

## History of the Crusades. Episode 214. The Baltic Crusades. The Livonian Crusade Part XX. 1221 to 1222.

Hello again. Last week, we saw things go pretty badly for Bishop Albert, who was forced to formally cede Estonia and Livonia to the Danish crown. He also had a new threat to keep his eye on, in the form of the man he had nurtured and coaxed into a series of powerful positions in Livonia, the new Bishop of Semigallia, Bishop Bernard. Bishop Bernard has powerful connections back in the Holy Roman Empire, and his son is the new Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, making Bishop Albert concerned that Bishop Bernard may adopt an expansionist policy in his newly created Bishopric, to rival Bishop Albert's own conquests in Livonia.

Now, while Bishop Albert has been away in central Europe, submitting to King Valdemar of Denmark and trying in vain to resolve all his political headaches, something interesting has been happening back in Estonia. The new King of Sweden, King John, had watched with interest the Danish King's moves in Estonia, and had decided that Sweden should get in on the action before all of Estonia was securely under Danish control. So he mustered an army, gathered a handful of bishops and a nobleman, the Duke of East Gottland, and sailed to Estonia to do some conquering.

The Swedish King, his army, his bishops and his Duke made landfall in Estonia at a place called Leal, which today is called Lihula. Now, the good news about Leal was that it was on the west coast of Estonia, a good distance away from Danish territory to the north. And there was a castle on the site, woohoo! The bad news about Leal was that it was just across from the island of Oesel, home to the still defiantly pagan Estonian pirates.

The King of Sweden decided that Leal would be the ideal place to begin the Swedish conquest of Estonia. He rebuilt much of the old castle which was on the site, and once he was sure that the stronghold would be adequate enough to protect Swedish interests, he installed the Duke of East Gottland in it, placed one of his bishops inside, garrisoned it with Swedish soldiers, and sailed back to sunny Sweden. I guess you all know what's going to happen next.

You guessed it, at the break of day during one morning in August 1220, the pirate ships of the pirates of Oesel landed at Leal and managed to offload a sizeable army of pagan Estonians, while the Swedes slept peacefully in their castle. The Estonians of Oesel surrounded the castle and set fire to it. The Swedes were way outnumbered by the pirates, who forced the men out of the castle with a combination of smoke and fire, and then proceeded to massacre them. Around 500 Swedes were killed, including the Duke and the Bishop, with only a handful of men managing to escape and make their way to a nearby Danish fort. In the words of Henry of Livonia and I quote, "The Swedes fell, killed by the Oeselians. The fort was captured, the Duke fell, and the Bishop, slain by fire and sword, entered, as we believe, the company of martyrs. About five hundred were slain, although a few of them escaped by flight and made their way to a Danish fort. All the rest perished by the edge of the sword. May their memory be blessed and their souls rest with Christ." End quote.

Pretty pleased with themselves for effectively booting Sweden out of Estonia quickly and decisively, the pirates of Oesel decided that maybe they could see if they couldn't also boot Denmark out of Estonia, since everything seemed to be going so well. They marched to the Danish stronghold at Reval and actually managed to besiege it for two weeks.

However, at the end of the two week period, the pirates spotted four ships sailing towards Reval. Fearing that it was the King of Denmark arriving with his army, they lifted the siege and retreated back to Oesel. This meant that they didn't succeed in taking Reval, but they did show everyone that the pirates of Oesel were a force to be reckoned with.

So, when Bishop Albert arrived back in Riga in May of 1221, that was the situation. The pirates of Oesel had managed to boot Sweden out of Estonia and had made a valiant but unsuccessful attempt to do the same to the Danes. So what was going on in Riga? Well, Riga was in a state of uproar. The citizens of Riga had all been scratching their heads in disbelief when the news came in that the Sword Brothers were now firmly allied to King Valdemar of Denmark, and that their Bishop Albert, the Bishop of Riga, the man who had tirelessly pursued their interests and their independence for more than twenty years, had just handed them all over on a platter to King Valdemar of Denmark. To say the people of Riga were unhappy about this development was an understatement. However, with the Sword Brothers on the side of the Danes, and their ability to mount any military resistance against the Danes curtailed by the political maneuvers off their Bishop, the only option available to the people of Riga was to cry "Havoc" and let slip the dogs of civic resistance. And that's exactly what they did.

King Valdemar had sent a representative to Riga to supervise the governing of Livonia. The local Rigans refused to have anything to do with him. The men of the Church refused to interact with him, the citizens refused to show him around the city, the merchants refused to do business with him. He was basically universally opposed, resisted and isolated by every single sector of Rigan society. The native Livonians, the native Letts, and the German churchmen, citizens, and merchants all did their utmost to make his task of supervising the governing of Livonia as difficult as possible. In the end, it was all too much, and the Danish representative decided to head back to Denmark. However, the German merchants refused to let him on board any of their ships which were sailing to Gottland. When the unfortunate man did manage to book passage on a ship, the merchants refused his request to be granted an experienced pilot for the ship, a person who knew of local conditions and could assist the captain to negotiate the treacherous local waters. As a result, the Danish representative had a really rough and really dangerous trip out of Riga, with the captain sailing blindly through contrary winds and opposing currents.

For some reason, this whole event causes Henry of Livonia to wax lyrical. He totally out-does himself and spends some time in his chronicle incorporating snippets of hymns and biblical quotes into his narrative, until it's quite astonishingly flowery and over the top. I haven't seen him do this before and I don't know why the Rigans forcing the Danish King's representative out of Livonia has unleashed such a tidal wave of emotion in him. Anyway, he's an expert to give you an idea of how Henry has recorded the event, and I quote. "He [that is the Danish representative] was going without a pilot in his ship and was tossed about by a contrary wind. He had come to Livonia, perhaps against the will of Him who rules the winds, and the winds therefore rose, not unjustly, against him. The Sun of Justice did not shine upon him because he had offended Mary his Mother, who was called Star of the Sea, and for this reason She would not show him the right way. Thus, even thus, the Star of the Sea always guards Livonia. Thus, even thus, the Lady of the World, the Empress of All Lands, always protects her special land. Thus, even thus, the Queen of Heaven rules over earthly kings." End quote. I could have gone on much longer, but you get the idea.

So, as Bishop Albert is sailing back to Riga, the citizens of Riga are now pondering what to do next. They know that they have treated the Danish King's representative very badly, and that when the said representative reaches the Danish court and reports this fact to King Valdemar, assuming of course that he makes it to Gottland alive having been forced to navigate the treacherous Baltic sea without a pilot, there is likely to be hell to pay. So representatives from all the different social groups in Riga made their way to the castle at Treiden to hold a meeting to decide how best to proceed, once the wrath of the Danish King inevitably came crashing down upon them. They decided to continue to resist, despite the obvious dangers present in taking this course of action. Interestingly, very interestingly in fact, they included the Sword Brothers amongst the groups they considered to be their enemy. So the men of Livonia who had joined this Livonian military Order were now so aligned with Danish interests and had so vehemently declared themselves as vassals of the Danish crown, that the citizens of Livonia and now viewing them as the enemy. Will this create some conflict and tensions in the city of Riga? You bet it will.

In response to this declaration, the Sword Brothers refused to take part in any civic resistance against Denmark, and even went so far as to detain some influential local elders so they were unable to attend the meeting at Treiden. In fact, in a few months' time, the Sword Brothers will be attacked by a bunch of Lithuanian fighters who had joined forces with some Russians from Novgorod, and Bishop Albert and the citizens of Riga will not raise a finger to assist them. Despite the fact that the Lithuanians were raiding into Livonian territory, the citizens of Riga sat back, whistled, and went about their daily tasks, while the Sword Brothers took a pummeling from the invaders. It was only after the Sword Brothers had suffered a humiliating defeat that the local Livonians, Letts and Christianized Estonians went on the attack, driving the invaders out of their territory.

While the citizens of Riga are flexing their collective muscles in Livonia, their rival the King of Denmark is flexing his muscles back in central Europe. In his book "The Baltic Crusade", William Urban reports that Bishop Bernard's son, Archbishop Gerhard II, the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen, has been encountering some problems. As you might recall, his Archbishopric stretched over territory in Saxony which was purely Saxon, and Saxon territory occupied by the Danish Crown. William Urban reports that the people of Hamburg were big fans of King Valdemar, and as a result Archbishop Gerhard had trouble governing the Hamburg chapter of his diocese. "Well", I hear you say, "Surely Bremen is still on his side, things can't be that bad." But yes, they were that bad. The citizens of Bremen actually rose in rebellion against some new taxes that had been imposed on them. Count Albert of Orlamunde came to the rescue but, as part of the agreement forged between the Archbishop and his rebellious citizens, Archbishop Gerhard was forced to destroy an important fortress at Harburg, which was near Hamburg.

All these dramas, in addition to constant pressure coming from Rome for him to provide extra financing for the Crusade to the Holy Land, meant that by the year 1221 Archbishop Gerhard was forced into a corner. With his Archbishopric beset by rebellions and internal strife, and with his coffers virtually empty, Archbishop Gerhard was forced to follow the same path as that recently trodden by Bishop Albert. Archbishop Gerhard conceded defeat, and submitted his powerful Archbishopric to King Valdemar II of Denmark.

Now, at this point, King Valdemar II of Denmark must be feeling pretty pleased with himself. His political maneuvering and intrigue has paid off handsomely, and he really is gaining the reputation as a monarch of unstoppable force and power. Full of confidence from his recent successes, in the year 1222 King Valdemar made a fateful decision. With

everything going so well for him in central Europe, the Danish King decided that it was time to sprinkle some of his magic monarch dust over a region that hadn't quite been pulled into line. Yes, in the year 1222, King Valdemar decided that it was time for him to travel to Estonia. In fact, King Valdemar was so confident of his ability to prevail no matter what the situation, that the place in Estonia he decided to go and plant the Danish flag was the island of Oesel. He gathered an army together and, along with Count Albert of Orlamunde and his army, set sail for the home of the Estonian pirates. Now it seems that King Valdemar had sent word to Riga that Bishop Albert was to muster the fighting men of Riga and also make his way to Oesel, so that the pirates would be fighting the combined armies of Denmark, Holstein and Livonia.

King Valdemar and his Danish forces arrived first and busied themselves building a stone stronghold on Oesel. Not surprisingly, the men of Oesel attacked the Danes and their fort, and actually looked like they might defeat the King and his army, when Count Albert arrived and turned the tide of the battle. The King and the Count were managing to hold their own against the pirates when Bishop Albert arrived. Now here is where things start to get interesting. King Valdemar seems to be as pleased as Punch to see his Livonian subjects, so recently having been brought under the wings of Denmark, but he is shocked to find that the feeling isn't mutual. No, to Valdemar surprise, every single Livonian who has traveled to Oesel, from Bishop Albert right down to the lowly local Livonian fighters, are all united and of one voice, and that voice is saying "We do not want to be ruled by Denmark."

Now, King Valdemar is not accustomed to set backs. Here he is on the island of Oesel. His men have just been within a whisker of being defeated by the Estonian pirates, and now he hears the startling and shocking news that the people of Livonia, the place he has recently claimed for Denmark, don't actually want to be ruled by him. King Valdemar is so shocked that he does something entirely unexpected. He gives Livonia back to Bishop Albert and restores the regions of Saccalia and Ungannia in Estonia to the Sword Brothers, with the sole condition that everyone swear fealty to Denmark, and assist the Danish Crown militarily if requested. Bishop Albert and the Master of the Sword Brothers both agreed, and Livonia therefore managed to maintain its independence.

Now this whole incident is a strange little hiccup for Denmark, which is seen as heralding a period of struggle and strife for the previously unstoppable Danish King. So with Danish setbacks on the horizon, with a reinvigorated Livonia, and with the Sword Brothers suddenly in charge of a goodly portion of Estonia, interesting times are set to continue in the Baltic states. Join me next week to see the drama unfold. Until next week, bye for now.

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