

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE HISTORY OF THE CONVERSION OF LITHUANIA*

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I

FRUITLESS ATTEMPTS TO BAPTIZE THE LITHUANIANS IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

The Lithuanians became converted to Christianity only five hundred and fifty years ago, and their final adoption of it constitutes one of the most serious problems of Lithuanian history in the fourteenth century. It had far-reaching effects on the whole future destiny of the Grand Duchy, and because the slowness with which they received Christianity had the most painful results for the Lithuanian people, the historian must consider the earlier attempts to baptize them if he is to grasp the reason why Lithuania became the last refuge of paganism in the whole of Europe. For all through the Middle Ages, while Christian culture was rising under the shelter of the Church in the West, while science was developing, schools were rising, and monasteries—at that period centres of cultural as well as religious life—were being founded in hundreds, Lithuania's plains were lying in darkness, unknown to history and concealed by the all-pervading fog of paganism.

After the journeys to Prussia of Adalbert of Prague (Archbishop Wojciech), who died in 997, and the monk Bruno of Querfurt, who died in 1009, no more was heard of missionary activity among the Balts for two centuries. During this period, the period in which Henry IV made his journey to Canossa, Western Europe was devoting all its attention and all its energy to the conflict between Church and State. Then came the Crusades to draw attention to Palestine. It is true that attempts to bring the Prussians to Christianity were made by Poles—and Polish historians attach considerable importance to them¹—but they must have been confined within narrow limits, for they left but faint traces among the Prussian people.

The motives which brought the Teutonic Knights, an Order founded in Palestine, to Prussia in 1230 are well-known. Thirty years earlier the Order of Brothers of the Sword had been founded at Riga with the aim

of converting Livonia, and in 1237 it was incorporated with the new institution in Prussia. It was the task of the Teutonic Order, as originally laid down, to defend its converts, but it soon passed from the defensive to the offensive, finding that the best defence lay in attack. The result was that Christianity was introduced by force and the new converts were enslaved. The Teutonic Order of Knights had originated in the crusading wars in Palestine, where it had shown great courage and devotion in defence of the faith and in aid of the weak, but on the other hand had also pursued the most selfish personal aims and manifested a morbid love of adventure; in short it exhibited the sharpest contrasts and contradictions, as indeed did many other mediaeval institutions. The Teutonic Order, therefore, which weighed so heavily upon the fortunes of Lithuania, was an institution combining lofty ideals with selfish, cruelly pursued policy. For more than two hundred years, throughout eight generations, the struggle with this Order was one of life or death for Lithuania, for upon its result depended the existence or non-existence of the State. And throughout this long period the sword-bearing monkish knights gave ample proof of their incapacity for missionary work. Their spirit was entirely alien to that of the Gospels, and in these two centuries of continual warfare with the heathen—since the fruits of war are always hatred and barbarism—they found neither the means nor the forms whereby the Lithuanians might be converted. The Prussians were in fact converted, but their conversion took the form of national extermination.

The Church desired to see justice done to the pagans.² But neither in Prussia nor in Livonia was it able to modify the actual course of events. The Popes, in the name of the Church, proclaimed that the Crutched Knights were simply to defend the Christians

* In this article the names of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes are given in their English forms. The correct Lithuanian form is given in parentheses at the first mention of each name.

¹ K. Tymieniecki, *Misja polska w Prusiech i sprowadzenie Krzyżaków* (Polish Missionary Effort in Prussia and the Introduction of the Teutonic Knights), 1935; L. Koczy, *Misje polskie w Prusach i na Pomorzu za czasów Bolesławów* (Polish Missions in Prussia and Pomerania in the Times of the Boleslases), 1933; T. Glemma, *Misja polska XIII wieku aż do przybycia Zakonu Krzyżackiego* (Polish Missionary Effort in the Thirteenth Century

until the Arrival of the Crutched Knights), 1931, Off-print from the *Miesięcznik diecezji chełmińskiej* (Chełmno Diocesan Monthly), 1931, No. 6.

² For the Church's views see Z. Ivinskis, 'Krikščioniškosios Vakarų Europos santykiai su pagoniškąja Lietuva' (Relations between Christian Western Europe and Pagan Lithuania) in the *Atheneum*, IV, 1933, pp. 135-144; K. A. Steponaitis, *Mindaugas ir Vakarai* (Mendog and his Relations to the West), 1937; J. Stakauskas, *Lietuva ir Vakarų Europa XIII amž* (Lithuania and Western Europe in the Thirteenth Century), 1934.

against attacks by the pagans, that is to say, to assure them freedom of belief. The Pope forbade the deprivation of new converts of their property; for they were not to be worse off after baptism than they had been before. In the many Bulls issued from the Roman Curia, summoning men to the crusade against the pagan Prussians at the time of their risings, 1242-49 and 1260-74, and likewise in the later Bulls against the Lithuanians and Samogitians we find constant admonitions that the newly converted pagans are to be treated mildly, not oppressed with tithes, and not loaded with heavy tasks or taxes. But the Knights treated all these as mere words written from distant Rome and went their own way, paying no heed to them.

E. Caspar in a very instructive book³ has clearly brought out the difference between the missionary ideal of the Pope and the conception of the Emperor. The Order adopted the latter. While the Pope called for the greatest possible mildness in the treatment of the heathen and the means by which they were to be brought into the Christian fold and laid down that they should be converted to the pure faith of the Gospels without being made at the same time to bear any excessive economic burdens, the Crutched Knights considered themselves empowered to take their land, since the Emperor Frederick II had conferred upon their Grand Master the title of a Prince of the Empire. This contradiction between the attitude of the Pope and that of the Emperor and the Order, this conflict of ideals concerning the basic question of aim, became apparent as soon as the Teutonic Order was transplanted to the shores of the Baltic. The divergent conceptions of the missionary task have been further illuminated by E. Maschke.⁴ In any case the conquest of pagan territory and the extermination of its inhabitants was as a matter of fact given preference over their conversion. Having once undertaken constant active warfare and determined to carry on their missionary work by force, the Crutched Knights and their auxiliary Crusaders did not trouble to ask the pagan bands with whom they came into contact whether they were ready for baptism. Herein lies the great tragedy of the Order's performance in Lithuania. It was an institution based entirely on warlike principles and regarded the sword as the only means of converting the heathen. The fundamental conditions of preaching and evangelistic work being thus set aside, stern reality brought the Knights of the Teutonic Order and the pagan Lithuanians into a state of constant and unmitigated hostility, which continued from the end of the thirteenth century in unchanging form for several generations. Great campaigns conducted with the aid of auxiliaries from the west, the regular annual inroads of the Crutched Knights and the armed forces of the confederates whom they enrolled from the native population, and the raids of robber bands (*latrunculi*) from over the border, turned the western districts of Lithuania in the fourteenth century into a permanent armed camp. The pagan Lithuanian lived in constant peril; for at any moment the knight in armour might come and burn his house and goods, take his cattle, carry off his wife and children into captivity, and finally kill him. These campaigns in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries attracted an unceasing stream of Western European knights and gradually lost all

vestige of religious purpose. The Lithuanian expeditions (*Litauerreisen*) soon became widely known in Europe and drew not only penitents who desired to rid themselves of the burden of their sins, but also adventurous squires eager for the honour of speedy knighthood. And the historical sources of the period give us clear evidence of the thoroughly worldly spirit of the crusading knights, which was entirely alien to the original purposes of the Teutonic Order. The poet Peter Suchenwirt, who sang of the violent campaign conducted by the Duke of Austria in the year 1377 and of the death of Olgierd (Algirdas), gave numerous details, telling where and in which Samogitian districts the warriors were dubbed knights for deeds of arson and murder—with accurate figures of their number—, what wines were drunk at the knights' banquets, and so forth.⁵

Accordingly, if one wishes to understand the reason for the remarkably slow conversion of the Lithuanians, one must first of all study the rise of the Order and its attitude towards the heathen, particularly at the period when this 'missionary monastery', which in its external organization and capable administration was in fact a State with all the attributes of a State, began to lose its religious character, since like all other States it was conditioned by purely worldly needs. In the meantime Western Europe continued, until the days of Jagiello (Jogaila) and Witold (Vytautas), to regard the Teutonic Order as the sole promoter and representative of Christianity in conflict with the pagan Lithuanians. The Order had of course appropriated to itself the title of 'Converter of Lithuania' and, as we shall see, did its best to hinder and thwart every attempt made by others. Every Grand Master throughout the fourteenth century cherished the hope that he would succeed in beating the pagans to their knees and occupying at least the western part of Lithuania, called Samogitia, which was so necessary if communication between the two branches of the Order, in Prussia and Livonia, was to be secured. If the subdued pagans were then outwardly baptized, as they were in Prussia, enough would have been done to justify the occupation of fresh areas for further German expansion. For this reason both the leaders and the common knights of the Order were champions of the idea that the conversion of the Lithuanians was their monopoly, which nobody else was to infringe.

Christianity so conceived in political and territorial terms could only be accepted by the Lithuanian Dukes under pressure of political circumstances. The threat of a great coalition against him led Mendog (Mindaugas), the unifier of Lithuania, to seek help from the Livonian Order at Riga. Seeing no other course open, he took the Grand Master's advice and became a Christian, thus following the path trodden before him by his nephew and dangerous rival Tautvila. The difference between them was merely that Tautvila had been baptized under the patronage of the Archbishop of Riga. As soon as the question of the possible conversion of Lithuania was raised, the old conflict between the Order and the Archbishop was renewed. While Christian was the Teutonic Order's candidate for the bishopric of Lithuania, a bishop for Southern Lithuania, by name Vitas, was at the same time consecrated by the Poles. We know little, however, about the dioceses and activities of either.

³ Hermann Salza und die Gründung des Deutschordensstaates in Preussen, 1924. Cf. E. Caspar, 'Der Orden und Hermann von Salza', in the collective work *Deutsche Staatenbildung und deutsche Kultur im Preussenlande*, 1931, pp. 50-53.

⁴ *Der deutsche Orden und die Preussen. Bekehrung und Unterwerfung in der preussisch-baltischen Mission des 13. Jhs.*, 1928.

⁵ *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* II, 1863, pp. 164-169.

Mendog, the first and last King of Lithuania, contrived to resist the obvious efforts of the Order to bring Lithuania and its diocese within their sphere of influence by converting the population. The new bishopric, which was claimed both by the Order and by the Archbishop, was under the direct protection of the Hory See.⁶ Innocent IV gave his determined support to Mendog and controlled the administration of the Lithuanian diocese himself, in defiance of the claims of both the rival authorities. None the less this diocese, although it was duly founded and well based, was not destined to endure long. Only the King himself, his family and his court had been baptized. In Pope Innocent IV's Bull it is stated that Mendog received baptism *cum numerosa multitudo paganorum*⁷ (together with a large number of pagans); which points to the conclusion that it was only the members of the King's suite who submitted to baptism. In the end the pagan reactionaries, allied with the particularist and separatist dukes, compelled Mendog to break off his relations with the Order, and no doubt at the same time he renounced his Christian profession. Even if he did not do so—which seems unlikely on psychological grounds—the murder of himself and his family by political opponents was the signal for the collapse of Christianity among the people of Lithuania, and it did not recover its position for

a century or more. With it fell the diocese of Lithuania, wisely though it had been made dependent upon Rome alone. It had been established in association with the enemies of Lithuania's political freedom, who were more anxious for the country's conquest than conversion, and therefore seemed to the dukes who opposed Mendog to be a most dangerous political creation. Christianity, represented by the Order, was for the Lithuanians nothing but a compulsory domination, to be forced upon them by crusades and political pressure. It was for this reason that it roused such sharp resistance and hostility.

It was a great misfortune for the country, nevertheless, that Christianity was not in the end established upon the basis formed under Mendog. If it had been, the history of the Lithuanian people would have taken a different course. The Order, having few strongholds left in Prussia at the time of the rising, would soon have had to renounce its ambitions. The Prussian people would not have been condemned to perish, and the relations between Lithuania and its Christian neighbours, particularly Poland, would have developed quite differently, and probably more favourably for Lithuania. Moreover, if the latter country had turned completely to Western Europe before 1387, a native culture would have grown up in the Grand Duchy comparatively early.

II

ATTEMPTS AT CONVERSION UNDER WITEN AND GEDYMIN

When one recalls the fact of the official conversion of Lithuania, confirmed for the second time by the ruler himself five hundred and fifty years ago, one should not forget that after the collapse of the faith introduced by Mendog attempts and endeavours to win the country for Christ continued throughout the intervening century. There were movements and efforts in plenty under the successors of the baptized king, Witen (Vytenis) (1293-1315), Gedymin (Gediminas) (1315-41), Olgiert (1345-77), and Kiejstut (Kęstutis) (1345-82). These attempts met with no success, that is to say they were not approved by the Dukes, although the latter were personally tolerant to the Christians who lived in their dominions. Their reasons for not allowing the conversion of Lithuania to become a reality, and for deferring so long their entry into the fellowship of Christendom, will become clear on consideration of the relations between pagan Lithuania and the Order.

We may first mention certain attempts to bring Lithuania into the Christian fold in the fourteenth century. Shortly after the death of Mendog, Pope Urban IV, in 1263, and Pope Clement IV, in 1268, endeavoured to maintain the threatened religion in Lithuania. The former wrote to the Bishop of Cracow urging him to send fit persons to preach the Gospel in Lithuania and to build churches for the heathen there.⁸ But at the time of the pagan reaction, which was encouraged by the warlike and energetic Trojden (Traidėnis) (1270-82), documentary sources reveal no traces of Christianity in the country. Dusburg in his Chronicle mentions the very interesting fact that in 1285 the missionary priest Conrad from Germany

(*Conradus sacerdos de Alemania*) came to Lithuania, where, after two years of efforts to convert the people, he was slain.⁹ This was one of the very few peaceful attempts made by Germans to evangelize Lithuania, for the Order regarded itself as the sole representative of German missionary effort in the East. An attempt made by the Archbishop and city of Riga under Witen came much nearer to success.

The rivalry which had long been evident between the Order and the Archbishop was now increased by the competition of a third party, the city of Riga, which maintained active commercial relations with the Grand Duchy and now began itself to take an interest in the conversion of the Lithuanians. Whenever the dispute between the Order and the town of Riga and its Archbishop was aggravated, the question of the conversion of the Lithuanians came to the front; for the pagan Lithuanians were natural allies of the people and the Archbishop of Riga against the Livonian Knights. With their conversion the Riga merchants hoped to extend their trade, and the Archbishop his ecclesiastical influence, among the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy. The baptism of the Lithuanians would have been a blow struck by the Riga burghers and the Archbishop seriously threatening the existence of the hostile Order. Both, if they had succeeded in converting Lithuania to Christ, would have freed themselves from the reproach of uniting with pagans and maintaining close commercial relations with unbaptized folk. In view of this, a plan was formed for converting the Lithuanians under Witen and Gedymin. It thus had its genesis in the quarrels and feuds of Christian institutions. The

⁶ J. Stakauskas, in *Lietuva*, op. cit. pp. 85 foll., has given an excellent description of the rivalry between the Order and the Archbishop of Riga over Lithuania.

⁷ A. Theiner, *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae* I,

1860, p. 50, No. 105; No. 106, 'cum numerosa infidelium multitudo'.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 76-77, No. 148; p. 80, No. 153.

⁹ *Scr. rer. Pruss.* I, 1861, p. 205.

conversion of the heathen was conceived in some sense as a method of combating the Christian enemy. In such circumstances the design could not be realized, but foundered on the intrigues of the Order.¹⁰

At the end of the thirteenth century the Archbishops of Riga made attempts to prepare the way for Christianity in Lithuania. The sources tell us of envoys sent by the Archbishop to Lithuania as early as 1282.¹¹ The Lithuanians under Witen, as appears from a Riga municipal record, were favourably disposed to the new faith in 1298¹², but Witen's favour and toleration led as yet to nothing. When the Order had become the Archbishop's irreconcilable foe and the Lithuanians gave the latter armed help and even garrisoned Riga for a time, the Crutched Knights prevented the Archbishop from coming to an arrangement with the pagans. It was not indeed the first time that the Knights had placed obstacles in the way of their conversion, and as late as 1366 the Archbishop of Riga had to complain that the sending of missionaries to Lithuania was dependent solely upon the caprices of the Order.¹³ In Witen's time there can be no doubt that the Livonian Knights did all in their power to prevent the Archbishop's clergy from entering the country of his allies and carrying on that missionary work which they had reserved for themselves and were not in the least disposed to leave to their troublesome rival.

As early as 1312, when the Papal Legate Francis de Moliano came to Riga, Witen, as we learn from a letter of Gedymin's to Pope John XXII¹⁴, requested him and the Archbishop of Riga to send him two Franciscan friars, to whom he wanted to entrust a church which he had built. The same letter goes on to say that the church was afterwards burned by the Teutonic Knights in the course of their warfare against the Lithuanians. But later, at the very beginning of Gedymin's reign, the Franciscans and Dominicans already had churches at Wilno.¹⁵ There was also a Franciscan church at Nowogródek. In a special letter dated May 26, 1323, Gedymin requested the Franciscans of the ecclesiastical province of Saxony to send four friars to serve the Franciscan churches in these two towns.¹⁶

Gedymin wrote a number of his famous letters in the same tone, inviting not only craftsmen, peasants and merchants but also bishops, secular clergy and monks to Lithuania and promising to protect the churches, honour the clergy, and himself become a Christian. They were probably written as a result of his close cooperation with the city of Riga against the two intolerable Livonian Orders and were evidence of the Grand Duke's good will. They were useful to the Riga burghers in their conflict with the Crutched Knights. In general there are clauses in these letters which were in accordance with the interests of Riga. But there are also others which were solely in the interests of Gedymin. Had he become a Christian at the instance of the Riga burghers, the greatest reproach made against them by the Order, namely that they

had concluded an agreement with a pagan and maintained profitable trading relations with him, would have been deprived of its point. But in Lithuania itself there were too many forces, such as the Samogitians and adherents of the Greek Orthodox faith, hostile to the Roman Church, and the whole question of conversion had become much too complicated by the opposing intrigues of Riga and the Order for there to be any possibility of a swift solution by the stroke of a pen. Gedymin had to wait some time for an answer from Pope John XXII, who was residing at Avignon, although as soon as he had become Pope, in 1316, he had written himself to Gedymin urging him to accept baptism.¹⁷ And when his envoys did arrive in answer to Gedymin's appeal, circumstances had changed and Gedymin ignored his promise to become a Christian. It is very possible that the Lithuanian Grand Dukes entered into these relations with the Christians and especially with the Pope in order to free themselves from the pressure of the Crutched Knights which was becoming unendurable. In any case they did not refuse baptism because they were particularly hostile to Christianity, nor because they were fanatically devoted to their paganism. They resisted the Order's attempts to baptize them because, like any independent political organization in similar circumstances, they feared to lose their political independence. From another point of view also it was difficult seriously to consider baptism. All this good advice from Avignon or elsewhere was neutralized by the action of the Order, which would have been very indignant if it had learnt that the Lithuanians had accepted Christianity from other hands than its own. For purposes of propaganda it now began to spread the statement that Gedymin's supposed promise to become a Christian was a falsehood and his letters forgeries, given currency by the burghers of Riga. Later the Crutched Knights, who permitted no missionaries to enter Lithuania, incurred the reproach of having incited the Samogitians and White Ruthenians to revolt in case Gedymin made any attempt to be baptized.¹⁸ To such a pass as this had they brought the cause of Christianity which they were supposed to promote.

In any case Christianity spread slowly in Lithuania from the people to the rulers; the pagans had chances to meet it at close quarters, for numbers of prisoners were brought to Lithuania from Christian countries. The Lithuanians made frequent inroads far and wide into Poland and brought back many Christian captives. Polish historians are fond of quoting a letter of Gedymin's to show that the Poles had their churches and monasteries in Lithuania as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century.¹⁹ If this hypothesis is to be accepted, it may be supposed that clergy who had learnt the language of the country while in captivity began to work as missionaries among the pagans as soon as the hour for official conversion had struck. But they may have taken the initiative even before that. The Lithuanians had thus the opportunity to

¹⁰ For the intensive and well-developed trading connexions between Riga and Lithuania see Z. Ivinskis, 'Der Handel Litauens mit Riga im 14. Jh.', *Conventus primus historicorum Balticorum*, Riga 1938, pp. 276-285.

¹¹ *Liv-, Esth- und Curländisches Urkundenbuch*, ed. G. von Bunge, II, p. 66, No. 638.

¹² *Op. cit.*, I, 1833, pp. 714-715, No. 570, 1298, III, 30.

¹³ *Op. cit.*, VI, 1873, p. 221, No. 2884.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, II, 1855, pp. 140-141, No. 687.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 146, No. 690.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143, No. 689.

¹⁷ The text of this letter is given in full by W. Abraham,

Powstanie organizacji Kościoła łacińskiego na Rusi (Rise of the Organization of the Latin Church in Ruthenia), I, 1904, pp. 365-367.

¹⁸ The latest work on Gedymin's letters, in which all these questions receive detailed treatment, is J. Jakštas, 'Vokiečių, Ordinas ir Lietuva Vytenio ir Gedimino metu' (The Teutonic Order and Lithuania during the Reigns of Witen and Gedymin) in the periodical *Senovė* (Antiquity), II, 1936, pp. 5-62.

¹⁹ W. Abraham, 'Polska a chrzest Litwy' (Poland and the Conversion of Lithuania), in the collective work *Polska i Litwa w dziejowym stosunku* (The Historical Relationship of Poland and Lithuania), 1914, pp. 8-18.

learn the faith of Christ from Christian captives and their clergy in many places. This was not, indeed, enough. The official baptism of the ruler was required as well as that of his people.

Fugitives from Lithuania also sometimes went over to the Christian faith. During the constant warfare there were frequently cases in which men who had been injured and were thirsting for vengeance went over to the camp of the enemy, where they naturally became Christians, since Christians could have no dealings with pagans, being expressly forbidden to do so. On the other hand, in the western districts, which were ravaged by the enemy and where the struggle for the ideals of nationality and freedom was fierce, acceptance of the Christian faith may have been equivalent to an act of treachery. Many a pagan fled to the Teutonic Order and was baptized. Dusbürg is fond of emphasizing that they fled only because they desired to become Christians. There were also cases in which the Crutched Knights themselves baptized their prisoners in the field. The same writer tells us that in the campaign of 1329, in which King John of Luxemburg as well as a number of great lords took part, after the capture of the stronghold of Medvegalis six thousand men were baptized: 'sed non longe post apostaverunt', but not long afterwards they apostatized, he presently adds.²⁰ The same occurrence is alluded to by the poet Guillaume de Machaut, who sang of John of Luxemburg's campaign in French.²¹ There may of course have been frequent examples of such mass baptisms following upon a victory, but they could not have had any lasting effect.

Even dukes sometimes accepted baptism. It is not quite clear why Butold (Butautas), a son of Kiejstut, fled to the Crutched Knights in 1365 and became a Christian; then made an inroad into Lithuania in the hopes of bringing about a revolution, and afterwards wandered about in Western Europe under the title of *Henricus, dux Lithuaniae*.²² But in 1383 even Witold accepted baptism under pressure of political events. Political reasons, again, led Lithuanian dukes who had acquired lands in the Ruthenian portion of the Grand Duchy to profess the Greek Orthodox faith. Such occurrences are known to us from the second half of the thirteenth century. Under Gedymín the Grand Duchy included still more extensive Ruthenian districts, inhabited by a compact Greek Orthodox population. Both wives of his son Olgiert were Orthodox, the children of the first being baptized according to the Byzantine rite. Still, such a baptism of a duke, whether it was according to the Latin or the Byzantine rite, was solely due to political considerations; it represented a merely momentary success and left no lasting mark on the country. Lithuanian princesses also used to marry dukes who had been baptized in the one Church or the other. Close bonds of kinship united the Lithuanian and Masurian dukes. For example, in 1279 Gaudemunda, a daughter of Trojden, married into the Masurian ducal family and was baptized according to the Latin rite; so too did two daughters of Gedymín, Elizabeth and Euphemia, and Danuta, a daughter of Kiejstut. The third daughter of Gedymín, Aldona, married King Casimir of Poland. Nevertheless, these bonds of kinship with Roman Catholic or Greek Orthodox dukes had no great influence on the conversion of the Lithuanian people. At the

court at Wilno the Eastern Church had a dominating position, yet it embraced no great number of the Lithuanian people. The numerous Greek Orthodox population of the Grand Duchy was for the most part indifferent to the paganism of the common folk in Lithuania; the Eastern Church throughout the fourteenth century seemed as it were frozen in the form which it had before attained, and it showed no expansionist tendency whatever. And because the Lithuanians ever since the time of Mendog had been accustomed to close relations with the Roman Church, it was possible in 1387 without great difficulty to face once more towards the West, as Mendog had done a century before.

From all that has been said it is clear that Lithuania in the fourteenth century was not entirely cut off from the Western, Christian world. Under the most varying forms the pagans had the opportunity here and there, even though often merely superficially, to come into contact with the new faith, in the name of which the Crutched Knights waged unceasing war against them. The reigns of Gedymín and Kiejstut, embracing a period of sixty-seven years from 1315 to 1382 coincided with the period of the greatest power and splendour of the Teutonic Order. Two of its most energetic Grand Masters, Dietrich von Altenburg and Winrich von Kniprode, the latter of whom died in 1382, made the Order's territory into a State extending from the banks of the Vistula to Narva, though it included a dangerous wedge of pagans in Samogitia. At that period the Teutonic Order could regard itself justly as the best administrator in Europe and as a financial power unsurpassed in the West. It had taken the trade of its territory into its own hands and developed far-reaching commercial relations. This purely military State—though its members always wore the Cross on their cloaks—became a power whose chief aim was to secure possession of Samogitia, a border district of the greatest importance in its policy. It therefore continued its attacks unremittingly and fitted out fresh expeditions year after year. From generation to generation the Lithuanians inherited the melancholy fate of having to wage continual warfare against the Knights of the Cross. The two armed camps fought constantly against one another with the same methods of murder, destruction, massacre and plunder—the pagans in defence of their liberty, life and independence, the Crutched Knights in pursuit of their supposed obligation to incorporate the lands of the pagans in their own Christian State. The interests of the two irreconcilable enemies had become so entangled that theoretical proposals had scarcely any value; added to which the Order was regarded in Rome as the official promoter of Christianity. It is remarkable that the clergy of the Teutonic Order, even though they were themselves members of it, did not even attempt to find a way to convert the heathen other than that of offering them the Cross on the point of the sword. Later ages have justly remarked upon the helplessness or unwillingness of the monkish clergy. Obviously they were unable at that time to devote themselves to serious missionary work when they saw no real advantage in it for their secular rulers. The whole missionary activity of the Order was guided by political considerations. Moreover, the members of the Order found it difficult or impossible to get access

²⁰ *Scr. rer. Pruss.* I, 215.

²¹ Guillaume de Machaut, *Poésies lyriques*, ed. V. Chichmaref, p. XXXIV.

²² For fuller details and a bibliography see A. Šapoka in the *Lietuviškoji Enciklopedija* (Lithuanian Encyclopaedia), IV, p. 1199.

to the Lithuanians, who not unnaturally regarded the Crutched Knights as their worst enemies. So the Order waited year after year in the hope that it would soon occupy Lithuania and evangelize it in its own way. That even in the time of Gedymin it regarded itself as near the attainment of its aim is indicated by an interesting fact, which also throws light on the relations of the Knights with the pagans and with the Archbishop of Riga.

The year 1336 was marked in the history of the Teutonic Order by great successes. The energetic Grand Master Dietrich von Altenburg made two roads to Lithuania through the wilderness between Prussia and the river Niemen and began to build the castle of Georgenburg at the confluence of the Mituva with the Niemen, the castle of Marienburg near Seredzius at the mouth of the Dubysa, and that of Bayerburg on the small river Gistus a mile and a quarter to the west of the Lithuanian stronghold of Veliuona. His Knights pressed victoriously forward up the valley of the Niemen and approached Kaunas, hoping shortly to conquer the whole of Lithuania from the Bayerburg, which was so named in honour of Duke Heinrich of Lower Bavaria. This is proved by the donations of the Emperor Ludwig the Bavarian, granting the Grand Master Lithuania, Samogitia and the Ruthenian districts. This document had, it is true, no practical significance, but it reveals the political plans of the Crutched Knights. The documentary donation of the pagan lands was not, however, everything. The Bayerburg was intended to be the residence of the Teutonic Governor of Lithuania, and the ecclesiastical organization of the country was also planned in advance. The Bayerburg, to which Emperor Ludwig presented the Bavarian flag, was to become also the ecclesiastical centre of Lithuania, as soon as the Teutonic Order had completed its conversion by force of arms. The Metropolitan of Lithuania was to have his seat there, and all the bishops of the newly converted country were to be subordinated to his authority.²³ So detailed was the Order's plan for a not far distant future. When the Emperor Ludwig was involved in a bitter struggle with Pope John XXII the Order took his side and now claimed the Emperor's support in return. When he confirmed their right to possess the city of Riga, though the inhabitants took energetic measures of defence and also enlisted the aid of Gedymin, the Crutched Knights

immediately felt the value of the Emperor's favour. And they cunningly maintained a balance between the two powers, Pope and Emperor, supporting their claims to the lands of the pagans on the donations of the one just as gladly as on those of the other.

Of course the donation of 1337, theoretically a great triumph for the Order, was directed primarily against the Archbishop of Riga, who regarded himself as Metropolitan of all the lands subject to the Order. For the Order now began preparations for the foundation of a separate archbishopric of Lithuania, which was thus to be withdrawn from the authority of the Archbishop of Riga. At this moment the latter made a solemn complaint to the Pope against the Order, which was therefore especially anxious not to let the future church of Lithuania become dependent on him. While Gedymin was a confederate of the people of Riga, the Archbishop was concerned to promote the evangelization of the Grand Duchy. Had this confederacy not been broken by the surprising victory of the Knights, who in 1330 made themselves masters of Riga, the Lithuanians would perhaps have allowed themselves to be converted by the missionaries from Riga. The Order accordingly strove with all its power not only to place obstacles in the way of the alliance between the Lithuanians and the men of Riga, but also to prevent any other power from converting the Lithuanians and thus getting them under its control. After the capture of Riga the Order might have been justified in thinking that its dangerous rival, the Archbishop of Riga, was a force no longer²⁴, and it hoped to exclude all competitors in the future. Its plan for an independent ecclesiastical province likewise throws an interesting light on the political ratiocination of the Crutched Knights. But Lithuania remained pagan for another forty years, and under the heirs of Gedymin it continued its embittered struggle for liberty and independence. And the famous Bayerburg, which had been intended to play a part in the occupation and conversion of Lithuania similar to that of Riga in the thirteenth century, now consists of nothing but two hillocks on the bank of the Niemen, on a former island or peninsula, clearly visible from the boat to the west of Veliuona. The remains of thorn bushes are all that is left of the 'barbed-wire' entanglement which in those days encircled this important post.

III

PLANS FOR THE CONVERSION OF LITHUANIA UNDER OLGIERD AND KIEJSTUT

In the second half of the fourteenth century the question of the conversion of Lithuania was again frequently brought up and discussed, though no special efforts were made to solve it. The rulers of Lithuania, Olgiert and Kiejstut, were in the circumstances ready at all times to consider proposals of this kind which did not originate with the Teutonic Order.²⁵ The first plan for the conversion of the country was suggested to Kiejstut, as we learn from the letters of Clement VI²⁶, by Casimir the Great of Poland,

who had become involved in a conflict with the Grand Duchy and with Lubart (Liubartas), a son of Gedymin, over the districts of Halicz and Volhynia. The Pope was informed by the King of Poland that the Grand Duke of Lithuania was ready to go over to the Christian faith and requested him to send missionaries to Lithuania. He further instructed the Archbishop of Gniezno to send monks of various orders and also secular clergy, God-fearing and worthy men, to instruct the Grand Duke, his brothers

²³ Cf. J. Jakštas, *Vokiečių ordinas*, p. 50.

²⁴ Cf. J. Jakštas, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

²⁵ All these conversion plans have been thoroughly studied by K. Chodynicki, 'Próby zaprowadzenia chrześcijaństwa na Litwie przed r. 1387' (Attempts to introduce Christianity into Lithuania before 1387), *Przegląd Historyczny* (Historical Review),

Vol. XVII, pt. 3, pp. 279-313. Cf. P. Šležas, 'Bandymai apkrikštyti Lietuvą Algirdo ir Kęstučio laikais' (Attempts to Convert Lithuania in the Reigns of Olgiert and Kiejstut), *Tiesos Kelias* (The Path of Truth), 1932, No. 12, pp. 781-794.

²⁶ A. Theiner, *Vetera monumenta*, I, pp. 525-527, Nos. 691-693.

and his people in the new faith and incline and lead them to follow the good path. But it was already suspected that the King of Poland's whole plan was suggested by political considerations.²⁷ Casimir wished to gain the favour of the Pope by the conversion of Lithuania and at the same time to make peace with the Teutonic Order. Thus he would be in a favourable position to continue the hostilities in which he had long been engaged with the Lithuanian Grand Duke for possession of Volhynia. But as long as the idea of converting the country was political in its origin, even the fairest promises failed to win over Kiejstut to its acceptance.

Two years later, in 1351, there was a fresh project put forward in connexion with Lewis of Hungary's campaign in Lithuania. Lewis entered into negotiations with Kiejstut and received the Grand Duke's promise to become a Christian and be baptized together with his subjects. The Grand Duke further covenanted to enter into an alliance with Hungary if the latter country would persuade the Teutonic Order to give back the districts it had taken from Lithuania and if it were prepared to defend these districts against the Crutched Knights and the Tartars. Although both sides confirmed the covenant with an oath—Kiejstut offering strange sacrifices when taking it—the Lithuanian nevertheless broke it and fled. Kiejstut's promise to become a Christian and his whole proceedings in making peace were doubtless due to his desire to rid his country of the enemy.

Yet another plan for the conversion of Lithuania was proposed a few years later, in 1357, again by the King of Poland. Casimir was anxious to free himself from the reproach made against him by the Teutonic Order and echoed by the Papal *Curia* at Avignon that he maintained relations with the pagan Lithuanians. At the end of 1357 he wrote to Pope Innocent VI, stating that the Grand Duke of Lithuania was ready for baptism, and asking him to write on this account to the Emperor Charles IV and to King Lewis of Hungary. It is noteworthy that Casimir wished all the churches and monasteries in Lithuania to be subordinated, as soon as the people had been converted, to the Archbishop of Gniezno.²⁸ Charles IV did actually write to the Grand Duke in 1358, advising him to become a Christian and promising him his support²⁹, but even the Emperor's attempt seemed remote from reality in the circumstances of the time. His envoys were told on their arrival in Lithuania that the country might become Christian if the Teutonic Order gave back the lands it had taken between the Pregel and the Dvina; while the Crutched Knights must advance into the Russian steppes and there defend the Christians against the Tartars.³⁰ At that time, when the Lithuanians were engaged in constant warfare with the Crutched Knights, these conditions were comprehensible, springing as they did from the Lithuanians' desire to remove the Order as far as possible from their borders. But to the Order they must have seemed too harsh, and indeed impracticable, for their fulfilment to be seriously considered. After having built so many fortified castles in Prussia and founded a large number of prosperous towns and established an extensive and flourishing

trade, it naturally could not abandon everything and start to build anew. Both the leaders of the knightly Order and its individual members were far too deeply rooted in their Prussian possessions and far too strongly imbued with the selfish spirit of their institution for them voluntarily to evacuate the districts they had taken by force.

More years passed, during which the Knights constantly burned down the dwellings of the Lithuanians, slaying or carrying away into captivity their inhabitants. The second half of the fourteenth century was characterized by increasing violence on the part of the Crutched Knights from Prussia and Livonia, who took many thousands of prisoners, slew large numbers and stripped the villages of cattle and horses. Such a policy on the part of the Order naturally frustrated every attempt made to convert the natives with good will. The Lithuanian Grand Dukes required assurances of safety from further attack, and on the other hand the atrocities committed by the Knights and their ruthless plundering of the Lithuanian countryside brought disgrace and infamy upon the idea of Christianity in the eyes of the pagans, for the Knights were officially Defenders of the Faith and its champions in *partibus infidelium*.

At this period the Order made an irruption deep into Lithuania, penetrating into the districts south of the Niemen and in 1362 laying Kaunas in ruins.³¹ It was beginning to establish itself in the region at the confluence of the Nevezys and the Wilia (Neris) with the Niemen, when in 1373 one more attempt at conversion was made, the last under Olgerd and Kiejstut. Pope Gregory XI addressed himself in writing to both rulers and to their brother Lubart, advising them to end the terrible war with the Crutched Knights and promising to send them God-fearing men, well acquainted with the teachings of Christ.³² This proposal was inspired by Ziemovit III, Duke of Masovia, who would gladly have allied himself with Lithuania against the Order. Dobrogost, Canon of Cracow and Chancellor to the Duke of Masovia, and later to become Bishop of Poznań and Archbishop of Gniezno, was sent by the Pope to arrange for the country's conversion. Possibly it was he who had inspired Ziemovit's proposal.³³ But on this occasion also the conversion of Lithuania was made dependent on the course of political events. Not till fourteen years later was the way for its conversion finally opened.

All these attempts were thus without practical result. Yet there were Christian congregations and churches in Lithuania in the fourteenth century. Franciscans and Dominicans went quietly on with their work, though little is known of their activity.³⁴ They had already established themselves in the country at the beginning of the fourteenth century, or at the very latest at the time of Gedymin's accession. The Franciscans seem to have been particularly active, though the fact is too little emphasized or even passed over altogether³⁵ in specialist literature, even in Professor Chodynicki's monograph. On the other hand it is incorrect to say that fourteen Franciscans were established at Wilno in Olgerd's time by Peter Gasztold (Goschtautas), and were all slain on one

²⁷ H. Paszkiewicz, *Polityka ruska Kazimierza Wielkiego* (Ruthenian Policy of Casimir the Great), 1925, pp. 117 foll.

²⁸ W. Abraham, *Powstanie organ. kośc.*, pp. 367-368.

²⁹ H. Paszkiewicz, *Polityka ruska*, p. 197.

³⁰ *Script. rer. Pruss.*, II, p. 80 (Hermann de Wartberge).

³¹ A. Kučinskas, 'Kęstutis kovos su vokiečių ordinu', (Kiejstut's Struggles with the Teutonic Order), *Atheneum*, IV, 1933, p. 121.

³² A. Theiner, *Vetera monumenta*, I, p. 696, Nos. 934-936.

³³ Cf. W. Abraham, *Polska a chrzest Litwy*, p. 12.

³⁴ *Lites ac res gestae inter Polonos ordinemque Cruciferorum*, II, 1892, p. 295. E. Kantak's monographs on the Franciscans in Poland and Lithuania were not accessible to me when I wrote.

³⁵ 'Próby zaprowadzenia', *Przegl. histor.*, XVIII, 1914, pt. 3, p. 317.

day³⁶, for Professor Chodynicki shows that the account in the chronicle of Bychowce—which indeed may be in its entirety a nineteenth century forgery—dates only from the middle of the sixteenth century, when the Gasztold family made rich benefactions to the Lithuanian Franciscans. The Franciscans desired to found a special branch of the Order, and this account of the Gasztolds' old foundation might, they felt, be useful to them.³⁷ Actually we know of only two Franciscans who lived in Lithuania under Gedymis in the fourteenth century. Equally unreliable are the accounts in later Muscovite sources of the death of three Orthodox martyrs at Wilno; Professor Chodynicki has here again demonstrated the late origin of this story, which is often repeated by the Russians.³⁸ The pagan Lithuanians were no strangers to the idea of toleration. It may indeed have lain in the very essence of their paganism that they forced their religion, based upon superstition, magic and the worship of natural forces, upon no one. It was characteristic of them that they held fast to it, but did not persecute others. Perhaps the Papal Envoys sent to Gedymis to negotiate his baptism have rightly reported his words: 'The Christians may worship their God after their fashion, the Russians after theirs, and the Poles likewise in accordance with their particular customs. Therefore the Lithuanians also worship God in their own way.'³⁹ This was an expression of toleration, or, as A. Alekna thinks⁴⁰, of a certain indifference; for all confessions seemed to Gedymis equally good. The conclusion may perhaps be drawn that the Lithuanian Dukes held to the old religion not so much because of any deep attachment to its cult of nature and the spirit world, but rather from anxiety lest they might lose together with it their political independence. And of course in those days of constant warfare they had to reckon with the pagan reaction, according to which Christ was considered as equivalent to a Crutched Knight, the source of all evil.

At Wilno, which had come to be an important centre for merchants, mostly from Riga, the Catholics must have had a small church. As may be gathered from later complaints of the Teutonic Knights there must have been more churches in Lithuania in the pagan period.⁴¹ It cannot however be asserted that Christianity had many adherents there during the fourteenth century. It was merely tolerated, while the people as a whole remained sunk in the deep-rooted magic and superstitious practices of the old cult. Presumably there was little or no missionary activity actually among the people in the Grand Duchy at that period, nor were there itinerant missionaries who proclaimed the new faith. We have very much better preserved sources for the history of the fourteenth century than for that of the preceding period, but until 1387 we hear nothing of any missionaries of the type of St. Adalbert or St. Bruno. Even the German chroniclers have not recorded a single fact which would show that the clergy attached to the Teutonic Order ever made the slightest attempt throughout the fourteenth century to preach the Gospel. If such a missionary had ever been put to death by the pagans, the annalists of the Order

would not have omitted to record it. And so the complaint made by some of the Order that their clergy did little to propagate the Christian faith in Lithuania was only too well justified. When proposals for the conversion of their country came only from above, from the rulers of neighbouring States such as Poland, Hungary or Masovia, the Dukes of Lithuania had every reason to demand assurances before they accepted baptism.

All these unsuccessful attempts made during the reigns of Gedymis, Olgerd and Kiejstut to convert Lithuania to the Cross were, strangely enough, entirely independent of the Teutonic Order. The conclusion must therefore be drawn that the Knights did not take the least trouble peacefully to fan the spark of Christianity which was already glimmering in Lithuania into a flame. The free baptism of the pagans was contrary to the interests of the Order, depriving them, as it would have done, of their claim to the neophytes' land. Accordingly, since they made political expansion their main aim, they subordinated even the conversion of the heathen to it and preferred to annihilate or subjugate them rather than bring them into the Christian fold. This compulsory evangelization, carried out by such depraved means, was fatal to the continued existence of the Prussians, and in their fate must be sought the answer to the question why the conversion of the Lithuanians took place so late.

The irony and paradox of the situation was in fact that the institution whose office it was to propagate the Christian faith among the heathen put serious obstacles in the way of its propagation. And in the end the conversion of Lithuania was not the work of those who for two centuries had posed in Western Europe as the converters of the heathen. It was by the efforts of the Poles that the Lithuanians finally were led to accept Roman Catholic baptism, when a Lithuanian Grand Duke, Jagiello, son of Olgerd, ascended the Polish throne.

One attempt to convert the Lithuanians made by the Order in 1382 must, however, be mentioned. Jagiello had entered into diplomatic relations with the Order and with their aid had defeated and killed Kiejstut, his uncle, on August 15, 1382. He had then to perform the promise he had made to the Order. On October 31, 1382, the Grand Duke of Lithuania met the high dignitaries of the Order on the island at the mouth of the Dubysa, near Seredzius. He concluded a pact with the Knights, ceding to them what they had so long desired, namely Samogitia up to the Dubysa, and promised in a special third covenant to be baptized with his people—*mit allen den unsern*—within four years.⁴² The document makes but short mention of the baptism, nor does it specify the circumstances which were to accompany it. Apparently Jagiello and his people were to make the arrangements for it themselves; there is not a word of any help to be given by the Crutched Knights. Doubtless it was very painful to the Order to enter into diplomatic relations with a pagan, and therefore at the official meeting with Jagiello it was considered politic to make this condition, which indeed corresponded with the fundamental aim for which the Order had been founded. However, the most important part of the

³⁶ *Polnoje sobranije russkich lietopisy* (Collected Russian Documents), XVII, 1907, p. 500.

³⁷ K. Chodynicki, 'Legenda o męczeństwie czterech franciszkanów w Wilnie' (The Legend of the Martyrdom of Fourteen Franciscans at Wilno), *Ateneum Wileńskie*, IV, pt. 12, 1927, pp. 53-78.

³⁸ 'Geneza i rozwój legendy o trzech męczennikach wileńskich' (Genesis and Development of the Legend of the Three

Wilno Martyrs), *ibid.* pt. 13, 1927, pp. 417-451.

³⁹ K. E. Napiersky, *Russisch-lituanische Urkunden*, 1868, p. 46, No. 47.

⁴⁰ *Kataliku Bažnyčia Lietuvoje* (The Catholic Church in Lithuania), 1936, p. 21.

⁴¹ *Codex dipl. Prussicus*, V, No. 135.

⁴² *Liv-, Esth- u. Curländisches Urkundenbuch*, III (1887), p. 394, No. 1185.

agreement for the Knights was without any doubt the cession of Samogitia as far as the Dubysa. Yet it happened that not even this desire of the Knights was realized in any tangible form. The provisional agreement, in which the Grand Master of the Order had not taken part himself, was to be ratified at a second meeting on the island in the Dubysa in the summer of 1383. The Grand Master came by ship with a number of his commanders, but owing to the low water level of the Niemen he could get not farther than Skirsnemune. He was also bringing with him two bishops, whose business it would be to make

preparations for the baptismal ceremonies. But as Jagiello refused to appear at any other place of meeting than that originally agreed upon, the Crutched Knights turned back and declared war. It is to be supposed that Jagiello already knew, in the spring of 1383, of the plan to offer him the Polish throne and the hand of Queen Jadwiga, and this knowledge must have led him to give a new orientation to his policy. These vague new projects were realized two years later, and thus Lithuania, the last remaining refuge of paganism on the Baltic, was finally won for the Cross of Christ.

IV

A FEW FINAL REMARKS ON THE BAPTISM OF THE LITHUANIANS AT WILNO IN 1387

To Jagiello, Grand Duke of pagan Lithuania, fell the high honour of becoming King of the neighbouring Catholic country. The text of the Act of Krewo of August 15, 1385, does not furnish a complete explanation, but there were realistic and politically founded considerations on both sides. The union of the two great States under a single sceptre was expected to be beneficial to both. The future King Jagiello did not consider it important to specify which was incorporated in the other, for in any case he would rule over both.

The Act of Krewo is a very important factor in the history of Eastern Europe, not only from the political but also from the cultural and religious standpoint. At this fateful moment, when the Grand Duchy turned its face toward the West, opportunity was at last found to receive baptism peacefully, with the aid of the neighbouring powerful State. Although paganism was still firmly rooted among the people, Jagiello and his cousin Witold saw clearly that it had come to be an anachronism in view of the politics of the time. The Lithuanian people had waited far too long before accepting the Christian faith. In view of the conversion of their neighbours, the Russians and Poles, there was no sound reason for holding out against it any longer. The fierce conflict with the Teutonic Order had been undoubtedly fought in part in defence of the ancient faith; but the ducal families themselves were experiencing a crisis in this respect. Olgierd and Kiejstut had still believed in the old gods, both had died as pagans and been burned on the funeral pyre according to the traditional rites.⁴³ But the new generation must have had different ideas, since the new faith was trickling in through every crack and cranny. They must often have doubted, when they saw only Christian peoples about them on every side, whether paganism could maintain its ground, and whether it was not time to receive the Gospel as all other peoples had done. We know that Jagiello, after he had become Grand Duke, immediately examined the court records and studied the exhortations of Popes, German Emperors and Christian princes to the Lithuanian people to accept the Christian faith. He must have realized the necessity of withdrawing from the dangerous situation in which his paganism constantly placed him. When he sent his

brother Skirgiello (Skirgaila) to the Grand Master, to the Emperor, and finally even to the Pope⁴⁴, his aim was to bring his country into touch with Christendom and the West. It is quite possible that he regarded baptism as a political necessity and as the most suitable means of winning friends in the West and obtaining the favour of Pope and Emperor. It is clear from his covenant of 1382, already mentioned, whereby he promised to let himself be baptized and to cede Samogitia as far as the Dubysa to the Order, that the Grand Duke was looking for some way of ending the oppressive wars with the Crutched Knights. Yet he did not in the end hand over this district to the Knights, and he found another, less dangerous way of introducing Christianity.

The conjunction of political union with Poland and an opportunity to receive the Christian faith through the mediation of that country must have seemed very favourable to the dukes of the younger generation, all the more so because in the conditions of the time the matter was pressing and this seemed the only way out. The Cross, which the Order preached with the sword, had meant, even if not the end of Lithuania's political independence, at least the cession of the western district to the Knights. In the very earliest days of the Lithuanian State, when Mendog had received baptism at the hands of the Teutonic Order, the Knights had forced the King to give up certain sections of Samogitia. And when they had later found the way to the court of their new convert they got still more from him, though by what means and methods, whether by threats or promises, we do not know.⁴⁵ In the end the Knights were in possession of documents promising in the name of Mendog to cede not merely the province of Samogitia, but the whole territory of his State. In the century following the death of Mendog the Knights' territorial policy towards Lithuania had been greatly strengthened. If the Lithuanian Dukes had also received baptism at the hands of the Knights, the old desire of the two Orders, in Prussia and in Livonia, would have been realized, and their domains would have been connected by a broad passage through the province of Samogitia. The powerful Teutonic Order on the coast of the Baltic would have penetrated far to the east in Lithuania. Even when the Lithuanians had re-

⁴³ *Scr. rer. Pruss.*, II, p. 113 (Wartberge), p. 620 (Wigand).

⁴⁴ S. Smolka, *Kiejstut i Jagiello* (Kiejstut and Jagiello), Pamiętnik Akad. Umiejętności, wyd. hist. i fil.-hist. (Memorials of the Academy of Sciences at Cracow, Historical and Philological Section), VII, 1888, p. 92; A. Prochaska, *Król Władysław Jagiello*

(King Ladislas Jagiello), I, 1908, p. 34; J. Pfitzner, *D. L. Kun. Vytautas kaip politikas* (Grand Duke Witold of Lithuania as Statesman), 1930, p. 62.

⁴⁵ Cf. Z. Ivinskis, 'Mindaugas und die Žemaiten', *Litterarum Societas Esthonica, Liber saecularis*, 1838-1938; *Opetatut Eesti Selts*, Tartu 1938, II, pp. 930-958.

ceived baptism without the help of the Order, they had still much to endure until the Peace of Melno in 1422, when Samogitia was to some extent wrested back from the Germans by military and diplomatic means. Even Witold himself had considered it necessary in certain circumstances to sacrifice this region to the Knights. Between 1404 and 1409 the Knights had already built a considerable number of castles in Samogitia and they began to dispose of the country with very little thought for the baptism of its inhabitants.

The way to the east was still very easy. There were far more Greek Orthodox Ruthenians than pagan Lithuanians in the Grand Duchy. From Gedymis's times onwards ducal children had frequently been baptized according to the Greek rite, while at the same time Orthodox women had married members of the ducal court. It is true that the Greek confession had not touched the great mass of the people, especially in Samogitia. Yet it would not have been difficult to introduce it officially from above. But baptism according to the rite of the Eastern Church would not have saved the Lithuanians from further agitation and oppressive political claims

on the part of the Crutched Knights, while further it would have assured the Ruthenian element a dominating position in the State in the future. In that case Lithuania would not only have broken off relations with western civilization, with which baptism would be, and indeed was, the most important link, but it would gradually have become completely Ruthenian. This can be stated with confidence when we look back on the second half of the nineteenth century, for in the time of Muraviev it was principally the Roman Catholic faith of the mass of the Lithuanian people which saved it from becoming Russian in spite of all the pressure exerted upon it.

Neither the Teutonic Order nor the Greek Orthodox Church felt called upon to send missionaries to Lithuania although the conversion of the Lithuanian people was excessively long delayed. But when Jagiello married Jadwiga, even though it was under pressure of political events, the problem of the conversion of his country which had occupied the attention of the earliest of its rulers, and concerning which almost all the important Dukes had negotiated in consequence of the ever stronger attacks of the Crutched Knights, found an unexpectedly speedy solution.

TRANSLATED BY B. W. A. MASSEY