

## History of the Crusades. Episode 204. The Baltic Crusades. The Livonian Crusade Part X. Headaches For Bishop Albert.

Hello again. Last week we saw the Sword Brothers exert their authority in Livonia, demanding and, after intervention from Pope Innocent III, being granted one third of the land conquered by the Christians in Livonia. Now this ended up causing some headaches for Bishop Albert. He effectively now had no control over the part of Livonia administered by the Sword Brothers, and even when they made decisions with which he thoroughly disagreed, he was powerless to intervene.

As we've discussed before, many of the Sword Brothers were violent men of dubious character, and I guess it's not surprising that our Chronicler, Henry of Livonia, reports incidents of some Sword Brothers, who were meant to be settling disputes between local people and collecting money to assist in the administration of the region, instead choosing to fill their own pockets. In his book "The Baltic Crusade", William Urban reports that the rough administration carried out by the Sword Brothers over their domains started to adversely affect Bishop Albert's general policy towards the Livonian people. He was keen to establish a sort of feudal state in Livonia, where the local people would play an active role in society, accepting Christian overlordship, and assisting in the defense of the region. However, the Sword Brothers' heavy-handed tactics were turning some of the more powerful Livonians within their domains against Christian rule.

Our Chronicler Henry of Livonia provides this example. An Elder within the region administered by the Sword Brothers came into conflict with one of the Knights from the Order. The Knight warned the Elder to stop inconveniencing his men, but the Livonian Elder didn't stop, so one night the Sword Brother assembled a group of men and took them to the fort occupied by the Livonian Elder. Arriving shortly before dawn, they found the men posted to watch over the fort dozing, so they attacked the fort, breached its walls and made their way inside. They seized the Livonian Elder, placed him in chains and confiscated everything of value that they found. The Elder managed to get word to Riga about what had occurred. A totally appalled Bishop Albert ordered the Livonian to be released and his wealth restored to him. In addition, the Bishop gifted horses and precious garments to the man.

I think this incident illustrates the conflict between the Sword Brothers and Bishop Albert at this stage quite nicely. The Sword Brothers were intent on administering their lands with an iron fist, with unquestioning obedience to the Order and filling their own pockets their primary goals. Bishop Albert, however, was looking at the wider picture. He wanted Livonia to function as a feudal state, which required the cooperation of the same Livonian Elders which the Sword Brothers were doing their best to intimidate. Bishop Albert had every right to be

concerned. William Urban reports that Bishop Albert's dream of incorporating Livonian knights into the group of men defending Livonia wouldn't come to pass, and he would find himself increasingly relying on only foreign knights.

But other than these issues, the Christianization of Livonia was proceeding pretty well. As Riga became better established, and as the housing became more comfortable, and as the risk of starving or freezing to death over the winter months consequently diminished, more crusader volunteers were electing to remain in Livonia over winter. This meant that more work could be done on securing the region. Stone forts began to spring up in strategic locations along the River Daugava, assisting in the defense of Livonia against raids by the Lithuanians and Estonians. The consolidation of Christian rule in Livonia also meant that Bishop Albert was able to spread Latin Christian influence into the land of the Letts, and form alliances with the Semigallians.

But of course, it wasn't just internal factors that Bishop Albert had to concern himself with. Once again, the politics of Europe were threatening to have an impact on the fledgling Christian nation. Now we mentioned last week that a major game-changer in the civil war within the Holy Roman Empire was about to occur. Just when it looked to everyone like Philip of Hohenstaufen was about to claim victory in the war against Otto of Saxony, Philip was murdered. It really was a terrible piece of bad luck for the Hohenstaufens. Saxon fortunes had been waning to the point where Otto's claim to the Imperial throne had all but collapsed. He had been relying heavily on English financial support, but that had dried up with King John's disastrous ascension to the English throne. To make matters worse, Denmark had invaded Saxony, leaving Otto fighting on two fronts. But then totally out of the blue, Philip of Hohenstaufen, King of Germany, and very nearly undisputed Holy Roman Emperor, was murdered. Now, before you start pointing your finger at Otto, he wasn't to blame. No, oddly, it seems that Philip's death had nothing to do with the Civil War. He was killed by an unstable Bavarian nobleman who was known for his unpredictable bouts of violence. So with the Hohenstaufens having been on the verge of winning the civil war, Philip's death sent the pendulum swinging back in the other direction.

Unsurprisingly, Otto of Saxony took full advantage of Philip's death. He commenced a rapid and thorough campaign of conciliation with the Hohenstaufens and their supporters, promising to continue some of Philip's more popular policies, adapting his own policies to suit those of leading noblemen across the Holy Roman Empire, and even becoming engaged to marry one of Philip's daughters. His work paid off. He won the support of the majority of the electors in a vote held in Frankfurt in 1208, and Pope Innocent crowned him Holy Roman Emperor the following year.

Now, this reversal of fortunes in the civil war altered the political playing field for everyone, including Bishop Albert. When Bishop Albert traveled back to Lubeck in 1208, he learned that his uncle, Archbishop Hartwig, had died the previous winter. Now Archbishop Hartwig was not just Bishop Albert's uncle; he was also his mentor and his principal supporter. Archbishop Hartwig, you might remember, was the man who had appointed Bishop Albert to the far flung post in Livonia, way back in 1199. Now, clearly Archbishop Hartwig's replacement was going to wield a great deal of influence over Bishop Albert and the expanding Bishopric in Livonia. There were two contenders for Archbishop Hartwig's replacement. Archbishop Hartwig had presided over the Archbishopric of Hamburg- Bremen, a powerful and extensive holding located in the northern part of Saxony. One of the contenders for the position of Archbishop was a man called Bishop Valdemar.

Now Bishop Valdemar was a very interesting and very ambitious man. In fact, to say Bishop Valdemar was very ambitious is definitely an understatement. Bishop Valdemar had been born in Denmark, and was actually the illegitimate son of the Danish King Canute V. Young Valdemar grew up in the Danish royal court, and it was pretty obvious to everyone that, even as a youngster, young Bishop Valdemar was an intelligent boy who saw a great future for himself. Probably sensing that having a smart, ambitious boy who had royal blood running through his veins hanging around the Danish royal court was not a terribly good idea, young Bishop Valdemar was sent to Paris to get an education, and was ordered to direct his energies and ambitions towards the Church. Well, young Bishop Valdemar excelled at his studies and started climbing the rungs of the Church hierarchy. He leapfrogged into more and more powerful positions at a dizzying speed, but really it wasn't enough for him. His ambitions seemed to reach their peak in the year 1193 as, having been elected as Prince Archbishop of Bremen at the age of thirty five, he gathered together an army of Swedish and Norwegian mercenaries financed by the Hohenstaufen family, and invaded Denmark with a view to seizing the Danish crown. But things didn't go to plan, and poor Bishop Valdemar was captured by the Danish King Canute VI, and spent the next decade or so in captivity. He was released in the year 1206 following the intervention of Pope Innocent III. As a condition of his release, he solemnly swore to never again interfere in Danish royal affairs.

So following his release, Bishop Valdemar was kicking around looking for something to do, when, wouldn't you know it? The position of Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen became vacant. So unsurprisingly, Bishop Valdemar put up his hand. Now here is where things get interesting. As you can imagine, the Archbishopric of Hamburg-Bremen was rather large and covered, unsurprisingly, the two towns of Hamburg and Bremen. Now, as far as I can discover, the town of Hamburg at this stage was inside the territory conquered by the Danes, so technically, at this point in time it was part of the Kingdom of Denmark. The more southern

town of Bremen, however, had not been conquered and was part of Saxony. So the Archbishopric extends across territory, which is part of the Holy Roman Empire and territory which has been conquered by the Danes. Bishop Valdemar's supporters were of course located in the town of Bremen. Why did Bishop Valdemar get support from Bremen? Well, because they were not yet under the Danish thumb, and they wanted to see the Danish crown pushed all the way back out of the Empire. They saw Bishop Valdemar, a man who was staunchly opposed to the current King of Denmark, King Valdemar II, as their best bet to achieve this.

But Bishop Valdemar's desire to become the new Archbishop, was opposed by the wonderfully named Burchard, Count of Stumpenhausen. Burchard von Stumpenhausen set up his base in Hamburg. Burchard von Stumpenhausen and his supporters were worried that if an ambitious man like Bishop Valdemar became Archbishop, their family estates may come under threat, so the clergy of Hamburg elected Burchard von Stumpenhausen to be Archbishop. And yes, if you haven't guessed already, I will be saying "Burchard von Stumpenhausen" as many times as I can during this episode.

So the situation now is that Bishop Valdemar has been elected Archbishop by the clergy of Bremen, and Burchard von Stumpenhausen has been elected Archbishop by the clergy of Hamburg. So what happens now? Well, to break the stalemate, both candidates, Bishop Valdemar and Burchard von Stumpenhausen, need to travel to Rome to personally appeal to Pope Innocent to make one of them Archbishop.

Now this decision was a political hand grenade. It was clear to everyone that despite the promise he made when he was released from captivity, Bishop Valdemar, if confirmed as Archbishop, would use the position to consolidate his power and to then make a play for the Danish throne. As a consequence, his election was fiercely opposed by King Valdemar of Denmark. But for exactly the same reason his election was enthusiastically supported by Philip of Hohenstaufen, who at this stage had not yet been murdered by an angry Bavarian. So Bishop Valdemar was supported by Philip of Hohenstaufen and Burchard von Stumpenhausen and was supported by, you guessed it, King Valdemar of Denmark.

In the end, the situation was too much of a headache for Pope innocent, and he failed to make a decision. So what do two candidates for the position of Archbishop do when the Pope fails to adjudicate their case? Well, they go to war. Both men raced back to their respective cities and gathered their armies. Burchard von Stumpenhausen was provided with a bunch of Danish knights by his chief backer the Danish King, and immediately went on the offensive, capturing the nearby town of Stade, which was just down-river from Hamburg. Bishop Valdemar managed to rally a contingent of peasant soldiers and went to the assistance of

Stade, retaking it from Burchard von Stumpenhausen. In his book "The Baltic Crusade", William Urban reports that shortly after this event the war came to a stalemate, with the River Elbe acting as a dividing line between the two wannabe Archbishops, with Bishop Valdemar controlling the left bank of the river and Burchard von Stumpenhausen controlling the right bank. So everyone was standing around, scratching their heads, wondering what would happen next.

What happened next was the murder of Philip of Hohenstaufen, Bishop Valdemar's chief backer. You would think that this would mean that Bishop Valdemar's case was lost and that with the Hohenstaufens throwing the towel in, in their civil war against Otto of Saxony, Bishop Valdemar would also throw in the towel, leaving Burchard von Stumpenhausen to be elected unopposed to the position of Archbishop. But no, that didn't happen at all. King Valdemar of Denmark was horrified at the thought of the civil war in the Holy Roman Empire coming to an end. It was clear that, as soon as the Holy Roman Empire got its act together and had a strong Emperor once again, one of the first acts that Emperor would do would be to push Denmark out of Imperial territory. That would almost certainly be the case if that new strong Emperor just happened to be Otto of Saxony, on account of the fact that Denmark had invaded, well, Saxony.

So King Valdemar scrambled to throw some spanners in the Saxon works. Philip of Hohenstaufen had been a vocal supporter of Bishop Valdemar's claim to the Archbishopric, so Otto of Saxony had supported, you guessed it, Burchard von Stumpenhausen. Consequently, King Valdemar now dropped Burchard von Stumpenhausen like a hot potato. As his Danish fighters packed up their things and headed back north, they took Burchard von Stumpenhausen's hopes and dreams with them. Burchard von Stumpenhausen then withdrew from the race.

So, does this mean that Bishop Valdemar becomes Archbishop? No, it doesn't, because King Valdemar doesn't want his horrible uncle Bishop Valdemar to become Archbishop either, because that would increase the likelihood of Bishop Valdemar making a pitch for the Danish throne, so King Valdemar also has to oppose the now sole candidate, his own uncle. In King Valdemar's mind, the absolute best scenario would be that the Archbishopric be left vacant. And that's what he will be spending his energies on from this point onwards.

So what does this mean for Bishop Albert? Well, it means a massive big headache. His Bishopric of Riga had been supported enthusiastically by both his uncle Archbishop Hartwig and Philip of Hohenstaufen. Now both these men are dead, and the Archbishop of Bremen-Hamburg, the man overseeing Bishop Albert's efforts in Livonia, was now nobody. The position was currently vacant with no resolution in sight.

Join me next week as Bishop Albert comes to terms with the new state of play in the Holy Roman Empire. Until next week, bye for now.

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