pagan question” was the most important instrument for getting help from Central and Western Europe. Correspondence, chronicles, writings and Council records repeatedly point to the betrayal of Christianity by the use of non-Christian peoples in the armies of the Order’s opponents. Also, the Roman and Hungarian King Sigismund of Luxemburg highlighted this in his famous appeal of 20 August 1410 for help for the beleaguered Order³⁰. It was a dangerous propaganda for the Poles, which prompted Bishop Wojciech Jastrzębiec of Poznań (Posen), two weeks after the battle, in wise foresight, to inform several Poles at the Papal Curia about counterarguments: it was true that the king had used Tartars and Schismatics in the fight against believers, but that was only done to defend the country. And, incidentally, they were subjects. He argued that even the Knights of the Order used pagan help, namely from native Prussians, of which barely a third had been baptized³¹. Later on, natural law theses were propagated by the well-known Polish legal scholar and Theologian Paulus Wladimiri in favour of the pagan peoples and against the Teutonic Order³².

It was, however, necessary for the Poles to also bring other arguments and they cleverly used the Bible word “Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam” (Iac. 4,6). The victory was therefore a damning verdict on the haughty Knights of the Order, who did not want peace, but strived for war and had given the king and the grand duke two swords with the call to fight. It was an extremely effective propaganda that fitted well into the medieval thought pattern. In the catholic theology, *superbia* was one of the seven deadly sins and the swords handover had taken place. It is already described in the letters of the king from the battlefield. The subsequent assertion of the Knights that it was not done out of arrogance, but that it was a noble tradition, could not prevail³³.

Thus, from the beginning, two lines of argument were present which were repeated in conciliar texts and chronicles in different variants and with different embellishments. In later chronicles the swords are sometimes described as bloody because they were said to have been allegedly handed over after a victory over the pagans.

²⁹ Essay on this by S. Ekdahl is being prepared.

³⁰ Ed. by E. Strehlke, [in:] *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, pp. 403-404.

³¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 427-429.

³² Fundamental is S.F. Belch, *Paulus Vladimiri and his doctrine concerning international law and politics*. Vol. 1-2, London-Paris 1965. See S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 206-208; *idem*, *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 202-204.

³³ S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 180-181, 203-205; *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 178-179, 199-201.

In Prussia/Germany, the “pagan” propaganda by the Teutonic Order continued and led not only in the period of National Socialism to the assertion that the Order had fought for the protection of the Occident (“Abendland”) and against the rising tide of hordes from the East³⁴. In Poland, however, the two swords became, albeit in different contexts, an effective symbol for the victory over German aggression and German haughtiness not only in the Middle Ages, but also in later times.

Flight and return of the Lithuanians

Of special interest is the depiction of the struggle of the Lithuanian army, which is described by the chronicler Posilge’s continuator in accordance with the ideology of the Order as an army of pagans. According to his presentation, “dy heydingschaft” was first to go to battle, but was chased away by the grace of God (“vor fuse weg geslagin”). Then the Poles came to their aid and a great battle ensued³⁵. An early report by a courier of Sigismund of Luxemburg (and thus friendly to the Order) to the King of France in the autumn of 1410 is referred to in the chronicle of the monk of Saint Denis (Michel Pintoin). It also states that the “Saracens” had been forced to flee and describes the dramatic turning point in the battle that followed³⁶. In the ideological confrontation after the battle it was important for the Teutonic Knights to emphasize that the “heathen” had been chased away by them, but that they had been rescued by the Poles.

The early and very important Polish *Cronica conflictus* contains a more detailed depiction of the events. It tells us that the Lithuanians, after about one hour of heavy fighting, had been forced to retreat (“ita quod gens Vitoldi ducis cogitur retrocedere”), and were pursued by men of the Teutonic Order’s army, who thought they had obtained victory and, therefore, left their banners. However, the pursuers themselves were then put to flight by those they had initially forced to retreat. When they tried to return to their banners, they were cut off by laterally penetrating Polish forces and either killed or taken

³⁴ A striking example of this is Heinrich von Treitschkes essay *Das Deutsche Ordensland Preußen*, which was first published in “Preußische Jahrbücher” 1862, vol. 10, pp. 95-151. Another essay by Max Hänisch from 1960 is mentioned by S. Ekdahl, *Tannenberg/Grunwald – ein politisches symbol...*, pp. 292-293 in “Journal of Baltic Studies” and pp. 284-286 in *Deutscher Orden 1190-1990...*

³⁵ *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, p. 316.

³⁶ Ed. by E. Strehlke, [in:] *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, pp. 453-454. For the French chronicles, see S. Gouguenheim, *Das Echo der Schlacht bei Grunwald im Frankreich des XV. und XVI. Jahrhunderts*, [in:] *Conflictus magnus apud Grunwald 1410. Między historią a tradycją*, eds. K. Ożóg, J. Trupinda, Malbork 2013, pp. 193-206. On the Chronicle of the “Religieux de Saint-Denis”, pp. 194-196.

prisoner. But those who were not separated from their banners clashed with Polish troops, and a very violent struggle ensued: “In quorum congressu bellum gerebatur asperrimum, et multi hinc inde ceciderunt mortui”³⁷.

This narration was known to J. Długosz when he wrote his *Annales* but rather than adopt it, he changed it in essential points. According to him, the fleeing Lithuanians could not be stopped, though Witold tried to repulse them with blows and shouts. Most of them fled to their own country, where they spread the news of the defeat and death of the king and the grand duke. The remaining Lithuanians were either killed or captured. After a few hours, the pursuing crusaders returned victoriously laden with prey and with many prisoners. However, their renewed intervention in the fight could not prevent the victory of the Poles³⁸. Due to Długosz’s great reputation, his interpretation was consolidated through the centuries in Polish historiography and the Germans saw no reason to doubt it either.

After the *Cronica conflictus* was discovered and published in the 19th century, the question arose as to who comes closest to the truth from the two chroniclers. Was it a real victory of the left wing of the Order’s army over the Lithuanians, or was it just a sham victory, as the pursuing men were themselves persecuted? Particularly interesting is the view expressed by the Polish historian Stanisław Kujot in 1910. He gives an answer to the question in favour of the men of Grand Duke Witold:

Obviously, their flight was something like Tartar cunning. The light Lithuanian cavalry, which could not withstand the banners of the enemy, dispersed in small groups to avoid being defeated – a method often used by them – and to mislead their pursuers. There is no doubt that the groups soon began to gather again and returned to the battlefield shortly after the pretend victors, where they probably fought next to the banners of Smolensk. It was a Lithuanian method, which was well known by Witold³⁹.

Thus, according to Kujot, it was an intentional and controlled “flight”, followed by a regrouping and a return to the fight. A similar opinion was offered by Adam Korta in an article in a Polish army review in 1949⁴⁰.

Through the discovery and publication of an undated letter with advice to the Grand Master in the case of a new field battle, the issue was finally brought

³⁷ *Cronica conflictus Wladislai regis Poloniae cum cruciferis anno Christi 1410*, ed. E. Strehlke, [in:] *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, pp. 434-439, here p. 438; *Cronica conflictus Wladislai regis Poloniae cum cruciferis anno Christi 1410. Z rękopisu Biblioteki Kórnickiej*, ed. Z. Celichowski, Poznań 1911, p. 27.

³⁸ Joannis Długossii, *Annales...*, pp. 106-107 (section *Lithuani terga vertentes in Lithuaniam usque aufugiunt*), p. 109.

³⁹ S. Kujot, *Rok 1410. Wojna*, “Roczniki Towarzystwa Naukowego” 1910, vol. 17, pp. 56-378, here p. 155.

⁴⁰ A. Korta, *Strategia i taktyka bitwy grunwaldzkiej*, “Nasza Myśl. Miesięcznik Oficerski” 1949, no. 7-8, pp. 83-91, here p. 90.

up to date⁴¹. The letter, which was published in the German original language for the first time in 1963, has no watermarks or seal, and there is no text on the reverse side. This, together with the interesting fact that the paper is clean on both sides, is circumstantial evidence that it had been sent to the Grand Master in an envelope attached to another letter containing the information we are currently missing (name of the author, date and place). As originally written, it is 30 cm wide and 12 cm high, but in its subsequently folded state, it was only 11.5 cm wide by 5.5 cm high. The author did not seek anonymity because he called for the help of a writer from the Teutonic Order. This is the same writer who – at least in the years 1416 and 1417 – worked in the castle of Schlochau (in Polish Człuchów) in Pomerelia. This is proved by some other letters in the Order's archives in the same hand. One may assume that the Teutonic Order's commander at Schlochau told his writer to write a letter for a foreign friend of the Order. It was then sent to the Grand Master as an attachment to another letter, probably from the Order's commander⁴².

We do not know if the author of the letter was an eyewitness to the Battle of Tannenberg, but he might well have been. In any case, he was a very competent man of high status with a consuming interest in and deep knowledge of the art of war. He poses a distinct warning and offers solicitous advice. His letter refers to the “guests” and mercenaries who had come to Prussia and who were not acquainted with the tactics of a feigned retreat. Most of all, these foreigners must be kept together in battle formation, so that what happened during the Battle of Tannenberg/Grunwald (“in dem grossen streythe”) will not happen again.

The original text in German was published in 1963, a translation into Lithuanian *inter alia* 1999⁴³, into English 2010 and into Polish 2015. A translation into understandable modern English reads as follows:

Dear Master, if divine Providence should arrange that you come together with your enemies to fight, and you line up and arrange your forces against your enemies, our advice would be that you take the war guests and mercenaries, which you have with you, that you take those of them, which you regard as able, and settle with your commanders that they be obedient when they are lined up for fighting, so that they stay in formation. It might happen that your enemies intentionally let one or two banners withdraw or flee: this would be on purpose, for

⁴¹ S. Ekdahl, *Die Flucht der Litauer in der Schlacht bei Tannenberg*, “Zeitschrift für Ostforschung” 1963, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 11-19, online: www.warfareeast.co.uk/main/Schlacht.htm. There was a note about the find as early as 1962 in the daily newspaper “Göttinger Tageblatt”.

⁴² Idem, *The Turning Point in the Battle of Tannenberg (Grunwald/Žalgiris) in 1410*, “Lithuanian. The Lithuanian Quarterly” 2010, vol. 56, no. 2, pp. 53-72.

⁴³ Idem “Lietuvių pabėgimas” *Žalgirio mūšyje. Straipsnis parengtas pagal pranešimą Jano Matejkos paveikslo “Žalgirio mūšis” ekspozicijoje Vilniaus Arsenale proga 1999 m. birželio 19 d.* – essay based on a lecture on 19 June, 1999 on the occasion of the exhibition of Jan Matejko's painting “Battle of Grunwald” at the Arsenal in Vilnius – in: idem, *Žalgiris. Šiandienos žvilgsnis. Trys paskaitos Vilniuje*, Vilnius 1999, pp. 13-34.

they hope they might break your battle formation that way, because the people usually like to take up pursuit, as seen in the Great Battle [Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg, S.E.]. Thus make sure, if this should happen, as strictly as you can, and insist, that your men stay in their arrays: because when a group of soldiers or an array becomes too sure of victory, it is not so easy to bring the people back, because everybody wants to take up pursuit, and thinks that the victory has been won, and they do not know that it may be half lost. And for this reason we advise you in the most forcible manner, that you hold your men together in the battle formations as severely as you can, and never let them leave the others, until you have seen how the enemy formations behave behind those who flee. And thus arrange this carefully with your commanders, so that it will be firmly kept, because it can be seen in such an undertaking, when 20 or 30 soldiers take up pursuit, that they sometimes cause many battle formations to be broken, for they sometimes hope to get profit, but instead suffer great harm⁴⁴.

In the Polish translation the text reads:

Drogi Mistrzu, jeśli boska opatrność sprawi, że przyjdzie ci walczyć z twoimi przeciwnikami, będziesz szykował i ustawiał swoje wojska na wroga, nasza rada jest taka, abyś z gości i najemników, których będziesz miał ze sobą, wybrał tych, których uznasz za sposobnych, i ustalił ze swoimi dowódcami, aby byli posłuszni, a gdy staną w szyku do walki, aby pozostawali w swej formacji. Może się zdarzyć, że twoi wrogowie z rozmysłem pozwolą jednej lub dwóm chorągwiom cofnąć się lub uciekać: będzie to zrobione z premedytacją, w nadziei, że w ten sposób załamię się twoja formacja bojowa, ponieważ ludzie zwykle lubią podejmować pościg, tak jak to miało miejsce w wielkiej bitwie [Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg, S.E.]. Upewnij się więc, a jeśli coś takiego miałoby się zdarzyć, jak surowo, jak tylko możesz, obstawaj przy tym, aby twoi ludzie pozostali w swoich szeregach, bo jeśli grupa żołnierzy lub szereg za bardzo uwierzy w zwycięstwo, to nie łatwo będzie ściągnąć ludzi z powrotem, bo każdy pragnie podjąć pościg i myśli, że zwycięstwo jest już uzyskane, a nie wiedzą, że może ono być prawie stracone. Z tego powodu radzimy ci stanowczo, abyś tak surowo, jak tylko możesz, trzymał swoich ludzi razem w bojowych formacjach i nigdy nie pozwalał im opuszczać pozostałych, dopóki nie zobaczysz, jak zachowują się wrogie formacje stojące za tymi, którzy uciekają. Ustał starannie ze swoimi dowódcami, aby tego niezawodnie przestrzegali, ponieważ zdarza się w przypadku, gdy 20 lub 30 żołnierzy rusza do pościgu, że powodują oni złamanie wielu formacji, bo choć liczą oni czasem na zysk, to zamiast niego doznają ciężkich szkód⁴⁵.

The new source was not received with much enthusiasm in Poland, although its content was occasionally discussed, for example by S.M. Kuczyński in his extensive monograph *Wielka wojna...* (Warszawa 1987) and in the book *Spór o Grunwald...* (Battle about Grunwald; Warszawa 1972)⁴⁶. As for later

⁴⁴ S. Ekdahl, *The Turning Point...*, pp. 64-65.

⁴⁵ Idem, *Punkt zwrotny bitwy pod Grunwaldem*, "Mówią Wieki" 2015, no. 7, pp. 8-12, here p. 11 (with ill.).

⁴⁶ S.M. Kuczyński, *Wielka wojna z Zakonem Krzyżackim w latach 1409-1411*, Warszawa 1987 (1st ed. 1955), pp. 391-39; idem, *Spór o Grunwald. Rozprawy polemiczne*, Warszawa 1972, pp. 128-129.

Polish interpretations on this subject, I refer to the descriptions by Krzysztof Kwiatkowski in *Wojna Polski i Litwy...* (Malbork 2010)⁴⁷ and in his useful book *Memoria continenter historiam denotat...* (Toruń 2015)⁴⁸. Critical voices predominate. A well-known Polish archaeologist even verbally told me that the author of the letter had “dreamed”. After the translation into Polish 52 years after the first publication in the original language, a polemical essay was published by a historian, who questioned the value of the discovery⁴⁹. One can therefore assume that the issue will remain virulent for a long time to come.

Since there has been no independent German Tannenberg research after the Second World War, there is no scientific discussion on this topic among German historians. The authors of books and essays in which the battle is mentioned therefore often base their descriptions on the disapproving Polish view or, sometimes, however, on my research. One may say that a cautious “wait and see” attitude now prevails.

Polish and German views on the key players

1. Ulrich von Jungingen

After the defeat and death of the Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen⁵⁰ the verdict on him in Prussia turned out to be negative, as is shown by different remarks in the chronicle of Posilge’s continuator. Among other things, he was accused of not immediately attacking the surprised enemy and, in contrast to the Polish king, having made tactical mistakes in setting up the units of the Order’s army. He was acquitted of the accusation of having sent the two swords, which enabled the successful *superbia* propaganda of the opponents, because this was said to have been done by the Marshal. However, he had brought many old Teutonic knights with him in the field army who were killed at Tannenberg

⁴⁷ K. Kwiatkowski, *Wyprawa letnia 1410 roku*, [in:] S. Józwiak [et al.], *Wojna Polski i Litwy z zakonem krzyżackim w latach 1409-1411*, Malbork 2010, pp. 238-563, here pp. 415-417.

⁴⁸ Idem, *Memoria continenter historiam denotat. Bitwa pod Grunwaldem/Tannenbergiem/Żalgiriszem 1410 w najnowszych badaniach*, Toruń 2015.

⁴⁹ W. Mikołajczak, *Grunwald 1410: nowe spojrzenie – czyli czego nie napisał prof. Sven Ekdahl*, “Mówią Wieki” 2016, no. 3, pp. 64-65. My reply: S. Ekdahl, *Grunwald 1410: nowe spojrzenie, albo metodyczne i inne błędy pana Witolda Mikołajczaka*, transl. B. Kopczyńska, “Mówią Wieki” 2016, no. 7, pp. 64-65.

⁵⁰ Cf. S. Ekdahl, *Ulrich von Jungingen (26.VI. 1407 – 15.VII. 1410)*, [in:] *Die Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens 1190-2012*. Zweite, erweiterte und korrigierte Auflage, ed. U. Arnold, Weimar 2014, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens, 40, Veröffentlichungen der Internationalen Historischen Kommission zur Erforschung des Deutschen Ordens, 6, pp. 106-117; idem, *Ulrich von Jungingen, Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens*, “Neue Deutsche Biographie” 2016, vol. 26, pp. 588-590.

together with countless other men. They would have been much more useful in defending the castles of the Order, the chronicler says⁵¹.

Regarding the picture of the Teutonic Order and thus also its Grand Masters in German historiography since the Middle Ages, Wolfgang Wippermann has written an important book entitled *Der Ordensstaat als Ideologie...* (Berlin 1979), in which he deals with the German “culture carrier theory” and the “Abendlandideologie”. He also describes, for instance, the negatively influenced judgement of the Enlightenment on the Order, which is expressed for example in works of Johann Gottfried Herder, Ludwig von Baczko and August von Kotzebue⁵². In the 19th century, however, the assessment in Germany became much more positive. In 1822 there was a dispute between Karl Friedrich Schinkel and Theodor von Schön because of a planned painted glass window in the “Sommerremter” on the Marienburg (Malbork), which represented the death of Ulrich von Jungingen at Tannenberg. The fallen Grand Master was attested “High courage without consciousness (bravour)” by Theodor von Schön, but he rejected a presentation that was reminiscent of a “humiliation” of the Order, and prevailed with this view against Schinkel and the Crown Prince, the later King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. The planned window was therefore never installed⁵³. Less cautious was J. Voigt in the 7th volume of his *Geschichte Preußens...* (History of Prussia; Königsberg 1836), when he represented Ulrich von Jungingen in character as a positive counterpoint to Władysław Jagiełło:

Thus ended [at Tannenberg] this bloody work of battle, more glorious for the Master, who knightly and valiantly fought and fell for the cause of his right and for the honour of his Order, than for the victorious King, who cowardly and timidly survived the hard day to continue the game of his malice and the plan of his word-breaking soul (“wortbrüchige Seele”)⁵⁴.

These few examples may suffice. Ulrich von Jungingen received a positive rating both during the Bismarck and Nazi years, but it was hard for the Germans to see him as a real “hero”. This role seemed much better suited to his successor Heinrich von Plauen, the “saviour of Marienburg”.

⁵¹ *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, pp. 316-317, 319.

⁵² W. Wippermann, *Der Ordensstaat als Ideologie. Das Bild des Deutschen Ordens in der deutschen Geschichtsschreibung und Publizistik*, Berlin 1979, Einzelveröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin, 24, Publikationen zur Geschichte der deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen, 2, pp. 112-116.

⁵³ S. Ekdahl, *Denkmal und Geschichtsideologie im polnisch-preußischen Spannungsfeld*, “Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands” 1986, vol. 35: *Mit Beiträgen zum Schwerpunktthema: Von den Teilungen Polens bis zur deutschen Reichsgründung. Zum Verständnis der polnischen Frage in Preußen und Deutschland*, pp. 127-218 and eight unpaginated pages with plates – also published in: *Zum Verständnis der polnischen Frage in Preußen und Deutschland 1772-1871. Referate einer deutsch-polnischen Historikertagung vom 14. bis 16. Januar 1986 in Berlin-Nikolassee*, ed. K. Zernack, Berlin 1987, Einzelveröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission zu Berlin, 59, pp. 127-218 and eight unpaginated pages with plates. In both editions pp. 138-144, 152.

⁵⁴ J. Voigt, *Geschichte Preußens...*, p. 99.

In Poland, the negative assessment of the fallen Grand Master in the set of Długosz continues to this day. There are, however, also positive aspects: some historians emphasize his efficiency and his military ability, for it is more honorable to have defeated an excellent opponent⁵⁵.

2. Władysław Jagiełło⁵⁶

The extremely negative comments on the Polish king by J. Voigt, quoted above, are interesting, because they accuse him of cowardice and timidity. This charge was already contained in the speech of the heralds, when the two swords were handed over, but it was promptly rejected by Jagiełło, who referred to his peace love and God's judgement. Following that pattern, all Polish chroniclers make him appear as *rex iustus* in a positive light in the context of medieval thought. There are many examples of this, for instance, the speech of Andreas Lascari before the Pope in the fall of 1411⁵⁷ and the *Annales* of J. Długosz. This successful propaganda ran through the centuries and found its most notable and famous expression in Jan Matejko's great battle painting *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* (Battle of Grunwald) of 1878, on which the King in small size is seen in the upper right corner of the painting, far away from the battlefield turmoil⁵⁸. His frightened expression comes from the fact that he has just been attacked by a knight from the Order's army, Luppold von Köckritz, and saved by the King's Secretary Zbigniew Oleśnicki⁵⁹. Matejko has in many ways adopted the depiction of the battle from the chronicle of Marcin Bielski, which is dependent on Długosz⁶⁰.

In fact, the late attack of the Polish army was based on the clever tactics of its leadership, i.e. Jagiełło. He decided to wait until the sun was no longer an

⁵⁵ Incidentally, in this connection, a dissertation in progress on Ulrich von Jungingen by Krysztyna Jarosławska at the University of Warsaw should be mentioned.

⁵⁶ For the following, cf. S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, passim.

⁵⁷ The first part of the speech (*Oratio coram papa pro recommendacione regis Polonie*) ed. by M. Kowalczyk, *Mowa obediencyjna do antypapieża Jana XXIII*, "Biuletyn Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej" 1996, vol. 46, 1996, pp. 19-24, the second by S. Ekdahl, in: *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 297-307.

⁵⁸ S. Ekdahl, *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem/Tannenbergiem w polsko-niemieckiej historii na przestrzeni dziejów*, [in:] *Jana Matejki Bitwa pod Grunwaldem: nowe spojrzenia*, ed. K. Murawska-Muthesius, Warszawa 2010, pp. 9-25; idem, *The Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg and its political and symbolic Interpretations in Poland and Germany through the Centuries*, [in:] *Jan Matejko's Battle of Grunwald: new Approaches*, ed. K. Murawska-Muthesius, Warsaw 2010, pp. 9-25.

⁵⁹ Cf. S. Ekdahl, *Ein Brief des Ritters Luppold von Köckritz an Hochmeister Ulrich von Jungingen vom April 1410*, [in:] *Prusy – Polska – Europa. Studia z dziejów średniowiecza i czasów wczesnonowożytnych. Prace ofiarowane Profesorowi Zenonowi Hubertowi Nowakowi w pięćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin i czterdziestolecie pracy naukowej*, eds. A. Radzimiński, J. Tandecki, Toruń 1999, pp. 231-247.

⁶⁰ M. Bielski, *Kronika Polska [...]* Nowo Przez Ioach. Bielskiego syna iego wydana, W Krakowie 1597 – the Battle description on pp. 294-302.

opponent of his own army, but dazzling and blinding the faces of the enemy, which was the case at noon⁶¹. We also know that the king was no “coward”, as Johannes Voigt claims, but had to be held back by his own people because he wanted to intervene personally⁶².

The constant emphasis of the king as a passive, peace-loving monarch occasionally took a negative turn. The underlying mediaeval religious pattern *rex iustus – rex iniquus* was not always understood by the chroniclers and the Teutonic Order’s propaganda surely also tried to interpret the Polish descriptions negatively. Thus the Silesian *Catalogus abbatum Saganensium* (1489) described the king as a sanctimonious old man who was useless for the business of war:

Rex autem, detractis caligis, quia senex erat et ad bellum ineptus, nudis pedibus novem missas, unam post alteram, a mane usque ad meridiem coram se legi fecit, flexisque genibus et elevatis manibus in tentorio orans pro populo suo⁶³.

Particularly noteworthy are four works of the famous humanist Enea Silvio dei Piccolomini (Aeneas Silvius; Pope Pius II), in which different traditions about the battle from Prussia and Poland are mixed up.⁶⁴ In *De viris illustribus* (1444-1450) he gives a description of Jagiełło’s personality, contrasting the actions of the king during the battle to those of Witold. Jagiełło is described as anxious and despondent, while the Lithuanian Grand Duke behaves manly and averts the impending catastrophe. In a later work *De situ et origine Pruthenorum* (also “De dieta Ratisponensi” or “Ratisponensis dieta”), Enea presents the king in a favourable light, while Witold is described as extremely hard and devious. Some years later, the transformation of the original image of Jagiełło is completed in *De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis Aragonorum* (1456). Now the Polish king is the hero: he answers the heralds, who hand over the swords, organizes the fight, sends the Lithuanians first into the battle and finally, after their defeat, by the intervention of the Polish army inflicts the terrible defeat on the exhausted knights. Enea has now obviously got access to better information. It is not clear what his sources were since the description is a harmonization of various data, but the Polish-friendly influence has become stronger. However, this did not cause Enea to spread the Polish propaganda stereotypes, because as a humanist he rejected the “medieval” theological argumentation. In none of his writings is Jagiełło portrayed as *rex iustus* and the handing over of the swords as an act of *superbia* of the Teutonic Order. The longest and most important description can be found in Enea’s *De Livonia [et de Pruthenis]* (1458).

⁶¹ S. Ekdahl, *Aufmarsch...*, pp. 43-44.

⁶² *Cronica conflictus...*, ed. Z. Celichowski, p. 27.

⁶³ Ed. by E. Strehlke, [in:] *Die Geschichtsquellen der preussischen Vorzeit...*, p. 432.

⁶⁴ For the following, see S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 244-259; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 232-246.

It is both an independent work in a manuscript in the British Museum under the title “Ejusdem Enee Silvii Senensis episcopi de Livonia” as well as part of the larger work “De Europa”. The claim that the Poles intervened only after the defeat of the Lithuanians can also be found in *De Livonia [et de Pruthenis]* and gives the two descriptions similarity. It seems that between 1456 and 1458 Enea had found new source material about the battle and that he regarded it as so important that he used it in detail in his new work. Presumably the source is from the Prussian local historiography, perhaps from Danzig (Gdańsk) or Thorn (Toruń).

Enea Silvio’s historical and literary work was widely spread by the development of the art of printing in the late 15th century. His writing about Livonia and Prussia was printed in 1470 in Cologne; in 1517 the chronicler Simon Grunau read it in Prussia. Polish historiography also paid attention to this description of the battle and Matthias of Miechów polemized in his *Chronica Polonorum* (printed in Cracow 1521) against Enea’s representation by pointing out what Polish tradition had to report. His chronicle is mainly a summary of J. Długosz’s *Annales*.

It is difficult to say exactly what influence this battle description of Enea had on later historiography; but it was certainly larger than previously supposed. The famous humanist had formed a new tradition, which differed from the usual Polish one. Thus, the presentation of the battle by Długosz was countered, which should not be underestimated since it came from one of the most outstanding personalities of that time.

In the 20th century, the medieval disguise of Jagiełło as a peace-loving and fight-reluctant *rex iustus*, who abhorred the shedding of “Christian blood”, was stripped in part and the King was declared the winner on monuments in Cracow and New York. On 15 July 1910, the inauguration of a large equestrian statue of Jagiełło, created by Antoni Wiwulski, took place on the Matejko Square in Cracow. In was destroyed in 1939 by the Germans and rebuilt in 1976 by the Poles⁶⁵. Since no moulds had been preserved, the figures had to be re-modeled using image templates and cast in bronze. At the World’s Fair in New York in 1939, another large equestrian statue of Jagiełło, created by Stanisław K. Ostrowski, was set up in front of the Polish Pavilion⁶⁶. It showed the king in victory pose on horseback with two swords raised and crossed, alluding to

⁶⁵ S. Ekdahl, *Die Grunwald-Denkmäler in Polen. Politischer Kontext und nationale Funktion*, [in:] *Das Denkmal im nördlichen Ostmitteleuropa im 20. Jahrhundert. Politischer Kontext und nationale Funktion*, ed. S. Ekdahl, Lüneburg 1997, Nordost-Archiv, Neue Folge, VI, 1997, 1, pp. 75-107, here pp. 80-81, 90, 101-102.

⁶⁶ Ibidem, pp. 88-89. A photo in the newspaper “Ilustracja Świąteczna” of 21 May 1939 shows the statue in front of the Polish pavilion. Reproduced in S. Ekdahl, *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem/Tannenbergiem...*, p. 17; idem, *The Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg...*, p. 17.

the victory over the Teutonic Knights. After the end of the World's Fair, the statue was kept in a department store in New York until it was given to the city in 1945 by exile Poles. The solemn inauguration of "King Jagiello" at its new location in New York's Central Park took place on 15 July 1945. Overall, the monument with its new granite base is more than seven meters high. An inscription on the pedestal indicates the king as "Founder of a free Union of the Peoples of East Central Europe, Victor over the Aggressors at Grunwald. July 15 – 1410"⁶⁷.

The Polish displayed their view of the Teutonic Order's defeat in 1937 when 18 copies on silk of banners, which had been captured at Grunwald/Tannenberg, were hung in the senatorial hall of the Wawel castle⁶⁸. They were also brought to the World's Fair in New York three years later.

A reaction of the Germans to this demonstration of the Polish victory was not long in coming and the Grunwald symbolism with the flags was interpreted as "an abuse of the images of German national property"⁶⁹. During World War II, Grunwald monuments with Polish "national" contents were destroyed⁷⁰. A striking case involved the so-called "Einholung der Fahnen des Deutschen Ritterordens" in May of 1940. The 18 copies found on the Wawel were at first placed in the office of governor-general Hans Frank and were then "repatriated" from Cracow to the Marienburg. Hitler did not mind this large propaganda campaign, led by the Nazi Propaganda Office for Danzig-Westpreußen, which was a department of the "Reichspropagandaamt". The event of the handing over of the flags in the "Large Refectory" of the Marienburg was broadcast by all the radio stations of the Reich as well as being reported by the "Völkischer Beobachter", the official daily paper of the Nazi regime⁷¹.

⁶⁷ S. Ekdahl, *Die Grunwald-Denkmäler in Polen...*, pp. 88-89.

⁶⁸ Ibidem, pp. 88; S. Ekdahl, *Tannenberg/Grunwald...*, pp. 286 (in "Journal of Baltic Studies"), and pp. 270-271 (in *Deutscher Orden...*). Photo in S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, ill. no. 12; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, ill. no. 12 – as for the captured banners, see S. Ekdahl, *Die "Banderia Prutenorum" des Jan Długosz – eine Quelle zur Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410. Untersuchungen zu Aufbau, Entstehung und Quellenwert der Handschrift. Mit einem Anhang: Farbige Abbildungen der 56 Banner, Transkription und Erläuterungen des Textes*, Göttingen 1976, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse, 3. Folge, 104. There is no Polish translation, but a Lithuanian translation of this book exists from 1992.

⁶⁹ D. Krannhals, *Die Fahnen des Ordensritterheeres von 1410*, [in:] *Feier der Einholung der Fahnen des Deutschen Ritterordens von der Burg Krakau, dem Sitz des Generalgouverneurs für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete, in die Marienburg im Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen*, ed. by Reichspropagandaamt Danzig-Westpreußen, Danzing 1940, pp. 10-14, here p. 12. S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 24-25; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 39-40.

⁷⁰ S. Ekdahl, *Die Grunwald-Denkmäler in Polen...*, passim; idem, *Tannenberg-Grunwald-Žalgiris: Eine mittelalterliche Schlacht im Spiegel deutscher, polnischer und litauischer Denkmäler*, "Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft" 2002, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 103-118, here pp. 105-106, 108-109.

⁷¹ S. Ekdahl, *Tannenberg/Grunwald – ein politischen Symbol...*, pp. 287-289 in "Journal of

3. Witold (Vytautas)

We have seen that the Poles for a very long time could not present Jagiełło as a fighting leader of the allied armies because of the *rex iustus*-scheme. Therefore, somebody else had to take over that role. In his chronicle, Długosz gave it to the Lithuanian Grand Duke, cousin of the king, and thus also in this respect influenced historiography for centuries to come.

In Długosz's *Annales*, Witold is the hero of the day, but the Lithuanian army, with the exception of the Smolensk divisions, is behaving cowardly and flees from the battlefield. It is noteworthy that neither Długosz nor his patron Z. Oleśnicki were friends of the Lithuanians and that Długosz started writing his chronicle in 1455, at a time when another great war was raging between Poland and Prussia. It was a time filled with great emotional tensions and one may assume that the refusal of the Lithuanians to side with the Poles in that war was one reason why Długosz inserted his contemptuous description of the Lithuanian "cowards" during the battle of 1410⁷². Due to the great authority the author enjoyed, the stigma he branded the Lithuanian army with was reproduced from century to century without being seriously questioned. Inevitably, it has left deep marks not only upon history, but also upon politics, art, and literature in successive generations. At the parliament (in Polish "sejm") in Warsaw in 1564 the Poles reproached the Lithuanians for having fled their common battlefield at Grunwald⁷³. From the 15th century onwards, the Lithuanian nation has been confronted with this "dark stain" on its history.

J. Matejko took over this interpretation and topos from Długosz and portrayed Witold in the centre of his famous painting of 1878 as the great hero, the radiant victor of the day⁷⁴. For the humiliated Lithuanians, this was a fantastic and very welcome gift from the artist, while the Poles are probably not entirely happy, despite their worship of Matejko. The grandiose painting is full of Matejko's own interpretations. The ideological background of important parts of the presentation is mostly unknown and it should be stressed that the painting

Baltic Studies"; pp. 274-277 in *Deutscher Orden 1190-1990...* – also see idem, *Tannenberg-Grunwald-Žalgiris: Eine mittelalterliche Schlacht...*, pp. 110; idem, *The Battle of Tannenberg-Grunwald-Žalgiris (1410) as Reflected in Twentieth-Century Monuments...*, pp. 176-194, here pp. 183-185. An exclusive photo collection of this event is kept in the archives of the Wawel castle.

⁷² S. Ekdahl, *Die Schlacht...*, pp. 260-273; idem, *Grunwald 1410...*, pp. 246-257; idem, *The Turning Point...*, pp. 56.

⁷³ A. Nikžentaitis, *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem w ocenie społeczeństwa litewskiego XV-XVI stulecia*, "Studia Grunwaldzkie" 1994, vol. 3, pp. 7-14, here p. 12. Also see idem, *Der Vytautaskult in Litauen (15.-20. Jahrhundert) und seine Widerspiegelung im Denkmal*, [in:] *Das Denkmal im nördlichen Ostmitteleuropa...* pp. 131-146.

⁷⁴ S. Ekdahl, *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem/Tannenbergiem...*, p. 11; idem, *The Battle of Grunwald/Tannenberg...*, p. 11.

is not a “source” in terms of the battle and the acting persons, but a mirror of conceptions dating from the 15th to the 19th century, which ultimately derive from the Middle Ages and especially from Długosz.

At the New York World’s Fair of 1939 the Lithuanians revealed a bronze statue of their own national hero in their pavilion. The creator was the then young, later well-known sculptor Vytautas Kašuba, who has also created the Gediminas monument of 1996 in Wilno (in Lithuanian Vilnius)⁷⁵.

During the inter-war period, there were tensions not only between Germany and Poland as well as Germany and Lithuania, but also between Poland and Lithuania. An illustrative example from the field of monuments is the statue dedicated to Vytautas the Great (Witold) in 1932 in Kaunas (in Polish Kowno), which was then the Lithuanian capital. Standing on a high pedestal, the Grand Duke controls four symbolic figures who submit to him: a Russian, a Pole, a Tartar and a defeated Teutonic Knight with a broken sword – a clear allusion to the Lithuanian victory at Žalgiris (Grunwald/Tannenberg). The statue was originally located in front of the Military Academy but was destroyed during the war and could not be re-erected until the reestablishment of the Republic of Lithuania on March 11, 1990, this time in the centre of Kaunas on the Laisvės Aleja, the Freedom Avenue⁷⁶.

Since the theological and spiritual background of the battle description in Długosz’s *Annales* has not been realized in historiography until now, German historians also tend to reproduce the version told by him. However, as seen in the example of J. Voigt, quoted above, the Germans like to interpret the *rex iustus* – behavior of the king not in a positive, but in a negative way. Witold’s role as a brave army commander on the battlefield remains unchanged.

Concluding remarks

The few examples given in this overview could be extended and supplemented by many others, as the views on the battle in Poland and Germany (as well as in Lithuania and other countries) differ in so many ways. This includes the army sizes and the number of casualties, the behavior of a part of the nobility of the Prussian province Kulm (in Polish Chełmno), who fled from the battlefield, the politics of Sigismund of Luxembourg at the time of the “Great War”, and, especially, the role of the Teutonic Order and its Knights in European history. It would, however, be too much to take on these comprehensive research fields in this short study. The examples provided should give an insight

⁷⁵ S. Ekdahl, *The Battle of Tannenberg–Grunwald–Žalgiris (1410)*..., pp. 181-182.

⁷⁶ Ibidem. Also see S. Ekdahl, *Die Grunwald-Denkmäler in Polen*..., p. 84; idem, *Tannenberg–Grunwald–Žalgiris: Eine mittelalterliche Schlacht*..., p. 109 (with references).

into the subject and present various points of view on the fascinating topic of the Battle of Grunwald or Tannenberg in 1410.

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