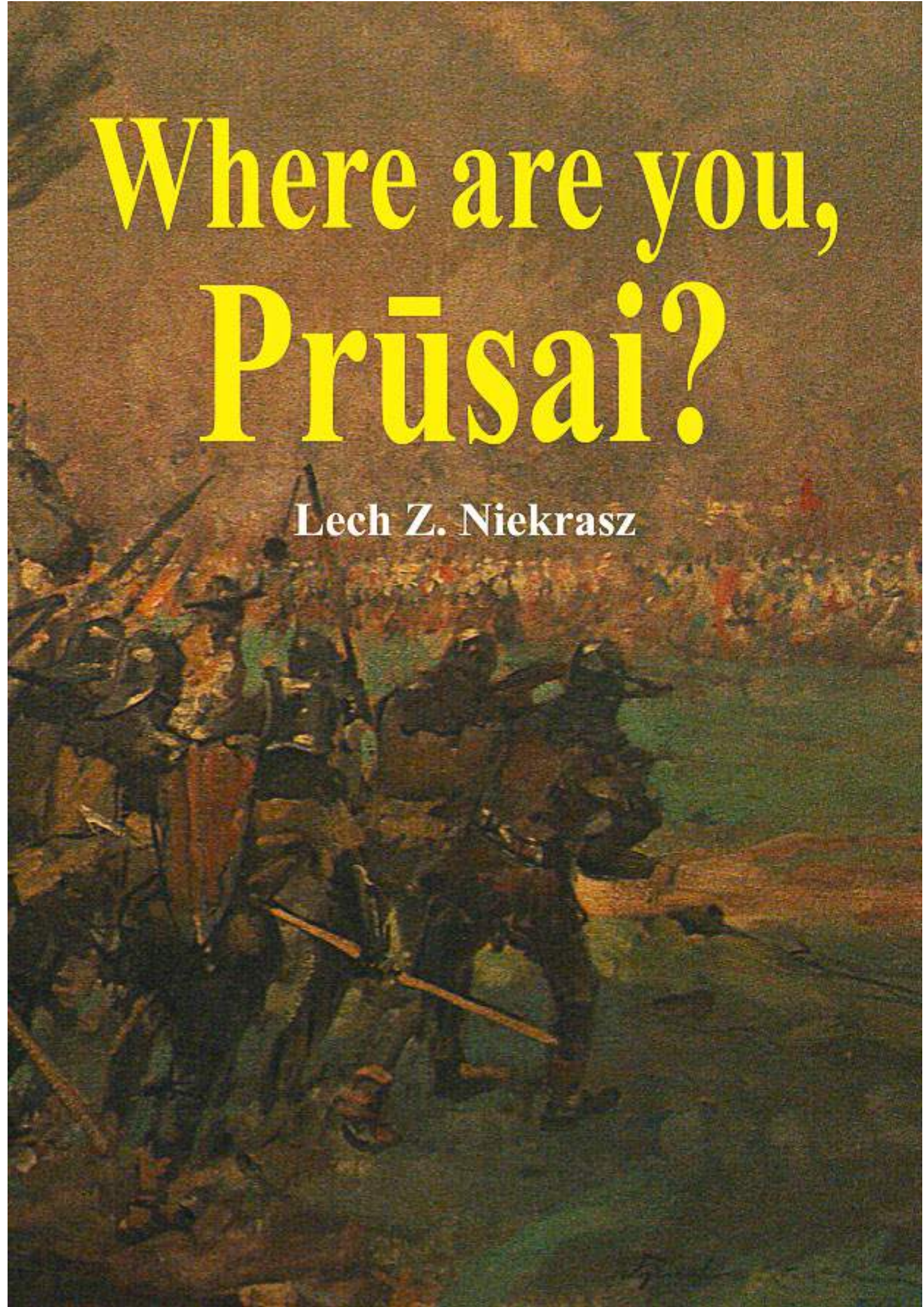


Where are you, Prūsai?

Lech Z. Niekrasz



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**The memory of the ancient Prusai have not passed with the wind
and therefore it deserves our respect,
so that history is not covered by falsehood.**

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Print and cover

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FOREWORD

It is worthwhile spending a moment to consider the problem which emerged after the conclusion of the second world war. It concerns the naming of the part of the former territory of Prusia, which was incorporated into post-war Poland. In view of the unfortunate traditions of German Prussianism and the associated worst possible memories, nobody wished to call this territory Prussia although it was to a substantial degree still inhabited by the indigenous descendants of the ancient Prusai, who saw no need to leave the land of their forefathers and talked of themselves as “ We are not Germans but we are also not Poles, we are locals”. After the war Stalin carried out another successive crime by ordering the deportation to Germany tens of thousands the descendants of the Prus people from the territory annexed by the USSR, the so called Kaliningrad region. A similar fate awaited the inhabitants of the territory incorporated into the Peoples Poland with the only difference that because of the discrimination against them the “locals” felt obliged to leave their fatherland and emigrate to Germany. This was also a crime on the living body of the population. Accordingly these lands, on which the Prus peoples lived on for over a thousand years before the appearance of the Slavs on the territory of to-days Poland, now carry the names of Warmia and Masuria.

It is meanwhile known that, as a result of the efforts undertaken by the Teutonic Order in the XIII century the victims of the invasions, which bore all the hallmarks of racial extermination, some 50% of the population of the then Prus lands perished, and the further 10% escaped the Teutonic sword by fleeing to neighbouring Poland or to Lithuania or Rus. The Teutonic Knights also placed their subject Prusai in the first line of battle in their wars of conquest, sometimes forcing them to carry out the most bloody work. From the year 1331 comes the information that during the battle of Plowce the Prusai refused to carry out the Knights orders to murder the Polish prisoners taken captive.

According to available sources the Order forced 5 thousand lightly armed Prusai to appear in 1410 on the fields of Grunwald who did not show the required fighting spirit, and many of whom sympathised with the Polish Crown. Their help to King Vladislav Jagiello is still little known, who due to them disposed of information about the location of the Order’s forces and because of this could locate his Polish and Lithuanian armies in the most advantagous positions. The attention of Polish historians by passed the part played by the Prusai Culm Standard brigade, whose influence on the result of the battle of Grunwald was thought by the German historians to be reason for the defeat of the Teutonic Order. The pages of history do not dwell on the fact that after Grunwald Prusai knights captured the Knights castles to turn them over to the Crown.

The Prusai had to pay a very high price for their part in the Thirteen Years War (1454-1466) where they also stood on the side of the Polish Crown. Their part in this was however dismissed by the Polish side. There were also incidents which indicated a negative attitude for the Prusai. An example of this was the attack by Piotr Dunin,

the commander of the Crown forces, on the cavalry unit of 60 horsemen sent to help the Polish King, which was forced to return.

The Polish side helped in the bloody suppression of the Sambian revolt of Prusai peasantry in 1525, supporting the German side.

Fatal in its result, not only for the Prusai but also for the Crown, was the policy of the Polish King towards the Teutonic Knights and their political descendants. The greatest mistake, after the bringing of the Order to Poland was the Prussian Homage which was paid to the Polish King Sigismund the Old from the last grand master of the Order, Albrecht von Hohenzollern in 1525. He stood at the head of a German enclave, or subjects de jure to the Polish Crown, the so-called Ducal Prussia. From this grew German Prussianism which grew to start the process of the partitions of the first Polish Commonwealth.



The map from the 1965 Atlas zur Weltgeschichte, showing ancient Asia Minor at 200 B.C. with three places name Prusia. The then kingdom of Bithynia was ruled by king Prusias, and was convinced by the Carthaginians to go to war with the Romans. Defeated by them, he escaped north and the legend says that Prusias settled on the Baltic shore: if so, then they were the Ostrogoths, as the Visigoths remained in Asia until the end of Vth century, when they went for the conquest of Rome. To support them, the Ostrogoths left the Baltic shores.

Heavy losses were borne by the enslaved Prusai population as a result of the Swedish invasion of the XVII century. At the beginning of the XVIII it was decimated by an epidemic of the black death brought from Germany. The XIX brought the bloody in its results Napoleonic campaign. A great tragedy was brought by both the two world wars started by Germany in the XX century, not counting the post 1944 losses of the descendants of the Prusai.

Kurps. In the year 1809, during the attack of the Austrians on the Duchy of Warsaw, the riflemen of the Kurp Battalions, headed by colonel Zawadzki and Lt.Col. Szremer, distinguished themselves on the river Bug. A force of these Kurps, made up from foresters of the Lomza department, formed a corps of mounted riflemen. On small horses, in battle dress and long sabres, lances and rifles, these people, at first sight unremarkable, but in accurate markmanship terrible, surprised the inhabitants of Warsaw. The Kurps were volunteers, unpaid, but only in receipt of food.

B. Gemb.

The rhetorical question of whether they could have survived in the situation which was created for them over the course of centuries not only by Germany but also by Poland ? However, the names of Preusse and Preussen, having nothing in common with the antique Prus, have survived as Prussian and Prussia. They are still used to-day by Germans, not confessing to the perpetrated ethnic name stealing.

There is not much interest in the Kurps, but these are the descendants of the Prusai, who sought freedom from the cruelty and persecution of the Teutonic Order, and who are known for their rich culture and folklore.

Returning to the question started in the foreword as to geographical nomenclature, it has to be stated that the name Masuria is a false creation, and the Masurians, in contrast to the descendants of the enslaved original Prusai, were mostly the returning descendants of the Prusai settlers from northern Mazovia, although amongst them were many Poles, Lithuanians and Ruthenes. In the situation in which the Teutonic Knights called themselves Preusse, and on the conquered territories of the Prusai emerged the state of Preussen, it is no surprise that the slaves called this, though the original owners of the land were called Prusai. However, there remained after them many but disjointed antiques for which the most suitable place should be still waiting for its opening museum of Prusai Culture.

And one other question which I would like to ask here, namely the pre-genesis of the Prusai, who up to now were denied to the indo-european family of nations. On the basis of the results of genetic testing on the living descendants of the Prusai, it can be stated that there is a link between them and proto-Celts, proto-Indoeuropeans and the proto-Ugro-finns. Historians divide the Prusai into tribes, but these were three ethnically separate peoples with the possibility of an autochthonic fourth, which could have survived the end of the ice age. The division of the Prusai into tribes is a mistake, and it can only be assumed that this was a territorial division during the conquest.

Recommending the study of this book, I hereby thank Mr Lech Niekrasz for his effort in undertaking the complicated theme of the Prusai and presenting it in a acceptable format.

Slawomir Klec Pilewski

I. VISITORS FROM THE DISTANT PAST

The traces lead to the Volga and the Dnieper

Although the origins of the Prusai have always interested historians, nevertheless it has not been to-date possible to finalise the matter, and the discussions which still abound on the matter to this date prove that from the scientific point of view the matter is not definitely settled. An expert on the subject, Gerard Labuda is of the opinion that “the Prusai formed one of the language groups ethnically belonging to a wider circle of peoples to whom we give the name Balts; to this grouping also belonged the many Lithuanian and Latvian tribes. The Prusai emerged as a separate ethnic group only at the merger of antiquity and the early middle ages, so that the history of the ancient Prusai has to be taken and presented in strict conformity with the history of remaining Balts”.

And here it seems pertinent to ask the question: how did the name “Balts” come about ?

The originator of this term is said to be the XIX century German philologist, Georg Heinrich Ferdinand Nesselmann, who specialised in the researching of the languages of the Baltic people and proposed in the interests of methodology this group name for the ancestors of the Prusai, Lithuanians and Latvians. This referred to the mentioned by antique historians and grounded by the lost text of Pyteas of Massala, or to-days Marseilles, of information about the island of Baltia, which was wrongfully identified with the Sambian peninsula and the later name of the Baltic sea. Thus the geographer, astronomer and Greek philosopher Pyteas of Massala was near the truth, as according to some historians of navigation he managed in his voyage near 310 B.C. to enter the waters of the Baltic and touch the coasts of the Danish island; hence his island of Baltia.

In the knowledge that early middle ages Europe was trampled by thousands or probably hundreds of thousands of horses hooves, which left traces of mass migrations of whole peoples, one should not wonder at the conclusion of Henry Lowmianski: “Due to the research of language specialists, who made analyses of local names on Ruthene territories (.....) there is no doubt to-day that one has to search for the first Balt settlements on the Pripet and middle Dniester rivers, on the Sola and Protava. The large number of names of the waters of this region has kept the original Balt characteristics”.

There can be no doubt that the Balts came from the east and that it was the Prusai who paved the way for the other Balts to the way to the Baltic Sea. However the motives which caused the Volga dwelling Prusai to undertake a journey of many hundreds of kilometers to the northern Baltic rather than the near southern Black Sea, which would have opened them to the world of mediterranean culture, will remain a mystery for all time.

The question regarding the ethnic origin of the Prusai: who were they and how did they come to be in central Russia? remains unanswered. One can only assume that

they were an indoeuropean people and this assumption is confirmed by the fact that in the old Prus language were found many Sanscrit elements. The word *purusah* means “people” in Sanscrit and this word was said to be used by Prusai calling to each other in the dense forest undergrowths. A more satisfactory explanation of where the Prusai came from can be expected from the genealogic study of genetics which is now taking first steps.



Map 1 North - eastern Europe, showing the peoples and their cultures at about III c. B.C.

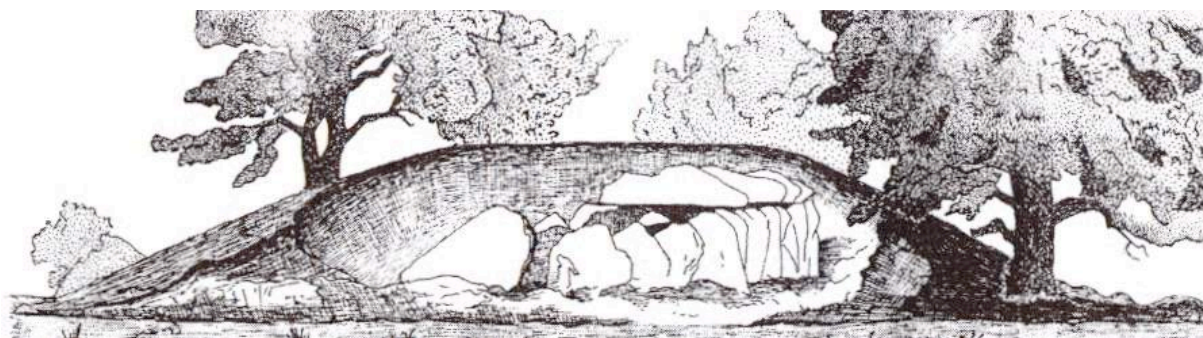
According to prof. Labuda the first, called by him Protobalts, were newcomers from the Dnieper who arrived on the sothern shores of the Baltic at the turn of the Vth-VIth centuries B.C., settling in the territories between lower Vistula, the later Mazovia and the lower Niemen. If that dating is correct, this would indicate that the Prusai were one of the oldest, if not the oldest of the peoples of Northern Europe.

The first mentions of the Slavs in Eastern Europe appeared in antique manuscripts only in the VI century, or nearly a thousand years after the appearance of the Prusai on the lands adjoining the southern Baltic. The author called pseudo-Maurice noted in his Greek work “Strategikon” that the Slav tribes hid in the forests and marshes, lived robbers live styles, attacked other peoples and it was difficult for them to reach agreement between themselves, as one would not work with another in spite of sharing the same language. The existence of a common language amongst the Slavs was confirmed by the VIth century Bizantine historian Prokop of Ceasaria, writing that these were barbarians tribes worshipping one god, who was the maker of lighting. The later chronicler Arab bin Rosteh made an entry that they burnt their dead in fire. In the light of other sources the Slavs showed kindness to visitors, but in battle they were dangerous, burning, looting and ravaging all around them.

Historians date the arrival on the Jutland Peninsula of the Germanic Danes, emerging from Scandinavia, at a similar time in the V-VI century: they were known for looting expeditions to Western Europe and to the southern shores of the Baltic. Only in the VIIIth century did the raids of the Scandinavian Vikings begin as they raided the Baltic shores in their *drakkarach*, as their flat bottomed rowing boats were known.

For all these described peoples the Prusai, settled on the Baltic over ten centuries before, were the object of constant attacks and looting. This only confirms that there was plenty to be attacked and robbed. The Prusai were simply richer than other peoples. And this has to be borne in mind.

If the landscape of this region has to this date kept to a large extent its harsh and unrepeatable beauty, placing it amongst the most exotic landscapes, not only in Europe, one can only imagine this land for many centuries ago, covered with ancient virgin forests, layers of marshes, bogs of wetlands and also glittering from the reflections of uncounted lakes and ponds known to-day under such names as Mamry, Niegocin, Kisajno, Druzno or Sniardwy. The character of this place on earth was formed by the retreat thousands of years ago of the Scandinavian ice layers, leaving behind many of original ancient natural features.



1 The Prus mound.

There is no doubt therefore as to the territory which was settled by the first Prusai. However there is a lack of unity on the question of their genesis, about which a historian of the younger generation, Gregory Bialunski writes “on the question of the original whereabouts of the Prusai there are currently two dominant hypothesis. The first of these propagated by the German archeologist L. Kilian in the 1950’s (...) and supported by some Lithuanians and Latvian researchers, and also lately by Russians, assumes that the Balts were the original dwellers there, who lived on the Baltic in the late bronze age (...) (2000-1800 B.C.). The second hypothesis - currently universal in Poland - assumes that the Prusai arrived on the Baltic only in the VI-V centuries B.C. from the region of central Rus in the basin of the Dnieper and the Volga (...). The first trace of the Prusai on the Baltic is said to be the culture of west Baltic Kurhan burial mounds. In favour of this is the evidence both of archeological data (...), as well as the rich onomastic Baltic names in the region of the Dnieper and of Moscow.”

Let us admit freely: to understand the fate of the Prusai it is not in the end very meaningful whether they were original inhabitants or came to the Baltic from the basins of the Dnieper or Volga.

The dissemination of ethnic material

However not everything seems to be fully evident and thus there are still many historical puzzles on the way to clearing up the darkness of Prusian pre-history. The late antique and early middle-age chronicles do not throw much light on this subject. The scribes of the time did not adhere too much to the rigours of making sure that their writings were in line with the realities of geography or ethnography, although, to tell the truth, they had no knowledge of these realities. The knowledge of this unknown world which they wrote about was often gained second hand or gathered from the teachings of the father of history, Herodotus, and judging from the known about unknown. In the case of the Prusians there were also difficulties arising because of the natural difficulties of access to their territory, and also the opinion that it was not possible to communicate with them in any other language apart from Prusian, which nobody knew. To-day all this leads to forming various hypotheses and asking question marks.

It has not been possible to explain fully which people hid under the name Aestians and where this name originated from. With these Aestians, or as others write, Estians or Estami, historians have a major dilemma. The growing misunderstandings about these Aestians or Estians are due to a large extent to the Roman historian Tacitus in the first century after Christ. In the pages of his work "Germania" the Roman put forward the information about the existence of "Aestiorum gentes", or the tribe of the Aestians, whom on the basis of hear say tales he located on the southern shores of the Swabian Sea. In contemporary chronicles the Baltic sea was known under this name, whilst "Germania" was not an ethnic but geographical entity. Tacitus wrote "Turning right (!) we find on the shores of the Swabian Sea the homes of Estians, who have the customs and dress of Swabians, but language nearer to that of the Britons. They worship the mother of gods. As a symbol of their faith they carry the images of boars. They rarely make use of iron, often using clubs. When growing grain and other organic products they work very conscientiously, better than can be expected after the typical German indifference". This would indicate a high work ethic by the Estians.

It is this Roman historian who introduced the name of Ests vel Estians into the historical records of early middle ages Europe. The geographer of the ancient World and author of the work "Geografia", Claudius Ptolemy of Alexandria, referred to this placing them on the Northern Ocean - yet another name for the Baltic - and in particular the peoples along the lower reaches of the Vistula, the Osians, which appears to be a version of the Osts - Estians. The same Ptolemy did not restrict himself to noting only this one tribe, mentioning the area of Sarmatia, which was constricted by the waters of the Sarmatians Ocean - yet another name for the Baltic - and the Venetian Bay, or to-days Bay of Gdansk. The Venedians were considered by some historians as Slavs, as well as the Goths called Gytones, further the Ugro - Finns, Sulons and the Galind and Sudin people which are related to the Prusians.

Such a Baltic Tower of Babel !

It needed a few fine centuries before Europe again heard of the Estians. This happened because of adventures of the traveller Wulfstan who was in the service of Alfred the Great, king of Wessex. In the year 890 the traveller set off under sails from Hedeby on the Jutland Peninsula in an easterly direction to explore the southern coasts of the Baltic.

The expedition interested the Anglo-Saxon monarch to such an extent that Wulfstan's written report was included by him in the Old English edition of the work of the Roman historian Paulus Orosius "Chorografia".

From the descriptions of Wulfstan it appears that he travelled in the Vistula basin and in the area of today's Elbing, where in the nearby lake of Druzno he came across what in future centuries was considered to be more legendary than real - the port settlement of Truso. It was only in 1982 that it was brought into historical reality by the archaeologist Dr. Mark Jagodzinski. As can be seen not all Middle Ages relations can be said to be myths. The Anglo-Saxon Wulfstan, who showed himself to be a very conscientious reporter, collected much information on the subject of the Estians, which in the opinion of experts on his writings amaze with the richness of his observations. He stated that the lands of the Estians were composed of a number of smaller territorial entities of different names, including Witland on the Vistula basin and that the people of the Estians, apart from trading in amber, also offered skins and furs.

In the light of Wulfstan's relations, who noted the habit of drinking mares' milk by the wealthy and mead by the plebeians as well as the habit of burning the bodies of the dead, can without major risk of error, classify the Estians as the Prusians, particularly as with time this name was replaced by the name Prusians which related to all the people living between the Vistula and Niemen.

Before this took place, the Estians figured in written sources composed over nearly ten centuries: from the 1st century AD, to Cassiodorus in the 5th, Jordanes in the 6th and Wulfstan in the 9th. However, it is known that their existence was found in various forms in parallel Latin sources and old Scandinavian sagas, to form today's name of the country of Estonia, although in the opinion of historians the Estonians have nothing in common with the Balts.

Electrum, or "Gold of the North"

At the turn of the antique and Middle Ages eras the southern coast of the Baltic Sea, and more strictly the Sambian peninsula, were joined with the Mediterranean world by commercial routes, strictly speaking with Rome. One tract led along the Vistula basin to the mouth of the Vistula, through the Kuyavia region southwards to the Moravian Gate, the second tract along the river Lyna to Kuyavia and further. The object of the trade, Baltic yellow amber was known not only in Rome but also in Greece, Egypt, Arabia and Persia: it was the juice of coniferous trees solidified in the depth of the sea for millions of years.

The source of this really great wealth were the coastal escarpments of the Sambian peninsula with their solidified flora which hid an abundance of yellow

amber deposits not found anywhere else in the world. Writing about the yellow amber Tacitus expressed the view that the then peoples of Sambia could not appreciate its virtues: “what are its qualities, or how it came to exist, was, in the manner of barbarians, not studied or of any interest: it even laid long term between other marine materials until our demand for it led to its fame. For them, it has no use: they collect it in raw state, deliver it unworked and are surprised at the price which they can get for it”. Thus Tacitus was surprised that these people so easily discarded this valuable but thrown out by the sea waves *electrum* in exchange for various types of ready to use goods. When writing about Baltic amber this historian did not fail to mention the Goths and the Aestians, stressing the difference dividing both these tribes, from which it emerged that the amber rich Sambia was inhabited by the latter, and from which it appeared that they were almost certainly Prusians. Meanwhile the wealth taken from the earth by the archeologists of Roman artefacts would point to the fact that they could fully utilise the demand for amber.

The unusual success which amber achieved in Rome in the epoch of the emperor Nero is proven by the surviving articles on the subject of the organisation by the Emperor of the “amber games”. Everything, including the weapons of the gladiators, the stretchers used to carry away the corpses of the slaughtered animals, even the decorations of the amphitheater surrounding the stadium, was decorated with amber. One cannot wonder therefore about the sending, by the emperors’s will, of a whole expedition to the distant and mysterious north. From the written report on this expedition the contemporary to Nero historian Pliny the Elder used the available data on the pages of his work. The expedition from the Tiber to Sambia met the expectations of the emperor, who came into possession of a great quantity of the sought after “gold of the north”. The weight of the heaviest of the brought rocks is said to have exceeded 4 kilograms, so it was a real trophy. Traces of this expedition and of many commercial journeys by traders to the Baltic were found here by archeologists, including roman fibulae decorated with enamel, as well as other articles of the material culture of the mediterranean world.

There are grounds for stating that the aims of this expedition were not only commercial but also intelligence gathering, particularly as this happened at the time of Nero’s reign, when the might of imperial Rome was at its apex and the empire used its intelligence network to gather geographical, ethnographic, linguistic and political information. They were all included by Pliny in his work “*Naturalis historiae libri*” and by Tacitus on the pages “*Germania*”.

From the beginning of the VIth century A.D., comes the relation as to how the Sambian delegation brought gifts in the form of amber for the king of the Ostrogoths, Theodoric, so as to restore trading links between the South and the North in a meaningful way. King Theodoric gracefully accepted the gifts, but did not show interest in restoring commercial ties. This trade therefore varied considerably between different centuries.

In spite of this one can risk the statement that medieval Europe was not only the scene of great migrations but also an area where commerce thrived. The Roman Legions were followed by traders who met with people considered to be barbarian, which word at the time not always had a negative connotation. The carriers of

actually very limited information about the existence of people such as the Prusians were items such as Sambian amber, which was also known to the antique Greeks. From this presumably emerges the somewhat playful legend that it was Jason who was said to have launched one expedition for amber to Sambia, although the aim of his journey was the golden fleece.

Bruzzi, Burus, Pruzzi, Prusians

Many centuries had to pass before the Prusians could finally show themselves to the world under the name which identified them, but with which they themselves did not always identify with. Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn thus states “the name Prusian given them by their Polish neighbours became common in the whole of the Christian world in the Xth and XIth century because of the mission of the Saint Adalbert and his heroic martyrdom. This name became synonymous with all the pagans living between the Vistula and the Niemen and it was rarely noted that in fact these pagans did not call themselves by this name”.

The suggestion that the Prusians were given this widely accepted name is shared by professor Labuda “It can be surmised that the name of Prusia was taken and quickly propagated by the Poles and Pomeranians; it was taken from them by the Germans, and the Ruthenes (in the form of Prousi). In the XIth century German sources (Adam from Bremen) noted the existence of Sambia and the Sambs (Semki) as a branch the Prusians”.

Only with time did they accept the name *Prusai*, from which the experts in the subject put forth the learned, as claims Adam Fisher, names *Prutheni* and *Borrussen*. From this emerged to-days Olsztyn Society Prutheni dealing with with the problem of the Prusians and the known German football team Borussia.

As in the case of the genealogy of the Prusians, so in the question of the origins of their name there is a lack of full clarity. The XVIIth century German historian, Christopher Hartknoch, was ready to accept that the name *Pruteni* comes from the Prusian word *pruta* or *pruota*, which was meant to signify common sense and wisdom. According to other historians it is derivative of the name of the early Prusian weapon *proca* (cathapult).

In written sources the new name, although in the changed form of *Bruzzi*, emerged for the first time only in 845 A.D. on the pages of the book written in Regensburg for the use of the Holy Roman emperor Ludwig II. The anonymous author of this manuscript, written of course in Latin, produced a geographical-historical description of the Slav tribes then living west of the Elbe and north of the Danube, also noting the name of Bruzzi. In all probability he was probably an information gatherer in the service of the Carolingian state, as the information he compiled showed great usefulness for military purposes. Time showed this was a preparation for the armed realization of the politics *Drang nach Preussen* or simply *Drang nach Osten*. It is worth remembering that the name Bavarian Geographer was given to this document by nobody less than the traveller considered to be the first Polish archeologist Jan Potocki, who caused its first edition in 1796. From that time

the name Bavarian Geographer figures in the historical sources of many European countries.

The next source in which the name *Burus*, relating to the Prusians, is found, is the relation of an Arab traveller from an expedition to Germany and to Slav countries. Its author, Ibrahim bin Jacob, was part of a diplomatic mission from the Caliphate in Spanish Cordoba to the court of the emperor Otto I the Great. From this mission in the years 965-966 he prepared a report, amongst others on the subject of the country of Mieszko I, in which he wrote: Mieszko's neighbour in the east is Ruthenia, and in the north, Burus. The homes of the Burus lie on the Ocean. This, quite clearly, refers to the Baltic, with a promoted name.

Yet another reference, from the years 991-992 is the document prepared in the ducal chancellery in Gniezno "Dagome iudex" referring to the wishes of the Polish Church for independence from the ecclesiastical power in Brandenburg's Magdeburg. In this document there is reference to the name *Bruzze*, which also features under the more common term *Pruzze* or *Przze*.

The name Prusia also entered Polish writings. From the early years of the XIth century and translated from the Latin writings of St. Adalbert one can learn what follows: "Next sharpening and readying the sword of the word of God against the cruel barbarians and wicked pagans, one start considering with whom first, and with whom last, to carry the fight (...). As he hesitated, a better thought ocurred to him, to go and fight to gods and idols in the land of Prusia, as this territory was the nearest(...)".



2. The construction of a bridge in the valley of the river Dzierzgon before our era

The name of Prusia can also be found in the text of the life of St. Bruno of Querfurt. It should certainly be noted that the first mentions of Prusia represented under their now known name usually took place in the context of marginal comments on the subject of the then Poland, which began to count on the map of central Europe, while Prusia was not treated as a specific subject matter. Secondly the authors of

these mentions had no first hand knowledge of the land of Prusia as dense forests and marshes were in those times practically impenetrable. The traders coming there for amber at the most moved in the narrow belt of the Baltic coast, not even trying to reach the depths of the Prus hinterland. The natural conditions of the environment created the state of isolation, which for many centuries resulted in a lack of interest in Prusia from the side of the then current world, whose centre was based on the mediteranean Rome.

II. THE POWER OF THE FAMILY AND THE CULT OF NATURE

Between patriarchy and multi wife marriage

Antique Prusia was not a territorial or demographic power. According to estimates the Prusians lived in an area of 42 000 square kilometres, roughly equivalent to to-days Warmia and Mazury. A small part of old Prusia, including the Prus heartland of Sambia, is now in the Russian Federation's Kaliningrad region.

On this territory there lived and worked a population of some 170 000 souls, which means that 1 square kilometre was inhabited by an average of 4-5 people. The most populated was the land of Sambia, stretching on an area of 2000 sq. kilometres. Because of the possibility of forming a substantial force of cavalry and infantry historian have accepted that the population of Sambia could have even been 10 persons per square kilometre and as such was the highest in the under populated Prusia and also in many regions of the Europe of the middle ages. These are however only hypothetical data, similarly to analogical figures for neighbouring Lithuania, whose population equalled that of Prusia with the population of 3 people per kilometre, and to Latvia with a population of 145 000 and a population density of well below 3 persons per sq. kilometre.

To-day the Warmian-Masurian vojvodeship with the territory of 24 000 sq. kilometres has a population of close to 1.5 milion with a population density of 59 persons per sq. kilometre.

The demographic structure of old Prusia was based on a family forming a basic social unit, and was - as writes Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn - "a family with deeply rooted traditions of patriarchy, grouped around father, and the relationship with the father's line was the building block of this formation. The man was the head of the family, the only owner of all goods and chattels, and only he had the right to represent the family of the public gathering of the *lauks*. He administered the whole property and looked after the needs and security of members of the family (...), was the only opinion giver, judge and high priest".

From available sources it would appear that the Prusians cultivated a multi-wife society, and each of many wives as stated the ethnograph Adam Fisher, simply had to be purchased. The form of payment could be of many ways: valuables, cattle, grain or furs. The XVth century priest, diplomat and the greatest of Polish chronicle writers of the middle ages, Jan Dlugosz, wrote that the number of wives was not limited "the buyer could have as many as he could afford" and the social status of women in Prusian family was not to be envied, and this because the purchased wives

became the property of the head of the family, “they would not receive any respect from their husband, and were therefore destined for ugly and servile work”.

The latest research on position of women in the family and in the society of old Prusia prove that not all these statements find confirmation in an analysis of historical sources, particularly in those of Teutonic Knights of the Order. Thus in the light of German historiography a woman in Prusia, as wrote Seweryn Szczepanski in presenting the work of Darius Sikorski “was shown as a part of inventory in a patriarchal society of barbarians”. Meanwhile it was not the pagan Prusians but the encased in the Teutonic Order’s armour Christian Germans were in this respect nearer barbarism, and it was on those relations that obviously Jan Dlugosz relied when he undertook this subject.

Seweryn Szczepanski writes “that the author opposes the hitherto proposed opinion of the (purely economical) procedure of the “purchase” of a wife. He sees in this not so much the fact of buying the woman as a person, but rather obtaining the right of looking after her (*mund*) from the hands of the father, brother or in the case of widow, the first born son or the nearest male relative (*mundoldalda*).

The meaningful element (...) is therefore the accentuation of the position of the woman as a specific object of a transaction, under the care of another male representative. The woman, by changing her status, automatically changed her family allegiance, the husband in turn was obliged from that time to care for and protect her, and on him fell the consequence linked to the defence of the wife’s honour”.

The author of the discussed work is also sceptical about the theory promoted by many researchers that the sons were to inherit from their parents the wife, whilst what was important in his opinion was not so much inheriting the wife but taking over the duty of care, or *mund*.

In the light of the latest research a reassessment should be made of many other items concerning the question of a woman’s status in Prus society. In the already cited review Seweryn Szczepanski writes “multiwifery amongst Prusians, because of the scale of the phenomenon, did not affect the so-called low status of the woman as the wife. According to the author this view came with an erroneous interpretation of the process of purchasing the right to care for a wife. It does not mean there was any acceptance for her wrongful treatment”.

In this way the old Prusians could in some sense carry out the role of gentlemen in to-days sense of the word. More could be said: “according to *Iura Pruthenorum* the penalty for wounding a woman by a man was twice as high as the penalty for wounding a man by a woman”.

This was something that to-days even extremist feminists are unable to comprehend! A Prus woman however had no chance of gaining the honour of being a leader of the family. There is a lot of information that the wife of a Prusian was therefore not nobodys property or a slave, which state of affairs could make woman in other societies jealous.

Such a situation for a woman in a social context gave her a chance to play a significant role in religious life and possibly the political life of the Prusians, as from the position of a religious adviser or sorceress she could, and did, have an influence on sometimes important decisions carried out by a gathering, or local meeting. An

isolated , but highly meaningful fact occurred during the defence of the fort Bezledy in the region of Natangia from the Sudovs, Scalovs and Nadravcs, which the Teutonic Order's chronicler, Peter of Dusburg, did not fail to note: "Nameda, the mother of Postdraupot of the clan of the Montemids, said to her sons *it hurts me that that I gave birth to you, and this because you do not wish to defend your lives and your clan before the enemy*. Her sons and the rest of garrison was so encouraged by these words that they gave battle and killed over two thousand men from the enemy army".

The same chronicler mentioned a banquet, which was given by Conrad of Mazovia, to which the duke invited to his table Prusian nobles together with their wives. This fact not only surprised the author of the relation, but the very happening, as this was alien to the then German customs.

All this could prove that the social status of Prus women was not as low as was presented by generations of historians and ethnographers.

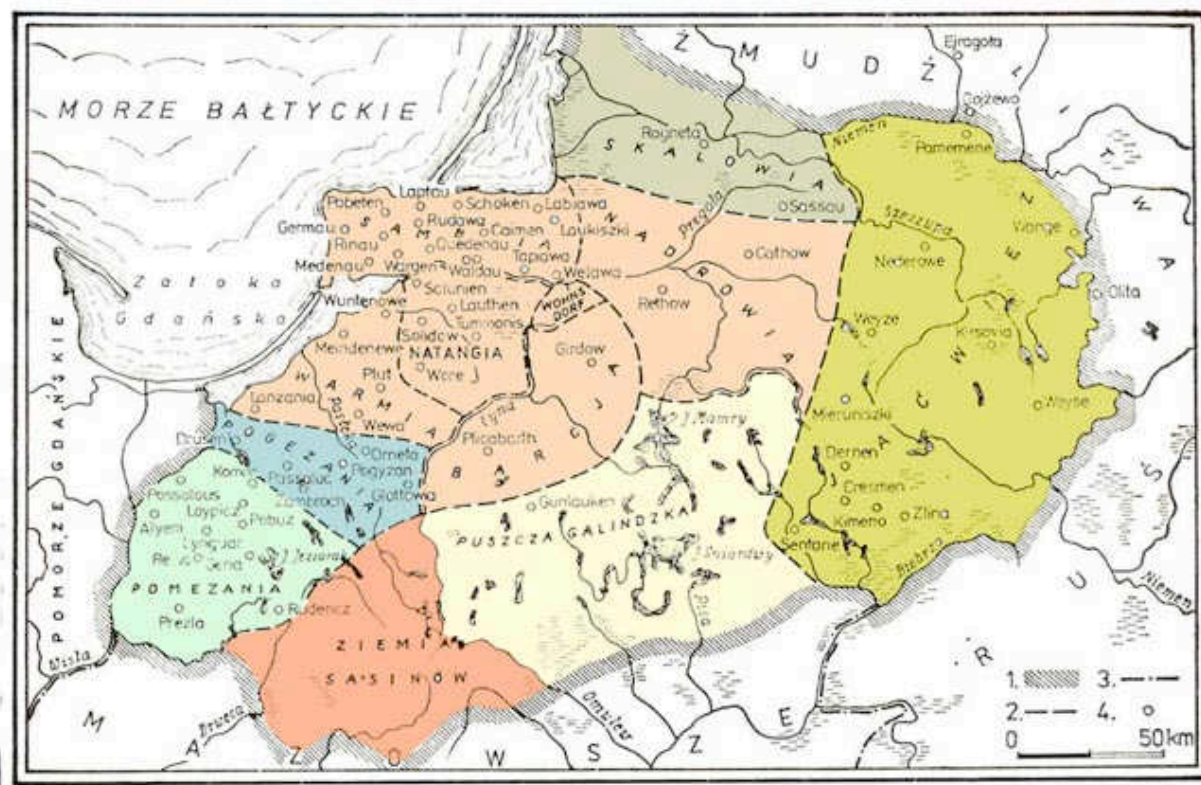
The Prus family should also be credited with their positive care for elder people and the poor, and also for showing their relatives compassion and great hospitality. The recipients of this latter were particularly traders and travellers to their lands, and amongst them was the several times mentioned Wulfstan. This opinion about the Prusians was expressed by the authors of many chronicles, including the German Adam of Bremen, who related the stories of traders returning from Sambia, according to whom the inhabitants were "the most humane of the humans" and came to the help of seafarers in distress and castaways on the coast of their peninsula. The Danish chronicler Helmold wrote in similar vein about XIIth century Prusians. A confirmation of the above opinion is also found on the pages of the work - which is even more valuable - of the German chronicler from the XIIIth and XIVth centuries and confessor of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order himself , Peter of Dusburg: "nobody comes to beg, because their custom that any of them who is poor is free to go from place to place, from house to house, where he can eat as much as he likes, and nobody chases him away".

In addition the Prusians stood out for their care for their fellow men, not letting them experience hunger and extending their care over the elderly, which was seen as a duty. Not fulfilling it led to the castigation of the guilty by public opinion. The already mentioned Danish chronicler Helmold confirmed the relationship between Prusians and the foreigners in the following words: "right up to this day, when somebody finds himself amongst them, they let him live a full life amongst them, although they do not let him access to forests and springs".

How then and why can one explain the not too distant from the truth statement by Wulfstan that "there are plenty of wars between them" ? It would mean that these visitor orientated, friendly to foreigners, and caring for the elderly Prusians were unable to find a common language between themselves, which led to mutual quarrels and sometimes armed conflicts. Too often one group, had no interest in the fate of another group: when Bartia was in danger, the neighbouring Nadrovia refused to help. This is any case one of the unknown factors which are common in the history and mentality of the Prusians.

Without researching the factors behind this state of affairs, it has to be said that this led to the weakening of the togetherness and cohesion of the people structure

of the whole Prus population. The preservation of this structure was not helped by the appearance of a veritable mosaic of separate and often competing with each other ethnic groups, which lived in many areas, or as others prefer, territories.



Map 2 Prusian people provinces

It is worth remembering that on an area, admittedly greater than to-days voievodship of Warmia and Masuria, there were neighbours in the form of Pomesania and Pomezania, Warmia and Natangia, Sambia and Nadravia, Skalovia and Sudovia, Galindia, Sasinia, and also Great and Little Bartia, and finally the ethnically related with the Prusians, Yatviagans. This people diversification also found its way into language diversification. In the sphere of the Prusian group - wrote prof. Labuda - "three dialects can be recognised: Pomesanian, Sambian and probably Yatviagans, whose only trace are local names. The western tribes talked with a Pomesanian accent; Sambians was used, apart from the Sambians themselves, by the nearby people of Natangs, Scalovians and Nadrovians".

Even if in spite of this the Prusians were able to survive as a society until the XIIIth century, or until the moment in which they had to submit to the organised might from the side of the Teutonic Order, they owed this survival to the strengths of the blood bonds which bonded the family together.

The wealthy, the free and the slaves

The factor which integrated Prus society was the solidarity joining families of similar backgrounds. They formed a unit which represented the widely interpreted interests of its members. The long-term existence of this social category is illustrated

by the fact that to-day there are still in existence the names of many Prus nobels families, such as Klec and Winde from Pomesania, the Karsins and Gobotins from Warmia, the Sambian Kandemins and Sipayns or the Natangs Montemins.

The Prus nobility unit carried out a function which was not only economic, but also public, normalising relations, settling disputes between members, and defending members against aliens. Another, but not less important role of the noble family was to ensure the keeping of major family possessions in their hands, as this ensured the survival of the unity of settlements. There was therefore a mandatory prohibition of selling land to strangers. In this respect the Prusians of the middle ages were much wiser than the XXith century Poles, who without much thought part with their land in favour of foreigners.

On the topic of land ownership, it should be known that, generally speaking, in Prusia it was accepted that the individual form of land ownership, where the basic unit of land settlement, called *lauks* after the Prusian, was paramount. The Prusians did not have a tendency to create large settlements, so that their *lauks* did not resemble a village as per our understanding. Prusians farms were scattered and formed on autonomic organism. They were usually situated on hills amongst lakes, waters and difficult to cross marshes, so as to facilitate defence against aggressors.

It is interesting that the amount of owned land decided on the position of a family in the social hierarchy of the Prusians; this position was decided by their goods and chattels such as valuable metals, precious artifacts, arms, works of craftsmen, horses and cattle, and also by the numbers of those on the lowest ring of society, namely slaves. The ownership of such possessions led Prusians to participate in public affairs and be in readiness for armed conflict, not counting the possibility of keeping a greater number of wives, which in the eyes of Prusians ensured the owner honour and prestige. As a result the social divisions amongst Prusians were decided by two factors: movable possessions, and being part of a family with a long history of settlement in a given locality and enjoying considerable prestige.

In the times before the advent of the Teutonic Order the Prus population formed by only two groups: the few but rich heads of families known from Latin as the *nobiles*, and from Prusian as the *rikijs*, and the clear majority freemen. At least this was the class structure noted by the already mentioned chronicler of Teutonic knights, Peter of Dusburg, who did not write a word about the slaves, who, as is known, were part of movable possession category and as such did not qualify to be considered as part of the social structure.

If one is to believe what was observed by Wulfstan, the wealthy differed from the commoner by drinking mares milk, whilst the latter had to content themselves by drinking mead. However, both, without differences, had the privilege of personal freedom, which was protected by the family code of ethics. Apart from liking *kumys* and owing massive movable possessions, the small number of these *nobiles* was known for a different life style and a fine and fixed in national memory genealogy, which stressed their great and glorious deeds.

No wonder then that it was from this wealthy class that recruits came to become leaders and warriors who formed the brave and well armed Prus cavalry. In the sphere of laws and citizens responsibilities, however, the *nobiles* did not rank

higher than freemen, which be even regarded as a sign of democracy in the Prusian manner. Even so, the Prusian *nobiles* carried out a leadership role in society, which, although it never and nowhere led to one man rule, formed a step towards the dissolution of the family based society.

One could therefore see in this group the beginning of the formation of the Prus aristocracy. In fact this terminology was used by prof. Lowmianski, writing “the common people formed the major group. They enjoyed personal freedom(...) These commoners were not divided from the aristocracy by any personal animosity (...) Formally they had full political powers, they took part in discussion meetings and with their motions decided on matters concerning territorial union. Factually they meekly followed the voice of the noble knights, they could not achieve independent judgements and were not able to organisational effort”.

This aristocratic character of wealthy Prusians also finds confirmation in the middle ages Ruthene sources, in which they appear as *kniazi*.

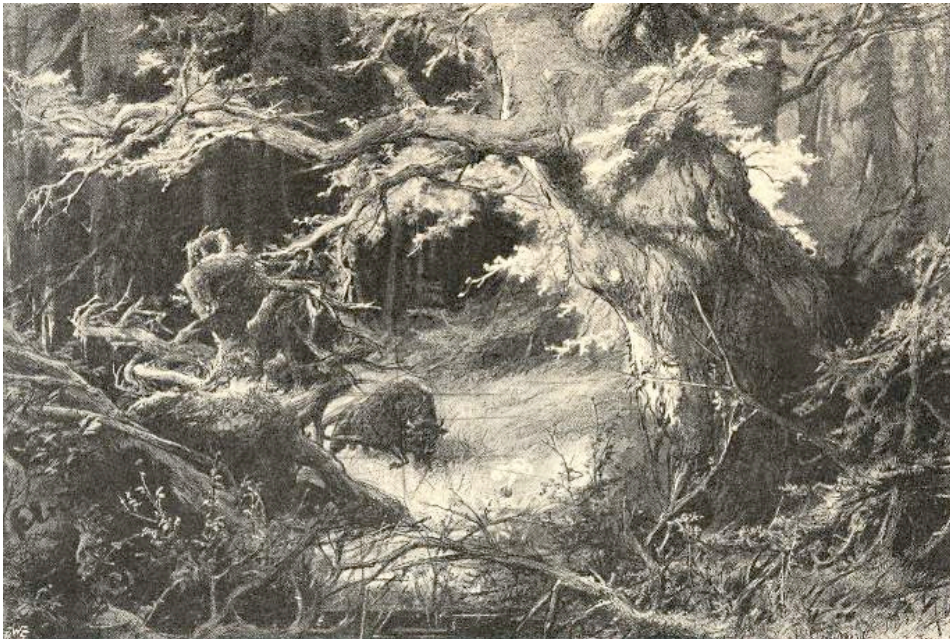
And finally - the slaves. In contrast to the ethnic majority of the freemen class of commoners, they represented an element from different people and were at very bottom of the social ladder, which came mostly from prisoners of war and their children. Mostly, because apart from the alien ethnical majority there were also Prusians forced into the state of servitude because they committed crimes, or else there were Prusian groups relations from lands attacked by other Prus people. In addition Slavs, Germans and even Scandinavians also came to be Prusian slaves. As was the custom with, they were bereft of any laws, and their Prus owner was their lord and master. Brought up under Prusian roofs the descendats of the slaves tended to treat the houses as their own and the family of their Prus master as their nearest kin. According to the experts of the subject, the fate of slaves in Prusia was nevertheless not the worst in the European middle ages, as in other regions matters were much worse.

One can once more return to the relations of Wulfstan, who amongst the wealthy gorging themselves on *kumys* included a king in his relations. However it is known that old Prusia was not a monarchy, and therefore writing about a king was for anglo-saxon chronicler a form of *licentia fantastica* not unknown amongst other chroniclers. Historians see in this king of Wulfstan a leader of one of the defensive forts who were elected at a meeting for a specific time, and at the end of this time gave the position to a successor. The function was not therefore hereditary and in the eyes of the local community had to be earned.

Nature on the altar of the ancient Prusians

The classic historiograph Henryk Lowmianski stated: “To day there seem to be no doubt that the rationalist theories of the rise of religion are in sharp contrast with the spiritual needs of early man, who, being mystically minded, could not understand happening around him by the work of mysterious, unnatural forces”. The Prusians were subject to this unnatural and mysterious force, which in the eyes of the researchers into their religion were considered to be the last of the pagan Balts in the Europe of the middle ages. The chronicler of the Teutonic Order wrote the truth when

he said that the Prusians, not knowing God, worshipped the sun, the moon, the stars, thunder and lightning, and also four legged creatures.



3. The forest surrounding of the Prusai.

The most evident example of the attitude of the old Prusians towards nature was their respect for the forest. It was the forest which took a singular place in the beliefs of the Prusians and their kinfolk Yatviagans, as “in the Baltic mythology - as claims Gregory Bialunski - there was a strict link between cults and forest”. Guided by such an attitude, the Prusians with obvious distain took an axe to cut down a tree, which the Knights of black Cross considered to be a sign of inherent laziness. They did not know, or wish to know the motivation of such an attitude, which was dictated by a belief that in every tree there was the soul of a dead person or one about to be born. Old trees which were witnesses of past events, especially oaks, were subject to particular veneration, as were lindeus, which were thought to be occupied by the spirits of women. As far as the need to take axe to a tree, a Prusian would fint ask the spirit living in the tree for forgiveness. Furthermore, in spite of difficulties in ploughing, quite often a stump remaining after a tree was cut was not removed, as this was thought to leave a spirit at least some place to go to. It was also forbidden to break branches or removing the bark from trees, because the ancient Prusians were convinced that a tree, like every other living thing, suffered from wounds it received and would eventually die.

How much better was the behaviour of the ancient Prusians in this respect than that of primitive XXIst century vandals!

In the course of time the beliefs associated with forest were modified and only trees associated with holy places were eventually placed under strict protection, but the feelings of care for trees expressed over the centuries remained. The thesis expressed by Darius Liszewski appears to be correct that “it is the system of religious belief of the Prusians that did not let the changing of the extremely rich environment

of the primeval forest into (...) a sparsely forested and naturally poor forming landscape”. So for many centuries until the XIIIth century the ancient forest, which covered over 90% of Prus territories, continued in almost untouched state and only in times of invasion and colonisation was subject to rabid exploitation. Only memories are left of the primeval forests, but some forest group have still remained which let us imagine the forest as it was when it was inhabited by pagans gods. One of this was Medinis, from Prusian *meddin*- the forest.

The activities of this god, or as some would prefer, a forest spirit, came to the Prusians due to the wealth of the forest, the plentiful animal population as well as the mysterious mood created by the cries of animals, the swaying of trees and cracking of branches. The forest, which is also worth stressing, proved to be a great supporter of the Prusians during their conquest by the Teutonic Order, whose patrols lost themselves in the ancient growths, wandering amongst the thick growths of pines, firs, larches, yews, oaks, beeches, birch and limes.

The cults of fire, water, stones, animals and greens, and everything which was an element of the nature surrounding them were also common.

In the time when in Western Europe the towers of magnificent gothic cathedrals were rising in the sky, the religiously disposed Prusians, indeed also other Balts, churches were unknown. The places of worship and placing gifts were only forest, and in particular the holy places therein, where the holy fire burnt. This was a place where under the penalty of death no unauthorised persons could enter and where even broken and dying trees were not removed.



4 The bison hunting.

The choice of location for a “holy wood” was decided, according to prof. Bialunski, “by an unusual form of a tree, which then became a central point of such a place. An unusual shape was almost a sign of the presence of a holy entity. These included trees with branches growing into the trunk or else divided, and then growing

back together, or trees with unusual growths”. Such trees were most often oaks and under them the holy man carried out his rites.

However there is not clarity in the question of the old Prusian panteon, or, if one prefers, Olympus, and this because of XVIth century and later Prussian-German authors studying the religion of the Prusians. They were led by Simon Grunau: “the greatest falsificator in the field of the history of the Balts” as he was described by prof. Lowmianski. The falshoods were based on the introduction to Prus mythology and their Lithuanian neighbours the figures of antique greco-roman gods, which clearly had no, because they could not have, any links with Zeus, Athena, Apollo or Persefone. Where was the Prusia of the middle ages, and where was antique Greece?

The base, on which something like that could grow, was in the era of the renaissance, a fascination with antique culture. This gave rise to many difficulties to later researchers of the religion of the old Balts, including Prusians. As was the case with their habits and customs, so in the case of questions of a religious nature, exit from the labirinth proved to be reconstruction based on more truthful sources than the inspired by fantasy work of XVIth century scribes. And also in this case these were edicts and prohibitions aimed at rooting out pagan beliefs, as declared the then hierarchs of the church. Even in the middle of XVth century meetings and the celebrations of religious customs in woodland scenery were forbidden by bishop Michael of Sambia. This was not the last of its type but the verdict of a church dignitary confirming strong links with paganism.

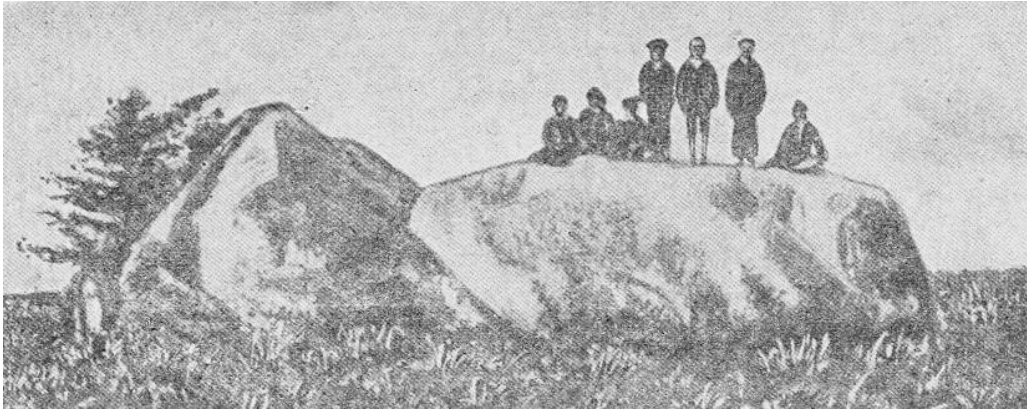
Another problem which had to be overcome on the road to real knowledge about the mythical old Prusian pantheon, was the opinion of a XIVth century chronicler of the knights of the Cross that, in contrast to the Slavs, the Prusians had no gods known by name. In the light of later research it appears that this opinion was based on the simple lack of knowledge of the chronicler.

From later sources it would appear that this pantheon was formed by many figures of gods, goddesses and demons. At their head stood Ockopirmus, or the first among all the gods of heaven and ruler of other gods. Subservient to him were amongst others known under their Latin names the gods Patollus-god of death, and Potrimpus-god of magic, ruler of life and fertility and also of the waters of the sea and of lakes, and also the Lithuanian sounding name of Perkunas-ruler of storms and wars. This was not the only proof of religious links between the beliefs of Prusians and Lithuanians, or even more widely - Balts. The fact that Perkunas-the leading god of the baltic pantheon, whose holy tree was the oak-appeared in Latvian language under the name Perkonos, in Finnish as Perkele, and to the Slavs was known as Perun, would point to his genesis as pre indoeuropean, and this because of the similarity to perk, which means oak.

In the opinion of some chroniclers these three gods formed something in the manner of the holy trinity resembling the old Scandinavian gods in the holy building in Uppsala.

An item of important cultification was the goddess of earth, who gave birth, fed and admitted to herself after death “in her interior there existed a world of perpetual happiness, where one could rest together with those close to him after the difficulties of life on earth. The earth, in the imagination of the Prusians never had a concrete

personality, giving it homage was by worshipping all vital forces of nature” writes Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn. And further “in line with the beliefs of the Prusians all their world was full of living creatures, animals, birds and trees, which were inhabited by the souls of their ancestors (...) Ghosts filled their houses in the form of crawling snakes, frogs jumping into their rooms and hiding in corners, and as birds they sat on trees and under the stiles of their roofs. And then the Prusians, who also recognised as sacred fields, waters and forests according to their wisdom did not dare to interfere with the spirits”.



5. The glacier stones in Warmia. 9.0m long 7.0 wide

One should know that the Prusians believed in immortality of souls which usually passed into animals or trees. This helps to explain their motives when dealing with flora and fauna.

The Prusians addressed their prayers to the economic gods, as states prof. Fisher, which were represented amongst others by Zeminele, who extended protection over ploughing, planting, picking and milling grain, as well as putting animals out to pasture.

There were also very specifically orientated gods, for particular “branches”, such as keeping horses, cattle, bees, fish, grain or gardens. “Success in the economic sphere of man’s action(...) wrote prof. Lowmianski - depended on his attitude to a given god”. In a very exhaustive system of peoples beliefs there was also room for *veles*, or water and forest demons, such as fauns, naids, driads and other such mythical beings. Gods of lower rank were also incorporated in the system, and amongst them were the tiny dwarfs - *kauke*, who hid in places in the household and were friendly and caring towards the home.

This brings to mind the common, in to-days Thailand, beliefs in the existence of demons, apparitions and other non-wordly beings commonly called *phi* or ghosts, which can be good or bad? And the good ones are placed by Thais on plinths before banks, hotels and other important objects: a house of ghosts - *sala phra phum* - the size of our bird cage, with the burning of wood sticks and making garlands of flowers. It emerges that these Thai *phi* belong to the panteon of Hindu gods. Do the Prusian *kauke* evolve from them?

Not all the gods were the objects of worship by the majority of Prus society. There were also gods which can be called regional and to them belongs the

worshipped above all by the people of Galindians the goddess Curche vel Kurko, who, as writes prof. Bialunski “is the only named for certain Prusian god known from source”. What about the many names of other gods found in written sources? It can in any case confirm the shortage of sources concerning knowledge about the spiritual life of Prusians.



6. A Prusai priest with an offering.

Not all the gods were the objects of worship by the majority of Prus society. There were also gods which can be called regional and to them belongs the worshipped above all by the people of Galindians the goddess Curche vel Kurko, who, as writes prof. Bialunski “is the only named for certain Prusian god known from source”. What about the many names of other gods found in written sources? It can in any case confirm the shortage of sources concerning knowledge about the spiritual life of Prusians.

Thus the noted by name on the pages of chronicle, Kurko: The goddess of food and drink, to whom offerings were made of wheat, rye flower, milk and honey. It was to have been a vegetarian god, living in lanes of wheat and retreating in harvest time, to hide in the last sheaf of cut wheat. The name Kurko stems from the Prusian *kurt* - to build, to create, and thus it signified the creator. To-days historians see in this a personification of the creator of a good harvest. This is all the more justified that according to the relations of chroniclers the Prusians used to offer gifts to this goddess after the harvest. A much larger sphere of competence by Kurko is given as a hypothesis by historians crediting this god with the name of the god of heaven, or else the mother of gods.

It should be noted in this context the fact that Kurko was held to be a female goddess, with which one can connect the localisation of this Prusian goddess with the locations of this Marian cult in the Teutonic Order period and later. An example of this can be the Marian sanctuary known to-day in Holy Lipka. As was proved by Jan Powierski, this could be confirmed by the fact that the goddess Kurko was linked with a linden tree forest, and it is known from other sources that the linden tree was a holy one inhabited by the spirits of women.

TABLE 1. Excavations from the grave of a gothic princess. Weklice II-III century A.D.



Excavated grave



Fragments of bronze needle



“S” shaped cramp - gold



Gold corals



**Button fastening - gold plated silver
Portraits of the Ceasars - Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.**

TABLE 2. Excavation from the grave of a gothic princess. Weklice II-III century A.D.



A pair fastenings -silver



A bow shape fastening - silver



Twin bracelets - silver



Bucket - bronze



Bowl terrasigillata-clay



Goblet scyphos type-clay



Belt buckle - bronz

Many historians have pointed out the clear similarity of the name of this Prusian god with the sanscrit word *Krko* , which meant the same as a sorceress or a witch. This would be yet another item proving the indoeuropean provenance of the culture of the Balts, which includes the Prusians.

An unusual paradox depends on the fact that on one hand there is a lack in the sources of certified names of the gods of the ancient Prusians, and on the other hand there are plenty of place names linked to the names of these gods. An example can be Kurko and names of places, such as Kurken from German times, and to-days Kurkovo, Kurkovko or Kurki. This would only mean the confirmation of the unusual durability of geographical names on Prusian soil. According to tradition the key role in carrying out religious observances fell to the priests. Although this role was normally undertaken by the home owner when celebrating household feasts, when celebrating with the gods and negotiation between them and society, the priests were close to professionalism, with a very wide area of responsibility. One of these was keeping the eternal fire burning in the holy wood, another-calling public meetings or managing the religious celebrations. From various sources it appears that the ancient Prusians priesthood also included priestesses who were unmarried and living near the holy places: their mission was to act as go - betweens between women and the gods.



7 The Holy Oak, Romove.

A substantial careere was made by a priest known under the name of Krive, who lived in the territory of former Nadrovia, somewhere north of lake Mamry, in a place called Romove. This priest, also found in some sources under the name of Crive, achieved great respect not only amongst Prusians, but also other Baltic people, as he was famous for seeing the dead, prophesying the future, and other unusual powers. Because of this he achieved great status with the usually reliable chronicler Peter of Dusburg, in his eyes having the rank of Pope, whilst Romove was linked with Roma, or Rome. Instead of the pastoral staff this “Prus Pope” used a long stick of a strange shape called *krivule* and presumably from this stems his nick name, as it was not a first name. In the light of the holy fire Krive used to accept gifts in the form

of one third of the loot seized from war expeditions, after which, in line with tradition, he threw the gifts on a burning pyre. His job was also to offer gifts to the gods.

A holy oak also rose above Romove, and served as the seat of the Prus trinity, the gods Patollus, Potrimpus and Perkunas.

The chronicler noted that: “ and to this oak, under which the snake Potrimpus rested, came women begging him to make them pregnant again”.

Under this oak Krive offered his victims, which were expected from him by the gods, and which function was possibly the most important duty of all the priests. The offerings, which could be clean or bloody, eg. from prisoners of war, including the Knights of the Cross taken prisoner. According to Alexander Bruckner a Teutonic knight was dressed in fine clothes and armour, given knightly apparell, was put on a horse, whose legs were tied to stakes and a wooden pyre was put up, which was finally put on fire. Other Teutonic Order prisoners were tied to the trees and put to death with spears blows. Offerings were also made from horses, bulls, rams, pigs and chickens usually of black colouring.

Then highly superstitious Prusians were not averse to wanting to know the future and this vital need was fulfilled by priests playing the role of soothsayers. The future they foretold from stars, pouring hot wax on water and lead, from burning fires, from rising smoke, from glass, from human and cattle blood, from entrails and from froth on beer. This was all accompanied by highly mysterious rituals and magic movements. However, one should not wonder at the Prusians of the middle ages, as even in the XXIth century it is not difficult to find people of similar mentality and believing in the possibility of knowing their fate. The Prusian *wajdle* , of the former soothsayers could to-day find full employment.

With fortune-telling as it always has been...

Peter of Dusburg noted the case of the tragedy which a well regarded fortune teller brought on her believers and which was presented by prof. Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn: “We remember that at certain time in Galindia there came an unusually high number of child births, and the general assembly decided that all newly born girls be put to death, and that the mothers who refused this would have their breasts cut off. The desperate (...) Galindian women went to this fortune teller asking for advice as to how punish their cruel husbands. The soothsayer called all the important men of Galindia region and told the will of the gods as revealed to her, that without arms and shields they should attack Slav land and wage war on Christians. Certain in the infallability of their gods and their priestess all who could went on such an expedition. And indeed the surprised inhabitants were unable to defend themselves. Thus the Galindians, with huge amounts of loot, prisoners, horses and cattle merrily took the road home. During the return some of the prisoners managed to escape and reveal that in the whole pagan force there were no arms and not a single shield. Encouraged by this the Christians overtook the Galindians, killed them all and recovered the loot and all the prisoners”.

As not everything which was noted by the chroniclers found confirmation in the facts, it can be assumed that this story may also belong to the category of legends unfriendly to the Prusians so as to justify all the works carried out by the Teutonic Knights.

Various magicians, under the name *wajdli*, were popular as the Prusian people highly ranked all sort of magic works, which survived on the territory of the later East Prussia until the XVIIth century. They were, it was thought, helpful in finding horse thieves. To the magicians also belonged the job of sanctifying ancient jewellery-*seitai*, which were in the shape of boars tusks, and if one believes the relations of Tacitus - were already in popular use.

To the cast of priests belonged the faith healers who wandered from distanced from each other homesteads to practice their charlatan works. Also belonging to them were the herbalists - *zelininkai*, whose knowledge of the properties of herbs was far more useful to people than the oaths of the faith healers.

As is evident from all this, quite a lot is known about religion and beliefs of the pagan Prusians in spite of the fact that this particular subject did not absorb the chroniclers and scribes. For this reason research about their spiritual culture continues. They will not however change the current state of knowledge, according to which the source of their pagans beliefs - as with all Balts, and many other peoples of early middle ages Europe - was nature in all its aspects.

III. PRUSIAN EVERYDAY LIFE

Life under straw thatches

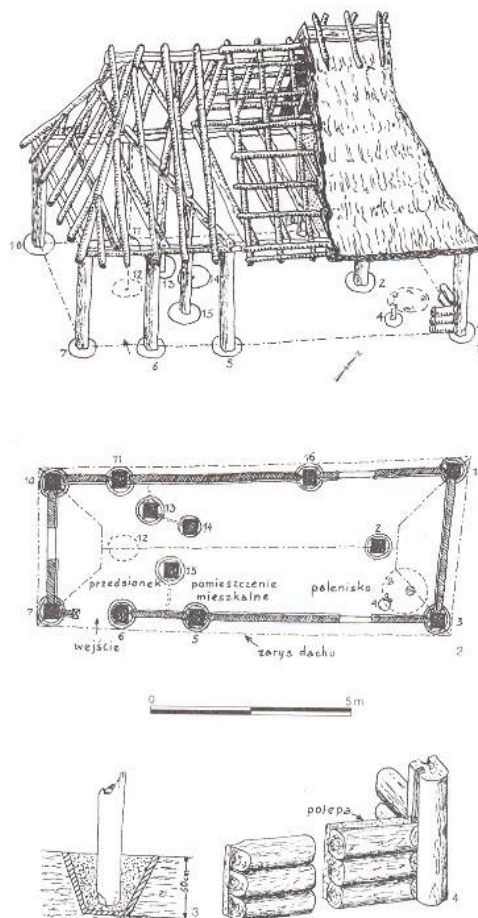
Thought to be given on what Wulfstan, travelling along the southern shores of the Baltic, based his description that the land of the Ests, who can be considered to be Prusians, "is very large and contains many towns". This statement is not in line with the then settlement structure, about which to this day not much is known, but what is known excludes any form of urbanisation.

Middle ages chroniclers often used their licence to fantasize, which can be seen as a prototype of to-days news media.

The stark landscape of Prusia was broken by isolated homesteads strewn around uninhabited land on the edge of forests in which the inhabitants lived a generally peaceful life, tilling their soil. As the family grew new homesteads emerged, creating settlements in the form of a square in the centre and an holy oak. Such a settlement, or Prusian *kaym*, together with surrounding buildings forming economic objects, which were around the manor house of the local chief, may have been taken by Wulfstan as a fort, or, if one prefers, a town.

This was so at any rate until the XIIIth century. Nobody in ancient Prusia had heard of villages in our understanding. And to-day not too much would be known about Prus buildings if not for descriptions of Slav buildings left by Dlugosz, Kallimach and other chroniclers, as they probably did not differ much from Prusian houses.

The similarity probably really existed, but the question arises who followed who: did the Prusians follow the Slavs or the Slavs the Prusians, as the first arrived in this region of Europe many centuries before the latter. “From the descriptions it would appear - stated prof. Fisher - that houses were built with wood and straw. They had an oval shape, slightly narrowing from the bottom to the top, fairly low, there was a space for the smoke to escape, and sometimes even a form of chimney (...). House types had various names. There were names similar to the Lithuanian *namas* and *troba* as is indicated by the Prus nomenclature of places and people such as Troben, Namkaut. *Namus* was a house without fireplace, only with hearth (...). A window was called a *lanxto*, which in Lithuanian *langalis* - means that it was formerly also a hole for the escape of smoke(...). Under this window was found a hearth, usually in a centre of the room, called a *pellano*(...). Resinous torches (*luckis*) were used to give light to a room (...). We have many names to describe a fire place. When a fire burnt on a high plinth built of stones (*stabis*), this was called a *stabni*, or a stone fireplace. A bakers fire was called by another name, *umnode* (...). In the middle of a stone fire place there was a hollow, into which the mistress of the house in the evening placed material with which to start the morning fire, and covered it with ash. The women of Nadrovia spoke words during this action to mean holy fire, “I am covering you beautifully, so that you will not be angry with me”.



8 House reconstruction 1000-550 years BC. Foundation were the field stones.

From the same source it is known that apart from living quarters the Prusians also built commercial objects, including containers for grain, barns and baths, in which fires were based on stones from the fields, on which, after they were heated up, water was poured. This was a forerunner of to-day's Finnish sauna. Stables and wheat dryers were also built. The Prusians obtained water from a well, which was built around the source. A description of the relics of these buildings remains in the chronicles of the XVIIth century ethnograph Praetorius and other researchers into the remains of the antique Prusians. All this confirmed highly developed building skills and a similar level of interior finish in Prus settlements. Being the oldest inhabitants in this region of Europe, the Prusians did not imitate anyone; indeed, they could be used as a reference for others.

Everything which is known on this subject to-day does not give total knowledge on the subject of Prusian buildings, with which subject - which is worth nothing here - has little in common with the so called Prusian wall, or a construction formed by a wooden skeleton frame which is filled with a brick, mud and reeds or other building materials. In Poland the prusian wall has remained amongst others in the Hel peninsula and other parts of mainly northern Poland. The name prusian wall is Polish, as in German it is known as *fachwerk*, in English-frame work, in French-*cloison de charpente*, and in Latin - *craticii parietes*, as this type of building construction emerged in the ancient world, strictly speaking in the Greek Mycenae and Tiryns, and later in Rome.

From the XIIth century it started to appear in Europe north of the Alps, but not until the shortage of wood in the XIXth century did it become popular in many countries. It is not inconceivable that this type of building construction was also known to the Prusians.

If anything is known in detail about Prusian buildings, then according to prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn this knowledge is due to archeology, "as the trained eye of the archeologist can understand the darkened marks left by impaled beams, the remains of log house walls, fire remains, caves in which grain and food were kept and stone underpinning of some houses. Very useful in the course of such research is the structure of the remains of earthenware items, broken or damaged and thrown away, which survived in the earth, and now, in items of ploughing, are thrown to the surface". On the basis of the results of excavations it can be said that apart from the house of the master, his family and servants, these solitary Prus homesteads were also composed of sometimes numerous outbuildings whose economic functions were very different. They were surrounded by fencing made of field stones, the whole reminding one of a type of fort called *buttan*, or house which was ruled by the father of the family *buttantaws*. He was addressed also as *butta rikians*, when this second word meant master, ruler, lord. According to the writings of Dlugosz, which are confirmed by later archeologists, the basic building material of the Prusians was wood, but the foundation of houses was from stone. This shows the high skills of the Prusians in the domain of house building.

8

House plan (reconstruction 1000-550 B.C.)

Although it is not known how the roof of a Prus building looked, much indicates that it could have been a double fall one, sometimes with an open space in the high wall. To finish the roof the Prussians used not only straw and reeds, but also dranic, a type of plank.

Log constructions were a commonly used building technique with houses standing on poles hammered into earth or the bottom of lakes. They formed excellent protection against rain and cold, and also from wild animals. These pole buildings were used above all by bees keepers, herdsmen and guards. The tradition of this type of building go back to the distant past, when whole settlements in the bays of lakes arose on log poles. Apart from raising settlements above the ground earth dwellings were also used, which were very useful as security bolt holes in times of wars and attacks.

Less is known about the arrangements for the interior of Prussian cottages, as this subject did not interest the middle ages chroniclers writing about Prussians. However, the subject is not totally without hope, and this because of the tools and effects of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries remaining in the region of Kaliningrad and Malbork. These tables, stools and chests formed the furniture of the houses of the wealthy.

A discovered fragment of a chest is witness to a high level of aesthetics, as “these household effects were carved and had geometric ornaments with design particularly heavily used in the ceramics of that time, mostly a zig-zag wave line(...) The name *stalis* (...) confirms the existence of tables”. It was in this light that things were seen by the ethnograph Adam Fisher who studied the Prussians for many years.

More knowledge on this subject is revealed by the results of recent excavations. From them it can be seen that the most important and central place in a Prussian cottage was the hearth or fireplace, and the smoke went out through a hole in the roof. Around the hearth stood utensils with food, and nearby, on lines, hung cradles. Along the walls were found, covered with furs, seats from stones and earth used by day for sitting and by night for sleeping.

“Beds, and the word in many cases needs to be understood as a place to sleep, were in the middle ages items common amongst the Prussians, being made from a wood frame with a covering of leaves, grass and straw. Pillows were also used, these were called “*balsinis*”. This word has the same source as a saddle, which in the Prus language was called “*balgnan*”. Probably then in the beginning instead of a pillow it was a saddle that was first used to put under the head. No doubt soft coverings or furs were used for covering(...).

An addition to the arrangement of the interior of a Prussian house were places to sit at by the table or by the hearth: usually tree stumps were used for this purpose, though benches and stools were also known. The interior was lit up by the burning fire or else resin torches, usually pine” declares prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn on the basis of archeologist works carried out.

The quality of life in Prusia in the middle ages did not vary much from those enjoyed by neighbouring peoples, and in certain aspects could even be higher.

Work in the field, in the forest and in the household

The early majestic and magnificent paysage of old Prusia did not go hand in hand with the commercial usefulness of these lands and thus it would be difficult to count Prusia in the category of economic powers. Farming, which formed the basis of all their economy, could not suffice to build such a power. Besides how much tillable land, meadows and grazing land did they have, since four fifths of their territories were covered by ancient forests and marshes? Some researchers therefore claim that the farming industry of the Prusians had an extensive character, but other insist that the repeated by some historians myth is imputing them with a low level of agrotechnical culture.

The average size of the land coverage belonging to one household did not exceed 20 hectares divided by wooded and non farmable areas. Larger land areas can only be talked about starting from the XIIIth century, meaning from the time of the Teutonic conquest.

The Prusians used a farming rotation system, using a two field, and later a three field rotation. The land was tilled by horses or oxen with wooden tilling implements, and wheat was cut with scythes, after which they were tied in sheafs and lined in stacks. A view of fields at the time of harvest was therefore similar to our fields before the introduction of harvesters and combines.

The Prusians planted their parcels of land with rye, wheat, millet, barley and above all oats - *wyse*, from which they made their favourite meal *meltan*, and with which they fed horses. In their gardens they cultivated peas, beans, beetroot, ruta bug and turnips which was considered to be the highest rated vegetable by the Prusians. In the orchards there were apples, pears, plums and cherries. Looking at things from this side, the Prusians were not behind other middle ages peoples.

A recognised speciality of the Prusians was the breeding horses, which were considered to be a holy animal. The white horse achieved a paramount position. In order to stop or at least make their stealing more difficult, the Prusians had the habit of branding ownership signs on their backs. They also bred oxen, red horned cattle, pigs, rams and sheep, and also chickens and ducks.



9 An extinct ox by Z. Herberstein from the XVI century.

The plentitude of forests tempted the Prusians with all sorts of animals and thus hunting was no less important for the Prusians. The forests were full of large beasts: aurochs, bears, elks, beavers and wild horses, not counting small animals.

Unfortunately man is a rapacious beast and the wild horse was killed in the XVIIth century, the bear and aurochs in the XVIIIth, and the beaver in the XIXth. The importance of hunting in the economic structure of old Prusia was demonstrated by the results of archeological excavations. Due to them it was possible to uncover from the earth a whole rich hunting arsenal, including spears, axes, traps, knives and other implements.

Cezary Tryk poses an intriguing question: “Did the Prusians know about hunting with falcons before the coming of the Teutonic knights?” And he answers: “In written sources confirmation about the existence of falconry in Prusia (...) There are a few mentions in the Orders chronicles. In the chronicles of Peter of Dusburg and of Nicholas of Jeroszyn, and also later in the *chronicle of Grand Master of Marinius* we find mentions that during the funeral rites of Prusians, birds of prey were burnt together with the body of the dead” and that “ the placing of birds of prey on the pyre together with the body confirms the attraction of this type of hunting to the Prusians”. It can also be assumed as fairly certain that hunts of this type were carried out by *Prus nobiles*, or the upper caste.

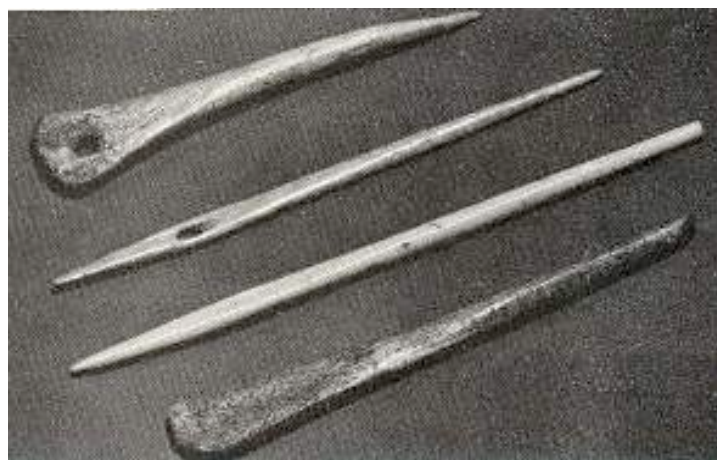
The forest also attracted Prusians engaged in bee keeping , for just as mares milk on the table of the rich, drinkable mead had to be on the table of the commoners, and wax was very useful. From this stems the observance of the law of ownership of hives, as a hive found in the forest became the ownership of the finder. The Prusians also mastered the art of attracting the hives of bees to the holes in the bark of old pines. The Prusians bee keeper would go to the forest for many weeks in order to clean up the hives, check on the bees and taking the honey and the wax. The importance of bee keeping is confirmed again by the fact that from the Prusian word *bartis* - barc comes the name of the land Bartia, and the word *druvis*- a non -naturally made opening to the hive gave the beginning to the name of the land of Nadrovia. At least this is what is believed by experts in the field.



10. The method of honey gathering by the Prusai.

No doubt the beekeepers emanating from the Kurp lands learned their trade with the Prusians. One can even say more: it is from the Prusians, via Kurp intermediaries, that the Slavs obtained their knowledge of beekeeping and making mead to drink. One has to remember that the Prusians were many centuries more experienced and could share that their techniques with the younger newcomers. One could also say that in addition both Prusians and Kurps had a joint love of freedom, as neither had ever suffered from feudal serfdom or slavery; and elements of women's clothing, as the characteristic tall and round Kurp hats would indicate their Prusian origin.

Fishing was a separate branch of the Prus economy, to-day it would be called inland activity, as sea expeditions with nets did not lie in the nature of the Prusians. They were very much more likely to go to lakes and ponds using implements such as hooks, pots, scoops, spears, fishing rods and nets, as well as other tools in summer, and hauled on lines in winter. The Prusians learnt the art of raising fish in still waters. The Teutonic Order's chronicler noted that due to such fish farming the inhabitants of one of the forts in Nadrovia withstood a siege of nine years. All these and other works were carried out in summer, were a sideline activity, and did not lead to schooling in the profession of fisherman or beekeeper. The Prusian summer started with the disappearance of ice on rivers and lakes and ended at the moment of the waters being covered with the first ice. In winter the Prusians concentrated on working in the homestead.



11. Zubronajcie, Suwalki . Western settlement. Needles and small awl. Bone length of 5, 6.2, 6.5 and 7 cm. III - II century BC.

At the time when women sat to knit and form clothes from linen and wool, the men started to make horse harnesses by sewing skins, and furs and shoes. To treat the skins they used a red colourant obtained from warms called *wormyan* or *warmum*, from which words some researchers extract the name Warmia.

Others worked in the forge in treating iron, from which various tools and weapons were forged. It appears that in the territory of ancient Prusia there existed iron ore from which iron called *gelso* was formed. This skill belonged to almost every villager, who was also a foundry worker serving in the forge. One of these units dated to VIth or VIIth century was unearthed in Wyszenbork near Mragowo. This iron

making fire plant consisted of a hole dug in the ground, of a width of about 45cms., and about it an earthenware chimney was positioned. The chimney was filled with layers of iron ore, lime and wood coal. Next the coal was burnt in the chimney, and the availability of air was adjusted by opening provisionally blocked up holes in the sides, which were situated at various heights. In this manner a temperature of about 1200-1400 degrees Celsius could be obtained within few hours. Then the process of the reduction of oxides in the iron began (...) In the upper part of the "chimney" the iron was formed (...) After cooling the fire place, the brick of iron was formed, the so-called *kes*, which was next cleaned by hot forging. From one such "chimney" it was possible to obtain an iron brick weighing 3.5 to 5 kg. which probably was enough to meet the needs of the homestead for a year" presents the technology of old Prusian iron making prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn.

For these reasons ancient Prusia was covered by net of forges and iron workshops, whose production did not always cover needs, particularly military ones. The forges also produced coloured metals such as lead, silver, copper and tin. It therefore seems justified to state that the Prusians achieved a high degree of evolution in metallurgy. The XVIIIth century "Elbing Dictionary" would confirm this, mentioning the names of several dozen Prusian articles of iron. No wonder then that a black smith - *wutris* was held in high esteem by society. Iron was not used in buildings.

Deep surprise was caused not only to foreign traders, but also to Teutonic Knights, by the fact that the known to the Prusians gold and silver was not of major value to them. This can be construed in many ways, but could also indicate a fair level of wealth among Prusians, who easily did without money, although it was known to them since Roman times.

A high level of Prusian artisans work was represented by earthenware, which delivered fired earthenware for domestic use. This level was ensured by using the earthenware ring, well known in Prusia. Prior to this clay earthenware was formed by hand. Goblets formed in this way were used by Prusians to make toasts on very many occasions. Let us go back to the archeologists knowledge on the subject of earthenware: "They were made of clay, to which were added small quantities of finely sieved broken stones or sand. The outer surfaces were covered with fine clay, which after roasting took on a beautiful black or red colour. Almost every item was richly decorated with various patterns of scars, lines, waves, circles, holes and stamps. An outstanding design was represented by the already mentioned goblets on empty legs writes prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn about the excavation works carried out. All this indicates not only about using highly developed and original Prusian production technology, but also about the deep artistic taste of the Prusians, who in their respect also showed something to impress other peoples. Similarly, they were no strangers to blacksmiths work, foundries, stone breaking, fur making, cooperage, carpentry, bronzing or products showing subtle artistic skill of female adornments from metal.

Thus in the time free from work in the fields, in the forest and on the water and also from repulsing frequent attacks from foreign invaders, the Prusians spent the life of very hard working people.

TABLE 3. Weklice-excavations from other graves. II-IIIcentury A.D.



Necklace - yellow amber



Necklace -yellow amber



Bracelet - bronze



Bracelet 2,5 twist -



Bracelet - bronze



Fastenings - bronze



12. Necklace - bronze, glass, amber.
First half of III century.



13. Necklace - bronze, red enamel. III century.



14. Breast string. Bronz II/IIIcentury.



15. Gilded glass beads. II/III century.

Festivities in the Prusian style

In a land equipped by nature with a beautiful landscape but relatively poor from the side of economically useful assets, the ordinary people, apart from some years of poor harvests, did not generally suffer from hunger. On the contrary, this land was able to feed everyone, and sometimes feast quite splendidly, and not only in the circle of the nearest family. This could testify to their highly developed culinary art, which they presented happily to guests coming from afar. A Prusian table was therefore very well equipped with food, and there were plenty of feasting occasions for this.

These were above all family festivities as well as celebrations and holy days for very different reasons, such as for example, the falling at the end of the summer the end of work in the fields. This was probably the most important feast day for the Prusians. Quite obviously the feast did not take place without prayers of thanksgiving and more than opulent banquets. These, together with heavy drinking by men and equal representation by women, led to the post-harvest merry making to last for many nights, as, in line with accepted custom, the Prusians were used to make merry from evening till morning. It is difficult to understand how it happened that a permanent alliance did not take place between two peoples so like each other in liking to drink as the Prusians and the Poles!

Equally important but a less boistrous celebration was the one linked to food festivities in the spring at the moment of the first work in the fields. A family banquet also took place on the occasion of births, weddings and funerals. "And for all this time - related Wulfstan - when the deceased is still at home, they drink and make merry until the day in which they burn him".

However, it would be wrong to think that the life of the Prusians would be composed only of merrymaking and drinking, about which particularly the Teutonic Order chroniclers wrote with great glee. It was not like that, as all the Lucullus type feasts and libations had to be worked hard for both in summer and winter. The every day menu was quite simple and straight forward. For this reason knowledge on the subject comes not so much from the notes of chroniclers, who were not interested in what was ordinary, but from the hard work of archeologists and ethnographers.

With the simplicity of food came the simplicity of the table utensils, which were usually limited to clay items of various shapes and wood plates and spoons.

The basis of Prusian food were agricultural products, mostly grain, which was milled on stones into flour, which in turn was made into various grades of bread. There were very many of these, because for every feast a different type of bread was prepared. The rich assortment of bread would also be confirmed by the fact that there were different names for the bread in different Prus dialects. The most common included thick wholemeal *somepisenis* and rye *geits*. Bread dough was prepared by a Prusian housewife using a wood bowl *gnode* and sometimes after adding finely milled bark to obtain a specific taste, was put into an oven, using a wooden spade *pettis*. The bread oven was located in a separate building *maltuve*, where the

housewife stored flour and where hand and rotary quorns were found. Apart from bread housewives also prepared grain cakes, covering them in leaves and burying them in ash.

Very popular was a meal consisting of wetted, dried and milled oats called *meltan*. Something like this remained until recently in Byelorussia, where a sharply tasting jelly drunk with sweet milk was prepared from oats. Dunking, drying and milling grain was a popular way in in the Prusian kitchen of preparing thick semi-fluid drinks with a mild taste of fermentation. Grits was boiled from steppe beaten grain.

Vegetables from household gardens also appeared on Prus tables, particularly peas, broad beans and turnips, which the Prusians valued most, and also pigweed, nettles and sorrel. The menu was enriched by fruits from the forest such as black berries, black currants, raspberries, and wild strawberries.

Fruits were dried for winter use so as to spice up flour based dishes.

The ancient Prusians knew about the technology of extracting oil from poppy seeds, flax and hemp.

A seperate chapter in the Prusian menu were dishes from cattle, non-homed animals, sheep, goats and above all horses. Consumption of the probaly highest prized horse meat attracted the attention of middle ages chroniclers. The Prusians also had a liking for wild birds, which they brought home from hunting. And if anything at times should be missing from the table, it certainly was not meat, which was plentiful every day and in every conceivable form: from raw to boiled, baked or dried in smoke for winter and kept in cellars under the cottages.

From the beams hung bundles of sausages, and clay receptacles contained a soup, iuse, made from powdered pieces of dried meat. The name of this soup will remind ethnographs of the Polish "juha". Finally there was no lack of fish, of which large quantities were obtained from lakes and less often from the sea, and which could be consumed-as was the case with meat from animals-raw, fried, baked and dried.



16. A filtration utensil. Clay III c. B.C.



17. Arms and tools. Iron II-III c. A.D.

Cattle raising enabled the production of milk and therefore cheeses *suris* butter *auctan*, but before it found its way to the table it first served Prusian “elegant” to treat their hair and skin. It also became popular to drink fresh milk *poadamynan* and sour milk *ructan-dadan*. “The very old tradition of white food popularity amongst the Prusians - notes Prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn - is indicated by the fact that all the names concerning it have original Prusian etymology and have not been borrowed from foreign languages”. Since we are talking about liquid drinks, it should be repeated after the Teutonic Order’s chronicler that in common use there were three types, namely water, mead and mares milk. The Teutonic Knights omitted one more and very popular drink amongst the Prusians, namely milk mixed with animal blood.

Drinking water was brought from the lakes by girls in large clay jars which were placed by the entrance to the house.

In turn mead was a drink, as was stressed by the IXth century traveller Wulfstan, of both free men and serfs. This was mead prepared with water, boiled and left to gain an acidic flavour. After flavouring with cones from wild hops, the drink was reminiscent of alcohol, though it had nothing to do with at first the unknown to Prusians beer. Only with time they were to adopt from neighbouring Polans, together with the name *piwis*, a product made from fermented barley.

Mare’s milk, about which Dlugosz wrote that they “drunk horses milk, and this usually turns the head” must have been fermented to have these properties. This liquid, about which it is known that it was favoured only by the wealthy, attracted the attention of Wulfstan and all later chroniclers, as it was not known in the countries of Western Europe, and only to the tribes inhabiting the steppes of the East. Could this be atavism brought in many centuries before from the Volga and the Dnieper ?

The chroniclers also noted a liking for the drinking of milk mixed with blood. Helmold wrote on this subject that “milk and blood serves them as a liquid, and even as a type with which they can get drunk”.

Dlugosz went further, repeating after Peter of Dusburg, that “a visitor or friend was not pleased by them if they let him go sober”! The same Peter of Dusburg wrote “if guests arrive, they give them the best they can. And in their house there is no drink and no food which they would not gladly give. They believe that they have not been sufficiently welcoming and looking after their guests if they did not get them drunk to the stage of vomiting”. Does this not recall the old time hospitality of Vilno, when the host forced guests to consumption, and the latter replied “thank you, I now feel unwell”.

The Prusian community, fed in its own way, which archeological and antropological research confirm, was in an excellent state of health judged by the standards of contemporary Europe, and the men lived to a ripe old age, if they did not perish in an armed conflict. The women also had a marked resistance to disease, as long as they did not die due to problems in childbirth. The mass and murderous epidemics which devastated great areas of middle ages Europe did not strike in Prusia.

“ In any case - writes prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn - life here was healthier than on Slav land, though death was easier. Easier because a Prusian was accustomed to death and despised it. Also important, it appears an influence on the state of health of the

Prus people was an inbuilt love for hygiene, which was noted amongst the others by Dlugosz, writing that “daily baths were a need both with men and women: it was believed that they ejected disease from the body resulting from drinking and lengthened life. A bath belonged to quasi-religious rituals, as “some Prusians - as a chronicler noted - try to take a daily bath to celebrate their gods”. Thus in every homestead there was a bath, as swimming in a lake did not satisfy the overpowering need for ablution in hot water. Water poured onto stones changed into steam, enabling a steam bath.

Was this not by any chance a Prusian version of to-days Finnish sauna ?

IV. THE NEEDS OF A HIGHER NATURE

Dress did not make a Prusian

How did the Prusian look ?

Answers to this question was given by middle ages chroniclers, amongst them the XIIth century Helmold: “These people have blue eyes, a red face and long hair” whilst the hundred years older Adam of Bremen described the Sambians as blue eyed people with reddish faces and long hair.

As can be seen these relations are in line with each other and therefore appear correct. In the opinion of prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn this description is in line with the results of antropological skeletons from ancient and early middle ages cemeteries found in Prusian lands. A Prusian, similarly to Poles and Scandinavians in the middle ages, was an imposing man with a light countenance, and fair hair and eyes. Prusian women also were reminiscent of Slavs by their appearance.

How did the Prusian dress ?



18. 19. The Prusai dresses

On this subject not much information and iconographic material has survived, and sometimes they raise doubts amongst researchers. However, it is noteworthy that there is unity between what was written by Adam of Bremen that “for wool clothes, called *faldones*, they offer expensive furs”, and that what was noted by the XVth century doctor and German historian, Erasmus Stella, that the men wear wool clothes and women linen. And this would be in line with reality, as there was no lack of wool and linen in Prusia. Especially popular were wool materials which were made with the help of polished sticks.

The materials were produced by cottage industry on still primitive frames, but the product obtained in these conditions was said not to diverge in quality from early ages Gdansk production, which would indicate a high technical level of skill by Prusian women. The women for everyday wear put on a long shirt, putting over their head and shoulders a wool covering called *rantuch*, over which in winter they put on a fur cap, and in addition decorated themselves with necklace and bracelet. The XVIth century chronicler Matthew Strykowski added to this picture writing that bracelets “from copper or brass were put on their necks, they also hung earrings on their ears, which to this day the commoners in Zmudz next to the sea, in Courland and in Prusia, still keep”.

The inborn elegance of the fair sex was confirmed in the course of archeological excavation and the finding of bone combs with brass fittings, azure lockets, hooks, necklaces, earrings and other similar objects. Prusian women therefore had a feeling for taste and the will to attract men.

Interestingly, nobody ever mentioned amber, which never pleased Prusian eyes. Women usually walked bare foot, or in vegetable slippers. Male dresses were narrow, long trousers tied with ribbons and tacked into shoes. Over them were wool or linen shirts reaching the knees and with long sleeves, and in the midriff tied with a decorative belt or ribbon. Most often the shirts were blue, as for example in Sambia this was the most popular colour.

There were other forms of male outerwear, but apart from the names nothing remains of them. Thus the names *wilna* or *wilnis*, which means wool, probably referred to the type of kaftan, and the word *pelkis* probably meant coat. The Prusian also wore *caune*, from the Prusian word *kuna* (marten) or fur, and in dress from *pastovis*, or knitted cloth. On their legs they wore *kurpe*, pleated with elm bark.

Proving a possible link between the names of this Prusian footwear and the region on the southern border of ancient Prusia, or to-days Kurpie, now belongs to ethnographs.

The observation of the Teutonic Order’s chronicler Peter of Dusburg, is noteworthy: “This nation does not care at all for the richness and sumptuousness of dress: as they take it off to-day, so they put it on to-morrow. It does not matter to them at all if they put it the wrong side on”.

Against logic this did not indicate an inborn Prusian abnegation or sloth fullness, if one takes into account the custom which ordered the best dress, and probably the most elegant outfit for the journey into the next world. This route led through a burning pyre, where the flames devoured the body together with the best dress. Prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn explains this custom in the following way:

“Everyone (...) carefully kept the best and most expensive outerwear, rarely using it and keeping it safe from damage, not to impress the neighbours, but so as to present themselves in style to their ancestors (...)”.

In contrast to the then Polish and West European customs, the richness of dress was not an occasion to manifest one’s social or financial position. In particular women, restricted to their homesteads, rarely invited to group meetings and celebrations, had few chances to show off their dresses.

In any case the dress was not important and it did not count in evaluating the valours of a man or woman. A rich dress could create awe and desire, but more valued was bravery, devotion to land and faith, and support for public affairs (...) There did not exist a system of Lords courts and ownership of the “princely” type, there were no court women who “walked so heavily covered in gold crowns, necklaces, chains on their necks, epaulettes, gold tassels and jewels, that if others did not help them stay on their feet, they would not be able to lift the weight of the decorations” wrote Gall Anonim about the court of king Boleslav the Brave.

The rituals and customs of the Prusian people

The ancient Prusians lived according to the rhythm set up by the virgin nature which surrounded them. This rhythm of course also regulated the rich area linked often with religious belief rituals and country customs which let them move away from their generally difficult daily existence. People therefore longed for the beginning of *dagis*, or summer, which came after a long hard winter - *semo*, as was common in Warmia and Masuria. It has to be known that the Prusian year was divided into two seasons, and it was summer, it can be said, that was the season of many rites, which were usually performed, as is known, at night. Such was the Prusian tradition, though it was also known to other peoples.

As the chroniclers stated, most of the various holidays, commemorations and celebrations fell into early part of the summer. The disappearance of winter ice on the lakes and rivers was considered by the Prusians to be the commencement of the days their *dagis*, which made them go into fields with the first tilling and send the cattle into the meadows. But did this not mean that such events had to be celebrated by giving fealty to the god of earth *Zeminele*, whose name originated from the Prusian *zemina* - earth ?

The men went in groups to the holy wood, so as to ask the priest to start the customary rites. After filling a wooden cup three times the celebrant raised the pagan prayers to the sky, which according to the chronicler Strykowski sounded thus “Our goddess, *Zeminele*, you have send away the nasty winter, and wish to propagate herbs, flowers and grasses over all the land, we now ask you that the grain we have planted and will plant will multiply and grow heartily, and all the cockle you will yourself destroy”. The praying lasted until dawn, and till dawn the participants drank plentifully, after which they went to work straight in the fields.

Probably the Prusians were more boisterous in the celebration of the end of the harvest. The rites were led by the main celebrant - *wurszajtis*, who was elderly and

the most honoured homesteader in the local community. There was a holy fire, there were the usual prayers of thanks, and there was an offering which was one of the household animals. This role was described by the already cited Strykowski: “*Wurszajtis*, covering himself with a towel, calls on all the gods saying: This is a fine offer of remembrance of our fathers, so that the anger of the gods will be appeased; after which, whispering he circled the bull three times before it was slaughtered, and the blood was not spilt on the earth, but gathered into a bowl, and taken out with a ladle or goblet. *Wurszajtis* sprinkles people, and the remnants into jars from which everyone sprinkles the cattle in their household”.



20 The pancake throwing

Next came something which everybody was waiting for: the roasting of meats and pancakes on poles. And again Strykowski is cited: “the peasants sit around a fire, to which the young women brought uncooked pancakes, and every person took one pancake, throwing one at each other through the fire, catching them so long as until they are roasted”.

To see the sense of this rite one should know that in line with the ancient Prusian belief the holy fire emanated with a godly force, which cleansed the pancakes roasted in this manner and all other foods drunk with milk mixed with blood or honey. In order that the tradition of celebrity be fulfilled, the priests taking part in the rites hit the faces of all present, so as to expurgate all their sins and forgive them. The people from their side did the same to the priests, who were obliged to call loudly for help from the gods. And finally when dawn came and all the celebrations were finishing, the participants, in Strykowski relations “go their ways, carrying the grain cake and what is left of the supper, and put it in one place, which everybody covers in earth and guards carefully, so that an animal or a dog cannot dig it out, and having done this, give praise to the gods”.

In line with the centuries old cultivated tradition of excesses associated with the harvest festival, next came celebrations to glorify and remember the dead. People gathered in burial sites, carrying foods and drinks to be left on the graves in the belief that the deceased will utilise the occasion to fortify themselves, to which course of

action they were thought to be encouraged by the fulfilled toasts, from the numbers of which the good feelings of the ancestors would depend.

Does this not remind of similar but not so old Lithuanian celebrations which were shown in “Dziady” by Adam Mickiewicz ? And does it not recall the Bolivian Indians, whose custom decrees merry making on the graves of their relatives ?

Customs, as can be seen, have no boundaries.

Any rites and ceremonies were linked with the departure of a Prusian from this world. They started with the placing of a barrel of barley beer for guests invited to cry over the deceased. Next the corpse was washed, put into the owner’s most elegant clothes, such as a linen shirt, trousers and overgarment with a leather belt with an iron buckle, after which they were put on a bench before the entrance to the cottage. Now the real celebration started: Taking out the beer with goblets the mourners spoke to the deceased: “Friend, why have you died, did you not have enough to eat and drink? “ Utilising the chance they took their requests to him to take their greetings to all relatives in the next world.

A narration about how the burial celebration looked like in the IXth century was left by Wulfstan: “When somebody dies there, he lies unburnt in the family or friends house for a month and sometimes two: (...) sometimes they are not cremated for half a year and lie in the open in their house. And in all this time, when the deceased is in the house, they drink and make merry until the day he is burnt”. From the same source comes the information that the “Aestians have such skills that they can make cold. Because of this the dead can lie there so long and do not degenerate, because they use cold on them (...) And if two containers full of beer or water are placed, they can freeze both, irrespective of whether it is summer or winter”!

Wulfstan still uses the old name Aestians, which in the end was replaced by the name Prusians.

Greater attention to their prowess in the then unknown art of cooling is given by Casimir Madela, stating that neither Wulfstan, nor the later chroniclers of the Teutonic Knights, could penetrate the mystery of the Prusian technique of freezing not only corpses but also food, from which the deduction that it must have been closely guarded by the then priestly caste. There has not been found any empirical confirmation of this physical phenomenon using a secret, but supposedly only known to Prusians, type of herb.

However, it was the ancient Prusians who managed to overtake the later achievements of the technique of cooling by practically using the endothermic reaction which takes place between ice and certain mineral salts. “Nothing stands in the way - writes Casimir Madela - to believe that the Prusians by chance found that a mixture of salt and ice has a strong cooling effect (...). It seems simple, but the great antique civilisations did not master this process. Only in 1530 in Europe (Italy) was it discovered how to make artificial cold with the help of a mixture of salt (...) and ice”.

It is known that the Prusians had ice. But the problem was how they could utilise salt. Nevertheless, in cooling they deserve a prize for being first.

An old and universal custom amongst Prusians was also the habit of burning corpses of the dead. If only the corpses !

Although Adam Fisher writes about placing the dead in caves and turning them head towards the west, nevertheless in line with the oldest and generally accepted custom the way of a dead Prusian towards another world was through a burning pyre. The flames devoured the corpse of the dead together with all the objects he used during his life, as it was thought that in everything made by the hand of man lives its own spirit, which during the course of burning flies off to live again in another world in a form similar to an earthly one. The old Prusian tradition insisted that those departing from this world should be furnished not only with valuables, but also in objects used by him during his lifetime such as an axe, dagger and spears, and also with bread and a jar of mead for the journey. A dead woman also received a needle and thread so that she could make repairs if needed to her dress. On the way to the place of burial the deceased was accompanied by a procession, which was formed by his friends on ponies.



21. Betrothal ceremony

The rites of the ancient Prusians were linked strictly with the family system and thus from this stemmed many habits of a family character. In the celebrations concerning the birth of a child the whole household and family took part - *seimins*, so as to undertake common thanksgivings to the god of earth *zeminele*, and to give him suitable offerings. Similarly the act of marriage was celebrated in style, from the transaction of buying the wife as a starter. The bride asked those gathered for the occasion to take part in the sad farewells after the loss of their unmarried status, after which she said farewells not only to her family but also to her house animals, and then went off in the bridal wagon sent by her fiance to her new house. At the border of the two homesteads a fire torch burnt, which circled the vehicle of the bride three times with the aim warding off wandering bad spirits. After arriving under the roof of her future husband the bride circled her new home three times and was subject to many customary habits, such as putting honey on her lips or showering herself with grain the so called "oczepiny". After all this came the ceremonies of cutting off long hair and putting a white cap on her head, which the wife was to wear till the moment

of the birth of a son, and in the end she was led to the marriage bed in which they had to consume a wedding cockerel, so as to assume fertility.

These and many other celebrations would not be known about if it were not for many instruction and edicts which were issued by the Teutonic Order's knights and bishops who were fighting signs of paganism. On this basis it has become possible to approximately reconstruct the celebrations of the Prusians, whose ties to their tradition proved to be unexpectedly strong.

Elusive songs and stone statues

This clean, though for everyday work sparsely dressed, Prusian people was not devoid of higher requirements. It was very willing to sing and dance to the sound of their music. Unfortunately no old Prusian musical notation survived, assuming there was one, and there was no trace of any musical instrumentation from ancient Prusia, although from the texts of chroniclers one can read that they were not only full of valour and with a strong work ethic, but also loved to sing and dance to double act music. In the opinion of ethnographers old Prusian melodies were based on pentatonics typical of the music of early peoples. Singing was a fixed accompaniment of feasting, work and all sorts of celebrations so beloved of Prusians, who could claim a very rich repertoire of all types of songs carried out on many and very different celebrations, which they were not short of in their lives.

In accordance with the universally respected custom the Prusians celebrated their festivals from dusk to dawn and thus the whole night resounded to the echo of songs echoing over the swamps and lakes, dying out in the forest glades. They feasted both in lonely homesteads dispersed over family territories, and in groups in meetings called in the holy woods, and there was plenty to celebrate, who to pay homage to, and what to remember.

As an important part of the proceedings concerned the dead ancestors, the people used to remember them by songs. The repertoire of glorifying songs must have been rich, as performed by *tulisze* and *ligasze* or priests whose duty it was glorify during the burial the brave deeds of those who were going to another world. "Probably to them would be ascribed Prusian singing and songs (*grimons* and *grimikon* from *grummis* - far off thunder)" - writes Adam Fisher, when thinking about the songs glorifying the dead.

Many occasions for vocal deeds was created by the daily life of living Prusians, such as births, betrothals or other family festivities, and also working in the household. The housewife passed the time more pleasantly during work on the grains and making bread singing, the boy tending cattle on the fields sang to himself, but it was only the wedding feast that brought out the song of the young bride, who sang to her dear betrothed with her worries about who would look after her parents, and who would look after him. No doubt also performed were songs of a lyric nature, love songs and those dance songs coming from the Prus - Lithuanian borderlands, some of which have been written down. According to prof. Adam Fisher they were similar to the Lithuanian *dajny* and from these reconstructing the character of the old Prusian folk songs can be attempted. A chance for festivities were for the Prusians the

first plantings of wheat, and they could not imagine the associated celebrations without banqueting and the accompanying dancing and vocal events. However, the most loudly celebrated, with songs and dances, were the Prusai festivities concerning the ending of the harvest, or the “dozynki” known to us and to our protoplasts. “The festivities and feasts at the time of the post - harvest holidays lasted for several nights, always linked with heavy drinking, playing and singing” writes Lucia Okulicz - Kozaryn by reference to the chronicler Matthew Strykowski, who was said to have participated in the goings on the Sambian Peninsula: “men play with long trumpets and bugles; they also sing, each one opening his mouth more than another”.

In the time of their reign the Knights of the Cross tried to remove and destroy anything linked with paganism, including dancing, which the XVth century German narrator Heinrich Beringer considered simply to be the “devils extravaganza”, and also strongly criticised the custom of dressing dancing women in men’s clothes. This was seen as proof of the longevity of pagan cultural elements and the attachment to them of the majority of the now baptised Prusai people.



22. Side utensils. Clay VI-VII century.

The ancient Prusai, as was clearly stated by many chroniclers, knew how to play and enjoy themselves, making their difficult existence in harsh natural surroundings pleasurable, and also in the neighbourhood of not very friendly peoples.

However, songs, music and dancing were not the only expression of taking part in the cultural sphere by the Prusai. Another feature of this was folk art. Unfortunately, in practice nothing does not count the reconstructions of the old chests an artefacts found by archeologists in fragments of old items. One can therefore assume that an inborn feeling of artism was not alien to the Prusai, particularly as even simple tools were usually covered with ornaments carved in wood. Stone statuettes found in the ground testify in turn their carving capabilities. The material culture of the Prusai was also represented by elegantly decorated ceramics which were dug up by archeologists.

It cannot be excluded that the folk art in northern Europe, practised by ancient Prusai over many centuries, could have affected the art of the Poles, Lithuanians, Kurpes, Kasubians and perhaps even Scandinavians.

It is some sort of paradox that the fact has come to light that whilst nothing has survived from the songs and music old Prusia, about which relatively much is known, there is almost no knowledge about and for what were used the excellently kept and conserved so called Prusai stone women. “These are crudely fashioned granite blocks

featuring facial elements and always similarly carved attributes: drinking horns, a sword in the belt and a necklace” this phenomenon is described by prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn.



23. 24. The granite “Babas”. Early Middle Ages from Barciany and Bartoszyce.

“The antropomorphic stone carvings called “*babas*”, form an unusual category of antiquities on Prusai soil” is the description by Miroslav Hoffman.

The importance of the antropomorphic carvings known as *babas* appear to be of great value to the historical picture of Prusia in past ages and also in modern times” considers Christopher Rybka.

The history, chronology and purpose of the stone statues, popularly called “Prusai *babas*”, remains to this day a divisive topic in science. This emerges from the very nature of this antiquities, and also from the lack of complex studies” - concludes Grzegorz Bialunski.

The cultural phenomenon of the Prusai stone *babas*, of which 21 have in total been counted in the territories of the present day areas of Novomiejski, Ketrzynski, Bartoszycki, Sztumski and Ilawski, or in effect the once Prusai lands of Pomezania, Natangia, Barcja, Sasinia and Galindia, has been the object of great interest of scholars, admittedly in recent times, but is fascinating them nonetheless. One of the difficulties in researching the function of the Prusai *babas* is the complete lack of any information on their subject in any written middle ages sources.

And this in the opinion of one researcher these objects were to personify the west Baltic dieties, and therefore belong to the category of antiquities linked with former Prusai cults, or, as others see it, relate to Slav gods. Others believe that they feature stone gravestones or repentance statues, which show murderers. Still others,

because of localisation of these objects in places where old communication paths ran, could show that they carried out the function of sign posts or other informative signs. However it has shown that there have been links between the stone babas and between folk tales which grew around individual objects. At the same time it was not possible to work out a common position as to the origin of these items. The differences are surprisingly large: some scholars believe that they originated in the early middle ages, others think their appearance was at beginning of our era.

Also there is no agreement as to place of origin of the Prusai stone babas: their mediteranean genesis is promoted by Anna Blazejewska, but Jerzy Lapo puts them as emerging from Asia, where nearly 2000 similar objects were found in Altai, Mongolia and Kazakhstan, or nearer in the Kuban, the Crimea, around the Don and the Dnieper, and also in Podolia. At the same time, according to this researcher, the description “baba” easily derives from Slavonic, including Ukrainian (“kaminni baby”) or Russian (“kamiennyje baby”), given to antropomorphic statues found in ukrainian and asiatic steppes at the very beginning of modern science. Parts of these statues undoubtedly show women, which was emphasized by the gravure of the breasts. Others show males, often armed. The paradox of the wording “baba” should in this instance be linked with Turkish name “baba” meaning forefather in the steppe culture. It has been deslavitized and has entered into scientific circulation, also in other languages, including German - “baben”, “Steinbaben”.

The quarrel over this phenomenon began three centuries ago, and specifically from the moment when the first of the later collection of stone babas was found in Bartoszyce. The people in this locality called it “Bartel”. It was an “antropomorphic carving with a height of circa 1.4m and a width of up to 0.6m, in shape similar to a rectangle with rounded edges. Formed from pink granite. The head is clearly differentiated, covered with a cone shaped helmet. A triangle shaped head, finished with a beard and shaped eyes, nose and lips. In the right hand can be seen a drinking horn, the left hand with open fingers beneath the right (.....). Also a gravure of flower form (?). Near the top of the arms are drilled holes for fixing an “aereole”.

The archeologist Lapo thus describes this finding. But the surprising things must be the back of the statute which carries the carved writing in the greek and hebrew alphabet. How did such writing from past centuries came to be in Bartoszyce?

To-day the various interpretations of this cultural phenomenon have to be recognised as carrying weight. Acording to one, and most likely of them, they were personages of warriors, worthy and wealthy of being remembered heroes and heads of clans, whose stone figures were to guard the property of their descendants. Thus the correct terminology should be not “Prusai stone babas” but Prusai statues.

All this however leads to the conclusion that the genesis and meaning of these objects is surrounded by a web of mysterious science which gives a fertile ground for varying interpretations.

V. BRAVERY IN BATTLE AND WEAKNESS IN POLITICS

Contacts with a wider world

Coins found by archeologists in the depths of Prusai lands prove that the population of these territories, in spite of a hermetically sealed language and a difficult to reach terrain, was open to the world. "They are interesting also because they form the best proof confirming the contacts between the inhabitants and foreign countries" writes the German historian Max Toeppen, documenting this statement with many findings.

To the knowledge on the subject of the foreign trade of ancient Prusai contributed only archeologists, but also farmers who sometimes were able to unearth in the regions of to-days Wegorzewo chariot engraved Roman denars from the time of the Republic and also coins with the name of the ceasar Marcus Aurelius Antonius. Also there were priceless finds of silver, bronze and lead coins from the times of the emperors Vespasian, Septimus Severus, Nero and Constantine the Great, which were found near Elk, Ryn and Ostroda.

The openness of the Prusai to the wider world was also confirmed by many middle ages chroniclers writing about the sometimes lively trading which they carried out with other people in the Europe of the time. Prusai traders ventured far beyond the borders of their land, leaving behind them firm traces which can be found for instance in Novgorod. In the middle ages this was the largest trading centre in north-eastern Russia. A trace of this was in the famous "Pruska street", whose beginning some historians date at the meeting of the XIIth and XIIIth centuries, and others at much earlier date.

This was not the only proof for the contacts which linked Prusai with the Russia of that time.

Carrying out excavation works in Kaup-Wiskiauty in the area of former Sambia in to-days Kaliningrad region, the director of the Baltic Expedition of Russian Academy of Science Archeological Institute, Vladimir J. Kulakov, found the Prus sign of the triple tooth trident from the VII/VIIIth century on gravestones. This was the symbol of the leading gods of the Prusai, Perkun, Potrimp and Patola. This same sign, dated for the X/XIth centuries was found by prof. Kulakov in the Dnieper region of Smolensk and Czernichov, which proved contacts between Slav Rus and Prusai Sambia. Did the founder of Kiev Rus, Vladimir the Great, reach for a Prusai sign which became the coat of arms of Kiev, and in time appeared on the gold and silver coins of Rus?

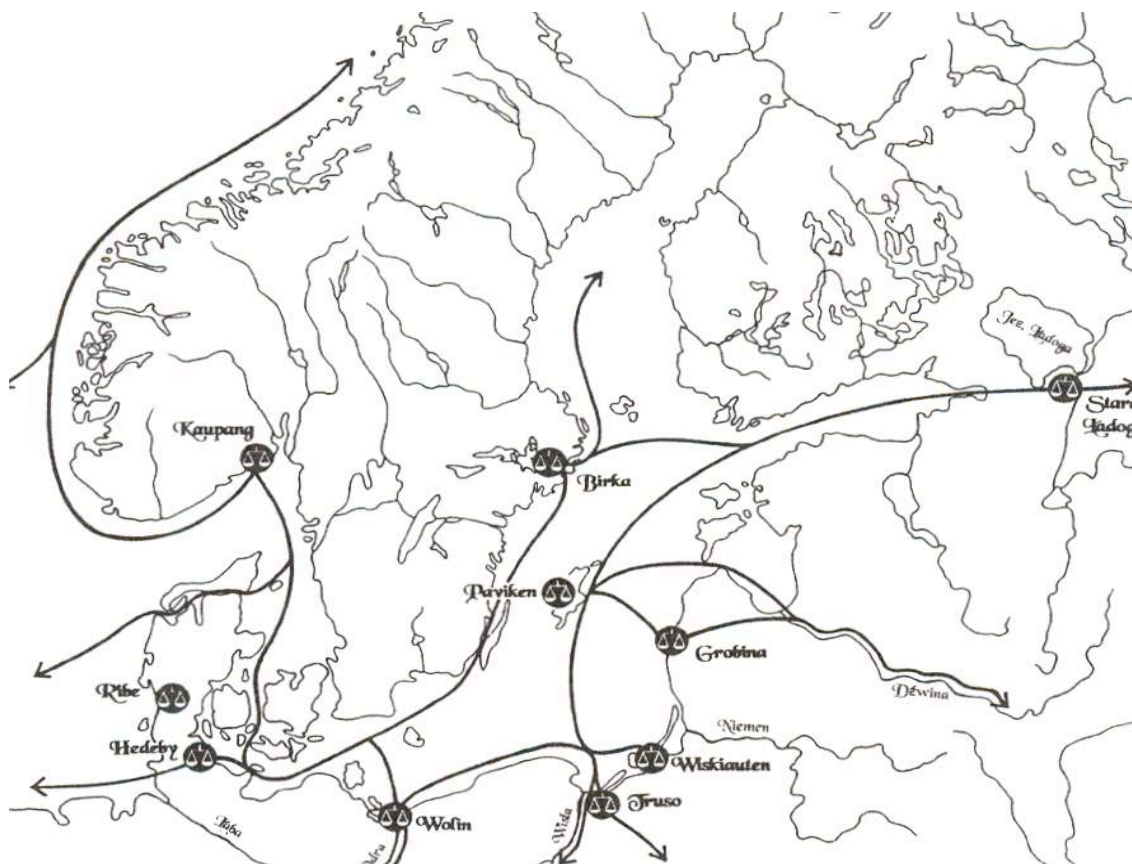
The expansion of trade from ancient times depended not only on land transport but also on sea transport and was carried out by barter trade or exchanging goods. The Prusai offered skins, furs, wax and amber. Those goods were exchanged chiefly for weapons, metals, salt and ornaments, although the Prusai could also make these themselves. The begining of the trade reach the antique era, when the mediterranean world, chiefly Rome, became enamoured of Prusai amber. It was later that merchants

from four corners of the world found a chance of making good business with the Prusai. In those times there were known routes, trading by land and by water from the southern Baltic through lake Ladoga to the markets of Novgorod and Kiev Rus, which supplied iron helmets, battle axes and other goods, including gold and glass products.

The routes leading onwards to the south led towards Black Sea and to the Eastern Roman Empire. One of this was called “the road from the Waregs to the Greeks” and was pioneered by the Prusai Goths settled from Vistula delta along southern Baltic coast until Estonia, the gainers on one side being Arabs and on other the Prusai. This was confirmed by the appearance even in the IXth century of a great number of Arab coins on their lands.

The Prusai also sold horses, finding a ready market for them in the Kashubian area beyond the lower Vistula, where the stallion was called “presok”, which meant Prus.

The sea trade also expanded, and Adam from Bremen wrote about this in his XIth century chronicle about the Swedish port of Birka to which “were accustomed to come in trading matters all the ships of Denmark or Norway, and also Slavs and Sambians as well as the other peoples from Scythia”. These Sambians were no other but the inhabitants of the most economically developed totally coastal Prusai with Sambia.



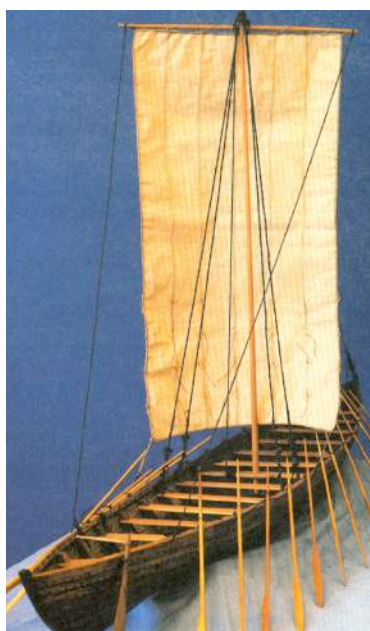
3. The Baltic ports and trading routes. Truso and Wisckiauten are Prusai ports.

The Prusai went to trade their wares not only to the north, to Swedish Birka, but also to the west, to Hedeby and further, about which we can learn from the XIIIth

century “Saga of the Knytlins”. The author mentions a Sambian trader called Vidgautr who often visited the Baltic ports with a rich trade offering. Once, trying to escape the Curon pirates he sailed with his ship to the port of Hedeby in Danish Jutland, where he was met with great friendliness. The Prusai merchant thanked King Canute for this with a real royal gift in the form of eight thousand white fur skins. The Prusai, as this shows, also had a sense of honour.

The western direction of their trading expeditions was evidenced by the research of language specialists, who a Prusai origin in the middle ages name Jomsborg. This was the name of to-days Wolin, from which one can deduce about the existence of trade contacts of Prusai with this port town. Since the Sambian fleet crossed the Baltic, one must also deduce that they visited the waters of the Bay of Finland and further, to lake Ladoga.

The Sambians were most adept at undertaking sea voyages, utilising the weakening of the Scandinavian hegemony on the Baltic in the XIth and XIIth centuries. The Scandinavians were now pushed out of the market by Frisians traders interested in Prusai furs, skins, amber and wax, offering in exchange a whole galaxy of above processed products. Although the Prusai most required salt and iron, but they happily bought swords, clothes and ornaments in the shape of necklaces, clasps and metal decorations, which styles could then be imitated by Prusai jewellers and would be sold to customers in Gdansk and even Wolin.



25. A model of the Prusian boat IX-X century.

The part played by the Prusai in the Baltic trade to the art of ship building. The Prusai fleet consisted of sail or oar powered vessels, flat bottomed and without decks, made from wood planks. The Prusai must have also utilised larger ships whose sea suitability enabled reaching even northern Birka. The wooden construction suffered the ravages of time, however in Bogarcie near Sztum, Dzierzgon and Frombork the wrecks of boats whose construction shows evidence of a decent level of Prusai shipbuilding. This were sailing vessels about 12-17 metres in length.

The activity of Prusai in Baltic trade was evidenced by the existence of two large, for these times, sea ports. These were the visited by foreign merchants sambian Wiskiauty, and the situated near to-days Elblag and described by the IXth century traveller Wulfstan, Truso. Goods were expedited from here to Pomerania and Scandinavia and further, which is proven by coins found there. In the opinion of historians Truso lost its importance as a result of the appearance on the map in the X century of Gdansk, which in time took over the function of this Prusai port town.

Earlier, in the IXth century Wiskiauty became important and was known as the beginning of the southern amber route. Near the old Prusai Wiskiauty archeologists have found, under the name Kaup, a large cemetery of graves.

This name, in the old Prusai language means to acquire or to buy. After the fall of Truso, Kaup became a regional trading centre which was a meeting place for the Scandinavian merchants sailing here from Birka. Kaup was famous, as was the whole Sambia, for easily available amber deposits near the sea shore. The port was more difficult to reach, being hidden in a bay where access was difficult because of sand banks and canals, while observation of entering vessels was easy. To-day the location of former Kaup is called Mohowoje.

In this discussion one cannot not refer to the function of money in the trading relations between Prusai and the outside world. Indeed money was not something new to them, but they did not attach much importance to it, although they had to deal with it from Roman times, cashing payments for amber. However they were not much impressed by Roman dinars, Arab dirhams and Rus and Scandinavians coins. Coinage in Prusai was not considered a judgement of values, as is demonstrated by the custom of melting coins to obtain metal for decorations. The Prusai did not make much heed of the nominal value of a coin but rather judged it by its weight. "Quite quickly the inhabitants of the coast learnt how to use weight (...). On these weighing machines they used to weigh the required quantities of the metal, sometimes breaking up coins into smaller pieces to righten the scales (....). The treasures in Arabian dirhams found on Prus land often come to several hundred whole coins and their fractions, and in those times this was a mighty fortune-writes prof. Okulicz-Kozaryn.

This type of approach to money did not change after Arabian coins were substituted by products from European mints.

Defence, reprisals and again defence

Without a knowledge of what in ancient Prusia was the "Wiec", or general meeting, it is difficult to be close to the realities of the time. The general meeting in Prusia was an extremely important social institution because it engaged the people to take part in group life and to make the key decisions for them. Such decisions included the necessity of defending their territory from outside threats, or a military expedition of a revenge character. "The 'Wiec' elected a leader for the time of war and decided on alliances. These meetings were to arrive at unitary resolutions which would bind all participants. In the case that somebody should refuse to submit to resolution, he could be even executed or sold to slavery (...). Thus the highest power

and law for the Prusai was the Wiece” - writes the historian of Warmia and Masuria Stanislaw Achremczyk.



26 “Wiece” The General Meeting

The leader usually became a notable having military experience, a high social position and suitable strength of character, such as courage and valour. It sometimes happened that a commoner and poor Prus who took part in a war expedition managed to magnify his wealth and advanced his standing, to which he was predestined by his captured fortune. This mechanism of social advancement did not make Prusai any different to other nations in the middle ages and later times.

Because of the physiographic conditions of seasons, the time when Prusai went on war expeditions was the winter. And these were often long and harsh and this helped such expeditions: in the summer it was difficult to transport seized horses and cattle, as well goods over marshes and wetlands, and one had to wait till frosts and ice covered the waters. Each expedition was preceded by a routine appeals to the gods, so as to assure success. The appropriate ceremony took place in a holy wood where a priest, kneeling in front of the eternal fire, gave forth prophecies and offered an animal sacrifice to the gods. This was confirmed in the relation left by the Teutonic Order’s chronicler Nicholas von Jeroschin: “the Prusai also had a custom, as I learnt, that they rarely undertook an important task without first testing the fates, according to their great paganism, believing that for sure they would soon learn from their gods whether the action they would undertake would have a positive or negative outcome”.

And only when strengthened by their gods in the success of their endeavour would the Prusai take from their arsenal the helmets, war clubs, swords, spears, axes, catapults and other arms. A generally used and highly effective weapon was a small

club used for throwing for considerable distances. In Prusia the iron sword came into use much later. Historians were however not of one mind on the question of whether the Prusai used bow and arrows. It is known they used hammers and axes made from stone.

“The main weapon of the Prusai - stated the ethnograph Adam Fisher - was their great bravery”. The Jatviagans were particularly famous for this. M. Strykowski says about them “The nation of Jatviags was so brave that they cared not whether they lived or died out”. According to other chroniclers, ten of them were ready to attack a hundred, they were so greedy for fame, penalised by death, but immortalised by family songs”.



27. The Prusian foot warrior with a short and a long clubs.

Historians were generally united in their opinion that they deeply believed in life after death and despised death, demonstrating their unparalleled valour in battle. Lacks in armament were compensated for by a tactic which depended on partisan war and sudden attacks. They also built traps. In open battle they attacked in a triangular formation, typical to other Balts. The general uprising was formed by poorly armed commonry constituting the infantry, and by the recruitment of selected cavalry from the notables, in later times equipped with helmets, swords and spears. Refusal to take part in a general uprising was a punishable offence, including the death penalty. Fortified settlements were used for defensive purposes. However, it was not fortifications but the forest and marshes, making movement difficult, which formed the best line of defence against the invader, who also had problems in marching through defensive traps. One could also hide from him in wild forests or in the fortified settlements. Situated on a hill top, surrounded by water and marshes, they were inhabited by notables. It was also there that at times of invasion the local commoners sought refuge.

And thus the centuries passed: from defense to reprisal and again to defence.



28. The bronze heads fixed to short Prusian clubs. Ancient grenades. More dangerous than arrows. Throwing them boys trained from an early age.

The late dawn of the Prus monarchy

In the light of current research it does not seem possible to achieve a satisfactory reply to the question of what caused the many centuries of Prusai living on to-days Warmia and Masuria not to consolidate into one political organism in the style of neighbouring dukedoms and monarchies. It is the more interesting as to why the Prusai ceased their political growth, though they did not fall behind their neighbours, especially other Balts in terms of cultural and economic development.

The stopage in the political development of Prusia can clearly be seen in the light of the process of uniting Polans, Vistulans and other into the Polish State.

Attention to this problem has been drawn as we would say to-day by the foreign observers recruited from the chroniclers. As an obvious anachronism this state of affairs was considered to be by the XIth century Adam of Bremen, and the younger by a century Helmold expressed surprise “In addition it is impossible to reach them because of marshes and they refuse to acknowledge any of their number as a ruler”. The furthest in his judgement went Gall Anonim saying clearly that “so far they remain without a king and without laws and that they do not depart from early paganism and wilderness”.

But it was not paganism, if one looks at the example of neighbouring Lithuania, which was the source of the political disintegration of Prusia as it was religion which determined their ethnic identity. The wildness of the Prusai should not be demonised, for no better were the Teutonic Knights bringing them the faith of Jesus Christ. As to Laws, it should be remembered that although they were not written they were precisely applied and were also deeply engrained in the nature and customs of the Prusai. It appears therefore that the reasons for this political disintegration should be searched for elsewhere.

The thing was that the Prusai had no concept of the feelings of ties and solidarity with other clans, whose lack would be difficult to justify purely because of the space isolation of haphazardly scattered “*lauks*”. A part was played by the strong feelings of autonomy, which conflicted with the thought of sharing power. *Lauks* as a common family institution was independent in its decisions and not subject in any

way to outside pressure. “*Mutatis Mutandis*” this was similar to the later sarmatian “a nobleman on his territory is equal to a prince” which in both cases was to end fatally. In this game the Prusai were nevertheless first. “The Prusai political structure, where the important decisions depended on the will of the general meeting of the smallest territorial entity or *lauks* (.....) was an excellent counterweight to any tendencies to monorule” - states precisely Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn. The Prusai social diaspora was linked by bonds of blood, language, faith and customs and traditions, which helped to keep together families, but did not stop them for rivalry between themselves on a rather restricted scale.

The Prusai did not know the meaning of common interest beyond their family sphere when they were threatened with danger. This happened in the days before Teutonic Order’s invasion when in 1210 the Danes temporarily took over sovereignty of the small lands of Paslack and Lanzania: the neighbouring Pomezania did not react at all to their plight. This was far from the only lack of inter solidarity. The XIIth century attempts at creating, as describes Stanislaw Archemczyk, “a military democracy leading to statehood came to nothing. The General Meeting chose a leader only for the time of war. Ever more important became the richest Prusai - the “nobiles”, amongst whom there were individuals who could subject to themselves larger local territories”.

Only in the XII century did the Prusai manage to gather a meaningful and disciplined force under the command of able leaders and according to Henry Lowmianski “this process led in a clear way to the unification of all the armed forces and the political consolidation of Prusai under the leadership of one commander, in other words to the formation of a monarchy”.

A similar conclusion was reached by Gerard Labuda stating that “the power of the leadership units opened the way towards new trends moving towards the unification of the country and assuming the political domination of wealthier classes”. This process was helped by the rise of great land estates. The basis underlying these changes was the formation of large wealth and the solidarity shown in the actions of whole clans, signalling the beginning of executive rule. The XIIIth century brought saving social and political changes, moving Prusai closer to the early feudal system. However the Prusai did not have the time and effort, unlike Lithuanians with their ruler Mendog, to find a leader to personify their national unity.

The Prusai “Nobiles” Survabuno and Warpode and Jatviagans commander Skomand passed into history as they tried to fill the role of multi ethnic leaders, but this did not avert the danger which was prophesized by the sword of Damocles already hanging over Prusia.

It was hung, one must say in sorrow, by our highly irresponsible predecessors.

VI DIFFICULT NEIGHBOURING WITH THE COUNTRY OF POLANS

Only negative talk of Prusai

The Roman maxim of “nil nisi bene” about the dead, or “not at all or well” about those who have departed this world has been left to us. The middle ages and even later chroniclers, when talking about the living Prusai usually expressed themselves negatively if not altogether badly. In painting such a picture of the Prusai one has to admit the first Polish chroniclers also played their part. The source of such opinions were also German chroniclers, which is not surprising, as one cannot expect good words to be said by the persecutors about their victims.

As always from every rule there are exceptions. Thus the IXth century anglo-saxon chronicler Wulfstan looked at the Prusai with a sympathetic eye, but he did not so much as judge but rather factually related what he saw. And if some positive or else even impartial words remain in the texts of old chroniclers, this is also due to other travellers from far off places, as the already mentioned Wulfstan, and also Ibrahim ibn Jacob and Adam from Bremen. However this is not the place for an examination for the reasons for this state of affairs. Using to-days Polish, it remains to be said that the ancient Prusai had a very poor press amongst their southern neighbours.

This negative scenario was started by the author of the oldest Polish chronicle, unknown by his full name Gall Anonymous from the XI/XIIth centuries, who wrote that “Poland, from the side of the Northern or Amphitronial Sea, has three very wild barbarian pagan peoples neighbouring each other, the Selentia, Pomerania and Prusia, against which countries the Polish duke fights so as to convert them to the (Christian) faith. The adjectives “wild” and “barbarians” were applied to the Prusai by our chronicler in every one of his relations.

Here follows what Gall Anonymous has to say about the expeditions of Boleslas the Wrymouth to Prusia “He marched on the very wild country of Prusia, where, seeking but not finding the opportunity for battle, he returned loaded with plunder, having started fires and taken prisoners (...). This land is so full of lakes and marshes that it could not be better protected even by castles and forts; thus nobody has yet succeeded in conquering it as nobody could march his troops across so many lakes and bogs (...) Thus the warriors of Boleslas, having been sent across the length and breadth of this barbarian land, gathered enormous loot, taking into captivity men and women, boys and girls, men and women slaves in huge numbers, burning buildings and villages; with all this Boleslas returned to Poland without giving battle, although this is what he most wanted”.

“However - wrote this scribe - it has not been possible to move their hearts away from paganism neither by the sword of teaching or by the sword of destruction to eradicate this generation of snakes”. Not without reason has this chronicler, noted in history as a supporter of absolutism, as he was recognised - and not only him - as

urging this way of converting pagans to a faith based after all on love towards fellow men.

Very radical in his opinions on the subject of Prusai was the XII/XIIIth century author of a later chronicle of Poland, master Vincent Kadlubek: "A people extremely savage, more cruel than any existing wild animal, unreachable because of unaccessible vast jungles and tar covered bogs". This time the opinion concerned the Jatviag Poleksians people and suggested the necessity of undertaking war with the "Prusai savages". Writing about the defensive tactics of the Prusai, the same author wrongly informed that building defensive systems was unknown to them. "They have absolutely no idea about using fortifications and have town walls like those of wild animals". This chronicler had great disdain for the behaviour of Prusai when faced by an enemy, writing that Polish warriors were not able to engage Prusai in open combat: in spite of long searching for an opportunity to fight, they could not do this as all the opponents, not so much from fear but from inbred caution hid themselves in marshes and caves. They are very used to fighting in narrow places, in the field however, they are useless: they use cunning to fight with more than strength, more crude bravery than valour of the spirit.

A similar outlook was exhibited by Master, as he was titled, Vincent to the religious beliefs of the Prusai, stating that they believed that "souls departing body reenter new bodies which are being born and some of them degenerate by entering animal bodies". It has to be known that Master Vincent had the title of court historian to duke Casimir the Just, whose court held him in high esteem, which was not without influence on the politics of this and other Piast rulers towards the Prusai.

In the "Lives" of St. Wojciech and in the chronicles of Vincent Kadlubek there are plenty of epithets which are thrown at the Prusai, and amongst these the term "dogsheads" does not belong to the most insulting. All these epithets emanated from the obvious despisement which an honest Christian was thought to have to hold towards a savage pagan. And therefore if we read that "a citizen of the heavens is surrounded by dogs heads opening their blood thirsty jaws in a long line" it is known that the author expressed his very negative opinion to the pagan Prusai in this way "For a genuine Christian every pagan as a person not subject to Gods mercy was equal to the wildest animals" summed up this question prof. Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn.

This picture was strengthened by the ridiculous myths and legends abounding on the subject of Prusai, which found an iconographic expression in the form of the famous Gniezno cathedral doors in the first capital of Piast state. Inspired by these legends and tales, and above all by the death of St. Wojciech, the XIIth century artist showed in his work all the cruelty which was supposed to characterise the Prusai. There was surprise that they were even quite similar to people. It could only prove that the artist never saw the Prusai with his own eyes.

Sometimes better, sometimes worse was the presentation of Prusai by the XVth century greatest of Polish chroniclers of the middle ages Jan Dlugosz, author of the monumental work *Historia Poloniae*. An echo of the Teutonic Orders relation was his note: "The Prusai discarded the Christian faith and on the eve of St. Matthew returned to idolatry. After making Grappin their leader they seized arms and attacked all the Christians living in the Prusai land with great ferocity. Priests and all

believers in Christ they murdered, churches were set ablaze”. However, Dlugosz was not an uncritical supporter of the Knights of the Cross, as he wrote about them “they made an armed invasion of the Prus province of Natangia, which they terribly devastated with fire and butchery. After such an invasion, when on their way home, they were surrounded in terrain difficult to fight by more numerous barbarians and surrendered. After this the Prusai, near the village of Witke, executed every single one”.

And thus it was not the invading Knights of the Cross who earned the title of barbarians, but the Prusai who had been attacked by them.

On the other hand Dlugosz did not hesitate to call the Knights “Robbers with the sign of the Cross”, introducing in the text to his “Animals” the motive of Gods punishment which will await these robbers for the atrocities they had carried out.

The other side of the Prusai coin

Happy are the beginnings of evil.....In that way one can start to describe the relations linking the Prusai with Polans who in the Xth century were starting to create their own state. The Prusai were unable to do this, which basically affected the relation between Prusia and Poland in the not too distant future.

All armed conflicts usually found mention on the pages of the chronicles of the times. There is not a word about any such conflict between Prusia and the state of Mieszko I in the chronicles of the Xth century traveller Ibrahim bin Jacob who noted the then battles between Prusia and Rus. At that time the border with Prusia was established, and this because of the temporary incorporation of Mazovia by the country of Polans. The theory of Henry Lowmianski about the possibility that the Piast name of duke Mieszko was of Prusai origin sounds very surprising. As in all other questions there are “for” and against arguments, but it is difficult to by-pass the following argument: “The possibility of giving Mieszko a foreign name was in line with the matrimonial policies of the first Piasts, who (...) usually formed foreign marriages (...) Thus a union between Piasts and Prusai seems likely”. But such a fact did not have great meaning: “for the Piast dynasty, which until the XIIIth century in the era of independent Prusai, did not multiply greatly (...) coligations with pagan Prusia were not attractive”. And with this statement one can close the discussion on the subject of it not friendly than at least not quite bad relations between Poland and Prusia. Their further history went on the route which was marked most often by bloody fighting. They were started by none other than Boleslas the Brave, about whom the chronicler Adam from Bremen wrote: “A very Christian king, allied with Otto III, conquered all the Slav lands and Rus, and Prusia, from whose hands St. Wojciech suffered a martyrs death and whose remains Boleslas then transferred to Poland”. This was the first written information about the military action of Gniezno against Prusia, but, as was the custom in middle ages manuscripts, much overstated, as there was no conquest but merely invasion, of which there were many.

For seventeen centuries, starting with the appearance of the Prusai on the Baltic until the aggression of Teutonic Order, nobody was able, in spite of many attempts, to conquer them or in any way to subjugate them. And there was much to conquer,

although even German sources presented Prusia as a land rich in many goods. The wealth and a high economic growth of Prusia has been proven by archeological excavations.

The Prusai policy of the Piasts took various forms including entering into tactical alliances, as was the case in the XIIth century, when the Polans joined the Prusai into alliance aimed at Mazovia and Pomerania, or when the Prusai gave military help to the Polans in a war fought with the German emperor Frederic Barbarossa. In reality this policy was aimed clearly at pushing Prusia into the orbit of the Polish state or at least into the sphere of Polish influence. Prof. Bialunski states the matter more clearly when he says that “the balance and initiative in mutual Polish - Prusia relations was on the Polish side, the latter also exhibiting expansionist ideas”.

The results of this Polish initiative were often troublesome for the Prusai, resulting in understandable actions from the Prusai side, which were met with sharp condemnation from Gall Anonimous, Master Vincent Kadlubek and other chroniclers. The Polish - Prusia borderlands were often the place of skirmishes, but apart from blood being spilt this did not bring any lasting political results as the chronicler Helmond wrote about the Prusai “access to them is impossible because of marshes and they refuse to accept anyone from themselves as ruler”. All the more difficult to expect them to acknowledge a neighbour visiting them with arms in hand as a master.



29 The Prusai war gathering

This does not mean however that mutual enmity was always intensive throughout over two centuries, from Boleslas the Brave to Konrad Mazowiecki, during the time of fourteen rulers of the Piast state. A period when there was a lessening of tensions was the XIth century, which found expression not only in increased trade but also in contacts between people. For something totally unusual one has to acknowledge the carrying out of pilgrimages from Poland to the first burial of St. Adalbert in Prusia!

The state of armistice lasting a great many years between Poland and Prusia definitely came to an end at the time of accession to the crown Boleslas III Wrymouth at the beginning of XIIIth century, strictly speaking in 1102, as six years later he led an armed expedition to Prusia. No battle ensued, because as Gall Anonimous noted, “nobody could take the army across so many lakes and marshes” but the expedition gathered substantial loot and large numbers of prisoners, not counting destruction. This was not the success which Boleslas wanted, reaching the lands around to-days Ostroda and Nidzica. Only three years later he undertook another expedition, to again gather slaves and rob the Prusai as well as destroying everything which could be destroyed, but again an open battle did not take place. Doubts in source materials do not permit a definite statement whether a third expedition ever took place.

Analysing the effects of the military operations, prof. Bialunski concludes: “the expeditions of Boleslas Wrymouth to Prusia did not bring much success. All thoughts that some Prusai lost their independence should be rejected”.

In the footsteps of his father went Boleslas IV Curlyhead: not discouraged by the lack of success of the father he began his reign in 1147 by an invasion of Prusia, who as usual would not let their neighbours overran them and did not stay totally defenceless. This was the beginning of a whole series of expeditions which eventually led to the establishment of suzerainty over a few Prusai districts. Just as Boleslas the Wrymouth made Pomerania the focal point of his foreign policy, so Boleslas Curlyhead treated Prusia.

The year 1166 was important in the history of Polish - Prusia relations. In reaction to a rebellion in Prusia against taxes and plundering of the lands of the Polish borderlands, Boleslas IV decided on a punitive expedition.

Vincent Kadlubek devoted much room to this in his chronicle. Here in his account: “Gathering numerous elite soldiers (Boleslas) readied himself to invade the province of the Gets which though not fortified in any way, but was difficult to enter because of its natural position. At the very beginning there is a jungle composed of thorned bushes, where under the green grass is a layer of muddy tar. The guides and leaders of the troops assure them that they have found a good short cut through the growths (.....). Thus the rows of elite troops marched in quick formation on a narrow path when suddenly from traps on both sides out jumped the enemy, hurtling weapons from afar as they used to in the past. They threw themselves like wild boars at the rows of spears whilst the soldiers hurrying to help suffered more from the weight of the scrum than from the blows of weapons. Some, weighed down by armour were swallowed by the open terrain, others suffered death by being entangled by thorn bushes and undergrowths, and all are engulfed by the darkness of rapidly falling night. Thus by traitorous entrapment a fine army was destroyed! Thus the valour of fine knights was wasted! (...). Still to this day many people shed tears after them”.

A moment of explanation: the name Gets was given by the chronicler to the Jatviags, but it could easily be applied to the Prusai. “The defeat of 1166 - writes prof. Bialunski - meant the ruin of the Prusai policy of Boleslas the Curlyhead and put an end to all his efforts aiming at subjugating the Prusai, or at least part of their lands”

The duke of Sandomierz, Henry, was killed in the fighting.

The end of XIIth century was marked by renewal of attacks on Prusia, this time under the leadership of Casimir II the Just, who took revenge in this way on his northern neighbour for their plundering invasions on Polish lands. Sometimes armistices were however arranged between the warring sides. These also took place during the times of Casimir II, who during one of the expeditions did not meet any resistance on Prus land.



30 Death of prince Henry in battle with Prusians.

Here is one more mention by Master Vincent as to what happened later: “At last, after burning nearly the whole province both their prince as well their nobles fall to the feet of Casimir on bended knees and ask for forgiveness, both for their and the lives of their brethern. At the sight of their losses the magnificent prince, moved by goodness, quickly forgives them and on receiving assurances of obedience and paying fealty, returns in triumph to his country”.

The Prusai however did not have the habit of keeping agreements and reneging on their promise of fealty prepared an expedition to Polish land. It also happened that as a guarantee of their word they gave hostages on the basis that their security could not stand in the way of their freedom, and, according to Master Vincent, thought it better that they would lose their sons rather than they would be deprived of the freedom of their fathers, and honourable death of their sons would assure their noble rebirth”.

The last of the rulers who under the banner of the white eagle fought against the Prusai was Konrad of Mazovia. The consequences of the policies he pursued against them in the first half of the XIIIth century proved to be fatal not only for the Prusai but in the long run also for the Poles.

Since we are talking of the political entourage, it should be mentioned that greedy eyes looked at Prusia not only from the Polans to the south, but from the

separated by the Baltic Scandinavians to the north. Especially in the XIth century they undertook armed expeditions on Sambia - three times - and the culprits were the Vikings, living mostly on looting and plundering. In their steps came - or rather sailed - the military formations of the Danish rulers: Canute the Great in the years 1014-1035 and Canute IV in 1080-1086. Apart from destruction and robbery none of these expeditions led to any kind of hegemony being established over the Prusai.

According to the chronicles of Rus of somewhat earlier times (in the Xth century) Prusia lands were the object of attacks from eastern neighbours.

They advanced as far as the Sambian peninsula, which similarly to all of Prusia, was coveted by its greatest wealth in the basin of the Baltic sea. The Polans of Mazovia did not equal the Prusai in this respect, as to the former nature did not give mineral wealth, and whose land was covered by the ice age blanket which left poor quality earth and sandy soil. They were characterised by poor quality forests which lacked the animals and mineral products of the mighty old Prus forests.

The poverty of Mazovia did not give its population many prospects of prosperity and because of this there was occasional mass emigration to the lands of Prusia and Lithuania.

Prusia was the target of expeditions and invasions of all surrounding peoples who looked for easy pickings on their land. This statement destroys the picture built up by many historians of the Prusai being primitive, poor and immersed in paganism, as they worked for their real and highly divergent from the false picture often presented, and for a few centuries, but for a very much longer period.

The Cross was there before the sword

It would not be just and historically truthful to maintain that the Piasts kept their relations with the Prusai solely to armed expeditions and invasions. It would however be correct to say that the motives for undertaking evangelisation of Prusia had a strictly political character. It could not, in these times, have any other character. Pointing to it was the target he had in mind when Boleslas the Brave sent the bishops Wojciech and Brunon from Querfurt.

Neither mission succeeded because they were totally unprepared to fulfill their task: neither missionary knew the Prusai language nor was aware of the extremely high state of attachment of the Prusai to the centuries old beliefs. Also the impulsive character of bishop Wojciech negated the requirements for a high level of diplomacy in such a situation, he had shown lack of diplomatic talent in Prague and Rome, where he held high church office. The Prusai missionary Wojciech was treated in the same manner as they would have treated anybody who would dare to transgress the borders of their Holy Wood (Gai), which in their minds was akin to blasphemy.

It was the year of the Lord 997 when bishop Wojciech left Gniezno for Gdansk under the protection of an escort from Boleslas the Brave, where he christened many inhabitants. From there, accompanied by his two brothers Radzim and Bogusz he crossed the Vistula onto Prus land. In the opinion of some historians one cannot be surprised that the appearance of foreigners in the Holy Wood highly angered the inhabitants. They deprived them all of their lives after the first declaration of bishop

Wojciech “I come from Poland, which is ruled in the name of God by the Christian prince Boleslas, to bring you salvation”. To the Prusai salvation was something unknown, and the address to them by Wojciech could not bring forth any positive reaction, but on the contrary brought forward uncontrolled fury which led to a tragic climax.

According to the written life of bishop Wojciech, who shortly after his death was declared a saint, the Prusai restricted themselves to a hostile welcome, requesting immediate departure from their territory. They feared that the presence of missionaries could be a threat to “their common law and way of life” and that “our land would cease to be fertile, trees would not give fruit, animals would stop giving birth and old ones would die out”. Such a perspective presented by their holy men could not remain without a fierce reaction from the General Meeting to which the missionaries were brought. After stormy deliberations, the unanimous decision was reached “If you do not leave to-night, to-morrow you will be beheaded”. In the light of the then customs, this decision was surprisingly mild, as death could have reached the missionaries the moment they landed on Prusai soil. In spite of enmity displayed to him bishop Wojciech ignored the decision of the congregation and decided to extend his stay on the unfriendly to him Prus land. And this led to the end of the mission.



31 The meeting at the Prus Holy Wood

There are two versions of the death of St. Wojciech. The author of the book devoted to the missionary “Passion from Tegernsee” noted that he died from beheading, with his head being cut off, but a monk from the Roman benedictines, Jan Kanaparius, wrote that he was killed from a blow to the body. For an understanding of the matter this is not very important. More important is what is stated by Jan Powierski: “the death of this well known person in the west during missionary work

in the interests of Boleslas the Brave made the diplomacy of this ruler much easier and created a sort of advertisement for a country which had freshly introduced Christianity”.

According to this author the “figure of Wojciech Slavnikovic shows itself not only as a symbol of christian mystic, but also as a figure of an active participant of the political happenings of the time”. On the other hand it has to be said that the death of St. Wojciech and St. Brunon caused a lavine of enmity towards the Prusai and the Jatviagans. An example of this enmity became the already mentioned carvings which decorate the doors of the Cathedral in Gniezno, where the body of St. Wojciech, purchased by Boleslas the Brave, were laid to rest as the first patron of Poland. It can be mentioned here that St. Wojciech was also made the patron saint of the Czechs and of Hungary.

If anyone had doubts about the political aim of St. Wojciech, the futher actions of Boleslas the Brave towards the Prusai dispel any such doubts.

In spite of the fiasco of this first attempt to evangelise the pagan neighbours from the north the successive rulers from the Piast dynasty did not resign to put into the effect the belief in papal Rome that the Prusai “had matured to the missionary harvest”. And so in the beginnings of the XIIIth century the first “white monks”-from their white cloaks-who left for Pomezania were the cisterians from Lekno. They did not get a friendly reception and were put into jail. However there are signs that some circles of Prusai nobles were by them not indifferent to Christianity, as they saw in the new religion a chance to weaken the rule of the holy men over the peoples masses, which hampered political progress. And it appears that they were right on this point. However a substantial majority of Prusai was against this option, as they feared that the new faith would mean the loss of their ethnic individuality.

The Cisterians, in spite of the above, did not share the fate of St. Wojciech and St. Brunon. To the contrary the head of the Cisterians in Lekno, Boguchwal vel Gotfryd could visit the place where St. Wojciech was killed, and in addition negotiated the release of his brother monks. A success of his next mission was the christening of two Prusai nobles. Some time later by decision of the Cistercians the missionary task was taken over by the Cistercians in Oliva. From that time, in 1209 the head of the Cistercian mission became brother Christian who started achieving marked successes. These included bringing to the Church two important nobles, Warpoda from the Lezansk land and Survabuna from the Lubavski land. The sacrament of baptism was given to them by the Pope himself in Rome, raising Christian to the rank of bishop, and in 1215 Christian became the first bishop of Prusia.

After the return from Rome bishop Christian settled in Zantyr, where he located his monastery and from where he organised his missionary actions in the area of Pomezania and Pogezenia. Zantyr is particularly interesting in that there are many opinions that this fort on the right bank of the Nogat is the place where Teutonic Order built their castle stronghold of Marienburg or to-days Malbork.

The sphere of operations of bishop Christian was indeed wide and brought much good to the Prusai community. Nobody before him thought about gathering funds to ransom prisoners; about taking care of young girls who were thrown out of

settlements and effectively condemned to death; about turning to christian countries for alms to help them; and finally about organising a seminary which would train future Prusai priests.

News about tragic fate of the girls reached Rome thanks to bishop Christian, inspiring pope Honorius III to produce an appeal in the form of bull to the bishops to support materially the action of saving the young women.

These and other highly humanitarian, as we would describe them to-day, actions of bishop Christian did not reach beyond the Pomeranian-Prusai border, and thus only a part of Pomezania and Pomezania, which Prusai areas were considered at the beginning of the XIIIth century, and thus two decades before the arrival of the Teutonic Knights, as christianized. The new faith brought by the Cistercians and other orders from Poland also left a permanent footprint in the language. Many Polish words entered Prusai religious terminology. Evangelisation was therefore an element of the process of introducing the isolated Prusai to the world of culture.

The statement therefore that Christian faith was not brought to the pagan Prusai until the arrival of the Teutonic Order does not hold water. Such a statement is negated by the works of the first Prusai bishop Christian and his brother Cistercians and other orders emanating from Poland. Lifting the sword above the Cross, the Teutonic Knights put to an end the process of these achievements, which in an Europe obsessed by the spirit of the crusades were something unique and deserving special attention.

VII AN INVITATION TO INVADE

From Hungary to Poland

Where is Acre, and where is Bremen and Lubeck....

Unresearched are the verdicts of history which decided that it was the Holy Land which gave rise to the Order of the Hospitallers of the Most Holy Mary of the German House, commonly later called the Knights of the Cross. This happened at the end of the XIIth century during the third crusade to the Levant with the participation of three European rulers, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, the French king Phillip II Augustus and the English king Richard the Lion Heart. The organiser of this expedition, the emperor Frederick, did not achieve success, as on his way to Jerusalem, which he intended to free from Moslems, he drowned in a fast flowing mountain river Salef, in to-days Syria. This tragic episode did not however stop the march of the German crusaders, although only a small part of them managed to reach the walls of the fortress of Acre near Jerusalem.

The newcomers from northern Europe were not used to living in the hot climate of Palestine and suffered *en masse* from many different diseases. The situation became tragic and in this state of affairs energetic repair action became necessary. Taking part in the crusade were the inhabitants of Bremen and Lubeck, who in 1190 organised in Acre a provisional hospital under the care of the German

hospitaller brethren. From the brethren there emerged eight years later the German knightly order which permanently and tragically fulfills a role in the history of the Baltic Prusai.

The Teutonic Knights were chronologically the third of the Knightly Orders which were formed in the middle ages Palestine with the mission of recovering the places which were Holy to Christians as linked with the work and death of Christ from the hands of Islam. Earlier to be formed were the orders of the Templars and the Joannites. Both these knightly orders, as well as the German order had before them a noble aim, which was carrying help, above all giving hospital care to those coming from west Europe to visit the Holy Land. Whilst the Templars and the Joannites were staffed by knights from many nationalities, the German order was open only to German knights, which effectively from the beginning gave this gathering a strictly nationalist character. This character was underlined by the whole political support with which they were endowed by the German princes.

Much support also came from Rome. Pope Innocent III, as is written by Gerard Labuda on the subject, hosted "the master and brothers of the order, which calls itself German" under his protection and agreed "that they rule themselves with the rules of the Joannites in hospital matters". With the support of Rome in the end full independence was gained by the German order from the Roman Templars and Joannites.

Almost from the very beginning the Teutonic Knights, as we will call them, pressed to obtain for themselves the same privileges and to gain for themselves substantial properties first in Palestine, and in time in the whole mediterranean world from Greece, through Italy and France to Spain, and beyond the borders of this world-Armenia, Alsace, Lotharingia, Austria, Germany and the Czech lands. This good fortune started for them in 1197 with the gift of the emperor Henry VI, who gave them a present in the form of the monastery of the Holy Trinity in Palermo in Sicily. Munificence towards the Order was also shown in 1222 by the ruler of Castille, Ferdinand III, the marriage of the daughter of king Phillip of Swabia and granddaughter of emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Beatrice, gave them the location of La Mota with surrounding areas. As can be seen in many cases these were the donations of rulers with whom the diplomats of the Teutonic Order had excellent relations and gained their confidence. A valuable acquisition of the Germans was the Isola della Doana, or the Customs Island belonging to Venice, where the Knights of the Cross moved the headquarters of the order's master after having to leave Palestine because of pressure from the Moslems.

Acre fell under the attack of the victors from under the green standard of prophet the Mohammed at the end of the XIIIth century, or precisely in 1291. Being well acquainted with the then current political situation of the whole region the pragmatic Germans did not offer much resistance. It should be noted what was written about this by prof. Labuda: "the nearly contemporary (1310) Austrian chronicler, Ottokar von Horneck states that the then present in the fort grand master, Konrad von Feuchtwagen, giving the order to embark on ships, was to have said that for the defeat suffered here they would take their revenge on pagans in Prusia and the Baltic hinterland".



32 *The Teutonic knights in battle with Moslems.*

After leaving Palestine each of the knightly orders suffered a different fate. The Templars finally settled in France where at the beginning of the XIVth century they were exterminated by the doings of king Phillip IV the Beautiful and the grand master Jacques de Molay was burnt at the stake. The Joannites, through Cyprus and Rhodes ended up in Malta, where they created the Knights of Malta existing to this day as an entity in international law. The links of this order with Poland are shown by the name of a district of Poznan - Malta.

The Teutonic Order went in a different way towards their historical destiny. The Knights of the Cross spent some time in Hungary, where they exposed in full the manner and aim of their desires. It should be known that the German order evolved in its character from a strictly spiritual entity to a temporal knightly one, in the end becoming an easy tool in German politics of naked force.

One should start with remembering that among the munificent donors was the Hungarian king Andrew II, who in 1211 gave the German order the land of Borsa which was part of Transylvania. Not without meaning was the fact that behind this donation was the monarchs wife Gertrude, from the family which also produced the wife of duke Henry the Bearded of Silesia who was instructed in bringing the knights to Poland. A similar role was played by a guest of king Andrew II, the landgrave of Thuringia, Hermann. The king was unable to counter the influence of such important persons and thus almost from day to day the Order became the owners of a land with the surface of 16 thousand square kilometres. This land was invaded from the east and devastated by the steppe tribe of Polovcows also called Kumans. This presumably decided about the kings order on the donation as it was thought Borsa would be protected from the Polovcows.

However, as it soon transpired, the Knights of the Cross understood the whole matter differently, who believed they could form their own state and brought mostly German settlers from Saxony and Bavaria. In the landscape of the Hungarian Borsa appeared defensive forts built from scratch such as Heldenburg, Marienburg,

Honigberg and Petersberg. It soon transpired that the German guests tried not only self-ordained enlargement of their donated land, but also to remove the jurisdiction of the bishop of Transylvania. The German ambitious were met with full understanding and support by Pope Honourius III, an example being the giving of instruction to the local bishop to promote to deacons the priests named by the Teutonic Knights. This led straight to the formation of a German diocese on the land of Borsa, which the Roman curia was ready to take under its protection, making it independent of the jurisdiction of the Hungarian church.

The information which reached the court that in addition to the favouring of German appointments the Knights were also annexing new territories led the monarch to doubt the point of further presence of the Germans on Hungarian soil. The loss of confidence in the Knights mission was completed by their request to Rome to enlarge their current autonomy in church jurisdiction by an autonomy of a political nature. This German demand also met with the support of the Papal see, which in the bull declared by Honorius III granted “special rights and privileges” to the Knights to rule over the Hungarian Borsa. This was a clear indication of the formation of an independent papal territorial enclave within the borders of Hungary. The obvious interference in the internal affairs of the Hungarian monarchy created a sharp solitarious reaction from the side and followers of Prince Bela and the transylvanian bishop Reginald. King Andrew called for the Germans to recognise his suzerainty. Guided by their power urge the Knights would not give up and called for judgement from the Papal court of appeal, and asking for an investigation of the charges brought against them by the monarch. When it appeared that the court would rule on the side of the Germans, king Andrew presented both Rome and the Knights with a “*fait accompli*”: “*manu militari*” he expelled his guests from the land of Borsa, by this sparing the Hungarians the fate which was soon to overtake the Prusai from the expelled Order. The Pope tried to intervene on their side and demanded their return, which the Hungarians side refused, arguing that the Teutonic Order was “like a fire in the breast, like a mouse in one’s bag, like a snake in the bosom”. Four times Rome urged the Hungarian king to submit, but he stood firm: the Knights lost the land of Borsa and the sympathy of the king of Hungary for ever.

It is of note that the very illuminating episode in the story of the Teutonic Order was ignored by the most noted of the chroniclers of the Order, Peter of Dusburg, and this can be understood, as there was not much to be proud of or to divulge the tactics of the adopted strategy, which in the near future was to bring Germans only profits in the political social and economic spheres.

“The chronicler Peter of Dusburg until the middle of the XIVth century was the only such author of the first detailed written text about the Teutonic Order” - stated Jaroslav Wenta in his introduction to the Polish edition of this work”. Although the title of the work - “the chronicle of the land of Prussia” - indicates its contents, the first part of it is a history of the genesis of the Teutonic Order.

As such it is worth looking at even if only to discover what the Knights thought and wrote about themselves:

“In the name of the Lord, Amen. In the year of the Lord 1190 at a time when the city of Acre was besieged by the Christians and due to the help of God was taken

from the hands of the infidels, in the Christian army there were some pious men from the cities of Bremen and Lubeck, who are people of mercy, looking with eyes of pity on the many and varied sufferings of the sick who were in that army, started an hospital in their tent, which they made out of the sail of a ship called in German a Koga. There they placed the afore mentioned sick, and with passion and humility gave them help, looking from their own free will after all the goods entrusted them by God and looked after them with mercy believing that in the person of each patient or pauper they received Christ himself (.....)”.

The notables gathered there, the wealthy and other well born celebrities, as we read later “looked on kindly, believing that the new form of hospitalization will bring forth fruit of reference and honesty in certain abundance, and without any doubts expected that - when the Lord gives growth and when the branches multiply - it will produce a great number of fruit in the future, then the council of all above mentioned princes wished for Frederick, lord and duke of Svabia to send fully empowered envoys to his brother, the magnificent Henry IV, king of Rome and future Holy Roman Emperor, to obtain from the Holy Father agreement for the founding of and confirmation of the rights of the mentioned hospital”.



33 The Teutonic Order in action

The Holy See looked with beneficent eyes on this German deed of mercy, not lacking to give brothers of the aforementioned hospital all sorts of rewards and also “permitting them to use a black cross and the white cloak (...). In this way the excellent and famous knightly order of the brothers of the hospital of the most Holy Maria of the German House in Jerusalem was founded, confirmed and granted many privileges. This is the selected vineyard of the Lord of Hosts which You, Jesus Christ, founded and for which you prepared the ground, moved it later and expelled the nations from the Prus and Baltic lands, planting it there and in this way your seedings reached out to the sea, and the roots as far as thr rivers. This fine knightly order was not only confirmed by the people on earth but its birth was fore told by signs on heaven and earth”.

In this way the Teutonic Knight, standing on the ruins and embers of Prusia, saw the genesis of the “excellent and famous order of the knights”. Could it be really true that he did not realise he was committing open blasphemy?

In the first part of his chronicles Peter of Dusburg also mentioned the first grand masters of the Teutonic Order. This office was in the first instance held by the brothers Heinrich Walpot, Otto von Kerpen, Heinrich Bart and Hermann von Salza. The first three did not achieve any great fame or results. Only the fourth Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens or grand master of the German Order was able to place the order on a very high political pedestal, finding in nearly the whole of Europe many mighty protectors, both religious and political - which in those times was much the same.

The Prusai still in the line of fire

The turn of the XIIth and XIIIth centuries, strictly speaking the times of the reign of the duke of Mazovia Konrad, brought a sudden change in the equilibrium which for some time had marked relations between Prusia and the Polans. The regions on both sides of the border became engulfed in by no means holy fire. And here a problem arises: who started with whom and why? As usual opinions are varied, although in the light of current knowledge there should not be room for any deep controversies.

Occupying himself with the history of the Teutonic Knights the contemporary american historian William Urban presents the following viewpoint: “We have little proof that the Prusai invaded their neighbours to seize cattle or slaves, as was common practice with Livs and Lithuanians”. It is surprising that Gall Anonimus, although in general he had little of merit to say about the Prusai, wrote more about their defence than their attacks. This can be deduced from the correct statement that “the country (of Prusia) is defended by natural conditions and the natural situation on islands amongst lakes and marshes”.

Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn shares a similar line of reasoning: “In standard defences guarding access to the settlements there were well concealed passages, known only to the inhabitants of the *lauks* (...) Permanent defences were regularly visited by those appointed to do so at the General Meetings and according to needs were repaired and improved”.

It is very difficult to prove that these passages and concealed traps pointed at aggressive intentions.

It would be difficult to accuse the Prusai of such intensions in the light of knowledge about their tactics. None other than Master Vincent Kadlubek left after him the story of one of the Polish expeditions to Prusia, where they could not find any Prusai ready to take part with the Polans in open battle: “in spite of long searches they cannot find it (the opportunity for battle) as all the enemies, not from weak spirited fear but from calculated caution hid in marshes and caves (...) they fight more by cunning than by strength, more by reckless bravery than by strength of spirit”.

However our historian errs seriously when he does not credit them with strength of spirit, as in fact almost all the other chroniclers of the era were united in

that the strongest weapon of the Prusai was their bravery. Already in the Xth century Ibrahim bin Jacob wrote: “they are famous for their courage. When they are attacked by other forces, nobody carries (...), but attacks, not looking for others, but wields his sword until he is killed”. The opinion of Master Vincent, clearly divulging from the truth, can be disregarded in view of his open negativity towards the Prusai.

This same Master Vincent could nevertheless sometimes summon sufficient impartiality to offer a fairly true description of military exploits: “Not having found them, the Poles, so it would not seem that they were not doing anything, become even more ruthless in their destruction: forts, villages, tall living houses, stores with grain are set on fire”.

This did not stop anyone considering the Prusai to be “a wild and warlike people”. In view of the above the cunning traps of which the Prusai were accused has to be seen as an element of their defensive facts, as the uninvited guests, be they Polans, Rusins or later the Knights of the Cross, were in many respects stronger. In such a case what could the Prusai do but watch them from hiding and letting them into their territories, all the more as this tactic, practised for many centuries, appeared highly effective?

There are therefore no major grounds for believing that the plundering expeditions against the peace loving neighbouring Mazovians were a monopoly of the Prusai.

More often than not the opposite was true, as it was not so much the Prusai trying to inflict on their neighbours from the south their pagan polytheism, but the open desire of the Polans to export to Prussia their Christian monotheism. And this aim was helped not only by sending to Prussia christianization expeditions with the participation of knights principally from Poland, but also from Czech lands and Germany. The aim was also helped by the ecumenising missions started by the Polish church on the Prusai territories of Pomezania and Pogezania at the beginning of XIIIth century, and particularly by the work of bishop Christian.

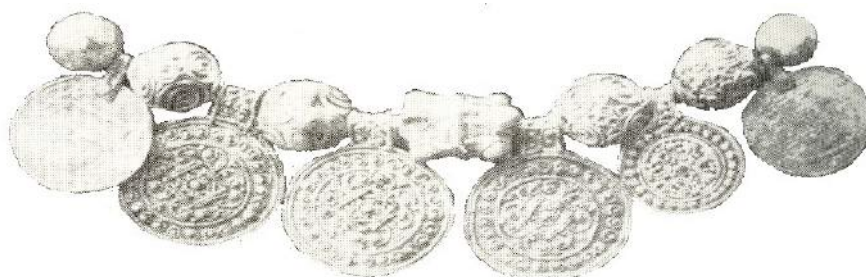
Not always was the Cross the sign of Christian love. “Peaceful christianisation was from time to time complicated by attempts to increase the power undertaken by Polish kings and dukes. Whilst expansion to the east was often met with success, in Prussia it only disturbed the missionary work and provoked revenge attacks by the pagans.

“However, expressing regret for committing mistakes was not part of the life style of christian rulers” remarks the American historian Urban looking from afar on Pruso - Polish relations.

Attempts of expanding their rule were made by many Polish rulers, starting with Boleslas the Brave, in his footsteps went others of whom the greatest activity was shown by Boleslas the Wrymouth, organising expeditions to Prus lands in the years 1107-1108, 1110-1111 and in 1115. In view of the above it became accepted in Polish history that “such expeditions were much more often organised by Prusai” - as writes Mieczyslaw Bielski and Valdemar Rezner - but this view: “these intrusions did not bring any decisions, but instead became a source of serious destruction of the Prusai people”.

If indeed the Prusai were a danger to Mazovia, which in any case was true, one has to look at this from the perspective not of end effects but of the reasons for these actions.

Blaming only the Prusai for the desire of plunder is not just, because it was not missing from the other side in the conflict lasting for over two centuries, as the pot was calling the kettle black. The possibility of gathering loot inspired all who went on military expeditions. For this reason just earmarking the Prusai in this context, who did not know the art of writing and could not leave written documents in their wake which could be confronted with those written about them by those well versed in this art, put them immediately in the position of losers and led to assigning them the worst possible characteristics. And this opportunity was heavily used, painting a picture in black and white. Painted in black on this picture could of course only be the Prusai.



34 The necklace of Arab silver coins. Wiskiauten.

Rarer was however the raising of the question of the defence by the Prusai of their independence, and this often at the price of their life. And from this attribute probably or almost certain came the highly negative opinion of the Prusai by Gall Anonimus, Vincent Kadlubek and Jan Dlugosz. In time this opinion lost its sharpness, but in the mind of many generations of Poles the tragedy of the fate whose victim from the hands of the Prusai became St. Wojciech remained coded.

The advances of Christianity upset those Prusai deeply entrenched in paganism, who in the end turned against their converted brethren. Growing resentment against missionary activities led to open hostility, which emerged in the form of attacks on Mazovian lands. With the help of the Rus prince Daniel the Prusai gave open battle to the forces of Konrad of Mazovia, who was defeated. Shortly later the Prusai advanced as far as Plock, creating a riposte from duke Konrad with support from Lech the White and Henry the Bearded. Further campaigns against the Prusai provoked them to further attacks, including the Gdansk Pomerania, whose ruler, Swietopelk, took the Polish side. The Prusai destroyed, amongst others, the priory of the Cistercians in Oliva, taking revenge for the destructions wreaked on their lands.

It is not right therefore to speak of only of the aggression of the Prusai in a situation where they had both to defend themselves and to attack. The Piasts, as all the other then reigning dynasties, were not doves of peace with an olive branch in a beak. They were rulers programmed on an expansion mostly to the north, which not only inspired but in line with the then ruling ideology in Europe justified missionary activities.

To the inflaming of Prusai - Polish relations in the beginning of the XIIIth century contributed the missionaries themselves, who sometimes placed the earthly profits obtained from their activities higher than the heavenly profits placed before the converted neophytes. This was proof how far the fine promises contrasted with the down - to - earth reality, when even the bishop Christian reached for armed force. This led to the Prusai beginning to identify christianisation with slavery, which under no circumstances they were willing to accept.

The cited prof. Urban is of the opinion that “religion began to be more important to both sides later. The Prusai, when they were provoked, certainly could not remain in their homes and quietly carry out their religious activities, but felt compelled, in line with standard practice, to continue their excursions on their christian neighbours long after they had already taken revenge on previous attacks”.

The question of who and why is examined by Grzegorz Bialunski “In total however, the many attempts at subordinating the Prusai in the first hundred years of the existence of the Polish state did not produce any lasting effects. It is worth noting that the righteousness, which is often wrongly presented in the literature to-date, namely the superiority and initiative in common Polish - Prusai relations was on the Polish side, also it demonstrated expansionist sentiments”.

That was the situation, we would add, not only in the first but also in the second century of the Polish state, until the moment when this state gave the initiative and superiority to hands foreign to Poland and Prusia. This was to determine the fate of both these societies and as a further consequence to weigh on the direction of development of the political situation in the whole of Europe. In any case this was one example where at first sight a minor move on the chessboard of history brings results unimaginable in political imagination. But the ancient Romans had already formulated the maxim: whatever you do, do it with thought and think of consequences...

The historical mistake of Konrad of Mazovia

Since as far back as their sojourn in Palestine the Teutonic Knights had already gathered information on the subject of far off Prusia on the Baltic wetting their appetite for their lands, then one would expect from the cautious by nature Konrad of Mazovia to orientate himself as to the reasons for which the knights were expelled from the not so distant hungarian land of Borsa. Even if duke Konrad had known something about it, clearly he sighted and tragic in its results political calculation. The hero of this story did not rate positive opinions from historians and experts on former times.

Pavel Jasienica: “Cruelty beyond all reason and imagination always marked the doings of Konrad”.

Simon Kobylinski: “A face with a predatory hooked nose and unstable inclinations (...) Lack of peace in a hawkish gaze and black hair. Fear in his social appearance was masked by an over proud pose”. Zbigniew Satala: “Konrad was an ambitious man, but very changeable and foul, he did not hesitate before committing rape, crimes or treason, if it moved him closer to his chosen aim, for almost all his

life he intriqued, fought against those closest to him, murdered, set on fire and destroyed”.

This was the opponent of the “cruel” and “wild” Prusai whom Polish and Teutonic Order chroniclers did not deign to call human. And to think that this was the son of king Casimir II the Just!

Duke Konrad was far from cultivating justice, having on his conscience the death of the wojewoda and counsellor Krystyn of Gozdow, who was first blinded on his orders, or the equally cruelly murdered Jan Czapl, chancellor and cannon of Plock, who was moreover the tutor of his son. Such were the times and our Konrad of Mazovia did not stray far from the accepted conventions in political behaviour. The evil spirit in this family was considered to be the wife of Konrad, Agafia, from the Rus family of Svietoslav, prince of Novogorod and Sieviersk.



35 Konrad of Mazovia

Buoyed by overblown ambition the ruler of Mazovia set himself two targets: to fight for the Cracow throne and to subdue to his wishes the hitherto undefeated Prusai. To achieve both these aims would increase his prestige mostly among his people. Historians quarrel about which of these aims were most important to him, but this does not change matters: the struggle for the throne showed varying fortunes, but with the conquest of Prusia he had no success. This aim was not brought any nearer by the expeditions undertaken in 1222-1223. And this could not give the ruler of Mazovia rest. He had to find a way to deal with the Prusian. A way was to invite the Knights of Cross to Poland, as their return to Hungary was impossible. It took place in the year of the Lord 1226.

It is difficult to state to what extent this was an independent decision of duke Konrad, or in part by the councils of his advisers, which included the first bishop of Prusia Christian, the bishop of Plock Gunther, and the Silesian duke Henry I the Bearded, who was a long time supporter of the Teutonic Knights, and with whom Konrad was once at odds. They all supported the idea of giving the Knights the Culm land in exchange for subjugating the Prusai for duke Konrad, who with his eyes already saw himself as the master of lands which none of his predecessors were able to subdue. For the Knights this would be something akin to a political service to a “noble and distinguished and most christian ruler” as Konrad of Mazovia was described by Peter of Dusburg.

In the relations of this chronicler things were as follows: “in this same time the knightly order in the person of its master, brother Herman von Salza, gained so many brothers, riches, strength and power that opinions of its good fame, which spread far and wide, in the end come to the attention of the afor mentioned prince. By Gods power it entered his heart so deeply that he wished to invite the afore mentioned brothers to defend his land, his faith and his congregations (...). Therefore, calling the bishops and his nobles he explained his intentions, asking them to give him good advice. These, with one voice, expressed approval to his wishes, adding that they know from reliable sources that the mentioned brothers are experienced knights versed in wielding arms and from the years of their youth trained in warfare (...). Because of this he despatched authorised legates together with his letters to the mentioned master Herman von Salza, who, when his brothers were presented with the object of their mission, after many consultations and various talks with his brothers on the subject of these difficult matters, and finally with the support of the Holy Father and Frederick II and the German princes who promised to help in the matter with counsel and support, decided to accede to the desire of the said prince”.

The news in 1226 about the start of pertractations of Konrad with the looking for a place on earth for the Teutonic Order Herman von Salza, reached the then public opinion via the meditation of emperor Frederick II. In the same year 1226 he hurried with promulgating a document of privilages granted to the Teutonic Knights which was requested from the Holy Roman Emperor by Herman von Salza. In this document the emperor not only confirmed the act of Konrad of Mazovia, but on the basis of his power to dispose of pagan lands, as they were then called, he gave all of Prusia under the protection of the Order. It also received other privileges from the emperor which placed their grand master on an equal footing with the princes of the German Reich. It was true that this was not yet equivalent to laying the legal foundation under the state of the Teutonic Knights, as a monastic order was forbidden to accept any lands from lay persons, and such a person was the emperor Frederick II. However this was a signpost for the future, showing the route which had to be taken to achieve the aim.

Having such trumps in hand, the Teutonic Knights two years later despatched emmisaries to Poland so as to seal the agreement to the last detail. They wanted from Konrad the place where they could step on Polish soil. And in 1229 they received a location called Orlovo near Inowroclaw, and a year later a white fort called Nieszawa and four surrounding villages.

The matter was seen in a different way by the Peter of Dusburg: “Since the afore mentioned brothers of the German house(...) had no place to rest their heads, the Prus land offered them earlier by the said Polish duke was something they planned to take up in a way that between them and the Prusai they would have for defence the river Vistula. They asked the afore mentioned duke to build them one castle. He, as a man completely subservient to God and eager in his faith, guided by the well known verse of the poet: “he has half the work behind him who started well” gathered his people and opposite the current town of Torun built them on a hill a castle called Vogelsang which in Latin means “*cantus-avium*” - the song of birds”.

Another German chronicler, Nicholas von Jershin, wrote about this foreboding: “many wounded sang there but not in the way birds sing, but rather the painful song of a dying swan”.

The Knights were supported by the bishop Christian and Gunther and the more donations for their cause were confirmed in 1230 by Pope Gregory IX, who four years later gave them whole of Prusia. The rest was just the matter of time. From their side both these church dignitaries also presented generous gifts in the form of church possessions which to German order settled in Poland. This was to be encouragement for the Order to start the work of converting the Prusai.

An irony of fate was that both Konrad of Mazovia and bishop Christian of Prusia who from the order of Rome organised the missionary action in Prusia, had absolutely no idea of the real intentions of Herman von Salza. Duke Konrad was immersed in political conflicts which engulfed the then Polish state and therefore looked benevolently on the settling of the Knights on Polish land, being misled that they would bring to an end his problems with the Prusai and extend his rule over them. Bishop Christian was also wrong in expecting that he would keep the authority of Rome and continue to manage the missionary action in Prusia. These hopes proved to be false, as his place was taken - with the approval of Rome - by the Teutonic Knights.

Both were out manouvered by the grand master Herman von Salza, who proved to be also a grand master in diplomacy, with which he gained universal support in Europe for his still masked intentions. But only due to diplomacy?

Taking the premise that all roads lead to the target, Herman von Salza stood before Pope Gregory IX assuring him that Konrad of Mazovia donated to the Order not only the fort Culm and other forts on the Polish - Prusai borders, but also assured that he had been promised that all territories which the Knights would conquer would belong to them. As proof of this the Orders grand master presented a document written in 1230 in Kruszwica in which there is talk of conquered territories “for peaceful keeping with real ownership and rule”. And the Pope used this as a base for his bull confirming the supposed donation to the Order of the land Prusia. Supposed, because the historians researching the question of the “Kruszwica Privilege” came to the conclusion that they had to deal with the Teutonic Order’s falsification. Also pointing to this was the fact that in the archives of the papal chancellery was found not the original, which strangely has disappeared, but a re-write of the original document. In the desire to seize the whole of Prusia the Knights relied on such legal fundamentals.

Whatever one would wish to say on the subject, one thing is certain: the investigator of the Teutonic Order on Polish land can be considered to be “the duke of Mazovia, Kujavia, Sieradz, Leczyca and Krakow, Konrad, who dreamt of the final solution to the Prusia question.

It is interesting how all this was seen by the king of Hungary Andrew II and what he thought about it, as he was able to see in time through the devious nature of the Teutonic Order and reached conclusions which saved his country.

The throne and altar against the Prusai

The fate which was to meet the Prusai was with certainty the result of many often intertwined factors. It would be a simplification to adhere to the idea that the cause of their tragedy was only the Teutonic Order or only Konrad of Mazovia. Being reasonably objective - if something like that is at all possible - an approach to the subject requires a wider look and the taking into account the spirit and character of times in which the drama of this people existing on the peripheries of the mostly Christian Europe. And it fell to this Christian Europe to carry out the very far from glorious task of initiating and monitoring actions which eventually led to the disappearance of Prusia from the actions which eventually led to the disappearance of Prusia from the middle ages ethnography of the European continent. The fact that this was totally contrary to Christianity as expressed in the Decalogue hardly needs proving here.

However, not for discussion is the statement that in this, as in many other cases, using cybernetic terminology, there was a key link between religion and politics, or, if one prefers, a marriage of politics with religion. In this case entering into the game was the strictly national factor, as the Teutonic Knights were the tool of German expansion, which used the Cross for aims quite at variance with its christian destiny.

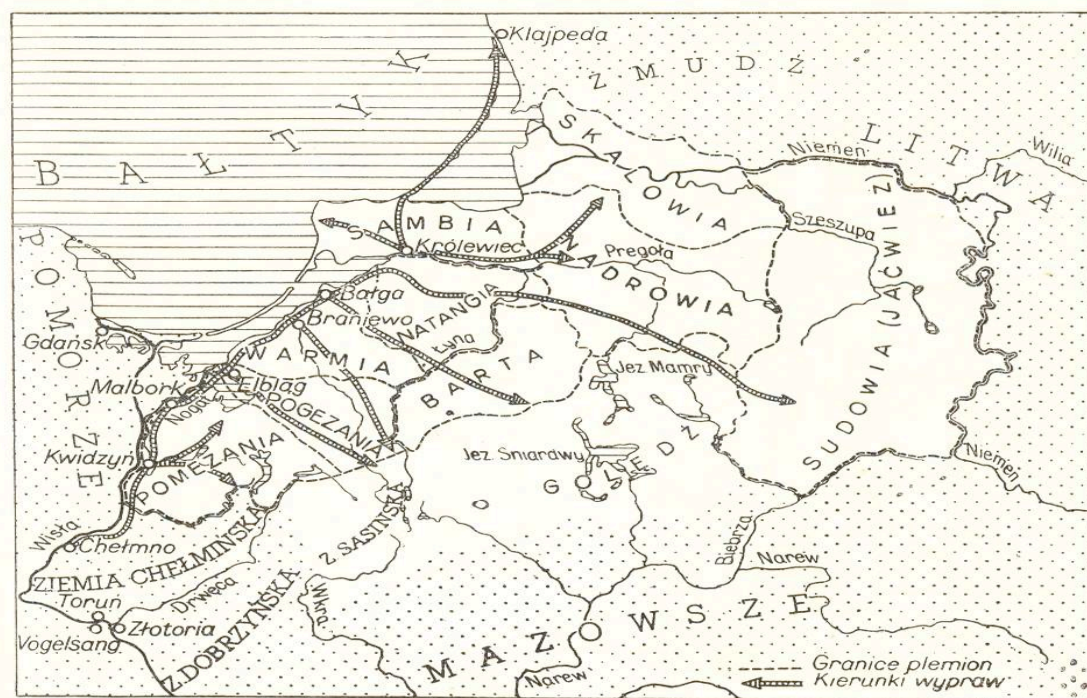
In the name of justice it has to be said that it was not the Germans who were the first to evangelise the pagans, holding the cross in the left hand the sword in the right. The first to do this were the Carolingians. None other than Charlemagne in the VIIIth century attacked the Saxons, promising he would either baptise them, or exterminate them. This motto was used by the Saxons when they attacked the Slavs.

“From the west came the slogan of a mission with the help of iron to Poland and found place in the chronicles of Gall Anonimus and Vincent Kadlubek” - wrote Henry Lowmianski. But in practice lay rulers put most energy into carrying out conquest and raising taxes from the defeated, and cared less about converting them. Even in the time of Charlemagne it was said that the taxes placed on the neophytes, ruined the faith of Saxons. Such similar objections (...) were common amongst German chroniclers, and in Poland Master Vincent rebuked Boleslas the Wrymouth that having subjugated (some) Prusai with the aim of converting them to the faith, was content to collect tributes, and resigned from conversion”.

And then came the times of the Crusades, which were initiated by pope Urban II, calling in 1095 synod in Clermont for the knighthood of western Europe to take

back the Holy Land from Islam. Half a century later, in the year 1147, pope Eugene III proclaimed the start of so called post - Elbe crusade against the pagan Slavs living in the western shores of the Baltic. This was the beginning of the epoch of the Baltic crusades, which, with different intensities, lasted until the middle of the XIIIth century. Apart from Livonia, Estonia and Finland on the map of the crusaders lay Prusia.

On the justification by the Roman Curia of the Baltic crusades writes Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt: "the fifth commandment and the teachings of Christ obliged the Church to be wedded to the cause of peace. Middle ages theology, when on the topic of war, relied on the teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo (...). basing his doctrine on the classical difference between a justified war and an unjustified one, he proposed a series of tests which would differentiate these two types of conflict".



4. The Teutons strategy in the conquest Prusia.

The baltic crusades were considered justified wars in so far as as they were to defend the christian missionaries in their work. "On the Baltic the mission came before the crusades and often it was the activity of the evangelisation projects that led to the annoucement of the baltic crusades-an appeal to the missionaries appeal for help " continues to write Fonnesberg-Schmidt, stating in the end: "Both Eugene III and Alexander III permitted the conversion of pagans by force, which stood in open conflict with canon law (...) Short term politics, in which popes answered the petitions of local authorities, assumed the need for war activities".

Pope Innocent III also became engaged in the Baltic crusades, giving them two tasks: converting the non-believers and promoting the christian faith, as well as the defence of those already converted from the the non-believers. The crusades were also supported by pope Honorius III, who placed the expeditions by crusaders to the

Baltic on an equal footing to the expeditions to the Holy Land, giving both total absolutions for their sins.

A fully pro-Teutonic Order policy was pursued by Pope Gregory IX, who linked high hopes of bringing Prussia into the orbit of the Christian world with Knights of the Cross. As a result he was very friendly towards the Order's mission in Prussia, and fulfilled all the requests which the Knights sent to the Holy See. And it was difficult to be surprised at this, as the grand master Herman von Salza was always a very welcome guest in Rome. It was he who received from the hands of Gregory IX the document giving Prussia to the Teutonic Order, which equated to giving them all the lands of Prussia. This was, as is known, the confirmation of what emperor Frederick II had earlier decreed, whose main adviser was the grand master of the Order. It is not difficult to imagine what advice he could have given the Pope. Because of this Herman von Salza took part in meetings, one can say, at the highest possible level for the times, or the Pope with the Emperor.

A supporter of the Knights was also Pope Innocent IV who "gave the Order a free hand in organising crusades. In practice this meant permission for a permanent crusade in Prussian territory - a remarkable concession, taking into consideration Innocent IV's predilection to his prerogatives (...) This concession was effectively the relinquishing of control over the recruitment of crusaders for campaigns in Prussia in favour of the Order"- comments Fönnesberg-Schmidt.

Having against them both the German emperor and the Roman popes, the Prussians stood before the spectre of undoubted annihilation.

VIII DRANG NACH PREUSEN

Half a century of extermination by the Knights of the Order

In the thirty ninth year of its existence, or AD 1230, the Order of the Hospital of the Most Holy Mary of the German House began the operation of the Christianisation of Prussia. It was initiated by the country's master Herman von Balk. Taking leave from the poem by Alexander Pushkin, who foretold the jailed Decabrist that from their spark a flame would arise, one can say that from the spark then started by the Teutonic Knights a flame was started which in the near future engulfed the Prussian lands and in the long term - the whole of Europe. It should be however remembered that all this started on the land of the ancient Prussians.

"The key to the success of the Teutonic Order - proves the British historian of Danish origin Eric Christiansen - was the example of the Cavaliers of the Sword in the eastern Baltic. It was necessary to start by building a number of riverside castles which could be used as bases by the Knights; only then could one think about systematic conquest of further territories and moving east of the Niemen".

From the experiences of the Cavaliers of the Sword the practical Herman von Balk made much use, resigning from the very risky expeditions deep into the jungles of the Prussian forests and marching along the right bank of the Vistula north to

Pomezania, and further, to the Baltic sea. However, he first conducted a bloody ethnic purge on land given to the Order and settled until now mostly by Prusai from the Culm land.

In line with their adopted strategy the Knights marched north-east from Culm to build their first castles in Kwidzyn and Radzyn. From there they could with success attack the Pomezans, whom they eventually forced to sue for peace. Herman von Balk sailed further north, leaving new forts behind him in this way cutting the same Pomezans access to an important to them communication trail.

To build their first forts the knights used stones, wood and earth. In time, and strictly from the middle of the XIIIth century, in the harsh and primeval landscape of the Prus lands there appeared fortified castles in stone and brick.

To-day one can still count over forty of them in Poland, the majority of them in former Prusia. They were situated 15-30 kilometres one from each other. In the castle arsenals the Knights kept the arms which were forged there and stored food. The heavy cavalry emerged from there, and behind them marched the infantry, followed by the wagons. Such expeditions or 'reizey' as the Knights incursions were called, were directed along the right bank of the Vistula to the north, towards the mouth of the Vistula. Henry Lowmianski wrote about this as follows: "These conquering 'missionaries' were characterised by unheard brutality in their dealings with the locals and forced them to submit, using cruelty without restraint, causing fear even in the middle ages Europe such unseen physical suffering".

The number of mass murders grew, burning people alive, taking out eyes, rapes and taking into slavery, not counting robbery, devastation, pillage and setting fire to properties were common place. The German in spirit of the Teutonic Order changed the peaceful Prus land into veritable hell on earth.

In the meantime the american expert on Teutonic Order matters, William Urban writes:"It is difficult to expect for the Knights to be judged on the basis of their most consequent statements and actions because in different times they behaved - like most human organisations - very differently; if someone always sees in them only the worst frailties, and in their opponents-the best, may be they can be considered to be embodiment of evil; and it is in this way that many historians (...) wrote about the German warriors".

It cannot be helped that memories of crimes stay longer than memories of good works...

Eventually there came the tragic for the Prusai year 1234. Aided by recruits from Germany and companies of knights from the dukes Henry the Bearded, Konrad of Mazovia, Casimir of Kujavia, Wladislav of Greater Poland, Svietopelk from Gdansk and his brother Sambor, the Knights of the Cross invaded the land of Resia. The route of their march was marked by rape, plunder, fire and bloodshed, which was loyally related by none other than the Orders chronicler. However, the systematic conquest of Prusia, if earlier armed invasions are not counted, started in earnest from a battle given in the same year on the the river Dzierzgonia with the living in this "land by the forest" Pomezans by these German warriors with the help, it must be stressed, of numerous units of Polish knights. As Dominic Szulc relates, "all of Lechia joined in the crusade expedition, from the Oder to the Vistula. In detail thus

Henry of Silesia brought with him 3000 warriors, Konrad of Mazovia 4000, Casimir of Kujavia 2000, Vladislav of Greater Poland 2200, Sviatopelk of Pomerania with his brother Sambor 5000, in total 16 200. But the whole of Germany did not deliver more crusaders than 5000, according to Voigt”.

As can be seen, it was in effect the Polish princes who won this battle for the Teutonic Knights, who quite quickly thanked them in a manner typical for themselves, namely treason and aggression.

“Not much can be said about the battle itself. It is certain that it was unusually fierce, that it lasted all day, that in violence it surpassed many conflicts of the time, and that the situation changed from hour to hour. Fortune smiled once upon one side, then upon the other. The battle was indeed very bloody. The Prusai did not sell their lives cheaply. According to some authors about 5000 Pomezans and over 4000 christian knights were laid on the field of battle (...)

The position of the Order was much strengthened, it also gained most of the political gains - write about this first major battle between the Knights of the Cross and the Prusai, state the experts on warfare Mieczyslaw Bielski and Waldemar Rezmer. Their doubts concern only the number of dead, which seems much exaggerated.

However this did not mean the end of the war to subjugate Pomezania where outbreaks of opposition kept breaking out in spite of being liquidated by the Knights, and local conflicts continued to break out. As a result the Prusai lost two more of their forts, including Sztum and Prabuty.

In the year 1236 units of Knights in the Vistula delta came across the well fortified Prus fort Honeda. Not daring to launch a storm, the invaders satisfied themselves looting, plundering and setting local settlements on fire. Their attention being elsewhere, they failed to spot the Prusai coming from Honeda, who cut them to pieces. A year later Herman von Balka at the head of reinforced units tried again, this time successfully to capture the Vistula delta, where he laid the fundamentals for the strongly fortified town of Elblag. The way to the “country of rushes”, or Pomezania, lay open to the Teutonic Knights.

Further attacks started in 1237 and produced a violent reaction from the invaded Prusai. However, not being able to resist the Teutonic attackers the Prusai preferred to flee with their families into the unknown rather than be enslaved. This encouraged the Knights to try new conquests. Thus did Peter of Dusburg shed tears over the harsh fate of the Knights “Nobody can count in detail how many difficulties, dangers and problems stood before the master and his brothers so that because of them the faith in Christ could increase and widen the borders of christianity. Therefore, by the grace of God, without whom nothing happens, when the Pomezanians and Pomezanians succumbed to the faith and to the brothers, the same master and brothers started to get ready for war against the Warmians, Natangs and Barts.

In 1238 the Teutonic Knights attacked the “red land”, or Warmia, to whose help came the neighbouring people of Pomezans, Natangs and Barts. Unfortunately, the idea of common interest above their interest was not part of their way of life and the alliance of these four provinces did not last.

With the seizure of Prus lands by the Knights, cases of betraying their national identity by the Prusai were becoming more common. “Many Prusai did not believe in the success of fighting. A large group of nobles went to see the Knights, as leaving the old religion they were ready to enter the road to treachery for the price of honours with the future victors. Here is the fate of one of them, Gedune, from the house of Kandemonid. For the promise of freedom and privileges he promised to lead the crusaders through the marshes of his home territories so that they could attack his countrymen in the rear. In return he was promised his life (...) When he finally reached his objective it transpired that his home had been reduced to ashes and all his relatives had been killed. Was this an accident, or was it done on purpose, out of contempt for a neophyte?” wonder Agnieszka and Robert Sypko.



36 Teutonic Knights paying a visit to the Prusai settlement (by W. Kossak)

It was no accident, for the Knights from under the sign of the black Cross were famed for similar behaviour from the start of their criminal activities. To the annals of conquest belongs the information about the fate the Prus Pipin. He admittedly accepted baptism, but fell into conflict with the Knights, who condemned him to death. The executioner exposed his intestines, nailed them to a stake and forced him to run around it. This was to serve as a memento to all Prusai who might consider any protest against the Order.

In this state of affairs it did not take many years for the people living along the right bank of the lower Vistula to find themselves under the Order's yoke. It was

from here that the attack of the Knights into the Prus interior started. Around 1240 was built the first castle outside the coastal are, Batenstein, to-day Bartoszyce.

In 1249 the Knights invaded Sasinia and Galindia, preparing for the attack on the richest but not accepting subjugation Sambia and on the way invading other Prus lands, Nadrovia and Skalovia. The German chronicler Nicholas von Jeroshin wrote of their exploits thus "They murdered so many unbaptised that many of them drowned in their own blood. They seized men and women in their hideouts. When they were ready to depart, the stone god of the Skalows (...) gathered a great host of his warriors and pursued the forces of the brothers. When the master learned of this, he sent strong forces on one wing and remained in hiding until the Skalows came near to attack. Then the brothers jumped out of the trap, killed many and forced the rest to flee".

Both from Skalovia and from Nadrovia an exodus of people went to Lithuania, leaving behind them an uninhabited space, which the jungle eagerly took into its domain.

In the end came the turn of Sambia, whose wealth was an object of desire not only for the Teutonic Knights. Earlier it should be remembered, on the coast of the amber yielding peninsula the Vikings had appeared, and after them Danish warriors sent by Canute the Great and Canute IV for loot and for the famous for their beauty Sambian women. In the foot steps of his predecessors on the Danish throne also went Valdemar II, but the Danes never succeeded in imposing their rule on Sambia and colonising their territory. Well versed in the art of sailing the Sambians were in a state to repel Danish advances on their lands and property. Sambia was also of interest to the king of Norway, Haakon IV, who obtained in 1252 a bull from pope Innocent IV on the question of his participation in the christianisation of this Prus land. The mission of the Norwegians did not in effect take place, but the fact itself proves that Sambia was of interest not only to the Teutonic Knights. All the same it was necessary to initiate the final solution of the Sambian question.

The Komtur of Dzierzgon, Heinrich Stange, in charge of the Orders forces, took the initiative and entered Sambia, burning Prusai settlements on his way and destroying the Holy Woods. Warned about the coming danger, the Sambians decided to fight. The Knights retreated and suffered defeat. Even the Komtur Stange did not escape with his life. From this the Order drew lessons for the future: turning with an appeal for armed help to the rulers of western Europe, it decided to encircle Sambia from the north and in 1253 built the fortress of Klajpeda. Sambia found itself in a pincer movement all the worse as her armed forces were far less numerous than the invaders.

The Knights attacked Sambia for the second time. It took only a few weeks for it to share the fate of all the other territories so far conquered. The Sambians who opposed the invaders faced death from the Knights sword. By the end of 1255 the whole of Sambia was pacified. The bloody saga of the Prusai, or the "people of the lagoons" was nearing its end.

To be conquered there only remained the last Prusai lands, Nadrovia and Skalovia. There the Knights showed of what they were made of, carrying out mass murdering, abduction into slavery, horse and cattle stealing as well as setting on fire everything which could not be stolen. Most of the Prusai population which survived

fled to Lithuania, leaving behind scorched earth. In spite of this the pacification of Nadrovia took over two years. No less trouble did the Knights have with the conquest of Skalovia, torturing and cutting into pieces men, abducting women and children, and burning Prusai forts and settlements, including Ragneta, Ramiga and Labiau. “On the conquered Prusai forts - writes the expert on the history of the conquest of Prusia, Slawomir Klec Pilewski - after earlier strengthening, the Knights installed their garrisons not only to control the conquered territory, but also to continue expeditions to Lithuania. The localisation and fortification of the forts in Skalovia was so thought out that in spite of the overwhelming odds of the Order and their experience, it was only after a siege of several years (...) and fleeing of the defenders, that the conquests were complete. For several years the Prusai were able to live only on fish from the rivers and lakes”.



37 Murder, loot, rape.

The crowning act of 53 years of conquest in Prusia was the armed invasion of the ethnically allied to the Prusai but situated in the direction of the Teutonic expansion, Jatviagans. The calendar showed the year 1283. This triumph of Teutonism coincided with the eleventh grand mastership of the Order of the Hospital of the Most Holy Mary of the German House, Hartmann von Heldringen.

The white cloak with the black cross was covered with blood.

White, black and red a few centuries later became the colours of Hitler's IIIrd Reich.

The crusade according to Peter of Dusburg

It would be fair to look at the conquest of Prusia with the eyes of the Germans themselves, so as to evade the charge of too black a judgement on the mission of the Teutonic Order. Thus the pedantic German author of the work “Chronicle of the Prus land”, Peter of Dusburg, brought home the whole truth about reality of the process of christianisation in Prusia and how it was applied. In the first part of his work the chronicler expresses his thoughts “on the physical and spiritual weapons” counting in these sword, shield, bow and arrow, sling axe and helmet and goes to discuss the need of using such weapons. And such were the Order’s tools in the christianisation of the Prusai.

“There are six reasons why we rely on bodily and spiritual weapons. First, for practice, so that we can prepare for war in line with God’s will (...). Who is worth much in war who is not trained in using arms? (...). But since war service is part of man’s life on earth, therefore as soon as he arrives on earth, he enters the field of struggle against the forces of hell, but weapons in our struggle are not physical, but has the might of destroying from God (...). Secondly, we use physical body weapons in case of traps by our enemies (...). Thirdly, we use physical arms in case of open attack by enemies (...). For this reason the brothers of the German House from the time of their entry onto Prus lands until the current time continuously make use of the sword, so that they are always ready for defence, if it were to happen that an open or hidden attack were to be launched by their enemies. In the same way we use the weapons of virtue against the open attacks of the devil (...). Fourthly we use the bodily weapons in the defence of peace, so that we can enjoy our possessions in peace (...). Fifthly, so that we can recover lost property (...). Sixth, for the demonstration of power, so that our enemies are seized with fear at the sight of our weapons” - wrote the Teutonic Order’s chronicler.

The same Peter of Dusburg left after himself a wide ranging and pedantically detailed history how, with the help of German arms the Order’s brothers converted.

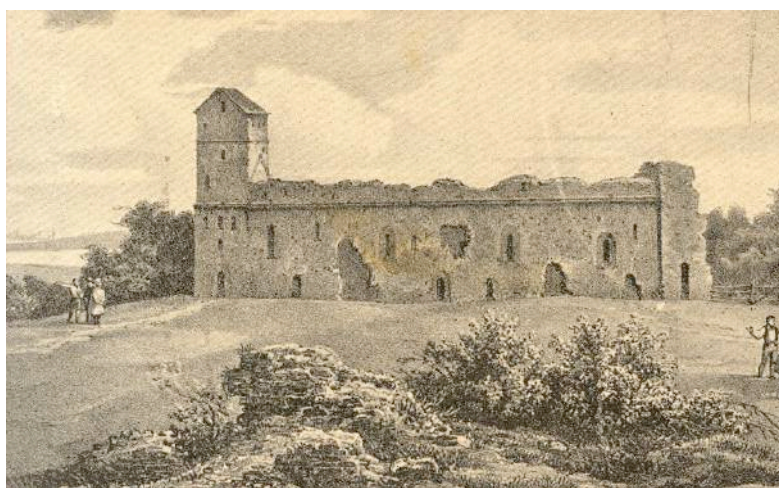
“*About the destruction of two castles and the death of Pipin.* Some say that (...) the Prusai had a castle called Rogow on the bank of the river Vistula above Torun, and also one below (...). Half way between the two castles lived a well born man from Pomezania called Pipin (...). No christian could leave a castle without being taken prisoner or killed by him. In the end the brothers started a war with the inhabitants of Rogow, and, as God must have wished, killed many of them and seized their leader; this leader, to escape death, gave them his castle, and, in the passage of time, when the inhabitants of the other castle fell drunk after libation, led the brothers with their troops there, who raided the place by force, killed everybody, and turned the castle into ashes. Shortly afterwards he gave his nephew Pipin into the hands of the brothers, who tied him to the tail of a horse and dragged him to hang in a tree in Torun”.

“*About the castle in Balga* (...) When they moored on the bank at Balga they landed and set up rows of archers in suitable locations and put ladders against the walls, and bravely attacked the Prusai castle. And with the co-operation of

Kondrunus, the leader of the garrison, they took the castle by force, taking people into slavery and killing the others”.

“About the coming of the Margrave of Meissen. At this time, the noble and devoted prince Henry, margrave of Meissen came to the land of Prusia with 500 noble followers armed with weapons and rich equipment. All the attention and strength of this lord were directed at the destruction of the unbelievers and expansion of the borders of Christian lands”.

“About the destruction of many castles and subjugating the Pomezans. In the land of Pomezania there was once a district called Resia in which lived many famous and experienced warriors. The above mentioned Prince attacked them bravely without looking backwards, destroying them with plunder, fire and great blood letting of the unbelievers. Their castle (...) and all further fortifications which they had in this place, called Sztum, and which were nearby (...) Prabuty and Obrzynovo, near lakes Druzno and Wielbark, he took by force and after turning to ashes levelled with the ground, taking the pagans captive or killing them”.



38 The Balga castle re-built by Teutonic Knights from the Prusai fortress Honeda.

About the defeat of the infidels and the destruction of the castle Partegal (...). Accordingly, with the advice of this Pomand all the notables from Warmia, Natangia and Bartia and others capable of fighting pitched their camp to lay siege to Balga, but the brothers, who knew about this happening and their preparations (...) came fully armed to do battle against Prusai and killed them until they were exterminated, so that no one was left alive (..). After this event the same prince and brothers with their army reached the castle of Partego and its fortifications, sacked it and reduced to ashes; the whole garrison was taken and put to death”.

“About the war with the Sambians and the destruction of the Germanu district Many wars were launched against the Sambian people about which would take too long to go into detail: however a few it should be mentioned. Brother Henry, called Stange, the komtur of Dzierzgon, on the order of the master, made war on Sambia with a great army(...) he destroyed with fire and plunder (...) killing and taking into slavery many people”.

“About the war against the land of Wohndorf and the capture of the castle of Kapostete. The Komtur of Königsberg together with the Sambian leader Thirsko, who had excellent knowledge of the routes to neighbouring lands, marched unexpectedly onto the land of Wohndorf, put the ladders against the walls and carried out that which is essential to carry out a storm. The castle Kapostete was taken by force and turned to ashes; in the castle and the immediate district many people were killed or taken prisoner, then the whole territory was destroyed by looting and fire and the invaders withdrew”.

“About the taking of other castles and the conquest of the Wohndorf land. In the next year the same Komtur of Königsberg again gathered strong forces and marched on the land of Wohndorf, made camp and laid siege to the castle Ochtolite, taking it in the manner previously described; therein, and in the locality of the castle, he caught and killed many people, and the castle was totally burnt”.

“About the destruction of a certain part of Natangia. Together with his men from Wohndorf, and others which he could collect, the same Komtur entered a part of the border land of Natangia (..) and destroyed it with looting and fire. The leader of this border territory, called Goduke, was killed with his two sons and many others, whilst his wife and all the servants with women and children and goods were abducted”.

“About the victory in which the counts of Julich and Marchia killed 3000 Sambians (...) The crusaders made ready for battle, and the count of Marchia attacked the horsemen, while the others attacked the columns of infantry so that assisted by the help of God they had a splendid triumph over the enemy: some died by the sword, others fled showing their rear, yet others retreated to the village (...) and were defeated there with great difficulty. It was necessary to call for help from Königsberg all the brothers and its garrison. They bravely attacked the enemy and after a long battle (...) killed all of their forces. And thus thanks to the merciful God over 3000 Sambians and other Prusai were slain that day (...)”.

“About the victory of the brothers over the Sambians in the district of Bethen (...). The brothers from Königsberg came with their army at the agreed time to the agreed place and started to pillage and set fire to the aforementioned area(...) The worried Sambians gathered and as an enemy attacked the forces of the brothers, and when the latter were ready to flee for their lives (...) the forces of the brothers from the Baltic states arrived together with strong and numerous cavalry so they attacked the enemy immediately and the whole army of the Sambians was destroyed by the sword whilst the women and children were captured. Houses in this and surrounding areas were burnt to ashes”.

“About the destruction of the Rino area and the death of its inhabitants. When the news of this came to the ears of the brothers from Königsberg they were so aroused that they gathered their forces and entered the Rino district, killed all the men, abducted the women and children with all their property, and thus again the land of Sambia lived in peace as before”.

“About the conquest of the castle Bartoszyce (...). In the castle of Bartoszyce there lived a man called Miligedo, who was so very brave that the Prusai considered that his death could equal the killing of half of the surrounding garrison. Because of

this they hatched a plan to catch him in a trap and kill him (...) In this and other ways they attacked him many times, and eventually killed him. In the same way they killed a man called Troppo (...) After their death there was great joy in the Prusai nation and among the brothers there was great depression. But the brothers, in order to turn the joy of their enemies into sorrow and suffering, on a gallows erected outside the castle gate, hung 30 Prusai hostages whom they were keeping as prisoners”.

“About the destruction of three fortifications and the killing of over a thousand Prusai. Later there came to a fight between the servants of the Knights and the Prusai who took part in the siege over a cooking pot which the latter wanted to move from one fortification to another where in line with their ritual they would use the pot to prepare sacrificied food (...) In the end by the will of God the brothers seized the pot by force and moving further forward completely destroyed three fortifications, so that out of 1300 men who were assigned to their defence few escaped death (...)”.



39 The German hell

“On the destruction of the castle of Brandenburg. The brother Frederick from Holdenstedt, the Komtur of Brandenburg, together with other brothers and his warriors, set off to the Natangia district (..) and ravaged it by fire and looting, killing and taking into captivity very many people”.

“About the plundering of the land of Natangia by lord Theodoric margrave of Meissen. When in the year of the lord 1272 the lord looked and saw the wretchedness of his people (..) the son of the distinguished prince and lord Henry (..) came to the land of Prusia together with a huge number of warriors. And when, together with the master and brothers, he wanted to attack the enemy, as he was entering Natangia he came across a fortification with many warriors who defended it. But the brothers Theodoric and Gunther together with the brothers and soldiers destroyed the

fortification and killed or took prisoner all the defenders. After this incident the said prince(...) entered with his soldiers deep into Natangia (...) ravaging it with fire and plunder”.

“About the captivity of the Pomezans, their very great defeat and return of peace to the Christians. The master and the brothers (...) gathered all the power of their forces and invaded the land of Pomezania destroying it from end to end with looting and fire. They killed the men and took women and children into captivity. Further the castle Lidzbark, which was then in the hands of the Pomezans, was taken, and all inhabitants murdered. And from that time the land of Prusia lived in peace”.

“About the capture of two castles the land of Nadrovia in the territory of Lethowis (...). When they entered the area of Letowis they ravaged it with pillaging and fire, they came to two castles in this area, and after a long battle (...), sure of Gods help in the end captured both. Next day they killed or took prisoner many people, and both castles with their annexes were burnt down. They captured such great loot in the form of horses, cattle and other possessions that they could hardly carry them home”.

“On the conquest of the castle of Kaminiswika. In turn the master with a great army crossed the land of Nadrovia , burning and looting, and when he reached the castle of Kaminiswika (...) he prepared everything which is necessary to a successful siege, attacked the castle (...) and in the end after a long battle they forced their way into the keep. Next they murdered all the men, and the women and children together with huge amount of loot they carried away. The castle they reduced to ashes”.

“About the conquest of the castle in Sassovia(...). A force of 1500 raiders assembled outside the castle of the Skalows in Sassovia, with others who sailed in fifteen ships. Next they attacked bravely and after the long struggle took the castle by force, the enemies in part they made prisoners and butchered the rest. The castle itself they burned to a cinder”.

“On the butchery of many Pomezanians(...). In the meantime the brother and master Conrad of Thierberg and other brothers gathered a great force and invaded the land of Pomezania, murdered a huge number of men, ravaged the land with fire and plunder, and seized the women and children whom they abducted”.

“On the same. In the same year, in winter, the brothers, again with armed forces, invaded the said land of Pomezania and again devastated it with fire and looting, caught and murdered everybody except a few survivors who escaped to Lithuania to the district of the castle Grodno. And Pomezania itself they turned into a desert”.

“About the devastation of the district Sudow called Kimenow. The brother and master Conrad of Thierberg and many brothers together with fifteen hundred horsemen invaded Sudow and ravaged the district which is called Kimenow. Apart from the fact that they killed a great many in addition to uncountable plunder of many articles they abducted a thousand people taken prisoner”.

“On the destruction of the district of Sudow called Krasima. The brother and master Mangold, whose predecessors started the war with the Sudows, to make sure that it would not fizzle out but would continue on a day-to-day basis, gathered all his forces and entered the area of Sudow called Krasima, treating it with fire and pillage.

He also turned to ashes the settlement of the famous ruler Skomand, the leader of the afore mentioned district, and next captured and killed one hundred and fifty people, after which he retreated with very great loot”.

And so on, and on, and on.....

Somewhat unique in this context appears to be the opinion of the american expert on the history of the Teutonic Knights William Urban: “The statement of the Poles that the Order was basically bad in its intentions and acts and that they erred in the faith, stopped being credible in the middle of XIVth century to the majority of the Church and public opinion in the West. Partly it was because of the tendency to exaggerate characteristic to the epoch, when the slightest failing was blown up to monstual proportions. What is more important is that this opinion was at odds with the experiences of actual witnesses. The knights and priests who were in Prusia and in Zmudz and saw the Holy War at close quarters, who met priests and nobles travelling through Germany and Poland, could have formed their own opinions independently. Their verdict almost always favoured the Knights of the Order”.

No comments.

Conquistadors of the epoch of the Middle Ages

However, it was not quite true that the extermination and loss of identity of one of the wealthiest of the known people of Northern Europe was only the work of the Order of the Hospital of the Most Holy Mary of the German House.

“When in 1230 the Order began the conquest of Prusia, there were less than a score of them! Till now in school text books the standard opinion is that the Knights of the Cross conquered Prusia. However in practice the Order’s Knights formed only a minority part of the armed forces”.

Stating this fact, Agnieszka and Robert Sypko show another participant in the disappearance of the Prusai from the ethnic map of Europe. This was led by the margraves, princes and sometimes by monarchs of the german knighthood versed in previous crusades against Islam and always ready to answer the appeals of the Teutonic Order for help in the fight against the Prusai. The Order used to appeal for Christian solidarity in situations when in battles with the Prusai pagans they suffered defeats, and one has to admit this happened quite often. In the opinion of Gerard Labuda two factors lay behind the military successes of the Order. One of these factors was “the numerical superiority of their forces, the organisation and battle qualifications, and also the quality of the commanders and the having of a wider battle plan. In all these areas, except perhaps the initially worse geographic knowledge of the terrain, and initially an inferior number of troops, the Knights were superior in every respect. They represented the highest in every respect level of combat aptitude to which western knighthood aspired in the wars with the world of Islam. Using its possibilities, the Teutonic Order was losing its original religious

character, becoming in the middle ages German knights living off robbery, known under the name “*raubritter*” (robber barons).

The second factor, which effectively decided about the military success of the Order, was the participation of knights from many countries of western Europe. The wars with the Prusai were joined by crusaders who were attracted by the appeal from Rome to liquidate the last enclaves of paganism in Europe. Such enclaves were amongst others XIIIth century Prusia, or territories much nearer and less dangerous than Tunis, Egypt, Palestine or Syria.

The mobilisation of western knighthood to war with the Prusai was principally the result of skilful and very effective diplomacy which the German Order pursued in many European states. As the grand master Herman von Salza promoted it with popes and emperors for privileges and possessions, so his successors tried to convince European rulers of their duty to take part in the Order’s mission to spread Christianity.

In terms of cunning, ruthlessness, the art of treachery and deceit the Knights had no equal in the whole of contemporary Europe. The appeal of Rome was answered above all by the German knighthood retreating from their missions in the Levant, who supported the Prusia crusade from the beginning. Already in 1236 the margrave of Meissen Heinrich arrived in Prusia with 500 knights ready to do battle with pagans. In 1239 they brought to Prusia a force of 700 crusaders headed by prince Otto of Brunswick, whose warriors captured amongst others the Prusai fort Honeda. After exacting revenge for the defeat suffered here earlier by the Knights of the Cross the conquerors of Honeda built on its place their fort of Balga. The map of Prus lands was changing.

In 1246 the Austrian prince Frederick expedited to Prusia a whole army of knights, who were followed by crusaders from many parts of Germany. In charge of the armed forces supporting the Knights of the Cross stood also lay dignitaries and priests from Lichtenstein, Anhalt, Brandenburg and Schwartzenburg. The whole German Reich treated the conquest of Prusia as its mission and from that came their support for the extermination carried out there. Overseeing the support for the Teutonic Order by western knighthood was none other than the emperor Frederick II himself whom the Order found to be a very dedicated supporter.

In the course of the conquest of Prusia more than once the Knights stood before the possibility of defeat by the pagans, but almost every time half of Europe hastened to their relief so as to show care for the christianisation of the pagans. Three centuries later similar hypocrisy was perpetrated by the Spanish conquistadors cutting down whole tribes of caribbean Indians and decimating the native populations of central and southern America.

Among the crusaders who made the name for themselves in the Prusai crusade in a singular way was the Czech king Przemyslav II Ottokar. In 1255 this monarch appeared on the border of Prusia, in command of a horse army said to number 50000. However as it was said that in those times it was normal to operate with rough estimates, all large numbers have to be taken with a “grain of salt”. It is certain however that coming from beyond the Tatra mountains to the Baltic the supporter commanded a very large force about the size of which the Prusai could not dream. He

was met in Elblag by the country master Poppo von Osterna himself. He persuaded the Czech monarch to participate in the Prus crusade, reminding him of the defeat suffered earlier by the Komtur Heinrich Stange in command of the christian Knights with the Black Cross in the battle with the Sambians. This type of the Order's argumentation was understood in western Europe and met with sympathy whose net result was often mass participation by knights in the realization of the criminal aims of the Order.

It was the same this time: the cavalry of the Czech king attacked Sambia. The attack was a great surprise, and the Sambians, who could only muster about 10 000 men, surrendered without a fight. It was then and there that Godune decided to commit treason, for which he paid, as is known, a very bloody price.

On the embers of the previously destroyed by the crusaders ancient Prusai settlement of Tuvangste on the Pregola river the Sambians, forced to work as slaves by the Knights, started to build a fortress which soon took the form of a mighty castle surrounded in time by a large town.



40 Hermann von Salza

To the glory of the Czech conqueror of Sambia the city was named king's mountain, in German-Konigsberg, in Polish Krolewiec, which in to-day carries the russian name Kaliningrad. The building of Konigsberg was financed, as writes Eric Christiansen, by the conqueror of Sambia, Przemyslav II Ottokar. Together with the built at the mouth of the Dauga fortress of Memel, which has entered history under the name Klaipeda, Konigsberg for a long time was the bastion of the rule of Teutonic Order over the Baltic.

In the year 1265 the princes Albrecht of Brunswick and Albert of Thuringia exterminated the Prusai and destroyed their lands.

A fairly unusual episode in the history of the Prusia crusades was the undertaken as late as in 1390, an expedition undertaken by the Earl of Derby, Henry Bolingbroke, later king Henry IV of England, leading 70 knights and 27 archers.

Unsolved to this day is the question how much he was influenced by the noble idea of war with the enemies of Christ, and how much by simply wishing to have an adventure and gain knightly glory. In any case lord Derby Henry sailed by sea from England to Konigsberg to join the Grand Marshal Engelhard Robe's knights expedition. When after 6 weeks of laying siege to one of the Lithuanian castles the news reached lord Derby that Lithuania for some years had been a Christian country, the english crusaders withdrew from the field of the battle to spend their time merrily in Konigsberg on jousting, hunting and merry making in the company of selected Sambian women. Excursions to other places also took place, including to Elblag, where the stay of the English contingent was ended by heavy drinking terminating in the rapes of Prusai women. The English force behaved similarly in Gdansk from which they were asked to leave as their life style was not consistent with that of the Teutonic Order by none other than Conrad Wallenrod, the Grand Master himself. This was more hipocrisy than anything else, as by this time the Knights lived in a very loose moral manner. After his return to England Henry of Bolingbroke, as the news announcers declared, felt "healthy and in good humour". This was evidence how much he and his knights enjoyed their ecounters with the Sambian ladies: as a result in 1392 he again returned to Konigsberg, but this time the Knights at once resigned from the services of his armed forces. The surprised lord did not however give up his noble, as he thought, mission, and set off to Jerusalem.



41 On the foundation of the Prus fortress Tuvangste in 1255 Konigsberg castle was erected by the Order as seen at the end of the XIX th century.

There was no lack therefore of crusaders from literally the whole of Europe. One should also not ignore yet another source of military power for the Teutonic Order. This was formed not only by Prusai prisoners forced to fight under pain of death for the Order, who had been degraded to the role of knechts, or the lowest category of servants, but also wittings, or the new nobility of the Order and the free Prusai warriors from Sambia coming from the already conquered territories. In 1246 some well known Prusai were abducted, who were taken to Lubeck to be publicly

christened in the presence of the assembled throngs of towns people. This was one of the tricks of the Order propaganda.

“*Last but not least*” it should be remembered also that arm in arm with the Teutonic Knights stood the divisions of warriors under Henry of Silesia, Konrad of Mazovia, Casimir of Kujavia, Vladislav Wielkopolski and Svietopelk of Gdansk, taking, as is known, part in the first expedition of the Knights against the Prusai. In the Culm land Polish fighters actively supported the Order in the ethnic cleansing carried out there, and it has to be known that this territory given to the Order by Konrad of Mazovia was Prus land. Moving further north, the united Teutonic and Polish forces started the conquest of Prusia by entering the land of Resia in the borders of Pomezania, where according to the Order’s chronicler rape, plunder, fire and great bloodshed were the rule of the day. This was repeated later where in addition to the “*raubritters*” from Germany supporting the Order and warriors from other European states, fighting with the Prusai was the subject of the Polish dukes in the mistaken conviction that they were fulfilling the holy duty of a christian.

As to how loyal and indebted to the Poles proved the Knights to be is shown in the case of the Lubavska land. This took place only 13 years after they were invited to Poland, in 1239. The people of Konrad of Mazovia were hunting in the forest of the Lubavska land, when the returning huntsmen were stopped by the Knights who took their arms and trophies and told them to tell duke Konrad that the Lubavska land belonged to them. This proves that the Teutonic Knights could seize land not only “*manu militari*” but also without bloodshed, in a peaceful manner.

For a military conflict with Poland it was not necessary to wait too long. Although at least in the early part of the conquest of Prusia there was support from the Polish side, the Order’s policy was soon seen to be anti-Polish. The Poles, unlike the Germans could not - and probably cannot even to-day - bring themselves to create a political vision looking deep into future.

IX CHRISTIANISATION IN THE GERMAN VERSION

More Profane than Sacred

It would be interesting to examine the sociology of the Teutonic Order and its preparations for mission activities. The brother-knights as a rule came from not very wealthy feudal families, but a condition of being taken into the Teutonic Knighthood was the demonstrating of noble ancestry. The majority of the Orders’s officers, including grand masters and komturs did not represent the highest echelons of contemporary society.

The criterion deciding on the right to wear the white cloak with a black cross was descendancy from the German speaking countries, which was criticised in the XIVth century by the prior of the French monastery of Saint Bertin that “ this Order is a German order and the order of the German Mother of God because they do not accept anyone as a brother who does not come from Germany, Austria and the german speaking parts of Switzerland. There were a few exceptions to the rule. Thus

for the price of the donated to the Order Bialogard land a Teutonic Knighthood was given to the Pomeranian prince Ratibor; covering himself in a white cloak was also the son of the ziembicki prince Nicholas Henry from the Piast family.

In time high ethical standards were cast a side which meant that the society of the Order began to be infiltrated by criminal elements which for subjugating themselves to military discipline could count on forgiveness through loss of memory as to their past misdeeds or criminal activity.

Against the French “*noblesse oblige*” the German Knights did not pay much heed to the promises they made, including perpetual vows which they had to make. They put on a whole range of responsibilities on the brothers, including obedience, poverty, chastity and war with the enemies of Christ. As writes Andrew Nowakowski “the monastic reality conflicted with the theory. The degradation of knightly customs and attempts to halt this process attempted by some leaders prove that amongst the brother-knights there were even more those who were monks only in name and led quite a lay life”. This would confirm the fact that at the end of the XIVth century those monks encased in armour resigned from using the word “monks” and from that time titled themselves “Herren” or Mr. This was probably the first step towards secularisation, or freeing themselves from all restraints of a religious nature.

These gentlemen did not adhere to the respecting of the rule of obedience to their superiors, often breaking the Order’s rule, which was eagerly noted by the chroniclers. Accordingly on the pages of the chronicle there is amongst others a mention of a rebellion by the komturs under the leadership of the conqueror of the Lithuanians Heinrich von Plotzke, who raised his hand on even the grand master Carl von Trier. Another grand master, Heinrich von Plauen, also became the victim of a plot and spent many years behind bars. The most famous episode in these series was the murder committed on the person of the grand master Werner von Orlsen, who died from a dagger of a brother knight.



42 Order marching for the human hunt.

The gentlemen knights did not pay much attention to the rule to cultivate poverty. The whole hypocrisy of the rule depended on the fact that this rule was only

for the knights-monks, and not for the Order, which gathered midas style riches. There was no way out but to turn a blind eye to the private property of the monks and eventually to drop the question from the register of duties. The grand master Winrich von Kniprode sanctioned the possession of a small amount of gold, but his successors agreed to collect it without hindrance but with the knowledge of superiors. As befitted knights, their objects of desire included war horses, which formed good stables, but according to orders from on high it was not right to use richly decorated harnesses or to parade in luxurious garments. The order forbidding this was also ignored, particularly as the Order's hierarchy gave the worst possible example on this.

“The grand master led a way of life worthy of a real lay ruler. Account books and inventories from the end of XIVth and from XVth centuries prove this” - writes the historian of the Order Andrew Nowakowski. Two grand masters, Conrad and Ulrich von Jungingen, surrounded themselves with probably the greatest pomp and luxury.

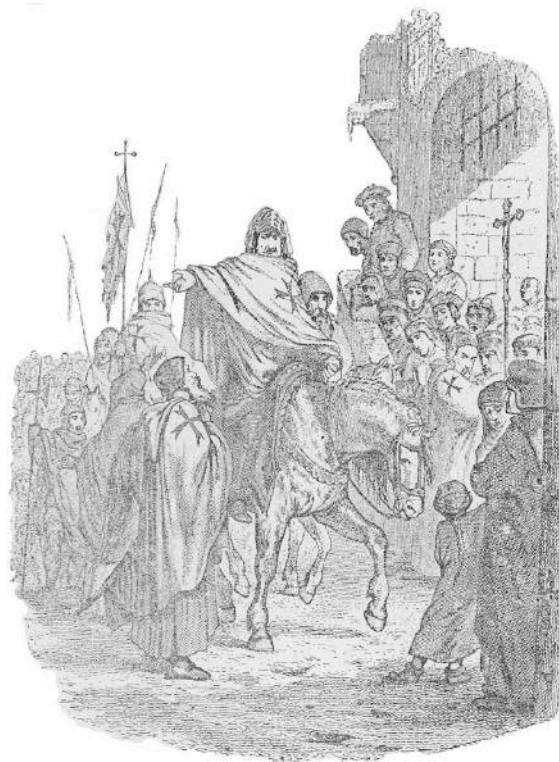
As appears from the account books of the Order, the material for the pillows for the bedroom and table covers for the first of these grand masters cost the equivalent of two horses and six cows or two suits of armour or over a dozen swords; a large sum of money was spent on towels covered with gold thread and silk decorations. The same master Conrad loved silver table settings, in covers with gold handles, and in gold and alabaster cups, Lucullus style feasts also greatly appealed to him if prepared with the best quality meats and fish, spices such as ginger, roots, pepper and mustard seeds as well as wine bought for mighty sums in Burgundy, Hungary and Greece. The Order's regulation however let the brothers eat in full only twice a day and drink only water, for any other drink special permission was required. However, who was to issue them to the grand master of the Teutonic Order?

From the data supplied by Agnieszka and Robert Sypko on the subject of the illustration of castles it appears that in the beginning of the XVth century the komtur of Nieszawa filled his warehouses with beef and lamb meats, ham and bacon, barrels of lard, fat and butter, cheeses, herrings, sturgeon and dried cod, further bags of barley, kasha, poppy seeds and peas, barrel of salt and other spieces including pepper and safran.

The castle in Nieszawa was no exception. Fed in such a way and made merry by wine or by beer, the grand masters and komturs, marshals and hospitallers, metal and woodmaking organisers, and other members of the Order's hierarchy clad themselves in rich garments unsuitable for monks made from rich materials such as atlas and silk, and silver belts and hung themselves with decorations made from precious metals. What can one say about silver and gold worn by the brothers, since the dogs of the highest officers of the Order paraded in silver collars, and the eyes of the Order's officers feasted on caged exotic parrots. Rich and colourful dresses were a great weakness of the grand master Ulrich von Jungingen. The fulfilling of his wishes cost the Order's treasury a small fortune. These were unbelievably large sums for which materials of the highest available cost and quality were sent from the then European centres of weaving. The coat of Ulrich von Jungingen was undersewn with the most expensive fur instead of, as prescribed,

the fur of household animals such as goats or rams. The standard line Teutonic Knights loved to wear the forbidden by the Orders regulations black hats, similar trousers and spiked shoes with heels and decorative laces. Elegance was, as can be seen, in demand and highly prized by the Knights of the Cross.

However the observance of the permanent vows of chastity was definitely not high prized. There exists proof of moral degeneration and the decline in behavioural standards. At the end of the XIVth century in the Order's Marienburg or Malbork there was a highly prospering public house whose customers threw off the white cloak with the black cross to cover their heads with a black hat change into black trousers and pointed shoes with high heels. Many of the Order's dignitaries could boast of children outside of the marital bed. A generally known practice was the raping by the Knights of women during their barbarian expeditions. There was also a practice, as noted by a chronicler, of drowning men "so that they could do with their wives whatever they wanted to".



43 The return from the human hunt

"Scholars who studied the history of the Order of the Hospital of the Most Holy Mary of the German House in Jerusalem all claim that the Order's rules gave priority to realistic matters of the time. The existence of a common monks community regulated the laws which were to create from their members disciplined and hardened warriors and not monks eager to contemplate and practice ascetism" summarises the situation Andrew Nowakowski.

Because of this a knowledge of weapons and their use was the strong point of the Knights, and not matters of a religious nature. Thus the Knights who were

supposed to evangelise the Prusai did not have the habit of taking the breviary and other religious texts into their hands, and this for the simple reason that they were mostly unable to read or write. All their religious preparation to take part in the mission came down to a knowledge of the prayer "Our Father" and "I believe in God", though their memory knowledge of these caused many knights problems not to be overcome. For this reason a Knight of the Cross was only required to repeat several times a day the Lords prayer. Also for this reason the knights declined all physical tests and trials, chiefly fasting, so as not to weaken their physical strenght, so vital in converting the pagans.

And thus made ready for their mission, in to-days language, the troops stood ready to fight the infidel Prusai.

The struggle with paganism and with neophites

"On the eve of Christmas Eve, at midnight, when people were asleep, they came to the Pomezans castle, which was then in a place called Old Christburg. Next the brothers put ladders against the walls, unseen by anyone, sacked the castle, and took all the inhabitants and murdered them (...) The castle, because it was seized at night of Christ birth, they gave the name Christburg, which means the Castle of Christ"

The above relation of Peter of Dusburg tells us everything about how they the brothers of the Order of the Hospital of the Most Holy Mary understood and realised their mission in Prusia. The German XIXth century historian of Prusia, Max Toeppen wrote openly "The purpose of war, particularly conflict between Christians and Pagans, was nothing else but the killing of as many as possible men able to carry arms, to take as many as possible women and children into captivity, and to seize as much loot as possible". Anther XIXth century German historian of crusades and reasercher into the history of the knightly orders, Hans Prutz called the conquest of Prusia nothing else but hunting for people. To-day we are used to calling it ethnic cleansing.

An analysis of the achievments of the Teutonic Order in the area of the christianisation of Prusia needs to remember that in middle ages Europe there were two different tendencies: "the first stated that by the decree of Christ it was necessary to bring the gospels to all people. The second however assumed that on the strength of God's decrees those who oppose the setting up of Christ order on earth are totally condemned to damnation. They should therefore be fought and enslaved. This last tendency was the reason for the rise of the crusader movement, which took part in the formation of the knightly orders, including the Teutonic Order. Then they started to put in practice the motto: "baptism or death". Fighting in the defence of the Cross and aimed against the unbelievers justifying killing, aggression and looting".

In this way the genesis of the Order's ideology is seen by Andrew Radziminski, and everything which happened in Prusia, not only through the Teutonic Order, should be seen in this light, as its ideology received moral support in Rome, and military support in Germany and many other countries in western Europe.

As is known there were attempts at converting Prusai to Christianity with quite good results in pre-Teutonic Order times. Not everyone is aware, however, that it was in the interests of the Knights of the Cross to make sure that this peaceful christianisation stood no chance, as this would deprive them of justifying what happened on Christmas Eve in Christburg. Because of this the Order got rid of the first bishop of Prusia Christian, but also working under his protection the Cistercian order: it often got rid of earlier converted neophytes, who according to the witness the Archbishop of Gniezno, Nicholas Traba, the Knights of the Black Cross often used sarcasm "If you are baptised, I will confirm you with my sword".

On the often tragic fate of the neophytes in the Order's state attention was drawn to the Roman Curia by the Papal legate in Prusia, William of Modena. Based on his reports Pope Gregory IX intervened on behalf of the Prus neophytes, demanding, unsuccessfully, that they should not be placed in a worse situation than before, when they were "disciples of the devil". Somewhat earlier equally outrageous was the behaviour of German bishops on the territories of the activity of the Cavaliers of the Sword in the eastern Baltic, who usually mercilessly robbed their neophytes of everything they possessed, which in turn was condemned by Pope Innocent III.

As prof. Lowmianski wrote "possessed by the urge to take control of all of Prusia, the Knights of the Cross had no scruples about causing difficulties to any independent missionary units, particularly those with a sincere desire to help neophytes in the fear that separate rival state organism should not be formed-in the peaceful conversion of Prusai(...) the Knights were not choosy about the methods used to halt the progress of peaceful missions (...) they made it difficult for crusaders to build churches and permitted churches already built to be used by pagans".

The marginal treatment by the Teutonic Order of the declared aim, which was christianisation, led to the fact that they restricted themselves, as states Marcel Kosman, "to forcing the formal acceptance of the new faith by individual Prus territories; in any case this gave them the chance to exert greater pressure than was possible after real conversion". The Knights mission in practice restricted them to forcing baptisms and orders to take part in Sunday mass irrespective of whether there were any churches in the vicinity. With this order a complementary one was the forbidding of any pagan rituals under pain of severe penalties.

In this context particular attention can be given to the reference by Karol Gorski to a XIIIth century manuscript found in a Franciscan monastery in Ireland. In the opinion of this historian the text kept in the library of Trinity College in Dublin under the title "A description of territories" was probably written by the bishop of the Jatviagans, Henry, "The author - writes Karol Gorski - praises the merits of "the man of God" bishop Christian, who spread "the word of God" and converted Prusia. And the Knights of the Cross are not mentioned (...) In the light of the "Description" the role of the Knights was limited. For certain they represented military might, but as people not knowing Latin (illiterati) and having no education they were not able to promote the Christian faith".

To promote it not even a literate, but not knowing the Prus language, could do it, the Knights clerics being ready chiefly for the function of military chaplains and administrative scribes.

“Let the Prusai remain Prus”

Peter of Dusburg stated plainly that christianisation was a political act and therefore, in the opinion of prof. Lowmianski this chronicler “treated the submission of the Prusai to the Order as equal to joining the Catholic Church, and rebellion against the Order as an act of apostacy”. One should not be surprised therefore that the converted Prusai for long kept returning to their original faith, to the tradition of gathering in their holy woods and there making offers to their previously rejected gods.

“A definite proof of the remains of strong paganism - not talking of sincretic forms - are the still appearing in the XIVth century cemeteries with typical pagan characteristics, richly decorated with tomb gifts. The habit of burning corpses did not fully die out in the next century” writes Marcel Kosman.

And when one of the bishops in 1427 accused the Knights of a tolerant attitude to the manifestation by the Prusai of pagan cults, their answer was “*Lasset Preussen, Preussen Bleyben*” or let the Prusai be Prus!

Could one, in a more hard hitting way, demonstrate the perfidy of the Teutonic Order as regards the question of christianisation to which they were committed to the Popes and the emperors? In the opinion of Karol Gorski the Order’s military mission “psychologically cut off whole generations of Prusai from Christianity”.

The Prusai effectively placed a sign of equality between christianity and the yoke of slavery and exploitation they were put under. It was one of the main reasons for the first Prusai uprising which was stopped by the agreement signed in Dzierzgon in 1249. It could not have happened without mentioning religious matters in the agreement. “Without doubt the christian religion was treated in this document very instrumentally” - comments Andrew Radziminski, pointing out the steady aim of the Germans to extend their control over the church and all of religious life in Prusia. An expression of these desires were, amongst others, legal acts concerning the penalising by the state of the faithful for committed sins. Something so absurd could only have arisen in the heads of the German Knights.

Christianisation was used not only as a front for the political and economic conquest of Prusia, but also became a very useful tool for their germanisation. This was proven by the fact that from the middle of the XIIIth century in place of the bishops emanating from the franciscans and the dominicans the Teutonic Order brought German bishops not knowing, quite clearly, the language of the faithful.

The best proof: the first sambian bishop was Christian von Muhlhausen who, under the Order’s pressure, also elevated Germans to the position of canons. The next bishop of this diocese came also from the Order’s nomination, Siegfried von Regenstein. This was true not only of Sambia but in the whole Prusia. In the end it came to that because of the inability of the clergy to communicate with the faithful, the “tolken” were engaged to be translators for confession, which met with opposition from the bishops. Only in 1426, or 143 years after the date recognised as the end of the conquest of Prusia it came to the opening of the first school in the

territory schooling native youths to be priests. This was not done by the Teutonic Order: it was arranged by Pope Martin V.

It would be difficult to expect care for the right methods of nurturing the christian faith from the Teutonic Order, which was engaged chiefly, if not solely, in strengthening the political and economic power of the ever more important on the map of northern Europe Teutonic state. Whilst the Order lacked the will to evangelise the Prusai, it did not lack the will to keep its image of criminals without human feelings.

Here is what Andrew Nowakowski writes about this: “concerning the cruelty of the Knights, shown not only during war, but also during times of peace, this can be illustrated by the episode which took place in the castle of Christmemel (Skirstymon). This fortress was built on the middle Niemen by the Order in 1313, but after a short time they decided to relinquish it, and before leaving to destroy it so that it should not serve their enemies (...) The Knights invited, for a farewell feast, many leading Lithuanians(...) The feast ended for them tragically, as the host barred the exits from the hall, set it on fire and burned everyone alive. The commentary of the Order’s chronicler is terrifying: “so the castle earmarked for destruction came in useful, as together with it the number of pagans was reduced”.

There, on the already converted Lithuania those pretending to be knights of Christ murdered priests and burnt recently erected churches, showing their real face of the German way of christianisation.

Better late than never. The views of Europe on its conversion of pagans began to diverge with the accepted by the IXth century Carolingian doctrine, used by Charlemagne, putting pagan Saxons before the choice: christianity or death! This method of conversion was used by German Saxons in wars with the Slavs and later by German Knights in the war with the Prusai. Several centuries had to pass before Europe recognised that Christianity could be natural by totally different means.

And then the streams of blood had not quite dried from Prusai and other Balts, when the humanitarian idea took root that the sword should be rejected as the tool of christianisation. The champion of this idea was to be a Polish humanist of European stature, a graduate of Italian universities, rector of of the Cracow university, diplomat and precursor of international law, Paul Wlodkowic. It was he who delivered a text on the Forum of the Coucil of Constance deliberating in 1414-1418 entitled “On the rule of the emperor and the pope on the non-believers”, proving that the pagan peoples have the right to live in peace and condemning the Teutonic Order’s barbarities in Prusia. In recognition of the thoughts of Paul Lodkowic Polish diplomacy was entrusted with the extremely difficult task of arranging a truce in the hundred years war between England and France.

On christianisation in the German version in time other Polish humanists came to realise the truth, and amongst them the priest Andrew Krzycki: primate of Poland, politician, supporter of the arts, also a writer whose “prince of humanists” Erasmus of Rotterdam included among the best known creators of his epoch. Thus Father Krzycki wrote these words stating with:

It is known that there are three crosses
with three different colours: those who

carry them are also of three types. Red is named after Jesus as he coloured himself in blood. White related to the robber on the right whose crimes were forgiven by few words. Lastly black, for the robber on the left; this traitorous Order claimed -rightly-as theirs.

By the law of irony it was not the nominally catholic Knights of the Cross who had the honour of finishing the process of the christianisation of Prusia; this honour could claim for themselves the leaders of German reformation which reached Prusia after 1525, or after secularisation of the Teutonic Order. Helping them in their work was the popularisation of the epoch making invention of the printer Johann Gutenberg. In popular circulation was the printed in Prusai religious literature in the form of catechism and prayer books. As writes prof. Kosman “it was reformation which promoted the speaking to the people in their own language and - it has to be confirmed - these demands were realised(...) In the times of the victories of protestantism the final act of the christianisation of the Prus people took place”.

Probably from these times comes the translation into Prusai of the “The Lords Prayer”.

“Thawe nuson kas thu asse andangon.
Swintints wirst twis emmens Pergeis twis lacims.
Twais quaits audasseisin na semmey Key Audangon.
Nusan deininn geittin dais numons schindeinan.
Bha atwerpeis noumans nuson auschautins kay mas atwerpimay nuson
auschantrikamans.
Bha ny wedais mans en perdaban.
Sclait is rankeis mans assa wargen. Amen”



44 Prusai sword, ritually bent.

X REBELLION AGAINST THE ORDER'S SLAVERY

Rzadz, Pokarvis, Krucken, and other Prusai victories

The Prus people would not be Prusai if they were to meekly put their head under the Order's sword. The fact that things were different are testified to by the most bloody battles of the times, which they had to fight not only with the Teutonic Order, but also with the elite, armed to the teeth, and playing the role of the crusaders the knights of Europe. It is enough to state that out of the over half a century's conquest of Prusia 20 years fell to the uprisings against the Order.

Various factors were responsible that the sometimes mad bravery and battle courage of the Pomezans, Pomezans, Warmians, Natangs, Barts and many other provinces did not lead to freedom from the Teutonic occupation. The most important is thought to be the lack of tradition of common action. This question is raised by Jerzy Necio: "an individual Prusai possessed the knowledge of a very strong link with his own family and the immediate surroundings, ie. the *lauks* (...) he had, obviously the knowledge of belonging to a whole family (...) but a feeling of unity of all Prusai was never formed. Such a situation made for specific means of defence against an outside invader - the *lauks* defended themselves in their forts ("pils" or "pikalnis") behind prepared earthworks. It was not possible to conquer at once, by marching, the whole of a clan's (Prusai) territory, all the more as the Prusai, in battle, would either win or die. A lack of fear of death was caused by belief in the travelling of spirits, the duties and responsibilities about the fate of the community to which the Prus belonged. The Prusai community was a gathering of free men".

Gerard Labuda approached the subject from a different viewpoint, suggesting that "the Prusai were not without chances", as they often had a numerical superiority over the Knights, but could not utilise this, as every clan fought on their own". The XIth century chronicler Adam of Bremen noted that "the Prusai did not want to have any master". Even in times of uprisings leaders were designated for the time of the fights only and in this one can see one of the reasons for the cause of the suffered defeat.

This weakness the Prusai tried to counter by the adopted battle tactics, of which Casimir Ascik writes "Because the Prusai forces had inferior weaponry to the German or Polish knights, they used partisan warfare. They tried to utilise above all the terrain conditions (...) in places particularly unsuitable for the battle. They therefore harassed the enemy by unexpected and repeated attacks and prepared traps in forests, marshes and wetlands".

This tactic was then known in the whole of central Europe. In the Rus chronicles there exists the opinion of the Rus prince Danily on the topic "Do your warriors not know that for Christians space is a fortress, to the pagans this is lack of space, their custom is to fight in growths".

In time, with the advance of the partisan warfare, The Prusai began to initiate the Teutonic Knights style of warfare, especially their siege tactics, the use of siege towers, machines to crash walls and machines throwing fire and stones.

The Prusai were bulverised to insurrection by the news of the defeat in 1242 of the combined forces of the Teutonic Order and the Cavaliers of the Sword in the war with Russian forces on the frozen lake Peipus on to-days border between Russia and Estonia. The warriors were led by prince Alexander Nevski, who went into history as the man who stopped the German expansion to Russia. He also proved by the same that the Knights of the Cross were not invincible and that they should be resisted always and wherever possible.

The feasibility of this was the result of the conflict which in that year 1242 caused the rift between the Gdansk prince Sviatopelk and the Teutonic Order. The rift was caused, as happens also in politics, by money. Thus Sviatopelk put a tax on ships supplying the Order from Germany, and in the end blocked ships sailing on the lower Vistula. War erupted, as usual by the action of the Knights. The Prusai decided that the time had come to throw off the foreign yoke and in 1242 started an uprising in Pomezania.

One of the greatest military successes of the Prusai became the battle fought in 1243 at Rzadz near to-days Grudziadz. A bloody fight in the narrow passage dividing the Rzadz lake and the flow of the Vistula ended with the triumph of the Prus warriors. "In the manner of structuring the battle by the Prusai one can see an excellent war trick, based on supposed flight from the field of battle with the desire to disperse the forces of the enemy(...) The battle ended with the almost total rout of the Order's forces". On the field of battle fell 390 knights write the cited experts on military matters, Mieczyslaw Bielski and Waldemar Rezmer.

An unpleasant role was played by Sviatopelk, who according to the situation supported one side, then the other. Thus after the victory of the Pomezans at Rzadz he betrayed them: in the moment when they were to attack the Knights together, he left the siege of Nova Dzierzgon and in the end caused the defeat of the Prusai. The consequences were the equivalent to the fall of the first Prusai insurrection which lasted seven years and the finalisation of the Dzierzgon agreement placed on Prusia.

Nevertheless the fighting continued on the majority of the conquered territories and led to the unification of the Warmians, Natangs and Barts around the idea of resistance towards the invader.

As a result of the uprising in his rule there remained only Elblag, Culm and Torun in the interior. It often happened that the Prusai fighters laid siege for months to the Orders forts, making it impossible for them to receive provisions. Conversely the Knights wreaked revenge on the Prusai, destroying with premeditation the growths in the fields, so as to destroy them by hunger.

The support the Order received from the knighthood of western Europe decided on the military superiority it enjoyed over the Prusai rebels. It enabled them to strengthen themselves in well prepared forts and start preparations for their attacks on the Prusai, who were rebelling against restrictions and foul treatment. Men were turned into slaves and sent to work on building new fortifications and castles, the women were seized to work in public houses to fulfill the needs of the Order Knights. This situation could not be kept going in the long run.



45 The German christian Order knights.

Contrary to the opinion that the Prusai avoided battles in the open field, the course of the insurrection proved that they could achieve superiority and this was proved by the battles of Rzadz, Pokarvis, Krucken and other similar victories. There was nothing left for Teutonic Knights but to defend themselves in surrounded castles, of which some, as for example Reszel, they left leaving after themselves only burnt timbers. When they defended themselves, this led to unusually drastic situations. In this way Peter of Dusburg felt sorry for his brothers, accusing of course the rebels who “promoted lawlessness against Your people, o Lord; they hatched a plot against Your said saints”. Throw them out from the nation, and let them not remember any more the name of Israel” So as to lead to the complete destruction of the Lord’s nation they gathered and laid siege to the castles of Konigsberg, Kreisporok and Bartoszyce. In the neighbourhood of each one three strong siege machines were mounted and garrisoned with many armed people, brave and experienced in using arms, so that there would be no way in which the besieged could enter or leave. And how many attacks, how many dangers, how many starvations, how many insufferable pains had to be borne by the besieged brothers and the remaining inhabitants in the aforementioned castles, cannot be understood by anyone in full. When they no longer had lamps, oxen, cows and surplus horses, they were forced to eat their skins, and they were forced to do so by the highest necessity. The hardness of these skins during these unusual meals was so great that many brothers, who ate them, lost their teeth”.

In response the Knights used ‘scorched earth’ tactics, which depended on destroying crops, burning and levelling to earth villages and exterminating the inhabitants.

Only eleven years had passed and the Prusai again resorted to arms, starting the second uprising. It was caused by the news about the disaster of the Order’s

forces in the bloody battle with the Kurons on lake Durbe in eastern Baltic. The Order found that lakes brought it bad luck - previously Peipus, now Durbe. The defeat hurt all the more that on the field of battle fell the country master of the Baltic Burhard von Hornhausen and other high dignitaries of the Order. The year 1260 is an important date in the history of the Baltic's as in it there was a break in the territorial contact between the Orders in the Baltics and in Prusia. This date also had a great psychological meaning for the Prusai. "The defeat of the Knights hastened the outbreak of the rising, but was not its reason" analyses the then situation Jan Powierski.

In the same year 1260 there erupted the second Prusai rising, which was a revolt against inhuman exploitation. Wishing to frighten the insurrectionists, the Knights engaged in actions typical for them. For instance the local leader of Warmia - Natangia Volrad Mirabilis resorted to the known earlier and typical trick for the Order: he invited nineteen natangian nobles for a feast to the Lanceberg castle on the Vistula delta. In the course of the feast he ordered the doors of the hall to be shut and set on fire. All the Prusai were burnt alive. This was in the Order's style. Equally famous became behaviour of the Order's komtur of Elblag, where he kept many Prus hostages, including children. This so called Christian German knight ordered the blinding of twelve of them, after which they were sent to their parents.

No different was behaviour of the Order with its brothers who became friendly with the Prusai fighters and helped them to capture forts. Information about this is found on the pages of the Kroniki Wielkopolskie: country master Hartmunch von Grumbach used torture to extract from seized prisoners - or else from traitors amongst the Prusai nobles - information that the Order's brothers Gerard and Heinrich co-operated with the rebels with the intention of giving them not only forts but also conquered Prus territories. On the order of the country master both brothers were blinded and publicaly burnt at the stake in the centre of Elblag. In a similar way all brothers of the Order were put to death who felt that the politics of the Order in Prusia was at odds with the announced doctrine of Christianity.

By a strange coincidence news of this reached Rome, which Peter of Dusburg noted: "Brother Hartmann of Grumbach, the fifth country master of Prusia held the office for three years. His name expressed his very hard character: Hartmann means a "hard man" (...) When two brothers from his order who departed from the faith after the battle in Kuronia (...) and formed a plot with the Prusai, he ordered them to be burnt in public in Elblag in front of a crowd. This happening so moved the Holy Father that he instructed the master to be removed from office, and he and whose counsel he took was condemned to a "penalty of spiritual penance".

The symbolic, as can be seen, punishment of a Knight of the Cross was no obstacle to continuing the fight with the rebels. As regards the way in which the information about the crime carried out on the two brothers of the Order reached Rome, much points to the likelihood that the Prusai rebels were behind it. In the opinion of prof. Powierski this would indicate that the rebels had maintained contacts with the Holy See: "In such a case one has to assume that the rebels, contrary to the sources of the Teutonic Order's provenance, who always identified the Prusai uprising with apostacy, tried initially to maintain contact with the Papacy, and only

because of the pro-Teutonic Order position of Alexander IV finally gave up on Christianity, which does not naturally exclude many cases of returning to paganism by the rebels.

Not apostasy, as the Order's diplomats presented it in their lies, but inhuman exploitation of the conquered population was the factual reason for the explosion of the second Prusai uprising.

Proof of the efficiency of the pressure of the Teutonic Order on the Roman Curia was the fact that Rome decided that the crusade in Prusia was more important than the defence of central Europe against the attacking Tartars. Under the standards of the crusaders stood all who considered themselves to be the fighters for the Catholic religion. However christianity in the Teutonic Order version was to the Prusai linked with murder and fire.

The Prusai insurrectionist successes were magnified by the Prus leader Glappo who with help of the Pogezean leader Auctume in 1261 recovered the strongly fortified by the Knights Lidzbark Warminski. After this success Glappo attacked the castle of Braniewo, where forty knights were killed but because of lack of manpower to staff this fortress he retreated, turning it to ashes. The same Glappo also destroyed the fortress of Brandenburg raised by the hands of Prusai slaves on the borders of Warmia and Natangia. The rebuilt fortress was again attacked by Glappo at the head of the Warmians, but this time the Knights were not taken unawares, calling on reinforcements from nearby Konigsberg. Glappo fell into the Order's hands, who as per their custom subjected him to tortures, finally to execute him on the outskirts of Konigsberg. Mention of the place of his death is worth noting because the Knights gave it the name of Glappenberg, or the hill of Glappo. This was the form of recognition of the bravery of this Prusai.

With the defeat of the Prusai also ended the attempt at sacking Elblag, where Auctume was slain. The leadership of the Pogezeans was taken over by their leader Linka, initiating, together with the Barts, military action not only on the territory of his native Pogezenia and other Prus lands, but also transferring it to the Culm land. There, in the battle of Pagustin, many Knights died, as well as over fifty crusaders from western Europe. However, the attempt to recover the castle of Dzierzgon by the Prusai failed. Also a failure was the attack on Konigsberg in spite of using siege machines, blocking access from the sea and destruction by the Sambian leader Glande of the Teutonic Order's fleet guarding this fortress.

The lack of success in the siege of Konigsberg was in the end decided by help from outside.

In each case the situation differed on the various Prus lands. Pogezenia, for example, managed to free itself from the Order's yoke, whilst neighbouring Pomezania for various reasons did not rebel against the Order so as not to lose the privileges guaranteed by the Dzierzgon agreement of 1249. The fate of Prusai on the fields of battle also differed. There were victories and there were disasters. Near Kowalevo in 1271 the leader of the Barts, Divan Klekine, was killed. Two years later the hero of the Prusai, Herkus Monte, was slain.



46 The Cross with the sword.

In the year 1273 Linka, together with the Barts, attacked Elblag, through which came German reinforcements from the west. The Prusai dealt the Order's garrison heavy losses, but even this time victory was taken by reinforcement coming from Germany.

A year later the Knights of the Cross, arm in arm with knights from western Europe, attacked the strongly fortified and remaining in Pogezan hands Lidzbark Warminski. The defenders suffered a defeat, saving themselves by flight: those who did not manage it, were murdered by the victors in their usual manner. From that time all trace from the taking part in the fight the Pogezan leader Linka disappeared.

Sometimes it was other way round: the leader of the Jatviagans, Skomand, used to come to the aid of the Prusai, at the head of his warriors he reached the territories conquered by the Knights. The Prusai were also helped by the duke of Pomerania Msciwój II, who destroyed the Order's fleet, which supplied the castles in Königsberg, Balga and Elblag.

Starting seven and a half centuries ago the second Prusai uprising is considered the largest of all the European middle ages uprisings, "the revenge taken by Knights on the defeated rebels and their families - writes Iga Burniewicz - was placed by historians among the most bloody pages of the history of humanity". The second Prusai rebellion, lasting till 1275, or fifteen years, also eventually collapsed.

In the Polish literature on the subject it became customary to write about two Prusai rebellions. Meanwhile William Urban clearly defines a third, dating it to the years 1275-1283, giving a leading role to the leader of the Jatviagans, Skomand. To the uprising, which was started by the Pogezens but soon joined by the Warmians, Natangs and Sambs. William Urban comments: "the members of the local clans were still able to organise themselves and to fight: and because both the nobles and the commoners had the reason to rebel, to its start all that was required was any spark

and some prospect of victory”. And again there was little required to achieve a success, all the more as the komturs of Elblag and Dzierzgon fell into the hands of the rebels, but as usual reinforcements arrived from Germany.

The final blow to the rebellion was dealt by the country master Conrad von Thierberg who invaded the rebel Pomezania in 1277 so as to murder, take prisoner and re-settle the conquered inhabitants, after whom there was only a desert landscape left. And again many Pomezans left their settlements in fear, fleeing from the Knights to Galindia, Sudovia and further east. Prisoners were forced by the aggressors to slave labour in the building of the castle in Malbork, which was soon to become the seat of the grand master himself and entered history as one of the most impressive castle formations in the world. Together with Dzierzgon and Elblag, Marienburg-because this name was given to the castle by the Order - they formed a defensive triangle which enabled controlling the situation in for the strategic region at the mouth of the Vistula.

The chances of victory for all three of the Prusai risings were not illusory, if it were not for the movement from the west of the forces of knights of many nationalities. Among these crusaders were, unfortunately, the warriors of the son of Konrad of Mazovia, Siemovit I, and princes of other Polish territories.

Herkus Monte, or the Prusai Conrad Wallenrod

The Prusai had many of their own national heroes. The greatest of them was Herkus Monte, who did more for his people than William Tell and Robin Hood. He led the Prusai to the second anti-Order uprising and assumed the leadership, confirming the opinion known in all of Europe about their bravery and valour. This opinion, as is known, was promoted as early as in the IXth century by the Iberian traveller and merchant Ibrahim bin Jacob and confirmed in the XIIIth century by the German chronicler Peter of Dusburg. Herkus Monte took pride of place in the history not only of Prusia.

He was born into the known and highly influential Montemid family in 1225. He grew up in the forested Natangia in the the *lauks* Stabis, which means stone or stone goods, near to-days Gorov Ilawiecki.

As a teenager he was a witness to the bloodshed and fire brought to Natangia by the ever more aggressive Knights, who promised Natangia extermination unless they accepted the terms of peace. So as to force them to agree the Knights seized as hostages some of the sons of the natangian clan elders. Among them was the future national hero of the Prusai. From Balga, on the deck of an Order's ship, he sailed under guard to Germany, to end up in Magdeburg.

There he spent the whole of his youth, immersed in European culture, admiring architecture unknown in Prusia and looking at the traffic on the street of a large town. Above all he became used to the unknown of a monastery school, in which he was taught many subjects including German, Latin and church songs, above all the art of reading and writing. There, in Magdeburg, he was baptised and received the name Heinrich, in Latin Henricus, which was shortened to Hercus. To the most important elements of the received education belonged all forms of training in knightly tasks.

Young Herkus showed himself to be very talented and capable of great hopes for the future for which the knights had earmarked him.

It happened that in the course of training sword play, Herkus fell through thin ice, risking drowning, from which he was saved by a young German knight called Hirzhals. This episode in the future became a test for the righteousness of the character of the young Prus.

So passed the years spent in the Teutonic Order's nest.

"The time came for the trainee knights brought by us from Prusland, baptised and educated in our land, to become knights. After their graduation ceremony let them bring the light of faith to the barbarian lands and recompense the House of the Order". These words were heard by Herkus and he prepared for service to the Order his other Natang hostage friends in the Magdeburg Cathedral during a celebration mass in the presence of Archbishop himself". Such are the rules of the Knightly state: firstly to hear mass every day with pious remembrance of the Lord's suffering, to fight bravely in the defence of the Catholic faith, the Holy Church together with its servants to be freed from any type of enemies, to help widows and orphans in need, to avoid unjust wars (...), to live without blemish as regards God and the people on this earth".

The text on this uplifting oration is cited by the historian and biographer of Herkus Monte, Jerzy Necio.

Then came the time of the oath of loyalty by the Prus to the Teutonic Order, and for the return to his family's Natangia where awaiting him were representatives of the Montemid family and the land settlement left to him by his father. He was left by fate on the border between two worlds: the Christian love of his brethren, and the ruthless war with pagans. Herkus Monte desired for his people the peace which was promised in the written treaty of Dzierzgon.

Guided by hypocrisy, trickery and treason, the Knights however were far from respecting the agreements jointly determined with the Prusai. Jerzy Necio writes "Herkus observed the work of the mill: the stone ball ground the barley pieces. 'I am the grain' he whispered. 'I know more than the rest of Natangs. I have seen things of which they did not dream. They will follow me, but do they know the fight will be final(...) If we were to lose, the world will forget us".

These words, unfortunately, were proved prophetic: who to-day remembers the Prusai?

The fortunes which were in the balance were not only those of the Natangs, but also these of the Warms and the Barts. Herkus Monte understood that the time had come to stand in defence of his people. He went to meetings and using his prestige and connections with great success mobilised both nobles and commoners for armed resistance against the Knights of the Cross. In the meetings the people produced their leaders: at the head of the Pogezens Divan Klekine, and of Natangia - the greatest and bravest Herkus Monte.



47 Herkus Monte throwing away the white coat with the black cross.

Considering himself a Christian, Herkus Monte decided in this situation to appeal to Rome, directing a letter accusing the Teutonic Order of ignoring the laws of God and of humans, and also with assurances that the majority of Prusai was now baptised and has no intention of returning to the faith of their ancestors and their customs and pagan life style; he stated that the Prusai were fighting not with the Church but with the Teutonic Order, which was murdering children, women and old men and turning men into slaves; he assured that the clergy and the faithful were not in danger of persecution or churches in danger of destruction; in the end he expressed the desires of his countrymen for Christianity to expand on Prus land and placed himself under the protection of the bishop of Rome.

The addressee of this letter, Pope Urban IV, did not accept its contents, accepting as true the lies of the Knights of the Cross who identified the rebellion against them as departure from Christianity, because of which they called for the knighthood of western Europe to come and help them. The Pope, as writes Lucia Okulicz-Kozaryn, “gave the Order new privileges vis a vis the Prusai. He let them imprison or take hostage those neophytes who did not participate in the organised armed raids by the Order or else refuse to take part in the building of fortresses. He also informed the bishop of Warmia that he had selected Czechs, Moravia, Poland and Pomerania to bring help to the Order in the defence of Prusia and the Balts. He also ordered to give crusaders offering their services to the Order the same penitence privileges as those gaining to the Holy Land”.

On the news of the position taken by Rome the Prusai started mass desertions from the Christian faith at the same time giving the Knights a pretext for calling western Europe to help in the fight against Prusai paganism. Their appeal, as usual, was successful and very numerous units of German knights reached Prusia by sea, mostly from Magdeburg and Westphalia, to destroy Natangia and other Prus lands. Their expeditions started in castles located on the Vistula delta, to which the aggressors returned loaded with plunder, leaving behind them spilt blood and destruction. One of these Knight's castles became the object of an attack of warriors led by Herkus Monte. On the territory of the "*lauks*" Pokarvis a fierce battle started with the returning from their looting expedition Knights of the Cross. On the 21st January 1261 Herkus Monte gained a spectacular victory over them. The knight's forces, excellently equipped with arms and food had left Konigsberg for the conquest of Natangia. Not far from Pokarvis they established a base, leaving an armed garrison, whilst their forces pressed on into the depths of Natangia. The rebels took the base without difficulty and steadily waited for the return of the loaded with loot and conveyed slaves Knights. As a result of total surprise most of the Knights fell in the battle. Only a few remained alive.

And here took place an unforeseen meeting between the Prus leader and his friend from Magdeburg, Hirzhals, who had saved his life and was now his captive. In accordance with tradition the Prusai drew lots for which amongst the prisoners would be given as a sacrifice to their Gods. Hirzhals was drawn but remembering the deed of the German Herkus Monte decided, to the anger of the Prus elders, to repeat the drawing of lots. And again Hirzhals was drawn. When as a result of the third draw fate again pointed at the same German, submitting to fate the prisoner himself went to the stake of his own will.

Under the leadership of Herkus Monte, whom the Knights of the Cross feared as fire, calling him a traitor and barbarian, the Prusai gained many victories, but there were also setbacks. The attack on the strongly fortified Konigsberg failed, and under its walls the Prus leader was wounded. However a great success was the expedition to the Culm land, which ended in 1263. On the return journey of the Natangs they were attacked by the Knights but Herkus Monte did not let himself be ambushed and near Lubawa gave them a bloody nose. There and then the country master Helmerich met his end. Shortly before he died the Knight of the Cross did not miss the chance to demonstrate to the Natang leader his germanic pride and according to Jerzy Necio the whole scene took place as follows:

"Come, dogs head - shouted Helmerich before his troops - you have forgotten a knights manners, you lout ! Come, I will treat your carcass into the mud !. Monte climbed on a tree stem and shouted back: ' Indeed, these are knightly words...I will meet you in a moment and you will be like the wick of a candle who will be extinguished by the wind ". They jumped at each other. The Natang leader parried the crossed Knight's blows with force, as if he was going through a wheat field. The swords sparked, the shadows flickered until one disappeared (...). Everybody, brothers, half brothers, aides, servants and knights - pilgrims, all these people at the service of the Order saw the fall of the country master".

Herkus Monte was seen by the Teutonic Order as a terror, causing panic fear amongst the brothers, as the strategy and tactics of his fighting made him unpredictable. At his hands died hundreds if not thousands of the Knights, who came to see him as a mirage rising from a trap. A mirage all the more dangerous and seductive as he had the habit of appearing in a Teutonic Order apparell.

Bouyed by his military successes Herkus Monte continued to fight destroying the Order's units and increasing their hatred for him. In 1272 the country master, the Margrave of Meissen, Dietrich II invaded his homeland, carrying out bestialities and huge ravages. The behaviour of the Teutonic Order was totally contrary to what had been taught to the young Prus in Magdeburg. Now he was convinced that all this was monstrous hypocrisy.

The success he had up to now finally came to an end: the brave leader of the Natangs was again wounded and hid himself in a deep jungle from which he intended to wage partisan warfare. The Order announced in the whole of Prusia that it would pay an enormous reward to whoever would show them where he was. The traitor turned out to be his own servant. As a result of an organised hunt the national hero of the Prusai fell into the hands of the thirsting for revenge Knights of the Cross. Commanding the operation the Komtur of Dzierzgon Schonburg von Hermann immediately ordered to hang the captive on the branch of an oak and to pierce his body with a sword.

Herkus Monte passed into national legend which was promulgated in the whole of contemporary Europe.

The case of the leader of the Natangs was not unique. "It often happened the Prusai and Lithuanians abducted as children and educated in Germany returned to their homeland and became the fiercest enemies of the Germans. Such a one was the remembered in the history of the Order of Prusai Herkus Monte"- stated in the addendum to his "Conrad Wallenrod" Adam Mickiewicz.

Reverie for the Prus people

To-days knowledge of the Prusai is certainly richer from that which was known about the subject by societies which had an influence on the fate of Europeans in the early middle ages, to whom Jerzy Strzelczyk dedicated his book "The forgotten nations of Europe". How many of the XXIth century users of computers and mobile telephones have heard anything at all about Picts, Goths or Gepids, about Vandals, Ostrogoths and Svabians, about Longobards, Vistulans or Lutiks, about Khazars or Venetians ?. Used in title of this book the term "nations" is not fully adequate to the subject matter. "A nation" as writes in his presentation Jerzy Wyrozumski - is an agreed category, far from to-days understanding of this term. It rather applies to peoples which had a common link, tribal, ethnic language or cultural". For this reason does Henry Lowmianski used the term "Prusai tribe".

How did it come about, that after seventeen centuries of living on the shores of the Baltic and in the depths of deep forests, linked by clans associations as well as by language and culture Prusai disappeared into history?

With a brave, and also containing a question, answer comes Gregory Balunski “Contrary to old literature and to the popular opinions expressed up to to-day the Prusai were not killed off by the Knights of the Cross, they survived the conquest, and even for a long time were the majority inhabitants of Teutonic Prussia. So what happened to them?.

It is known that the Prusai are no more, and their language lost. Why did fate treat them differently to say the Latvians or the Estonians, also conquered and who lived for centuries under foreign domination?”

These are the questions. And to repeat the question: how did it come about?

However much we were to discuss the subject, it would be difficult to avoid statistics, though because of the lack of knowledge of statistical tools in the middle ages one can rely only on estimated data. According to generally accepted by researchers estimates the Prus lands in the XIIth century, or before the conquest, were lived in by 170 thousand inhabitants, but by the end of the XIIIth century some 90 thousand souls were alive, or not much more than 50%. The largest losses were suffered in the rebel wars by the inhabitants most active, namely Pomezans, Warmians, Barts and Natangs, to whom belonged the bravest of the Prusai, Herkus Monte and for his valour paid with his life.

Not only losses in population and the associated material destruction led to the disappearance of the Prusai as a nation from the map of Europe. Many other and very varied factors were responsible for this as by-products of the negative policy towards the Prusai carried on by the Teutonic Order.

One of these was the forced resettlements policy practiced on all the Prusai nations to move them from one place to another, leaving behind them whole desert areas “Grosse Wildnis” which were to form a defensive belt. Such mass movements the Knights forced on settlements on the bordering with Lithuania people of Nadrovs, Skalows and Jatviagians. In turn the Barts were re-settled in areas of Pomezania where even in 1286 they tried to organise a rising. Such uninhabited defensive were belts also lands formerly inhabited by Galinds and Sasins, which were moved to Warmia. And it was to these districts that Teutonic Order’s chronicler Peter of Dusburg referred to in his description of “*Grosse Wildnis*”.

“These were not minor re-settlements - states Gregory Bialunski - since eg. the Jatviagians, moved to Sambia until the XVIth century formed a clearly different enclave called “*Suduisher Winkel*”.

The Jatviags “nobil” Cantegerde was directed to Sambia with 1600 of his countrymen, and to Balga - another nobil, Russigenus, together with his whole family.

The consequence with which the Order carried out their re-settlement action and by this depopulated the border territories, is shown by the case of the Jatviags leader Skomand the Younger, who fled with his entourage to Rus. Not finding the right conditions to settle there, he eventually returned to his homeland, but was unable to live there as Knights re-settled him to the area of to-days Gorowa Ilawecka.

The aim of this brutal and forced migration was the loosening of the bounds linking the Prusai people with their homelands.

A different reason leading to the de-population of these lands were the escapes from the Orders yoke to the neighbouring Lithuanian and Polish territories. For self-willed exile went not only the Prusai from the common people, but also the representatives of the upper classes using the coat of arms of Prus. Among them were the immortalised on the charts of the “Chronicles of Greater Poland” the castellan of Bydgoszcz Teodor, and also the vojevoda of Tczew and Gdansk Wasil and his brothers Glabuna and Sadyk. Refugees were the sons of the Prus Letaud, whose extradition was wanted by the Order from the duke of Mazovia Ziemiomysl.

The routes of the escapees also led to Rus, where reaserchers have confirmed the appearance of Barts and Skalows, and also to Lithuania where a society of Jatwiagans was established numbering over five thousand Jatwiags.

Probably the greatest influence on the destruction of the ethnic structure of Prusia and the weakening of national links was nevertheless German colonisation, which led to the required, from the point of view of the Order, mixture of the colonisers with the native population. Already in the beginning of the XIVth century over 25 thousand German colonisers found room for themselves in Prusia, who also had an active role to play in the process of germanisation: a century later the German population numbered 150 thousand, or 48% of the total population of Prus lands. Shortly later the Prusai became a minority in their land. The presence of the Germans directly influenced the warning of nationalistic feelings especially in the upper echelons of the Prusai community. It is right to remember that Poles from northern Mazovia also took part in the colonisation of Prusia, as well as Lithuanians.

The majority of the Prusai population which stayed alive after the conquest, decided to continue on their native lands and be subjugated to clear discrimination in the laws promulgated by the Teutonic Order.

As states prof. Bialunski “The Prusai had a poor law system of inheritance which was very profitable from the point of view of the authorities (taking over property and goods). Also they were not allowed to freely sell their properties and buy new ones, or even going to other settlements as servants or artisans”.

Discrimination of Prusai reached further and deeper: the Knights did not let them hold any office, including jury service, bailifs, village or city mayors under Culm law, effectively German. And conversely: Germans in towns and villages were banned from taking into service Prusai grooms or servants, and transgressing this ban was punished in the courts. The Order banned Prusai from keeping lucrative beer cellars or inns, and also introduced all possible fiscal or tax penalties.

“Only a few Prusai, mostly richer ones, adapted to the new situation and progressed their careers. The others lived in villages as subjects of the Teutonic Order. Subject to high rates and taxes they remained under the self imposed rule of the Knights.

Until the XIVth century the legal and social situation of the Prusai peoples remained much inferior in comparison to the newly arrived Germans or even Poles or Lithuanians”- writes Slawomir Klec Pilewski.

Pushed onto the margin of social life the Prusai were losing their national and cultural identity. “It was characteristic that in the times of Teutonic Order the Prusai people cultivated the old customs and kept their national identity, but in the XVIth and XVIIth centuries they suffered a systematic decline” states Marcel Kosman.

In line with these processes came strong germanisation pressures, which the Prusai language, slowly eliminated from public life and losing its written form, was unable to cope. Already in the beginning of the XIVth century, after the completion of the conquest, the German started forcing the Prusai to depart from their language and to communicate in German. In this state of affairs it took just one century to practically eradicate the language of the Prusai. According to researchers already in the XVIIth century the Prusai were communicating in German.

“Why did the disappearance of the language happen so quickly?” asks prof. Bialunski and answers “Lots of reasons accumulated here: thus the existing processes of assimilation: the levelling of the social and legal position of the Prusai with the rest of the population: the removal of their different customs and above all ever more common access to parish schools now teaching only in German.”

All this in the end led to the disappearance of traditional customs and the language of the old Prusai. The historian Christopher Hartnoch noted that in the second half of the XVIIth century one could only meet old men who still knew a few words in the Prusai language. This would prove that the regression of this language occurred in the time of a single generation. The conquest of Prussia took place not only territorially but also in the cultural sphere. It was a total conquest.

The Prusai, as Karol Gorski described it, became Prussians, who not only robbed original owners of their land, but stole their name. The German territorial enclave was to be called *Preussen*, and later *Ostpreussen* (East Prussia).

XI CRACKS IN THE ORDERS BREASTPLATE

Knights of the Lizard in their coat of arms

A.D. 1397 four representatives of the Prusai noble knights of the Culm Land, badly disposed towards the Teutonic Order, put their signatures under the document of the content: “let it be known to all present and in the future, who will read this letter, that we four, Nicholas and Hanusz, brothers from Rynsk, Frederick and Nicholas from Kitnow, also brothers, have deliberated and agreed that we have formed a Society in such a way that we four aforementioned and all who will join this society will help one another in necessary and honest works, in person and property, as can be carried out, without any disloyalty, treason, falsehood or any other unpleasantness, which would be carried out either openly or in secret, alone or by other people against anyone, (who) mistreats, worries, brutalises or does harm whether bodily, by dishonour or on property, we, or one of us who is previously mentioned in the society, but taking out above all any seniority, and also relatives on the fathers side, so that if a relative of one of us insults or harms in the previously mentioned matters as to body, honour or property so that none of the society

associates should act, but should stay silent until the matter is resolved or one relative to another to whom the matter relates carries out justice.

So we discussed whether we served God, our Lord truthfully, however it was, as if God inspired us, as the four eldest from the society makes or will settle, in which others should not hurry; but if someone from our Society because of God's plague or other matters, becomes poor, the four eldest elected will do him good and everybody should accept this.

Also we four above mentioned decided to keep the written articles in whole, always and firmly with loyalty and honour, without any trick and opposition: if somebody from the Society were to do such a thing or let our secrets, or cause them to be known, or if he was convinced about this he should be thrown of the Society and kept away without faith and treated as a certain criminal.

This because we formed our Society for the glory of our Lord and his service, our rightful heirs for their honour and ourselves for our use and comfort.

The sign of our mentioned Society will be a Lizard.

In order to strengthen the above mentioned Society so that it would be totally and completely kept with the written articles we have ordered this letter to be written, with our attached seals, which was dated 1397 in the day of St. Matthew the Apostle(25 II).

We also wish that all who will join the Society affix their seals to the letter.”

Formed in a manner of the knightly brotherhoods in the western European countries, which in times of peace looked not only after organising tournaments, but mutual help against all types of oppression. The Society of Lizard placed before itself precisely defined political aims. Just the fact of such an association in Teutonic Order territories already kept in an iron grip has to be considered as the first crack on the Order's breast plate. This also proved that backed by solid, it would appear, foundations, the German Teutonic Order state proved to be less durable than one would think from its undoubted political and economic power. The source of dangers to this state can be seen in its very nature, which can appear strange all the more than in its third century of existence the Order's state advanced to be the first economic power in the Baltic sphere. This unusual level of expansion was however achieved by the Order by means of ruthless and brutal exploitation of the Prusai inhabitants.

This question is summarised thus by Fr. Julian Anthony Lukaszewicz: “Everyone however had the right to demand that in theocratic state, ruled by an Order under the control of the Pope, relation should be ideal, and the subjects should be the happiest people on earth. However in the Teutonic Order's state things worked precisely in the opposite way. Neither villager, town dweller or noble could find justice. The perpetrators of injustice were always members of the Order”. And further: ‘In the times of Conrad von Jungingen the Knights, confused by their power and success let themselves perpetrate excesses on their subjects. Nobody could find satisfaction for libel and calumny thrown at his good name, nobody could find defenders in the case of attack or rape. An individual could not defend himself, so by necessity he or she had to rely on comrades who could speed to them with help.

And it was against all this that the founders combined to form in Radzyn Chelminski the Society of Lizards, in spite of being obliged to keep their loyalty to

the Teutonic Order. In this situation the Knights from the sign of the Lizard were condemned to a secret form of activity. Officially however these brothers called themselves a charitable organisation, philanthropic, religious and pious. And these declared intentions were taken at face value by the grand master Conrad von Jungingen himself, affixing his seal to the statute presented to him, which was equivalent to confirming the document.



48 Malbork - the Europe's largest castle, on Prusai land.

This was strange as in spite of keeping in their service a complex intelligence network this leader of the Order was not aware of the ruling social attitudes. Thus wrote about this the historian Marian Bartkowiak: “Anti-Order attitudes also appear amongst the German population centred on the towns. The townspeople, endangered in their businesses by economic competition from the Order, worried by political and fiscal pressures, direct their sympathies towards Poland, seeing in co-operation with it a chance of their expansion (.....) On the other hand the Culm nobility, restricted by the Order in their rights and privileges, also looks to Poland, having in their sights the obtaining of state rights”.

The grand lord in Malbork did not suspect that the Lizard nobles considered themselves *de facto* supporters of the Polish King and aimed at restoring to his rule the Polish lands given earlier to the Order, including above all to separate the Culm Lands from Order's state.

So the very fact of organising the antagonists of the Teutonic Order in the Society of Lizards and its activities lasting many dozens of years came as the first serious crack on the Order's steel breast plate.

The oppositional character towards the Teutonic Order of the brothers from the sign of the lizard was nevertheless a subject of discussion amongst historians. Stating that “almost universally it is assumed that it was basically an opposition organisation to the Knights, further that it had a secret agenda separating the Culm Land and reuniting it with Poland”. Gregory Bialunski believes: “These are only suggestions exposed in the light of later happenings, all the more as there are no signs of distrust

by the Order. Evidently, either there was no opposition activity by the Lizardians at all, or it was very deeply conspiratorial.”

Later events however were to prove that the public character of their activity, which included special masses, hid the real aims of this brotherhood. In order to hide them it forced in 1398 on the Order’s rulers agreement to organise a separate vicary in Radzyn Chelminski. A second such vicary was set up a few years later in Torun. On the occasion of its founding in 1408 the new grand master Ulrich von Jungingen wrote that “The beloved and loyal Knights and equerries of the Lizard Society came to him and brought a document from my predecessor, the deceased and loved brother, who gave it to them in the matter of the foundation of the vicary of the Society by the church in the town of Radzyn.”

Nota bene it should be known that only two years later on the fields of Grunwald and after the battle these “beloved and loyal knights” deeply distressed the same grand master. Before this happened, he gave the knights of the Culm Land and Dobrzyn Land many a privilege.

In the conviction of historians this was not the gesture of the Order’s nobility but the desire to make sure of the loyalty of the Lizardians in the face of the coming and inevitable war between the Order and Poland.

Such were the behind the scenes activities of the great game between the knights of the sign of the Lizard and the Knights in white cloaks with black crosses.

The Prusai were on the fields of Grunwald

From the moment of appearing on Prus lands the Teutonic Order worked hard and constantly to merit the fully justified opinion of being an expansionist aggressor, not satisfied with the conquest of Prusia, but attacking in every direction under the slogan “Drang nach Osten”. As if it was not enough in 1398 the Order even seized Swedish Gottland which they occupied for eleven years and from which one could control the commercial sea routes linking Prusia with Sweden, the Baltic states and Rus. However, being forced to leave, they left the island to Denmark for a very considerable sum. It was not only example of the Order seeking money for the return of formerly conquered territories.

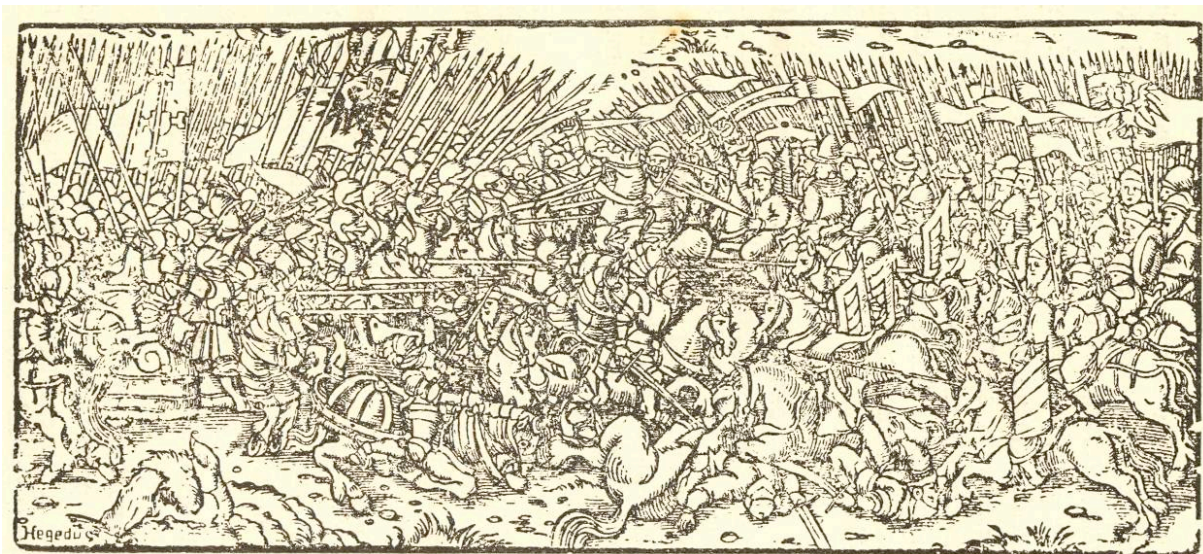
But since the Order decided on the conquest of far away Gottland, one should not wonder that much earlier it made the decision to seize the nearby Gdansk situated at the very entrance to the Vistula, and in the end the whole of Gdansk Pomerania. And here it is worth noting that for the second time in the course of only a few score years the Polish side made the error, fatal in its consequences, this time asking the Order to take away Gdansk from the Brandenburgians, who seized the city. It was difficult to find a better present for the Teutonic Order. The liberators did not wait to be asked again.

“The Knights of the Cross surrounded the city and made up the fortifications. Eventually by treason and trickery they were able to enter the city at night, in a horrible way they murdered over 10 000 gathered townspeople and nobles (...) whoever could, saved themselves by fleeing. The Knights burnt the city so that only embers and ashes remained. This happened on 14 November 1308, the third day after

the feast of St. Martin (...) The Knights wrote to the Pope that they did not cause any harm to the inhabitants: the latter of their own will destroyed buildings and burnt their own houses; they emigrated all over the world, leaving the Order with the problem of building a new town” - Fr. Lukaszewicz cited German sources. It is more difficult to find a greater lie, and it was not the first.

This happening passed into history under the name of the bloodbath of Gdansk. It was carried out by the Knights of the Cross, who in their criminal work gained experience during the conquest of Prusia and could now use this in their attacks on Pomerania, Kujavia and other neighbouring territories.

Such was the beginning of a string of conflicts which was now started by Order, behaving as they did earlier in Prusia: they invaded Polish lands, murdered, robbed and burnt. And to think that this happened hardly 100 years after Konrad of Mazovia invited them to Poland, seeing them as defenders from the Prusai. The wars started by the Order in the years 1327-1332 and later the war with Poland destroyed Kujawia, the Dobrzynski Land, Greater Poland and Mazovia. In 1331 there took place the ferocious battle of Płowce. Even to-day historians debate who was the victor: king Wladislav Lokietek or the grand master Luther von Braunschweig. The fact is that the battle did not have much influence on Polish - Teutonic Order relations or the situation in Prusia.



49 The Battle of Grunwald

To an explosion of the for years simmering conflict between the Order and Poland culminated the battle in 1410 on the fields of Grunwald near to-days Olsztyn. This was the greatest battle in Europe in the late middle ages.

It is therefore worth while to consider the question of the participation of the Prusai in this armed conflict and the consequences arising from it. This subject so far has not absorbed Polish historians, although there are reasons to state that the role of the Prusai in the battle would be difficult to by-pass and ignore, without risking insulting historical truth.

Is it time, as the Order's chronicler had it, that the treachery of the Culm Standard decided the fate of the battle? The question seems at least worthy of discussion and so it is useful to look at it more closely.

Here is what was written by the German chronicler known as the “continuator of Posilge”: “A few no-gooders, knights from the Culm Land - folded the Culm Standard, as well as other standards, from which the knights fled, so that few of them survived.” The XIVth century priest and chronicler Johann von Posilge was not a German but a native Prusai and so his views on the Teutonic Order were more critical and departed from the accepted in these times uncritical views of its exploits. This continuator, presumably German, departed from the spirit in which von Posilge related and for the disaster of the Order at Grunwald blamed the Prusai knights, whom he called “no-gooders”.

To completely different conclusions came the reaserch of this question by Slavomir Klec Pilewski: “In the battle of Grunwald the Culm Standard, forced by the knight’s oath and representing knights of Prusai descent, mostly from Pomezania, was on the side of the Order. The elite of this Standard and its leaders - were Lizardians remaining in close contact with the Polish Crown (...). In view of of the unforeseen consequences from the side of the Order the role of the Culm Standard must have been most secret on both sides (...)

For Jagiello the knowledge of the location of the Order’s forces on the fields of Grunwald was of great importance. Information as to formation of the Order’s units could only come from the Lizardians. Such knowledge could only be delivered by somebody who was treated with full confidence in the Polish camp. Who was he ? He could have been one of the commanders of the Prusai guides with Jagiello. So the information could have come from Nicholas of Pilewice, a Lizardian and a member of the Culm Standard. The first suspicion of treason on the Order fell on him. During a search in the property of Nicholas of Pilewice the Knights of the Cross found correspondence with the Crown hostile to the Order together remains of Polish flags. With the help of these the couriers from the Crown identified themselves (...)

Often there is talk of very active fighting of the Culm Standard at Grunwald against the Polish Crown and that it surrendered only when the defeat of the Order became obvious. There is no proof on that. However without doubt it was one of the last sixteen reserve standards (...)

After the battle and later there were no mentions that the Culm Knights suffered any losses during the battle, which devalues the statement about active involvement in the battle against Jagiello’s army. Just the surrender of the Culm Standard on the other hand delayed the attack of these 16 standards, and also caused total confusion in the Order’s ranks. This was a very useful time gap for Jagiello, giving him time to reorganise the ranks of his warriors.”

The stand which was taken by the leadership of the about 600 riders of the Culm Standard might testify to its considerable strategic strength and by the same about the unquestionable role which it played out on the fields of Grunwald.

This was something greater than another crack on the Order’s breastplate; this was undoubtedly a heavy blow dealt to the Order by the Lizardians. Even before this great battle they formed, let us say “working contacts” with the opponents of the Order. “An example of likely co-operation with the Polish - Lithuanian side before Grunwald is the knight Nicholas of Pilewice, supplying false information and in addition carrying on hostile correspondence to the Order with Poland” writes

Gregory Bialunski. And further: "One cannot exclude opposition activity in the time immediately preceding Grunwald. It is known that Polish speaking knights took part in the reconnaissance of the Order's forces, and it is worth noting that lance flags were found after the arrest of Nicholas of Pilewice."

He was not the only knight who worked against the grand master from Malbork, giving his services to King Jagiello. A Polish agent in the court of Ulrich von Jungingen was Staszko from Bolumin. Working against the Order in the diplomatic sphere was Jan Surwillo from a Lithuanian family, who was chased by the Knights of the Cross for treason. To the opposition also belonged Nicholas (Klaus) from Durag, Dytryk (Dietrich) from Dylew, Albrecht Karshau, Zbylut, Janusz from Rynsk and Pulkowa, Fryderyk of Kitnowa, Janusz from Szczuplinek, Jacob from Kobyl, Phillip from Narzymia and many others. Some of them belonged to the unfriendly to the Order Lizard Society. Their activity found its expression in supporting King Wladislav Jagiello in its preparations for war against the Teutonic Order. Some researchers point out the existence of not only a secret but also open opposition of Prusai knights against the Order. The leaders in this activity were Nicholas of Pilewice, Jan Surwillo and others remaining in contact with a part of the knights from the Culm Standard, the Lizardians. From their services of a reconnaissance nature the chief of staff of King's Jagiello army made good use, as he was well briefed about the movements of the Order's army before the battle of Grunwald. On the other hand the Prusai allies misinformed the Order's leadership by giving false data on the subject of the movements of King's Jagiello army. In this way the Prusai made a significant contribution to the disaster which befell the Knights of the Cross at Grunwald.

One should not wonder that the Knights tried all possible ways to take revenge on the disloyal Lizardians. And not all could escape the revenge of the grand master who, after the Grunwald defeat, became Heinrich von Plauen. On his orders beheaded by axe were Eberhard Kunseck, Jochart bei Rastenburg and many others. All were spared the final verdicts of the Court which replaced the suspicions of taking part in a plot by the Komtur of Radzyn Georg von Wirsberg against the ruler of Malbork. The Komtur did in fact plot to eject von Plauen, in which Lizardians were to help him.

The plot was discovered, but the price of life was paid by one of the no-gooders, the leader of the Lizard Society, standard bearer of the Culm Land, and the man who, according to prof. Bialunski "at Grunwald he reversed the Standard giving the sign to cease fighting" Nicholas Rynski.

As wrote the Order's chronicler, "Nicholas Rynski, because of his crimes and treasons had to flee the country. He reached the court of the bishop of Ciechocin. He was received with grace and invited to the bishops house. When they were at the table, some brothers and servants of the Order arrived to seize him. Hearing that he was with the bishop in a strongly built house, after long deliberations, they decided to return. The criminal escaped from the hands of the Order (...) The Knights could not catch Nicholas, so they seized his property of Rynsk by sequestration."

The grand master von Plauen did not however resign from revenge on the "criminal" and ordered him to be seized at all costs. The task was given to the mayor

of Lipin, Heinrich Holt, who was thought to be a friend of his neighbour Nicholas. In the old manner of the Knights he invited him to a feast, so that he could be taken, bound and sent to Grudziadz, where the grand master von Plauen himself was waiting for him; he ordered him to be tortured without trial and to be publicly beheaded on the town square.

Noble born knights had the privilege of putting their under the sword. Nicholas of Rynsk was insulted and shamed dying like a simple servant from an executioners axe.

The death of Nicholas of Rynsk became the signal for a total war between von Plauen and the Lizard Society. His greatest fault in the eyes of the Knights was not so much obedience to the Polish king regarding the Culm Standard; the greatest error which he made after the defeat of the Knights at Grunwald was to encourage the landowners and townspeople to seize the castles and manors of the Order. This action was led by the knights of the Culm Land, throwing out the Knights of the Cross amongst others from Ostroda, Radzyn, Rogozno, Pokrzywno, Starogard, Lubioz, Krzyzbork, Balga and Ketrzyn, from which quite often, as stated in chronicles, the monks were pulled by their beards". It also happened that a paradox arose, as the Orders castles captured by Prusai knights were defended by the local Prusai who were led by just a few Knights of the Cross. Now these same Prusai helped to take the castles which together with the towns and submissions of fealty were passed to the Polish monarch. It would be difficult for a show of a more friendly attitude to the Crown.

One of the first who shared the fate of Nicholas of Rynsk was Nicholas of Pilewice alias Niclos von Pfeilsdorf, who together with Janusz of Pulkowo seized the castle in Kowalewo. Captured shortly later by the hungry for revenge Knights of the Cross, who, as wrote their chronicler, was found during a search with "small pieces of standards which came from Poland and also some letters from Poland which sharply criticised the Order" and were the correspondence of spies.

In spite of taking a clear pro Polish stance by the Prusai Culm nobility who were counting on more than a kind look from the monarch and asylum on the territory of the Crown; they were met with great frustration, as they gained nothing from their loyalty to the Polish King. On the contrary the Order fortresses captured by the Prusai were given to Polish garrisons who removed the Prusai conquerors. This was another and fatal in its consequences error, as was soon to be seen, by the Poles, as it put an end to the political aspirations of the Prusai in their soul but opting for Poland Culm nobility.

This happened when the power of the Order and Knights state in its existing form began to clearly wane to which the conversion of Lithuania with the help of Vladislav Jagiello in 1385-1387 turned out to be highly negative for the Order. This proved that the Christian faith could be nurtured without force and bloodshed, which left the Knights without any justification for their politics of robbery and exploitation. As commented on this William Urban "The Order ceased to be necessary. But they still had to realise this."

The Order did not realise this and not understanding their defeat at Grunwald leapt as a wounded lion on selected prey. And it was to be completely different: in the

captured after the battle camp of the Order the victors found 20 carts loaded with iron shackles which were to be used to lock the Polish and Lithuanian prisoners !

The Prusai Union looked to the Crown

The territories of the recent Prusia were in the XIVth century inhabited by three ethnic groups, namely old Prusai, Polish and German. This made it easier for the Teutonic Order to rule by a highly centralised system which did not take notice of the form of ethnic society.

The consequences of this state of affairs were described by Fr. Julian Antoni Lukaszewicz: "Between the ruled and the ruling there existed because of this a steady divide and a void so deep that it could not be filled even by religion so as to create some sympathetic community of interests. Fear forced one to submission and silence, the knowledge of unbridled power gave the second brutality, terror and exploitation.

A citizen in the Order's state was a subject and slave who had to work out his various serfdoms to benefit tyrants and travellers from the whole world".

On the lands of the Teutonic Order's state there were always fertile seeds of rebellion against the rule of the Knights of the Cross which "*per fas et nefas*" desired to recompense itself for all the losses suffered as a result of the Great War with Poland. And losses there were. The way to this aim led through extreme fiscalism and exploitation of its subjects, especially the peasants. Far from satisfied were also the town dwellers, who had no means of increasing their commercial activities. It was also difficult not to rebel against the repressions of the komturs legal system, which ruled not only through the Courts but also controlled the administration and the soldiery. In this way the Order formed a monopoly in the sphere of control of both political and economic life.

The one political force which was able to counter the total control of the Knights rule proved to be the Prusai Union. This was a confederation of the nobility and Prusian towns. The decision of its founding fell on the meeting of the Prusai states in Elblag. Even in the same year representatives of these bodies from Torun, Culm and Gdansk met in Kwidzyn to sign an act of formation giving the representatives of the states the right to take part in opposition to the Teutonic Order. This was the continuation of the activities of the Lizard Society, which entered into the membership of the Prusai Union. In the opinion of historians the activities of this Union can be recognised as the beginning of the disintegration of the Teutonic Order's state.

The time was ripening to start a struggle between the Prus states with the Teutonic Order about the sharing of power. The Union, where the Prusai knighthood from the Culm Land this time also played a leading role, represented the interests of the opposition, that is the merchant patricians and the aforementioned knights, which together with the "knighted" soldiers formed the landowners. Because of their duty of military service they desired to increase their stake in the political life of the Order's state.



5 The territorial Prus land division by the Teutons at beginning of the XIVth century.
1 Prus land and Pomerania in Teutons borders. 2 Regional borders of districts. 3 Administrative centres. 5 The Orders castles. 6 Other places

“In the specific conditions of the Order’s state the Prusai Union was composed of representatives of the oppositional desires of the majority of the Order’s subjects, and co-ordinated their further common fight. It also rightly considered itself to be the representative of all the states and a legal entity” wrote Marian Biskup.

It can be understood therefore that the grand masters of the Teutonic Order did everything in their power to maximally weaken, lead to disintegration, and best to kill off the Prusai Union. In the end this led to an internationalisation of the growing conflict as the Knights of the Cross appealed for help to the Emperor and to the Pope. All this however, indicated the steady weakening of the political structure of the Order state. In spite of this the Order considered a decisive conflict with the Prusai Union, including naming the rebels as outlaws, confiscating their properties and banishments. Finally matters reached the stage that the Emperor Frederick III became a party in the conflict and in 1453 condemned the Union and demanded its termination.

The Prusian Union refused to subjugate these themselves to the Emperors will. This was another, the latest and the greatest crack on the still strong breast plate of the Knights.

Now events followed one another. In February 1454 the Secret Council sent a delegation to Malbork, which informed the grand master Ludwig von Erlichshausen that the Union had terminated its loyalty to the Teutonic Order. At the same time in Krakow a deputation from the Prusian Union asked the Polish King to take control and rule in Prusia. In March that year Casimir the Jagiellon proclaimed an act

incorporating Prusia. In the opinion of prof. Biskup this document in practice liquidated the Teutonic Order's state in Prusia. In April of the same year 1454 the representatives of the Prusian states swore an oath of fealty to the Polish King in Torun.

A political battle now started between the Union and the Teutonic Order to decide the future of these lands, and this was to lead to another armed conflict. The grand master Ludwig von Erlichshausen did not even consider the thought of sharing power with the Prusian Union. This state of affairs meant the Polish side had to use force, which meant war with the Order, which passed into history under the name of the Thirteen Years war (1454-1466). Arm in arm with the Polish forces fighting the Teutonic Knights stood the knights of the Prusian Union.

One of the most prominent figures among Prusians proved to be Nicholas III of Pilewic whose grandfather was Nicholas I. A servant of the Crown fighting with the Order, he did not take any rewards and on the contrary invested his whole family fortune into the work of uniting Prusia with the Crown. In recognition of his services he was granted an invitation to the ceremony of signing the treaty of Torun in 1466. He was not only a Senator to the Crown, a most important office, but also had great respect amongst the gentry and the Prusian townspeople, which is evidenced by his election to the Council of the Prusian Union.

Unfortunately, once again the Polish side could not bring itself to give merit for the services such as those rendered by Pilewski and many other Prusians. Intriguers were found who would accuse Pilewski of betraying the interest of the Crown and it was necessary for King Casimir the Jagiellon himself to intervene to clear him of false accusations. Intrigues fostered by jealousy and deeply held antagonisms had for long, it appears, hurt Polish national interests.

The Thirteen Year war was carried on with changing fortunes for both sides and ended in a peace called the second peace of Torun.

On the basis of the treaty the Order lost to the Crown the Gdansk Pomerania and the lands of Culm and Michalowska as well as the Zulawy, and also Malbork, Elblag and Tolkmicko or the territories now called the Kings Prusia. The eastern parts of the Order's lands with Konigsberg, to which the Teutonic Order moved its capital, was left in the ownership of the Order, forming Ducal Prusia. And therefore - Ostpreussen or East Prussia. According to the treaty the grand master was forced to pay homage to the Crown, which obliged him to give fealty to the Polish King. For a proud Teutonic Knight this was a highly humbling act.

"The decisions of the Treaty of Torun - analysed prof. Biskup - even though they accentuated joining the territory of Prusia to the Polish State, clearly formed a lessening of the act of incorporation of 1454, leaving the Order in the eastern part as a continuing threat over the Baltic (...) The unprecise treaty descriptions of the legal status of the Order's lands left it in the future to its own interpretation, lessening its fealty character".

Looking at the past from the present, it would appear right to share the opinion of Slavomir Klec Pilewski that neither earlier than Grunwald, or later than Torun, the Polish side did not benefit from the historical chance of forming from the local Prusai allies a barrier to the continuing military inclinations of the Teutonic Order. "All the

administrative posts in King's Prusia were controlled by Polish oligarchs, and those remaining in the hands of Culm gentry slowly lapsed. In the year 1478 in the meeting of the Crown Council in Brest Kujawski Nicholas III von Pfeilsdorf left in unexplained circumstances. His departure became the beginning of a process of the total marginalisation of the political role of the Culm Land Prusai gentry. The Prusians disappeared from the historical map".

They disappeared, we can add, because of the short sighted and very damaging for the Crown politics of all those who could and wanted to harm her. Not for the first time nor the last.

XII THE POLITICAL PHENOMENON OF PRUSSIANISM

The fulfilled testament of Hermann von Salza

The reflected lights after the first burnt settlements of the murdered Prusai had not yet died when the Knights of the Cross began to form the Order's state on the conquered territories, - *Deutschordensstadt in Preussen* - putting into effect the aim which was set before the Teutonic Order's grand master Hermann von Salza. To this aim were close the activities concerning the well thought out and long term German political plan concerning Prusia.

One of these activities was the destroying of solidarity within the provinces by pleasing the nobles and bringing them on their side. The nobles were bought by the Order also by gifts of land, and the native inhabitants were weighed down by paying taxes to the new owners. In this way the Knight's weakened their defensive capabilities, preparing the ground for their own rule. The knights also gave the Prusai nobles various privileges, which led to the forming of the native class of knights.

Another of the fundamentals of the Knight's state was the colonising of conquered Prusai lands by immigrants from Germany and giving them privileges. The first immigrants arrived in the Culm land as early as in 1233. The initiation of the process of German settlers led to deep and irreversible changes in the national structure of Prus lands.

Prof. Lowmianski divides into three periods the story of the colonisation of Prusia. In the first period, from the start of the conquest to the second decade of the XIVth century, the Teutonic Order led to the growth of many new settlements by Germans towns and villages. The German townspeople were particularly eager to take this opportunity, putting their roots along the communication trek which was formed by the Vistula with the Nogat and the Vistula delta.

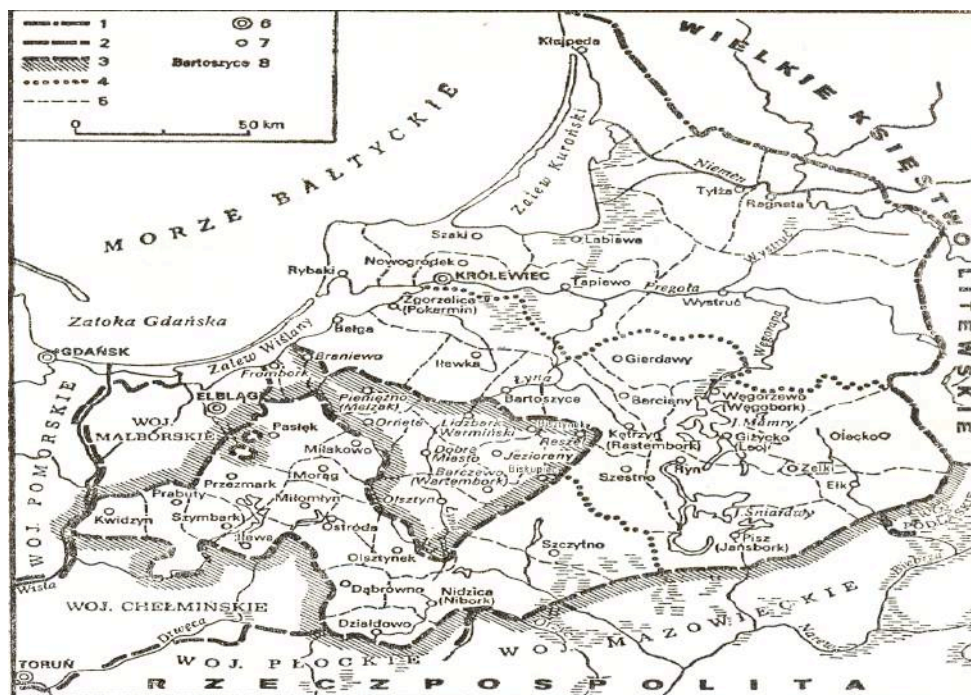
Under the banner of the Order also knights arrived from Germany. After the ending of their mission some of them remained in Prusia, where the Knights gave them land to which they brought all their families together with servants. The first wave of settlers was swept aside by the Prusai uprising and only after the ending of the conquest did the second wave arrive, which proved to be much more lasting.

The next period, lasting from the second decade of the XIVth century to the second decade of the XVth, passed under increased colonisation of the whole of Prusia, including above all the depopulated areas of the Prusia interior. Apart from the rent paying villages based on German law there grew German knights estates.

And finally the third period, from the defeat of the order at Grunwald in 1410 to the Prussian Homage in 1525, as a result of difficult times for the Order, there was a clear weakening in German immigration and a strengthening in immigration from Lithuania and peasants and gentry from Mazovia.

The colonisation of Prusia, with periods of different pressure, brought many various benefits to the Order: political, coming from presence of Germans, military and fiscal, coming from the exploitation of the Prusai peasantry.

The Teutonic Knights supported their stay on a base of a demographic nature, and this state soon drew attention to itself by a high and fast economic growth. A goods - money economy, not previously known in these lands, permitted the entry of Prusia into the orbit of baltic and black sea trade. At the head of the most advanced towns in the Order's state were Torun, Elblag and Gdansk. These and other towns acceded to the Hansa in the middle of the XIVth century, which already dominated trade in the basin of the Baltic Sea. The economic boom was however not only the effect of good management by the local bureaucratic machine divided into Prusian komtur districts, or units of the Teutonic Knights administration. The growth of commerce in the monk's state was helped by the able utilisation of the growth of the economy in the Europe of the time.



6 Map of the Prus land division after year 1525.

1 The states borders. 2 Warmia and other provinces borders. 3 and 4 The borders of Ducal Prussia. 5 Regional borders. 6 Places above 10 000 inhabitants. 7 Places below 10 000 inhabitants. 8 Local administration in Ducal Prussia

The benefits of this economic prosperity was not however experienced by the Prusian population.

One also has to pay attention to the very important role played by the monks state in the germanisation of Prusia. The Teutonic Order was after all German to the bone, the clergy was totally German, and at least the higher echelons of the town dwellers and merchants were Germans who accumulated major riches in their hands, and also the landowners belonging to wealthier categories of the farmers were of German origin.

Finally, German in its nature was the aggressive expansionism of the Order's state, which expanded its power to the east, west and north. In the early XIVth century the German Orders state reached its zenith of territorial expansion, ruling not only over Prusian land but also over Pomerania on one side, and also Courland and the Baltic States on the other. The Knights of the Cross now looked hungrily on Lithuania and Rus, not counting Polish lands.

“The Knights state in Prusia - wrote the historian of the Order Marian Biskup - played a highly important role in the developments of the history of the Pomeranian - Prusian lands and its neighbours, with Poland and Lithuania at the fore, and also the German states. This was caused by the remarkable character of this country's creation, existing as an independent political organism in the years 1226-66. as a Polish fiefdom in a smaller territorial entity in the years 1466-1525, together an even 300 years.”

The grand master Siegfried von Feuchtwangen chose as the capital of the emerging state of Prussia the fortified stronghold of Malbork, transferring to it in AD 1309 the hitherto capital of the Teutonic Order from Venice.

A kings crown for the Hohenzollerns

In name Catholic, the Teutonic Order had for tens of years been loosing its original character as a religious institution: the level of morality of its leaders and brother knights had been lowering, and the court of the grand master had been becoming more and more lay. The Knights *Ordenstaat* had been becoming a political anachronism. The situation demanded deep reforms. The catalyst of change was to be the spreading reformation in Germany, which penetrated Ducal Prussia, here gaining ever more understanding.

And something happened which was inevitable: in 1525 the last of the grand masters, Albert von Hohenzollern-Ansbach, finally broke with Catholicism, and by his office, accepting Protestantism, and taking over as ruler of Ducal Prussia as a lay prince. However, he tried to remain in good relations with the Polish Crown. On the 10th April of that year he went to Krakow to kneel in fealty in the main square before the Polish King Sigismund the Old. According to witnesses of the ceremony, which four centuries later Jan Matejko painted on canvas, the king gave prince Albrecht a flag with a black eagle on a white field with the letter “S“ and a kings crown, which from then was to be the emblem of Albrecht. “The Prince - as wrote prof. Biskup - next made an oath as a lay subject of Poland, after which his accompanying Knights

of the Cross tore the crosses from their coats as a sign of liquidation of the Prussian arm of the Order (...)

The formal act of the so called Prussian Fealty, the symbolic closure of - after nearly 300 years - of the rule of the Teutonic Order in Prusia also started a new period in its history as a lay subsidiary of Poland with the territorial rule of Albrecht Hohenzollerns”.

The Prussian fealty marked the final end of the Order’s state. How things were to be in the near future emerged that they would not be beneficial to Poland, as the links of prince Albrecht with the aggressive Hohenzollern were the precursor of the tragic for Poland German politics now totally dominated by Prussia.

Various historians commented in different ways about the Orders state. Here is what the XIXth century Kaisers Germany historian Heinrich von Treitschke had to say: “In the history of the monks state what is most impressive is the deeply rooted doctrine of the supreme worth of the state and the need for citizens to subject themselves to the aims of this state, which were clearly defined by the Teutonic Order. The extreme harshness of the Germans caused the Order to distinguish itself from the irresponsible Slavs. In this way Prussia gained the name of the new Germany”

Sincerly, one can say, in line with the author of the “Chronicles of the Prus land”, Peter of Dusburg. And what about the Prusai? The new Prussians tended not to talk or write about the original Prusians. Moreover the Germans avoided speaking or writing about the fact that the Hohenzollerns were at any time the subjects of the Jagiellons.

Not much time went by before German Prussia found itself in the power sphere of Brandenburg. In the end a single state, Brandenburg-Prussia, was created. At its head stood the Great Elector - the Grosse Kurfurst-Frederic William, whom German historiography, as writes Norman Davis, always presented as a “ Prince of the German empire, in addition disposing of the rights to far off Prussia”, although he was still subject to the Polish Crown. For the whole of the second half of the XVIIth century the Duchy of Prussia was now independent although linked by personal union with German Brandenburg.

Then came the XVIIIth century. “What happened next was one of the strongest examples of auto-promotion in modern times. Nobody could foresee the future course of two extremely complicated European wars or in what condition the Hohenzollern state of Brandenburg-Prussia would emerge from them (...) The Margrave- Prince-electer was however determined to achieve the international status of a crowned king (...) He wished also to guarantee his representatives a place at the most important table, when arms are replaced by diplomacy” - writes Norman Davies.

Also achieved was the resolution of the thorny problem of a name new on the map of European monarchies: “*Das Konigreich in Preussen*” or the Kingdom of Prussia. In Prussia, but quite clearly, without the Prusians and to the detriment of Poland !

And thus “18th January 1701 the elector of Brandenburg Frederick III in the town of Konigsberg was crowned as the “King of Prussia” (...)

The coronation itself started in the morning of 18th January in the elector's hall of hearings (...) It was planned totally from the scratch. Frederick I (as a king he changed his numeration) was personally responsible for every detail, not only for the new royal insignia, the lay ceremonies and the liturgy in the castle church, but also for the cut and colour of the costumes (...). The Elector, covered in a gold cloak with glistening diamond buttons, decorated with ermine and in carmasine stockings (...) placed the crown on his own head, took the sceptre in his hand and took oaths of loyalty from those present”.

Such was the ceremony in the castle of Konigsberg according to the description by Christopher Clark. According to estimates by this historian the cost of it was six milion thalers compared with a four milion thalers annual income of the monarch. Everything was very rich, ornate and in great taste !

As writes prof. Davies, the word Prussia lost its geographical meaning. “The new situation needed a change in usage. Everybody who inadvertently used the word ‘elector’ had to pay a fine of one thaler into a box for charitable purposes. From that time every place that fell into the hands of the Hohenzollerns was officially to be called ‘Prussian’. Strangely, Berlin became a Prussian town. Even more strangely, Brandenburg now became Prussian”.

The German Prussians born on Prus soil took on the shape of a political phenomenon which had no precedent in Europe.

The marching step of Prussian militarism

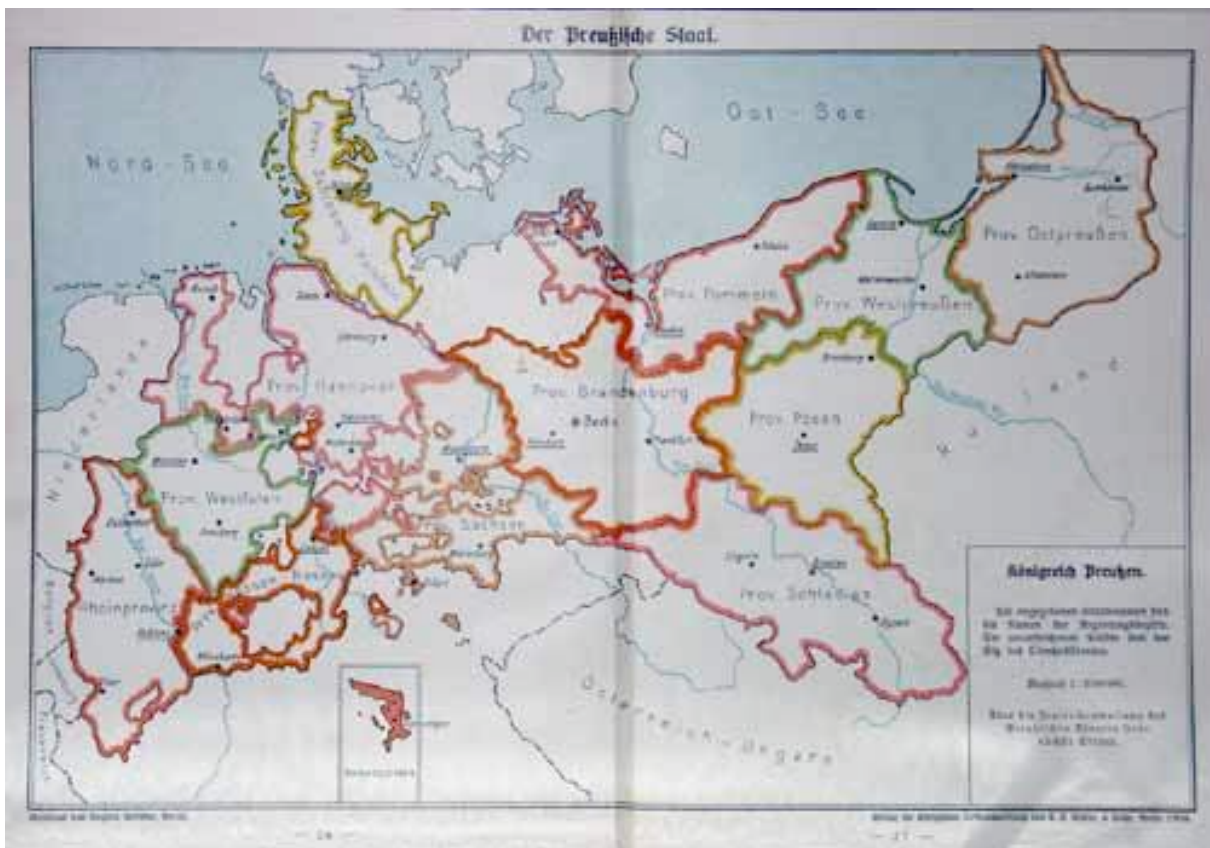
Never in history had the Germans been seen as a peace loving country. To the contrary the name of their country was usually associated with the idea of militarism. To understand better the nature of this phenomenon one has to turn to the past, to the pages of the “Chronicle of Prus Lands “ from the pen of Peter of Dusburg. This work, as is known, is a truthful and concretely written account of the conquest of Prusia, which can be understood to be a lecture on the subject of militarism. Therefore it seems right that the thesis that German militarism is linked with the conquest by the Teutonic Order of the then Prusia is correct, and hence the description Prussian militarism, although it has nothing to do with the original inhabitants of this land, or have then Prusai.

This militarism, which was to become the cause of the greatest misfortunes of Europe, gave signs of its existence even in the times of the Dukedom of Prussia, when the commander of the regular army, Frederic William, defeated the Swedes at Fehrbellin near Berlin. Remembered by the March of the Cavalry - Reitereimarsch - the date of this battle, 28th June 1675, was the National Day in Germany until 1918. The importance of this battle was not so much military as psychological, as the Swedish armies were until that time considered invincible. It was the sign of the appearance of a new power on the political scene of Europe and Frederic William was hailed as the Great: *der Grosse Kurfurst*.

The Hohenzollerns from the start of their rule relied on a strong army, considering it to be the decisive argument in any diplomatic pertractations. It was not

said without substance that, in contrast to other countries, which had an army, Prussia was a state which was kept by the army.

To justify this opinion was the work of the King of Prussia and elector of Brandenburg Frederick II the Great-Friedrich *der Grosse* also called *der Alte Fritz* or Old Fritz - who in his country of 2.5 million inhabitants kept a regular army of 190 000, the largest then in Europe. Old Fritz disposed of a highly trained and very disciplined - hence the term prussian drill - infantry, cavalry, artillery and engineering forces. In the years 1740-1763 under the flag of Prussia he three times waged war on Austria over Silesia, which finally became part of his state, and a few years later took part in the war of Bavarian Succession. In total his army took part in 21 battles, fighting with the armies of Austria, France, Saxony, Russia, England, Sweden and the German Reich.



7 Map of the German Prussia at the year 1912 and without Poland.

Utilising the state of political chaos into which the commonwealth of Poland fell under the Saxon dynasty, the Prussians emerged with the initiative of its partition. This was the realisation of an idea of the Teutonic Order which probably came up with it twice, but found no potential partners. This time the partners were found. As a result of three partitions between 1772-1795 with the help of Russia and Austria Prussia enlarged its territory at cost of Poland for over 100 years. As if this was not enough the Prussians stole the Polish Regalia from the Wawel, which they destroyed in a barbaric way so as to deprive the Poles of the symbols of their national identity.

The XIXth century brought successive triumphs for Prussian arms: in 1864 the war with Denmark over Schleswig-Holstein, in 1866 with Austria over control of the

German provinces, and in 1870-71 with France, which lost Alsace and part of Lorraine to Prussia. This was the zenith of the expansion of Prussia based on militarism, with Prussia assuming the role of the military hegemon of Europe. A visual sign of this was the victory parade of the Prussians under the Arch of Triumph in Paris. No one other than the Prussian generals introduced the goose step parade, which was adopted by the armies of many countries. The parade in Paris was led by general Friedrich von Bernhardi, *nota bene* the author of the work titled “Germany and the next war”, in which he expounded the principles of Prussian militarism. Here are some of his thoughts: “War is biological necessity”; “the main aim of politics can never be the keeping of peace”; “weak nations do not have the same right to live as strong and energetic nations”. What else was the driving force behind Adolf Hitler towards the Poles and other Slav nations ? And one other thought from von Bernhardi: “War is the most important factor supporting culture and the growth of power”. Was this not a return to the policy of the Teutonic Order which by fire and sword opened the way to the Prussians for the culture brought to them?

The figure whose views on war and politics were adopted by von Bernhardi was the historian Heinrich von Treitschke. He claimed that “God will always ensure that war will constantly return as a drastic medicine for the human race”.

In 1871 the Prussians achieved an amazing political success: in the great hall of mirrors in Versailles the Prussian King William I crowned himself emperor, heading the “full of spirit of Prussia” into the II German Reich. Such a name was adopted by united Germany. The Prussian concept of forming Germany into one country was realised by the Prussian from the blood and iron premier and later chancellor Otto von Bismarck. This was undoubtedly the greatest political success of the Germans since the times of Hermann von Salza.

It sufficed for five generations, to the amazement of Europe, for a third rate state to reach the status of a first class power. At the base of this political advance of Hohenzollern Prussia was this militarism. Victorian England could not but react to this, as in its European policies it had always opposed the hegemony of one power.

This country was now Prussia. In the published in 1871 in London “a shortened history of the rise of the power of Prussia” as is defined by the British historian Norman Davies, one could read as follows: “due to unfulfilled ambition, unusual talents and a complete lack of respect for what is lawful and right, Prussia was able in the last century to rob Austria, Poland, Saxony, Denmark, and France of the provinces belonging to them. In such way Prussia ensured itself the title of the best pupil in the school of Mistress Europe.

Just to think that it was this tone of morality that was used by the largest then colonial empire in the world !

This primacy was also apparent in the internal affairs of Germany, leading to the setting up of the German customs Union, which became the catalyst of the great economic expansion of Prussia in Europe. “The Prussian spirit” enlivened later the anti-Polish policy of the founder of unified Germany chancellor Otto von Bismarck and also hostile to the bones to Poland activity of the *Ostmarketiverein* known as the *Hakata* which even at the end of the XIXth century continued to germanize Poles under Prussian rule.

As everything in politics has its end, because of the result of the defeat of the Kaiser's Germany in World War I, in 1918 came the liquidation of the Kingdom of Prussia and the disappearance from the political scene of the Hohenzollern dynasty. However, Prussianism did not die: under the name of the "Free State of Prussia"-Freistat Preussen - it became, under the laws of an autonomous province first part of the Weimar Republic, and later Hitler's IIIrd Reich. It was not by chance that a multitude of Nazi politicians had their roots in East Prussia. A Prussian stamp was carried by the influenced by the bolshevik NKWD Geheime Staatspolizei, or the later known by the name of the Gestapo Hitlers political police. Its founder was the premier of the Prussian province Hermann Goering.

The work of such pupils of Germans such as von Treitschke and von Bernhardi was in turn written up by Melchior Wankowicz on the inter war militarisation of East Prussia: "We take the road to Konigsberg, which is even more congested. Again and again we come across motorised units of the Reichswehr. All, even passenger cars, are painted in military camouflage patterns (...) On the roads we meet units of 'motorised cavalry' - canon on rubberised tyres (...) We are at the western edge of the Sambian peninsula, which hangs like a fist over East Prussia, dividing the bays of Fryzki and Kuron. On this peninsula there are said to be concentrated huge air bases, from which planes can reach Warsaw in half an hour. These bases are guarded by marshes and many fortifications going from bay to bay. This grey mass of cement is probably the beginning of a chain" wrote Wankowicz in the 1930's on the pages of his political best seller 'Na tropach Smetka'."



50 Germans during the last war in 1939, seizing Polish trophies from the Grunwald Battle

And further: “this land - once the historical cradle of the partitions, and to-day surrounded by armoured forts like a fist hanging over the capital of our country (...)The possibility of war hangs over Poland every hour of the day and night, at every season of the year, on every kilometer of the long 607 kilometers of the border.

„A typical Angriffsgränze” shouts a German geo-politic, Karol Hauszoffer (...)

On grounds covered with fortifications live people educated in the cult of war, brought up for war, the descendants of the Teutonic Knights, after whom remained an uplifting and sad song : „let us rejoice, the Pagans are in great pain”.

The forebodings of Wankowicz were soon to turn into tragic reality. General Friedrich von Bernhardi sent his regards with his work „Germany and the next war”.

The cataclysm of war fell on Poland and on Europe in 1939, this time also started by the Prussianised Germans. In marching step, militarily from the Germanised Prussia there marched in all directions the divisions of the Wehrmacht and the Waffen SS, whose tanks carried on their armour the cross. The same cross graced the squadrons of Stukas and Messerschmitts of the Luftwaffe. It is not difficult to see similarity with the cross on the cloaks of the Order of the Hospital of the Most Holy Virgin Mary of the German House. This was an overuse and blasphemy on the holy symbol of Christianity. Similarly with the name Prussia, which the Germans stole from its legal owners and also defamed, fixing on it their crimes

Konrad Adenauer was close to the truth

“Hereby the state of Prussia, its government and all subsidiary institutions are dissolved”. An edict to this effect was issued on the 25th February 1947 by the Allied Supervisory Council which was the highest authority in the defeated and divided into sectors of occupation Germany. Decree No 46 put only the last nail into the empty coffin of Prussia. The organism of Prussia, its living substance - the untouched until January 1945 peoples community - was disbanded. By 1947 almost nothing remained of it. Prussia met the same fate as Carthage: “*ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*” (“when the land is turned into desert, they claim that they brought it peace”).

In this way the fact of the final disappearance of the Prussian state from the map of Europe is commented by Norman Davies. However this comparison of the fate of Prussia with that of Carthage can be questioned: there is nothing which could be called the “spirit of Carthage”, and there is nobody on earth who longs for and remembers Carthage, whilst not only there still remains the “spirit of Prussia” but it is thriving and being strengthened. Again we refer to Davies: “Prussia died recently. People who remember it are still alive (...). They have crossed the whole world, but there are some who remember old times, take part in refugees associations and write books about ‘*unvergessene Heimat*’ (always remembered fatherland). Some even dream about the reincarnation of Prussia”.

This “Prussian Spirit” survived and still prospers in to-days Federal Republic of Germany. Not only in history, but also in the psychology of the Germans was

encoded the political phenomenon of Prussianism, forming a spiritual bridge between to-day and the past, marked by German triumphs. This bridge cannot be destroyed by any resolutions of a political nature. To tell the truth, it is difficult to wonder at this, just as it is difficult to be surprised at the sentiments expressed at the loss of Poland's pre-war Eastern Territories by their former inhabitants. Such is human nature.

The degree of adherence of the Germans to *Ostpreussen*, or East Prussia, is shown by the fact that in the 1930's excavation works carried out there by archeologists representing the *SS Ahnenerbe* were organised by *SS Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler. Its full name was the Society for Research on the Historical Spiritual Legacy of the German Forefathers. These researchers were to prove that the territories of the Prusians exterminated by the sword of Prussia had been German since prehistoric times. One of the people taking part in archeological excavations in the area of Stary Dzierzgon in former Pomezania was *SS Untersturmführer* dr. Hans Schleif. Being unable to accept the verdict of history, at the time of the entry of the Red Army into Berlin he shot his wife and two small sons, after which committed suicide. Schleif's route to the next world was followed by Joseph Goebbels with all his family.



51 Year 1951 Konrad Adenauer



52 Plebiscite between Poland and Germany in 1920.

However, there are Germans who realised the role played by Prussianism in the history of Europe. One of these was the leading politician of post-war Germany, *nota bene* the first Chancellor of post-war united Germany, Konrad Adenauer. Here is what he published on the 30th November 1946 in the newspaper "Die Welt": "We in the West, refuse to accept much of what is commonly called "The Spiritual Prussianism". I believe that the capital of Germany should be located on the south-west, and not far in the east, in Berlin. If Berlin should become the capital again, the distrust by other countries will never cease. He who makes Berlin the new capital,

will create a new Prussia in spirit". The Chancellor clearly overestimated other countries and their historical memories.

However, letting himself after the war be photographed in a white coat with the black cross did the honorable member of the Teutonic Order, Konrad Adenauer knew the opinion of Churchill, who in the Teheran conference in 1943 stated clearly: "I would stress that Prussia is the source of evil" ? In the light of everything which is known about the origin of Teutonic Prussia, it is difficult to share the opinion of Norman Davies, who states "the dictionary definitions of 'Prussianism' keep to outdated opinions. The American Merriam-Webster dictionary defines this description as a 'despotic militarism and iron discipline of the Prussian ruling class'. This will need modification" But modification will surely not be required, particularly in the light of what the German publisher Bernt Engelmann, who specialises in history, has to say on the subject. Writing about the "Prussian spirit", he states that "it inspires fear, circulating in various forms and in various disguises, or it emerges, sometimes despised but sometimes being praised and glorified. Often it is treated positively especially when people felt their Prussianism as a fault, or in any case as a hindrance".

Regarding the question as to what exactly is understood by the term "Prussia": "an European community similar to others? Barracks organised in the form of a state? A state organised in the form of barracks? A force for order in the real sense of the word? An anachronism? A nightmare? A life style?". Bernt Engelmann gives his answer: "If ever there existed Prussia which is traditionally described, which is not at all certain, in any case it was a country of unlimited possibilities. Just to give one example: in the same time as some were escaping from the impossible to bear Prussian slavery - others found asylum there and glorified Prussia as a place of freedom and tolerance in Europe".

We read on what this publisher has to say: "Black and white - the colours of Prussia and in the black and white symbolism there is an attempt to judge that which was once Prussian or said to be Prussian. Some saw and still see only - or above all - that which is white, others that which is black. Meanwhile (...) Prussia came about constant conflict with itself and with support from this dialect - and only in this way can it be understood".

As if this interpretation of the genesis of German Prussia was not enough, the publicist goes further into historical material: "and what really was - or should be - understood by Prussia and the 'Prussian Spirit'? Is one thinking about what was felt by Georg Lukacs, when in 1968 he declared that he felt "an enormous hatred to everything Prussian"(...). Is it that by the term 'Prussian' one should not rather understand the position of Colonel Johann Friedrich Adolph von der Marwitz, who protested against war crimes ordered by Frederick II, 'Old Fritz' - a Prussian legend - and chose banishment, as 'carrying out orders did not bring glory'? Did the 'Prussian Spirit' support the doings of the fairly noble and non-aggressive junkers Dubslav von Stechlin, who was presented to us by the Prussian writer Theodore Fontane in his last great book?"

And finally a quite realistic look at Prussia and its essence: "Old Prussia is considered as an authoritarian state of aggressive militarism, extremely meticulous

officials, ever present police, proud junkers. Sabre brandishing monarchs - a state armed to the teeth, but poor and craving conquest, a danger to its neighbours. It is seen as an anachronistic society, very backward in the political sense (...), they are considered as a country in which scientists and artists were not held in high esteem, merchants had a very low rating, but well born officers were held in enormously high esteem. They are considered a country where “the limited intellect of the subjects” were not permitted to criticise the doings of the rulers, let alone the directives of the military, not counting the fact that it was a life long duty of every citizen to wholeheartedly serve God, the King and the “Fatherland” state to which the citizen had to subordinate all private interests.

The approach of Engelmann to the political genesis of the Prussian phenomenon is also interesting: “Wanting to show the expansion of the state which called itself ‘Prussia’ from the beginning, one has to start from the area lying outside the real country of Prussia, namely the Marchia of Brandenburg. Because this very poor, sparsely populated country on the north-east border of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation changed itself into a great European power, which using the name ‘Prussia’ did not let the world rest”.

This was true but with one proviso that without the conquest of Prussia by the Teutonic Order, the part played by Europe in this political process, Luthers reformation and a few other factors the rise of this European power would not have taken place and the world would have breathed more easily.

To-days Berlin does not remember all this because it does not wish to: in the opinion of Norman Davies Berlin has for a long time been suffering from Prussomania. Evidence of this is the fact that in 2001 Berlin with Brandenburg feasted in grand style the 300th anniversary of the setting up of the Kingdom of Prussia, organising over 100 exhibitions. It is enough to look closer at the themes (Prussia in European history, Prusso-Russian relations in the XIXth century, Prussian science and technology, the art of Prussia) to come to the conclusion that ‘*Ostpreussen*’ has a very strong place in the German mentality. And this happens not only in united Germany: a great propaganda success was the organised in 1981 exhibition under the title “Prussia: an attempt at a balance”. This was a reaction at the official and steadily increasing demonstration of the emotional ties between communist east Germany with Prussianism. Proof of the cultivation of these ties is for example the name of one of the best German football clubs: Borussia.

This is said to be the Latin name of Prussia before the Teutonic Order conquest. In this way one can to some extent influence the sub-conscious.

Even the politics are not free from Prussianism. Proof ? The expanding activities of the landowner of East Prussia (*Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen*) which actively supports revisionism towards Poland through the Prussian Legacy (*Preussische Treuhand GmbH Co. Kg*). Their demands are voiced by the well known and gaining support from members of the German government elite Erika Steinbach. The same who declared that “Hitler’s crimes are not enough to justify the exmission of Germans” from to-days Polish Western and Northern territories as a result of the second world war started by Berlin, which is something more than suffering from nostalgia for Ostpreussen and its past, the Wolves Lair of Adolph Hitler

(*Wolfsschanze*) and the Amber Room (*Bernsteinzimmer*) which the Wehrmacht robbed from Tsars Palace. There reminiscences of aggressive Prussianism, which somehow to-day they do not seem to worry anybody, is a pity...Strange: in the XIXth and XXth centuries it also did not raise worries !

The Western allies defeated the IIIrd Reich, but they did not manage to weed out the “Prussian Spirit”, which still symbolises the political phenomenon of Prussianism. Perhaps nearer the truth would be Konrad Adenauer who liked to parade in a white cloak with the black cross ?



53 The XIV century columns head showing Prusai battling with Teutonic Knights.

XIII WHERE ARE YOU, PRUSAI ?

Migration to the four corners of the world

It is untrue that the neighbouring lands of Prusia and Poland were always at war with each other and that the Prusians and Poles had at best neighbourly suspicion, not to say enmity. This was not true, as it is contrary to the findings of the historians researching the question of the settling of the Old Prusians on Polish lands. An expert on this subject, Vladislav Semkowicz, wrote: “In the year 1912, in a published journal devoted to the ‘Oldest privileges of Mazovia’ I paid attention to the existence in Poland of a family which in the first half of the XIVth century shows purely Prusian first names, and adheres to them the following century. Settled in Mazovia in the neighbourhood of Prusia, clearly they had come from Prusia and had earlier received some privileges from the Mazovian dukes (...) which is all the more interesting and noteworthy that in our heraldry we previously had this family and from the heraldic point of view there were even three variants of this family: Prus I, II and III.”

As the research conducted by Jadwiga Chwalibinska indicates, the archivalia, court books and other records reveal that the newcomers from Prusia, settling in middle ages Poland, mostly reinforced the knightly families. “The Prus family - as the author writes - was not considered to be among the most important or wealthy. It did not play any important political role in the history of the Polish state, as can be seen in the case of other knightly families”. Nevertheless their presence on Polish lands proved to be permanent enough that its traces have lasted to to-day.

This problem was investigated long ago by Jan Dlugosz who stated that the Prus family originated from three dukes, who left their homeland because of the

threats of punishment hanging over them for crimes they had carried out. This thesis was not accepted by later heraldists, but not all were of this point of view as after further research it emerged that this secretary of king Casimir the Jagiellonian, the canon of Krakow and author of the "Historia Polonica" was not likely to fantasize.

More likely, in spite of everything, convincing appears to be the thesis that the exodus of Prusians to the south was caused by the conquest of their lands by the Teutonic Order. They tried hard to bring the Prus nobles to their side and thus to conflict them with the plebeians. Not all nobles were however ready to accept this temptation and decided to leave their land, settling not only in Poland but also in other countries.

These matters sometimes caused a political resonance, as was the case of the of Prus Letaud, who in 1257 found asylum in Mazovia. As at the time there was a treaty with the Teutonic Order binding each side to hand over the runaway slaves, the refusal to give them Letaud made the Knights of the Cross threaten war with the mazovian duke Ziemowit.

The appearance in Mazovia of the first Prusians in the role of settlers, who might have been the sons of Letaud, Jadwiga Chwalibinska dates in the middle of the XIIIth century, stating "Emigration from Prusia to Poland, and particularly Mazovia took place constantly and in peaceful times.

It was caused by the neighbourhood of the two lands, trade and economic relations and finally bonds of blood as for certain they existed between the populations of these countries. War could only be a very good period (...) for Prusian settlement in Mazovia, which in these times could only be intensively strengthened either by prisoners or by willing newcomers".

Their integration into Polish surroundings is demonstrated by the fact that apart from clear links in the names of places inhabited by Prusians there were names of places which showed no relation with these communities. It would be difficult to suspect that places in the region of Plonsk, Zakroczym and Wyszogrod, such as Blichowo, Janowo, Wegrzynowo, Loniewo, Miszewo, Chylin, Rembiszewo, Dluzniewo, Wilkowuje and many others were inhabited by minor gentry with the coat of arms of Prus and also that of Prusian provenance were the families of Slubicki from Slubic, of Oznacow from Arciszew, of Nakwaski from Nakwasin or Napiorkowski from Napiorek.

Sizeable communities of Prusian settlers were found in the areas around Warsaw, including the once called Powsin Pruski, in which Powsinski family domiciled in the XIVth century. Starting in XVth century the Prusian family of Okecki owned Okecie, the family of Opacki - Opacz and the Jezierski family - Jeziorna.

The newcomers using the coat of arms of Prus and carrying the name Kobylinski also favoured the areas of Ciechanow and Grojec, which is indicated by the names of Kobylino and Kobylino - Jedyta villages, with latter being associated with the Prusian name of its founder, Gedeyt. The Kobylinski - Gedeyt families were also noted in the regions of Lomza and Czersk. The coat of arms of Prus was carried by the Chomentowski families of Chomentow, by the Goscianskis of Goscianczyc, the Jarmultowskis of Jarmult, the Krakowianski of Krakowian, the Mladzki of

Mladza, the Niedzialkowskis of Niedzialek, the Ojrzanowskich of Ojrzanow, the Swietochowskis of Swietochow, the Wieczfinskich of Wieczfni, the Zielenski of Zielonek, the Zaleski of Tarczyn and many others.

“The territories mentioned above are these where the settlements of the family reaches its strongest grouping” - concludes Jadwiga Chwalibinska. “In parts of Mazovia one does not meet such strong conurbations as we can see eg. in Tarczyn, although even there, especially in the areas of manor houses we find larger or smaller groups of settlements inhabited by those with seal of Prus. These are in the areas of Rozana, Ostroleka, Mlawa, Lomza, Wizna or Kolno, where the Prusians came from central Mazovia, and where they received frequent nominations from the Dukes and in this way took part in the colonisation action on the outskirts of the duchy”.

In tens, if not in hundreds, one can count the Mazovia villages which were settled by the newcomers with the arms of Prus and whose names do not bring to mind any other ethnic derivation. This confirms the deep process of their assimilation.

In a smaller, or only a trace measure of Prusian settlements, there are places in Podlasie, the Kujawa, the Dobrzynski land, and the lands of Sieradz, Rawsko and Leczyca, in Greater Poland and Little Poland, in other words nearly the whole of the XIVth century and XVth century Commonwealth.

To the most concerned territories with this immigration belonged the areas of Plonsk, Wyszogrod, Grojec and Tarczyn, or central Mazovia, which can be regarded as their original base in Poland. However the Prusian settlers obtained their property in many ways and in the opinion of Chwalibinska one cannot assume that “all the Prusian families settling in Mazovia were put there by the dukes. There were amongst them those who settled here as prisoners of war (...) at first they were part of the slave population in the villages; there were also those who came of their own free will, seeking shelter from the oppression of Teutonic Order, and amongst those were undoubtedly some descendants of old Prusian nobles. Here on foreign land, in different circumstances, after accepting the Christian faith, they took on the rules of the Polish community (...) One should also note probably special cases of special merit rewarded by privileges, about which we have no knowledge, but which one can surmise for example from the fact of granted privileges in 1345”.

Confirmation of these arrangements is in the list of places in the current road atlas of Poland, as nomenclature is said to show the greatest resistance to the ravages of time. One can count scores of places in to-days Poland whose names are Prusak, Prusy, Prusewo, Prusinowo, Prusinow, Pruska Laka, Pruska Mala, Pruska Wielka or Prusowy Borek, not counting many modifications of the names Prus or Prusy.

The question of the migration of Prusians in its wider context was also investigated by Gregory Bialunski who proved that its beginning already started in the XIth century, when as a result of the invasions of Prusia the first prisoners and captives appeared on Polish soil. This was then forced migration, which was strengthened in the XIIth century as a result of the attacks of Boleslas the Wrymouth and other Polish rulers. In these times Prusian settlements of, as researchers presume, prisoners origin, started up in such distant areas from Prusia as Silesia and Little Poland. “The existence of prisoner settlements are confirmed by the quite numerous

village names of the Prus type. Prusy near Krakow (...), Prusy near Busko Zdroj (...) and Prusinowo near Opatow. The existence near Prus names of Pieczyngs and Hungarians indicates at an early date of the rise of these settlements, namely in the period of the rule of Boleslas the Brave” writes prof. Bialunski.

From this it would appear that our ancient rulers acted quite bravely and it is note worthy that there is a lack of data sources about the existence of any settlements of Polish prisoners or captives on Prusian lands. This would indicate that it was not the accused of aggression and plunder Prusians who took the lead in attacking their neighbours.

Another category of settlements dating from the XIIIth century was formed by the free Prusians, especially nobles fleeing in the times of the Teutonic conquest and later.

The directions of this migration were various, as those fleeing did so not only to the South, mostly to Mazovia but also to other parts of Poland and further, to Slovakia and to Moravia. They also migrated East, settling in Lithuania and especially in the areas of to-days Grodno, Lida and Slonim. Highly regarded by the Lithuanians were the settling near river crossings Prusian Barts because of their skills in building bridges. Further in this direction the road led to Rus, where in the upper reaches of the Beresina and Novgorod the name of Prusia emerged, which researchers linked with their trading activities which could be evidenced by the “Prusian” street in Novgorod. They also migrated West, or Gdansk Pomerania, where the Prus families of Wajsylewicz and Wyszelicow were noted for reaching high offices. The fourth direction for migration of the Prusai were the Baltic states.

However, the main wave of emigration was aimed at Poland. “locally the Prusians were able to reach major wealth, and even gained political influence (Gdansk Pomerania, Kujavia). For quite a long time they kept their own characteristics which differentiated them from their surroundings, such as Prusian names, coats of arms and passwords. Thus even in the XVI - XVIIth century it was fairly easy to point out their settlements (Mazovia, Lithuania, Rus)” states prof. Bialunski, underlining that the size of the migration can only be estimated and probably did not exceed a few thousand persons.

One other statement by prof. Bialunski deserves mention: “One can risk the hypothesis that this migration helped to bring about the defeat of the Prusians in the wars with the Teutonic Order. Firstly because it was the most active and wealthy individuals that fled, and they were the most able to fight and resist. Secondly because of their numbers. These few thousand people (...) was a population equal to the population of a minor Prus district or at least 1 - 2000 fighters”.

In the conviction of this researcher the migration had an effect on the fate of the Prusians. One has to add here that it became the base of the future Prus diaspora, which ever more resoundingly makes its voice heard, demanding the correction of the falsehood disseminated over the centuries and restoring their memory. This requires an understanding of common historical decency and justice.

Poles with Prus roots

Over four centuries have passed since the times when the Prusians disappeared from the demographic map of Europe as a separate ethnic population. Not only the passage of time but also the lack of written sources in their own language that above all causes that many questions concerning the Prusian past continue to remain an argument for historians and researchers of allied sciences, as other interpretations of the same and well known events can be made.

Probably one subject which does not create any doubts is that based on the results of genealogical and heraldic research and particularly the genetics of the Prus roots of many of to-days Polish citizens.

It is a fact, not a fantasy, that over 500 000 would be able to confirm either a close or a loose union with their Prus protoplast from past centuries; over 700 can use a seal with the Prus coat-of-arms, and nearly 7 000 people in Poland currently use the name Prus, with which other names of Prusian roots, such as Sasin or Pomezanski, are found. This data was found as a result of the research of an expert on the subject Slawomir Klec-Pilewski, who writes "In Polish terminology the surname Prus became an unrecognised fact. The question is how it came about. I consider that this is a rare and unusual happening, in so far as a different ethnic group settled for nearly seven centuries in a different culture so strongly accentuated its identity by using a surname describing the people it came from. This phenomenon has until now not been solidly researched, analysed and commented upon its uniqueness (...)" And further "Every second inhabitant of northern Mazovia and Kujavia could be descended from the Prusians. The people called Mazurs, or Polish settlers in German Prussia, are in the majority polonised Prusians."

According to the researchers of Robert Kostecki and Jadwiga Chwalibinska the names of the families bearing the coat-of-arms of Prus to-day number hundreds if not thousands. This list includes names such as Butwilowicz, Czarnecki, Komorowski, Krasnowiecki, Krzyzanowski, Rodowicz, Sas, Skowron, Windak or Zajackowski. This is a sign of the fact that the largest phase of Prusian emigration settled on these Polish territories.

Only very few of them show much interest in the history of their family. Among them is a descendant of the old nobles, or Prusian aristocracy, the already cited Slawomir Klec-Pilewski who thus explains the reasons for devoting himself to the history of his family: "Many people have asked me: how has it happened that you became interested in the family history ? Is there any sense in devoting so much effort, time, and also money to these matters? (...) is it worthwhile exploring the far off past and find things which to-day have no meaning ?

I answer: it is (...) If I have devoted many years of my life to this it is because I am deeply concerned that reconstructing the history of the Klec-Pilewskis has a meaning not only to the descendants of the family, but also forms an important source of knowledge of the history of the Prus nobles who joined Poland and in a certain period played an important but not fully recognised role in Polish history (...).

Historians generally treated the subject of the Prusians fairly marginally and in any case continue to treat it as such. In schools it is put into childrens heads only that they were pagans and barbarians. Such a view has been put forth since time immemorial, probably emerging from the writings of Dlugosz. This is harmful and unjust. Various ethnic minorities are praised, but those from whom are descendent many Polish families are forgotten (and usually nobody has the slightest idea about the subject). What is worse, universally the Prusians are confused with the germanic Prussians, and this is a tragic mistake, as the Prus peoples have nothing to do with the Germans, who were their deadly foes (...)

I have decided the time has come to acquaint the Pilewskis with the real history of our family. I believe every man should know his roots. This is a question of honouring one's surname (...)

According to my knowledge there currently live from 600 to 800 persons with the name Pilewski, of whom two thirds live in Poland and one third in the USA (...) I hope that it will be possible to create better ties with the American branch of our family (...) However there are no chances whatsoever to make contact with the Pilewskis living in Germany. There live the representatives of three lines of this family, but these people are completely germanised and the tradition of the family does not appear to have any meaning to them. I doubt whether they would want to join us at all".

If one assumes the length of life of one generation to be a quarter of a century, then the history of the Polish statehood counts for over forty generations, whilst the saga of the Klec and later Klec-Pilewskis counts to twenty seven generations !

The genesis and career of this family was the Prus Klec, a subject of the Pomezan bishop, descendant of the Prusian leaders of the land of Rezia. The main line remained on the lands given to the parents of Klec - in Klecewo near Kwidzyn. At the end of the XIVth century this family advanced to the rank of knighthood (...) Another branch of this family settled at the end of the XIVth century in Klecewo near Sztum, where it also advanced to the local knighthood. The most distinguished representative of this branch were: the knight Christopher of Klecewo, an active participant of the Thirteen Years war, and the keeper of Warmia Andrew Klec (...)

A side branch of the Klec family settled on the Culm Land. Here it took possession of Pilewice (german Pfeilsdorf) from which it took the name of von Pfeilsdorf. This family reached the peak of its career in the second half of the XVth century when Nicholas III von Pfeilsdorf became the Castellan of Gdansk and his sons were starosts of Starogard (...) In the middle of the XVth century the family underwent steady polonisation. Then the name Pilewski appeared sporadically, becoming in regular use apparently in the XVII-XVIII centuries".

Some of the latest generation of the Pilewskis were noted in the histories of the wars for Polish independence, demonstrating by this their belonging to Poland.

Clearly Prus roots belong to another family, the counting fourteen generations Windak family, whose name is considered to be derived from a form of the Prus name Windiko, which means the son of Winde. This family originates from the first mentioned in 1400 village near Chelmza. The settlement of this family on Polish soil is confirmed by the fact that 14 places carry the name of Winde. From 1540 Jan

Windak settled near Wieliczka, giving a start to the still living there line of Windaks in Little Poland. They occupied themselves with farming and handicrafts, and later were linked with the mining of salt. Some of this family emigrated to Bohemia and western Europe and beyond the Ocean, to the USA. Many representatives of this family gave evidence of its commitments to Poland, fighting the Germans in the Silesian insurrections and with the Russians during the first World War, and during the second dying from the bullets of NKVD and sharing the fate of the deportees to Kazakhstan and to Siberia.

“The history of nations are the stories of the families living therein, and the story of the Windak family teach Polish history. Currently in the world there live 700 people with the surname Windak. We are Poles, some of us will say that they are Americans, French or Canadians. However our former fatherland was Prusia. Genealogical, onomastic and genetic researches confirm this truth. Our surname (...) carries information as to where we come from and who are our ancestors. Signing in at work, filling in questionnaires, being listed at school with the answer “present” we state that we come from the Prus family of Windak, and our family seat is the Prus village of Windak” writes Leszek Windak about his ethnic background.

Where two argue... This concerns the quarell between Poles and Germans about Nicholas Copernicus. He who “stopped the sun and moved the earth” was a Prus by origin. This is testified amongst others by the support given to him by the Prusians as to the decision to appoint the canon of Frombork, not counting the results of genetic research, as a a result of which one should talk of him “as of Prus origin” though he considered himself Polish.

In this pantheon researchers place the founder of the Polish Legions in Italy in 1797 and the hero of the Polish National Anthem, general Jan Henryk Dabrowski, who used the seal of the Prus coat-of-arms 'Panna'. It has also been proved that he was a descendant of the Prusians of Pomezania, from whom stems the wealthy family of Dabrowski, later settled in Pomerania and had military traditions. General Dabrowski, who represented a poorer line of the family settled in the area of Lublin, sold part of his inheritance so as to fund the Legions he created. His roots reach the times of the Lizard Society, starting with John of Szczuplinek, a knight of the Culm Land standard and participant of the battle of Grunwald.

It emerges that the creator of “Lalka”, the “Emancipants”, the “Pharaon” and other masterworks of Polish XIXth century literature, Alexander Glowacki, writing under the name of “Boleslav Prus” also related this to his Prus provenance. He came from the nobility settled on Lublin lands and used the family coat-of-arms of Prus.

Beyond any doubt are the Prus roots of the famous Polish scientist and twice winner of the Nobel Prize, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, which are proved above all by the results of genetic tests. Also of importance are surviving archives which show the relationship between the surname of our laureate with old Prusian names Sklodoi and Ansklode. Some of the Sklodowski family used the name Windiki. Windik was the son of the Prus noble Obizor, who started the Nienaltowski family. Descending from the Prus knighthood the Sklodowski and Nienaltowski families quite early, in the middle of the XIIIth century resigned from the Teutonic Orders protection to settle

near Grojec, Czersk and Tarczyn, and after Grunwald, and receiving privileges from the Mazovian dukes, moved to the Nurski lands.

To-days Poles with a Prus pedigree are present in many areas of social life, particularly in business, finance, culture and sport, though most of them do not realise what their ethnic provenance is. However, slowly but systematically the interest in the Prus question is rising, as is evidenced by the work of the Prus Society and the Prus Club. The aim of these organisations directed by Slavomir Klec-Pilewski is, speaking generally, to bring about the renaissance of the memory of the Prusians amongst the nations of Europe, or the reverse of what the Teutonic Order did nearly 700 years ago in their drive to erase the memory of Prusians living to-day, and those aware of the need to return the memory of Prusia reacted to the internet Prus Club talks for itself:

‘Dear Sir, for over 60 years I have been living in Holy Warmia. From the first moment this land has charmed me because of its unique natural beauty, the magnificent varied landscape, and above all its tragic past. Thus I fully support the initiative of forwarding to the current and future generations the truth about the tragic fate of the first users of this land’

Stanislav Swoboda-Kwiecinski Poland

‘I fully back the campaign led by the Prus Society to recognise and renew the rights of the original inhabitants of Prusia’

Greetings, Chris Prusakowski, Bahrain

‘The extermination of the ancient Prusians and the conquest of their territories, as well as the seizure of the name of their nation is a fact almost generally unknown. The memory of the real Prusians and their bravery deserves honouring by to-days Europe, irrespective of how difficult this road may be’

Michael Kulczykowski, London

‘History has once more repeated its cycle, now in the form of the all embracing European Union, so it is very important that the history of the ancient Prusians becomes public knowledge so that we will avoid future dark ages. My predecessors gave me a feeling of pride, especially a legacy of the feeling of freedom. I promise my support (...) in our joint effort. I am a member of the Council of the Prus Society and confirm my membership of the Club.’

Jerry Prus-Butwilowicz, Australia

‘Through out World History and from memorial days we have been the pawn of World Rulers let it be - politicians or wealthy people (...). Countries have been divided, pillaged (...), Prusia is such a good example (...)

I believe in my heart that it is time for history to set the record straight.
Bravo *Slawek Pilewski* on fighting for justice and setting this long overdue History Record!’
Good Luck and God Bless, Georges Chamchoum,
Filmmaker, Hollywood, California, USA

‘I believe that it is quite right to talk of the Baltic peoples, and above all the Prusians and the Jatviagans, and this because of their tragic history. Your stance is very valuable from every point of view, particularly as it seeks to recreate certain historical values. Because of this you have my whole hearted support’

With friendship, Stanislas Zaborowski, France

‘Dear Mr. Slavomir !

With pleasure and thanks I accepted your invitation to the Prus Club. I think that my ancestors, of the arms of Prus, would be proud that I am trying to keep their memory and their achievements. It is not without reason that I have chosen as a motto a quote from Anthony Kepinski. It is we who carry the responsibility that our future should be not an empty page in our history, and for the continuity in our story, and for the future of our history we should also try to keep the memory of our ancestors so as to pass it on the next generations.

We ourselves will be ancestors ourselves.....

Current knowledge about the history and culture of the Prusians is still small, often warped, so I fully support your activity and engagement, which are worth of admiration and respect. Your page is a valuable source of information, it should help didactically with school history lessons. Let us return to the real memory of our predecessors!’

Sincere greetings, Aranka Malkiewicz

Therefore answer to the question ‘where are you Prusai?’ should be: We are amongst you! In Poland and in the world.

A surprise for many will undoubtedly be the information that the descendants of the British heir to the throne, the Duke of Cambridge, William, whose marriage was considered as of world news, come from the region of Old Prusia. This was proved by the custodian of the Museum of Culture in Wegorzewo, the historian George Lappo, based on the research on genealogy. It emerged that the British Windsor dynasty are linked by bonds of blood with the aristocratic Prus family von Lehndorf: in the antecedents of the genealogical tree of prince William figures the born in 1723, in the once Prusian residence of Sztynort, Maria Eleonora von Lehndorf.

These coligations reach much further, till the XVth century, and take their beginning from the daughter of Nicholas III von Pfeilsdorf, to-day Pilewski. The von Lehndorf family is descendent from the von Pfeilsdorfs. On the basis of genealogy

one can therefore prove that Pilewski family is several times linked with the Queen of England, Elizabeth II, her husband prince Phillip and many other monarchs of Europe, including the dynasty of the last Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II Romanov.

Wars Prusiskan means the Prusian language

Historical memory is seen to be more robust than human memory. As a result, in spite of the passing of many centuries the Prus question is coming alive, both in Poland and beyond. In the steps of the classics of Polish prusology, such as Wojciech Ketrzynski, Henryk Lowmianski, Karol Gorski, Gerard Labuda or Marian Biskup comes the younger generation of researchers linked with the Olsztyn based Scientific Society of Pruthenia, whose mission is “making the story of Prusia come live again - that of the former inhabitants of Prus lands”, as was written in the text presenting the aims of this society. The way to this aim leads through the enlarging of scientific - research activities concentrating on the theme of the history and culture of the ancient Prusians. The object of this activity is also archeological research and the promotion of information about old Prusia. The Society has organised co-operation amongst German researchers, the result of which has been a seminar and scientific tour “German archives as a source of knowledge of old Prusian lands”. To revitalise this co-operation a major effort was made by Grzegorz Bialunski, representing the young generation of prusologists.

The effect of the working together of the above with the Research Centre of Wojciech Ketrzynski in Olsztyn is the publishing since 2006 and devoted to the Prusians and other Baltic peoples a newsletter called “Pruthenia”. On its pages those interested can find articles on all aspects on the knowledge of Prusia, including presentations of the latest research which sometimes differ meaningfully from earlier knowledge.

Through the co-operation of this institute and the Pruthenia Society from the Warminsko-Mazurski University in Olsztyn, the Olsztyn Museum, and the Archeological - Historical Museum in Elblag for several years there have been “Interdisciplinary meetings with the history and culture of the Balts - Colloquia Baltica”, forming a platform for meetings of researchers from many seats of learning in Poland.

The Pruthenia Society is a group from the Peoples Building Museum - Ethnographic Park who are the co-organisers of the Baltic Festival in Olsztynek.

The Folk Culture Museum in Wegorzewo has for several years been carrying out workshops of west Balt ceramics which have aroused much interest.

In the area of disseminating greater knowledge of old Prusia researchers were supported by social organisations. In the area near Ilawa there were recently found over 800 silver coins and fragments of decorations dated to the early XIth century. This collection included amongst others arab dirhams and roman denars which were not only confirmation of the part played by ancient Prusians in expanding trading in middle ages Europe, but also of the fact that the Prus land still hides important treasure. The whole of the find belongs to the Museum of Warmia and Masuria.

The history of old Prusia is the subject of interest not only of institutions and social organisations, but also of passionates of various kinds, to whom belongs amongst others Robert Klimek, who tries to find antiquities proving the Prusian origin of to-days Warmia and Masuria. The history of the relevant finds is kept alive by the journal "Mazovia".

It is difficult to overstate the form of popularisation of data about ancient Prusia amongst the youth of medium schools through the multi regional knowledge events about Prusia. It proved possible to do this through the Pruthenia Society. Various historians, archeologists and museum staff were encouraged to take part in this cyclical event and to gain the support of the local authorities.

"In to-day's awareness the Prusian are thought of only as an unhappy primitive people who fell before the superior civilisation onslaught of the Teutonic Order. In reality they have a centuries old history, and evermore new detailed research, especially archeological, lets us see in their authors an original civilisation (...). We hope that due to our events the Prusians at least in part will be rehabilitated in history. This is particularly important in the case of the youth living in north-east Poland, which by nature is predisposed to look more into the cultural aspects of their small area" - wrote the organiser of the event under the name "Balts and Prusians - the northern neighbours of the Slavs".

The scholar Matthew Fingas described the event in such words: "Hundreds of years went by in which the Prusians lived on this land. This event is also a gesture in their direction. It must not happen that they should go into complete oblivion, always remaining a sad, primitive and forgotten people".

Here in turn is an opinion expressed by the voievode of Warmia-Mazuria Stanislaw Szatkowski: "Please accept my sincere congratulations and thanks for preparing and carrying out the 'Prusians - northern neighbours of the Slavs' symposium in which pupils not only from the north-east Poland, but also from voivodeships of Kujavia-Pomorze and the north of Mazovia took part. It is happy to note that this event, carried out on various educational levels, managed to attract many young people. The retaining awareness - is the confirmation of the history and physical being of Warmia and Masuria. It is also a proof of the story of our region".

An equally succesful attempt at interesting middle school youth in the history and archeology of Prusian lands is the super regional event "Aestiorum Gentes".

Above all it is noteworthy that there are likely to be succesful research studies by language specialists who are determined to recreate the '*Wars Prusiskan*' or the language of the old Prusians which died out some centuries ago. In spite of a very limited data base this does not seem to be a vain endeavour. It is formed by barely three antique segments of the Prus language, namely the 802 words in the Pomezanian dialect of the Elblag Dictionary from the middle of the XIVth century, the Simon Grunau dictionary which has about 100 words, and 'Enchiriddion', translated from German into the Sambian dialect and published in 1561 in the Konigsberg Catechism of Martin Luther. This small base is augmented by the so called 'Epigramat from Basle', or found in 1974 in this university an adnotation in the Prus language on the page of the Latin filial.

As a result of the reaserch carried out by the language experts there appeared the “Base Dictionary of Polish-Prusian for the further rejuvenation of the lexicon (Sambian Dialect)”.

“An important task becomes the re-birth of the oldest Prusian language as the new Prusian, the need of all possible Prusian communities. The new restitution in Europe lets the Prusians have the hope of taking an active role in the future development of part of their patrial land, in the Kaliningrad region, where there is a hope of creating a world centre for all Prusians.. This centre could help the current inhabitants of the region in solving the question of their self-identification (...). The new Prusia must become the tool of rebuilding the mental and cultural foundation of the Prusian ethnic by creating a basic store of their literature (...). In such a way the national cultural memory will be returned”-claims the expert on baltic themes and on the Prus language, Letas Palmaitis.

In the research on the Prus language dr. Gniewomir Sarbicki and Matthew Piegat also take part.

“To-day the Prus language-writes dr. Palmaitis further - has regained its grammar and has adapted it to current use in the form of a minimal introductory lexicon. In the reborn Prus language electronic correspondence can be used. All this is our Baltic input into unifying of Europe, which is interested in remembering all its historic components”.

Can Europe really be interested in this ?

The communique of the Prus Society would suggest that this is so, and points on the rise in interest in the Prus question in the world, appealing for support for the idea of setting up a Centre of History and Culture of the Ancient Prusians. Another equally important aim of this institution would be to convince the world that using the name of Prussia the Germans have desecrated the oldest and one of the wealthiest people on the Baltic in north-eastern Europe. The communique reminds us that after arranging the extermination of this people the Germans, using a stolen name, for nearly 700 years pursued the most invasive and aggressive politics in Europe.

The surprise is all the greater, which is mentioned in the communique, because of the negative attitude of the European Union authorities towards the suggested inclusion of E.U. funds in the realisation of the idea of the Centre of History and Culture of the Ancient Prusians. The Society is also turning towards descendants of the Prusians and their symphathisers in the world about activity for the remembrance of one of the oldest nations in Europe.

Before Brussels can ever be persuaded to allocate a suitable sum for this purpose, it is first necessary to persuade Olsztyn to this idea: its historical politics, if such a term can relate also to local authorities, appears not to accept, as yet, the existence of the Prus nation.

XIV POST SCRIPTUM

Who of us to-day realises that, when journeying to the Baltic or to the Masurian Lakes, as he goes through the land of the ancient Prusians, about whom memory has been kept mostly on the charts of scientific dissertation, in cultural relics or in forms such as Prusian Stone Women ? The land of Prusia and not the Prussians, as such terms are mutually exclusive by the verdict of history.

Travelling through Warmia and Masuria causes the more observant people some surprise, awoken by the fact that to-day there is more "Prussian Spirit" there than remembrance of Old Prusia, not counting the fate of the Polish spirit which in a free Poland does not bother those of whom it might be expected.

This question is raised by Jan Engelgard on the pages of the "Mysl Polska: In the period of the Polish People Republic the accent was put on the Piast tradition, now it is seen as an aspect of 'communist propaganda' (...) eg. in the thoughts of the inhabitants the so called pioneer period of settlement and the setting up of the Polish administration after 1945 suddenly became a topic to be ashamed of, as if it distanced ourselves from this historic - in terms of centuries - happening (...) Cutting ourselves off from the years 1945-89 is silly and short sighted. If we ourselves reduce our role on these lands - somehow Prussian memories, sentiments and reminiscences come back naturally".

Facts, which are mentioned below, are much more than plain stupidity !

Thus in 1993 the daily "Zycie" gave forth the joyful news: "The Grand Master in Malbork". Slawomir Klec-Pilewski commented this as follows: "It is unthinkable that such a fact could take place in the period of the so - called Peoples Poland, let alone that the press would mention this. I therefore treated this as an eruption of post-communist misjudgement, although in my mind I could not fathom that one could invite the political descendant of the criminals with the cross on their cloaks. The question arises who stood behind this invitation? (...) I am intrigued as to how the heroes of the 1939 battle of Mlawa, defending Poland from the German Prussians attacking from the north, feel, and here is reception for a Prussian with black cross".

From this time dates a clear progression in the strengthening of the German influence in a spirit typically Prussian, in which the local authorities of Warmia and Masuria readily participate, and the apex of which, so far, was the taking patronage of an international conference in 2010 titled "The Teutonic Order in history, ideology and action" by the marshal of the Voievodeship and the rector of the University of Warmia and Masuria. The conference was graced by the arrival directly from Vienna of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, dr. Bruno Platter. It should also be known that this event in Polish scientific life was just prior to the great celebration of the 600th anniversary of the battle of Grunwald.

"We very much depend on the youth, who may never again in their lives get the chance to hear the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order. Such a gathering is remembered for the rest of ones life"- assured the organisers of this conference.

Accordingly it is not difficult to understand why the appeal of the Prus Society sent to the authorities of Warmia and Masuria was completely ignored. Does this not confirm that the pro-German lobby is gaining complete control over the future German East Prussia region?" - considers Slavomir Klec-Pilewski.

However, the former youth prisoners of German Konstantynow Lodzki camp (lager Konstantynow), remembered Warmia and Masuria when stating in their appeal in 2006 that Elblag and Olsztyn had become the places of antipolish meetings of German revisionists wanting to tear away from Poland her recovered Western Territories. And thus the authors of the statutes of the Organisation of Germans from the East in 1994 state *expressis verbis* that they, "In peace and freedom they want to again unify East Prussia with the whole of Germany". In peace and freedom therefore take place in Gizycko, financed by the council of the town, events of the type '*Ostpreussisches Sommerfest*' during which, greeted with open arms was the chief of the *Landsmannschaft Ostpreussen* or the landowners of East Prussia, Herr Wilhelm von Gottberg from Dusseldorf, who opts for the restitution of *Ostpreussen*.

"How could permission have been given to organise, in Olsztyn in 2004, a fourth congress of the revisionists from the Political Congress of Landowners of East Prussia?" asks Marianne Grynia, quoting the speech of the then Chairman of the European Parliament, prof. Hans-Gert Pottering, who clearly stated in 2007 that "permitting any discrimination in the EU would be a blow aimed at the dignity of man". This was said to the participants of the celebration of the Day of the Fatherland Areas of the Union of Expelees. Presumably this concerns the dignity of a man of german nationality, and discrimination is the keeping of the political status quo, which was decided by the allies after the collapse of the Third Reich. Is it that Herr Pottering considers that the time has at last come for its revision ?

In such a way in the XXIst century, with the participation of the establishment of the European Parliament and the III-rd Polish Republic, the memory of the centuries old destroyer of the Prusians and founder of the Order's State, the grand master Hermann von Salza and the continuator of his work, Frederick I Hohenzollern, who turned the land of the ancient Prusians into a breeding ground of German Prussianism, is being kept. This, as is known, initiated the partitions of Poland and later tyrانىsed the whole of Europe, starting the most bloody world wars.

In this context a letter which was written to Slavomir Klec-Pilewski by Manfred G. Kaireit (Kairaitis), *nota bene* a known activists of the Prusian community in Germany which after the second world war was deported or forced to leave the land of his fathers, is noteworthy. From this correspondence we learn that this community took the decision to end all contacts with the Landowner of East Prussia, the authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany, and german politicians, because it "was pointless, that we, descendants of the Prusians, wasted our precious time, which we do not have". And further: "We, the Prusai, are able to forgive everything which was done to us in the past, especially in 1947-52, but we will never forget it (...) We, the Prusai, as a minority, are able to demand international protection of our ethnic language and religious rights, which are declined to us by the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany, using argumentation equally stupid as nonsensical !!! Such rights are guaranteed by international law standing

guard on the basic rights of man and as such come into the sphere of international cooperation of all European countries.”

In view of the above use of the usurped name of Prusia to promote strictly German political interest, particularly revisionist demand which the so called Prussian Legacy demands from Poland, is a totally illegal action and contrary to the spirit of the supposed rule - of - law adhering in the European Union.

Returning to recent history it has to be admitted that the communist period has to be ashamed, but for a reason about which in 1992 the “Gazeta Wyborcza” (Voters Daily) wrote in 1992 in an article by Joanna Zarembina: “In 1830 97% of Masurians spoke Polish, in 1870-79%, in 1895-53%. In 1945 there lived 100 000 Masurs. Today there are no more than 4 000 left, with 99% of Masurians living in Germany”.

This is the effect of many communist crimes, in this case crimes of an ethnic nature. It is they who expelled the Masurs from Poland to beyond the Elbe.

Jolanta Zarembina writes further: “The carriers from Krutynia call themselves ‘sztakers’ (German *der stecken-stick*). For them every excursion is a gold mine - scores of people to carry. For an hour sailing with five persons they charge 25 marks. The guests on the boat talk loudly. Heil Hitler! shout at them Polish children from the shore”.

These children are equalled in their mentality with the adults who show greater interest in Adolf Hitler and his “Wolves Lair” in Gierloza than in Nicholas Copernicus and Frombork.

The Polish presence in the lands of Prusia was in the pre-war years documented by Melchior Wankowicz by travelling in these lands (“In the footsteps of Smetek”) and retreating into the far off past.

“Olsztyn - the heart of Warmia. Warmia belonged to Poland in practice since the battle of Grunwald, and formally since the peace of Torun in 1466 till the first partition (...) The Warmians and the Osterodians were the first Polish colonists, coming here from the Dobrzyn land(...)

Green is the land of Warmia. Forested and mountainous. Let us look at the historical map. The Germans say that Warmia had the shape of an axe hanging over East Prussia. But we did not give it the shape, but the treaty between the Teutonic Order and their own Bishop, who, in line with middle ages practice was given one - third of the lands to profit from, and this caused the shape on the map.

And because the bishops did not much want to back the Knights of the Cross, for the Grunwald campaign the whole of Warmia sent only a 100 men, and from Grunwald on until the partitions it stood regularly behind Poland - and it thus stayed a Catholic country.

From the times of Wankowicz, who demitologised the doings of the SS *Ahnenerbe*, some things have changed, but much points to the fact that Smetek still has fun and with the same German passport.

And what about the Prusians who interest us ?

This book, which the readers have kindly looked at, came about because of the initiative of Slavomir Klec Pilewski. It does not have the merits of scientific treatise. Instead it is an attempt at treating the subject in a reasonably popular way and having the aim of creating in the subject of Prusia the interest amongst all those who enjoy wandering in the nearer or further peripheries of history. But the aim is not only enjoyment of the subject matter, as the echos of the far off in time one would think, Prusian question, if one can call it that, steadily come back to the present. A sign of this is for example the operating behind the Oder and showing harsh enmity towards Poles, the Prussian Legacy movement. This links not so much with the Prusians who were led by Herkus Monte of the Natang people fighting with the Knights of the Cross, as much with the Prussians from the sign of Otto von Bismarck or the Nazi leaders.

It would be worthwhile to reflect on the tragic saga of the Prus people so that, in line with the maxim *historia est magistra vitae* one could see relations of cause and effect of the the present and the past, in the forming of which they had their own considerable, though not always glorious, thoughtful and wise input of our forefathers.

“But guilty towards the Prusians were not only their immediate conquerors. Poland is also not without guilt towards survivors saved from the Teutonic pogrom, who later sought refuge in the Commonwealth and often gave her great favours, but never received appropriate thanks. To-day both Germans and Poles hide their heads in the sand and they are not able to built a monument which would remind all that such a people once existed”- writes with bitterness Slavomir Klec Pilewski.

Well now... the Germans act according to the maxim that the executioner does not built a statue to his victims. What is the maxim that the Poles are guided by, bending before the political followers of the executioner?

* * *

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