RENAISSANCE HUMANISM IN PRUSSIA

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Thesis

Scholars of Humanism and the Enlightenment are familiar with Prussia as the birthplace of Kant, Herder, and Georg Voigt. That they are not particularly aware that Prussia was the home of earlier humanist thought is understandable, since it produced no internationally recognized masters of literature, philology, or criticism during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Nevertheless, renaissance humanism was important in Prussia because local traditions encouraged the adoption of a humanistic approach to life and learning. In effect, humanism and regional traditions had a symbiotic relationship during the Renaissance and Reformation. These three essays describe that relationship.

As a case in point, Nicholas Copernicus was the product of Prussian humanism. Born in in 1473 in the city Germans called Thorn and Poles knew as Toruń, educated in Cracow and Italy, he spent his life in the bishopric of Ermland, serving as an episcopal administrator, developing a system of monetary laws, and formulating his astronomical theories. He was also a humanist, a man of wide-ranging talents and interests. He was Polish in that he was born, educated, and lived in lands subject to the king of Poland; he was German in that Royal Prussia was a largely German-speaking region with historical ties to the Holy Roman Empire. In fact, Copernicus was neither wholly one nor the other: he was a Prussian, reared and living in a regional culture with traditions of its own. If the thesis of these essays is correct, it was not completely by accident that such a brilliant star of western civilization appeared in the eastern sky of Prussia.

Humanists were appreciated in Prussia because rulers there saw the benefits to be gained by hiring men of broad education who could perform a variety of tasks which could not be done by knights belonging to a military order or by traditional churchmen. Moreover, both the grandmasters of the Teutonic Order and the kings of Poland desired to be recognized as patrons of art, literature, and

JBS, Vol. XXII, No. 1 (Spring 1991)  29
science. The humanists deepened and changed this appreciation for the arts, but they were even more important because they weakened the hold of outmoded traditions on government and put into political office men educated in Italian, Polish and German universities; these men in their turn reformed the laws, taxes, and courts, encouraged the spread of schools, and made new ideas and practices so respectable and commonplace that later it was easy for their rulers to introduce further innovations encompassed in the Reformation. Copernicus' discoveries were part of a secularization of thought and practice, justified by classical example, and spread by means of an exchange of correspondence between educated men in Poland and the Empire.¹

In this sense the Renaissance was an era in which many educated men adopted new ways of thinking about themselves and about the world. Such intellectual processes cannot easily be divided, dissected, and inspected, because the Renaissance is, as Jean Gadol puts it, a unity.²

Definition

My use of the term Humanism is that of Jacob Burckhardt, the great nineteenth-century Swiss historian. Burckhardt said that educated men had acquired a dynamic new awareness of the world around them; he further stated that this liberation of their minds resulted in the new art, new manners, and new approaches to government that we associate with the Renaissance and Humanism.³ Modern scholars tend to associate Humanism only with the study of literature (and one branch of philosophy, morals).⁴ There are reasons for choosing the older, Burckhardtian model. First, for all their faults and exaggerations, Burckhardt's ideas have caught the imagination of the public and historians alike; there is every reason to believe that a hundred years from now our successors will still use his book as the starting point for discussions about the meaning of the Renaissance. Secondly, the emphasis in the nineteenth century on art for its own sake provoked many people to envision artists and intellectuals as congenitally and necessarily out of step with manly activity and progress. This is unfortunate. If the Renaissance has given us any concept worth preserving today, it is that of the "universal man," the person who is fully conversant with art, literature, science, and the study of human behavior. The person trained in the liberal arts who also believes that all knowledge and wisdom are within human grasp is a humanist, one who not only understands the relationship of one field of knowledge to the others, but one who believes there is no challenge man cannot master if properly educated and intelligently led; consequently, the liberally trained "universal man" can oversee the work of the ant-like specialists who do not see the broader implications of their actions. Moreover, the humanist can communicate his knowledge by speaking and writing; hence, he is the ideal administrator, advisor, counselor. It may be that some of the so-called universal men of the Renaissance were not humanists, and vice versa, but Leon Battista Alberti was both a humanist and a universal man, and so was the ideal courtier described by Castiglione.
Renaissance Humanism in Prussia

Most modern scholars concede that human activity is so complex that humanism did have significant influence outside literature. This was especially true of the study of rhetoric. Bouswma, whose booklet on humanism has been printed by the American Historical Association, says:

*A rhetorician had to be a man of almost universal competence. Since a rhetorician needed to appeal to men as he found them, in all their limitations, complexity, and variety, he had to develop an imaginative understanding of human psychology and behavior, both in individuals and in groups. And because any kind of knowledge might be required for a particular rhetorical task, a rhetorician had to take all learning for his province, including logic.*

If this is true, then the term humanist, when used in reference to rhetoricians, returns almost to the Burchardtian description that has been so fruitful in defending literature against the technocrats and practical men who see no point in wasting time on mere books. If the term humanist is to have some meaning in today's world, it must be defined as the employment of the knowledge and literature of the past in the service of the present. I believe that such was precisely the intent of the Renaissance scholars who wrote books and established schools, who served princes and bishops, and who took an interest in art, law, theology, alchemy, mathematics, and politics...without losing their love for literature and intelligent conversation. Such, at least, was the attitude of the humanists in Prussia.

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Prussia in the
Fifteenth
Century

Poland

names in italics = bishoprics

0  50 miles
0 100 kilometers
EARLY HUMANISM IN PRUSSIA

PART ONE: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. What is Humanism?

A modern specialist on Humanism, Myron Gilmore, described the humanists of the early Renaissance in this fashion:

(They were reformers) inspired by the new scholarship and the new philosophy. They were above all distinguished by a belief in the power of the human intellect to bring about institutional and moral improvement. The new Greek and Hebrew learning, they held, could be productive only of good, even when it seemed at first glance farthest removed from the Christian tradition. The program of Christian humanism was built on a conviction of the importance of the rational faculties of man and it exalted the role of an intellectual aristocracy. It emphasized nature rather than grace, ethics rather than theology and action rather than contemplation.

Humanism is an attitude emphasizing knowledge which affects human behavior and the ability to understand nature. While concerned about God and the hereafter, the followers of Humanism are not mystics, theologians, or churchmen; they are rather the opposite—they seek to understand this world, not the next one, and they find the best guides to this purpose in ancient literature, art, and science.

Humanist thought in northern Europe originated in the educational system of the medieval Church. Many churchmen fortunate enough to attend Italian and German universities before assuming office in the secular and regular branches of the Church were first made aware of the graceful style and the persuasive nobility of ancient philosophy through the few Latin classics then available. Even earlier, before churchmen attended universities—even before there were universities—there were teachers teaching grammar and rhetoric through classical texts we consider important in forming humanistic attitudes. Because the churchmen conducted business in Latin and read for pleasure, enlightenment, and spiritual comfort in that language, they acquired and regularly used a language with its roots and sustaining power in Roman literature and culture. In the study of rhetoric there was a potential for the partial abandonment of Scholasticism in favor of Humanism.

The Latin language carried with it the seeds of humanist tradition. Thus, from the time of the Christianization of Poland (c. 966) and the crusade to Prussia (c. 1230), east central Europe was being readied for the flowering of scholarship and learning characteristic of the Renaissance era. The approach to life and learning that we call Humanism was, fundamentally, an outgrowth of medieval developments that proceeded at an uneven pace, affecting some individuals in one way—

JBS, Vol. XXII, No. 1 (Spring 1991)
say, an appreciation of good style—and others in different ways—perhaps a widened perception of moral responsibility, or an understanding of history. Those who limit the definition of Humanist to those individuals who immersed themselves in classical studies find that there were very few Humanists (and almost none in the North until quite late); those who include the rhetoricians and moralists find them present in Germany much earlier and in greater numbers.

Scholasticism was not the antithesis of Humanism. Too many individuals thought like humanists and wrote like scholastics, or vice versa, for us to imagine that a clean line can be drawn between them. No humanist could ignore the importance of logic and the citation of authorities; and no scholastic could deny the existence of alternative routes to knowledge (as in the case of mysticism). Many men then, as today, believed in essentially contradictory ideas. This did not prevent them from attempting to improve their understanding of the world and their practical skills, for at some point most of us have to come to terms with the limitations of logic in dealing with matters both of this world and the next. When we reflect how complex human beings can be today, we should not expect that we can easily divide medieval and renaissance men into defenders of the outdated past, on the one hand, and pioneers of the future on the other.²

The transition from the potential through intermediate stages to the actual in humanistic thought is one of the main themes of these essays. The Teutonic Knights in Prussia had long sought to enhance their prestige through leadership in the arts and architecture; they continued this into the era of humanism, when two humanists specializing in rhetoric, Laurentius Blumenau and Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, helped to popularize study in Italian universities. A second theme concerns regional traditions which led the rulers in Prussia—both German and Polish—to use humanists as administrators instead of scholastically trained clerics or uneducated nobles.

These developments did not come easily or suddenly. The study of arts and letters in northern Europe had been limited by the lack of patronage and intellectual stimulus. Consequently, there was no place where northern scholars and artists could compare themselves to their Italian contemporaries, for neither secular nor religious leaders of the North were able to offer the money or the intellectual incentives needed to achieve that type of success. Patronage was conservative in taste and ungenerous with cash. There were only a few universities north of the Alps and east of the Rhine, and while some good professors taught in them, the general quality of instruction was unpredictable and the degrees lacked prestige. Prague and Leipzig attracted many students, but this was because they were nearby and relatively inexpensive, not because their reputation was particularly good. Few Italian students were attracted to them.

From the late fourteenth century Polish students looked upon the Jagiellonian University in Cracow as the most important center of learning in east central Europe; it had been founded to make education available in the national capital and thereby give prestige to the monarchy. This university, built on solid foundations of cultural patronage, had made Cracow the center of Polish intellectual and artistic life long before. The great rival of Cracow for cultural leadership
in the North had been Marienburg, which was not a large city or even an episcopal seat; it was merely a large castle and administrative center near the shores of the Baltic Sea. It was the headquarters of the Teutonic Knights who had conquered Prussia and established cities, bishoprics and convents. When the two states of Prussia and Poland competed for regional leadership, that competition became important for the support given to humanist studies. The almost intangible quality of prestige relied upon by the kings of Poland and the grandmasters of the Teutonic Knights to win friends and impress subjects could be measured through the influence of their rhetoricians almost as well as through the success of their armies.

This competition for prestige was not an equal one, because the Teutonic Order did not have a university. Grandmasters had contemplated establishing one in Culm, a city on the Polish border which was claimed by the King of Poland from time to time; but they always came to the decision that such an institution would be too expensive. The grandmasters would compete instead through the brilliance of their architects, artists, and rhetoricians, in which areas their prestige remained high.

II. Political History of Prussia

Poland and Prussia were not always rivals. For half a century following the arrival of the Teutonic Order in Prussia the two states were allies of necessity. The pagan enemies in Prussia, Lithuania, and Mongol-dominated Russia were too powerful to be faced alone. Only when those enemies were worn down, and Poland had simultaneously recovered from a long period of civil strife, did the two Christian states begin to mistrust each other. One reason for the suspicion was personal: the Polish king, Ladislas Lokietek (1306-1333), reunified Poland in part by utilizing a nationalist anti-German feeling. This had frightened the German knights of the Teutonic Order. Another reason was ideological: in his long campaign to win the crown, King Ladislas had been principally concerned with conflicts involving the Dukes of Silesia and the Kings of Bohemia and Hungary; consequently, he had given little concern to the Lithuanians. The Teutonic Knights considered his failure to cooperate fully in the crusade against that group of pagans as little less than treason against Christendom. A third reason was territorial: even when he was only Duke of Kujavia, Ladislas had never given up a claim to an inch of territory he considered his, and he now seized upon claims to border territories which the Teutonic Knights believed rightfully theirs. The culmination of a long period of growing tensions came in 1309. After a rebellion in Pomerelia (West Prussia) had been quelled by the Teutonic Order at Ladislas' request, he refused to reimburse the order for its expenses and demanded that the territories be handed over to him. The Teutonic Knights, outraged at what they regarded as royal arrogance, defied him by seizing Danzig and purchasing the Brandenburg claims to Pomerelia. The king sought to reclaim Pomerelia by force but failed, and afterward no peace agreement could be reached. Although truces interrupted hostilities, a state of war existed continuously between Poland and Prussia for the remainder of the king's long lifetime.
Such hostility between the two principal Christian states in the region was a source of worry to numerous popes and even several Holy Roman Emperors. Time after time papal legates came north to seek a peaceful resolution of the conflict so that all potential crusaders in the area could fight together against the pagans in Lithuania, the Orthodox Christians in Russia, and the Moslems coming north from Turkey. Despite those efforts and also negotiations at church councils, at the papal curia, and at neutral sites, the mediators achieved nothing. Apparently, nothing but a Polish victory in its efforts to obtain Pomerellia or a renunciation of Polish claims could bring peace. In 1343 Ladislas' heir, Casimir the Great, made peace with the Teutonic Knights by renouncing his claims to Pomerellia, and the peace held even after 1386, when Duke Jagiello (Jogaila) of Lithuania married the ruler of Poland and changed Polish policy from neutrality toward the crusades against the pagans to one of supporting the newly baptized Lithuanians.

In 1410, King Jagiello, with the aid of Duke Vitold (Vitautas) won a great victory over the Teutonic Knights on the battlefield at Tannenberg/Grunwald. Together Jagiello and Vitold had assembled one of the greatest armies seen in medieval Europe with which to smash the largest force ever raised by the Teutonic Order. However, they failed to reap significant territorial benefits because they could not capture the large castles defending central Prussia. Their feudal levies went home, either to defend other threatened frontiers or because their time of service had expired. The Teutonic Knights then recruited reinforcements and drove out the few remaining invaders. Thus the Teutonic Knights put off the day of reckoning for another half century. The Poles and Lithuanians had to mark time, which they were willing to do because they could see, from 1410 on, that the Teutonic Knights were weakening year by year, and the time would come when they could occupy the lands they considered theirs.

This feeling was all the stronger because of the growing economic ties between Polish and Prussian cities: Kujavia supplied grain to Danzig and sold the excellent Bromberg beer; Great Poland sent grain, cattle and plain cloth; Masovia sent wood and cattle; and even distant Little Poland shipped lead and grain down the Vistula. The immigration of peasants and burghers across the borders made the regions resemble each other more every year—Germans were predominant in the cities, Poles in the countryside in Calm and Pomerellia; German-speaking peasants formed a majority only in the coastal provinces east of the Vistula River.

Poland's dependence on the markets in Thorn, Danzig, and Elbing also represented a dangerous situation for the crown—an interruption of commerce by the Teutonic Knights would have severe economic consequences for the Polish merchants. The king recognized the need to secure access to the West Prussian markets; war was not the way, at least not yet, but time was on the side of the king. As the years passed and especially after Jagiello died in 1430, the feelings of the West Prussian merchants changed, and they no longer feared the Poles as they once did.

Those were difficult years for the Teutonic Knights. The seemingly invincible armies of knightly monks had lost the genius for victory, and internal unrest disturbed the discipline that had allowed small forces to conquer and defend vast
Early Humanism in Prussia

territories. The grandmaster became despotic, cruel, and arrogant, provoking his
subjects into revolt. The disrepute into which the knights fell was all the greater
in contrast with their glorious past.5

III. The Teutonic Order

The Teutonic Order had been founded during the Third Crusade. In 1190, as
the armies of the German, French, and English crusaders camped before Acre,
suffering in the heat and squalor, dying by the thousands of disease, the duty of
attending to the sick and wounded fell to the crusading orders then in existence,
the Templars and the Hospitalers, which were composed largely of French (a
nationality which included many subjects of England then, since the king of
England ruled more of France than did the king in Paris). These French orders
naturally took care of their noble countrymen first. Middle-class crusaders from
north Germany, exasperated by what they considered to be an insulting neglect,
founded a hospital order of their own, calling it the German Order (the Teutonic
Order). The members of the new religious order remained in the Holy Land after
the main body of crusaders went home; and they apparently sought to increase
their prestige by identifying with an older order of the same name that had virtually
disappeared at the time Jerusalem had fallen.

In 1197 another army of German crusaders came to the Holy Land but lacked
sufficient warriors to win a victory over the Moslems. Observing that some of the
members of the German Order serving as hospital orderlies were knights and
wanting them to fight in their army, they petitioned the pope to permit the German
Order to assume a military role, as the knights at the hospitals of the Templars and
Hospitalers had done decades earlier. The pope agreed, and from that date the
Teutonic Order can be called the Teutonic Knights—although officially the name
did not change.

The membership of the Teutonic Knights was divided into three categories:
1) The knights, who as monks (actually friars, since they lived in the world rather
than in cloisters) took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and who promised
to conduct warfare against the enemies of the Church; relatively few in number,
they earned a great reputation in warfare for their skill in battle, their unsurpassed
discipline, and their willingness to die for their cause. 2) The priests supervised
the spiritual welfare of the membership and were responsible for much of the
correspondence and political organization. 3) The serving brothers, often of
middle-class origin, who staffed the minor offices, ran the hospitals, prepared and
served the meals, cared for the animals, washed the laundry, cleaned the
bathhouses, and fought alongside the knights as men-at-arms and light cavalry.
These three classes of men lived for war and prayer. And for a century they had
little opportunity to enjoy luxuries or have any relaxation of discipline.

The strong internal discipline and organization of the Teutonic Knights could
be seen as a northern expression of the spirit of scholasticism—the triumph of
logic and centralization, the imposition of the principles of Roman law. While this
centralization could be traced to Friedrich of Hohenstaufen, whose Italian govern-
ment was a model of efficiency, it was also an extension of ideas discussed among churchmen and laity at several levels of society.

Governed by elected grandmasters who ruled like constitutional monarchs with the assistance of a council of officers and periodic meetings of representatives of the membership, the Teutonic Knights managed to avoid great internal crises. Unexpected deaths, even assassinations, hardly disturbed them. The mixed constitution provided for advice and counsel, deliberation, effective communication, and limiting local autonomy. Upward mobility was possible for gifted knights, but birth remained important for promotion—as was true in all feudal societies. Since the membership was recruited in the Holy Roman Empire, largely from Germany, it was important to maintain the prestige of the order at the highest level possible. Any decline in popular favor could be measured almost instantly in fewer enlistments and fewer gifts and bequests from friends and admirers.

The principal mission of the Teutonic Knights was to fight in the Holy Land. That mission remained foremost until the fall of Acre in 1289. The secondary missions of the order—in Transylvania early in the thirteenth century, in Prussia from 1230 on, and in Livonia after 1238—did not become primary until after 1300, the grandmaster’s change of residence from Venice to Marienburg in 1309 being symbolic of this change in mission.

From the earliest days of the Prussian conquest the Teutonic Knights had encouraged immigrants from Germany, Poland, and Pomerania to settle in the underpopulated regions. By generous grants of lands and privileges they attracted burghers and peasants. Cities and villages had sprung up—small towns by Italian standards, but nonetheless important ones for the economy and culture of the future. On the other hand, there was only a small settlement of immigrant nobles, because the Teutonic Knights did not want to rule over a feudal state. By holding a near monopoly of legislation, taxation, and justice, the Teutonic Knights created a state which was unusually effective and centralized for the period. They relied upon the citizenry of the towns, the native converts, and small bands of crusaders to provide auxiliary cavalry and infantry but gave them little official voice in the management of affairs. Government was the prerogative and duty of the knightly monks and their bureaucrats. They listened to advice and passed wise laws and regulations but did not allow the burghers or nobles to forget who held the reins of authority.

By 1290 the Teutonic Knights had conquered all of Prussia and most of Livonia. A formidable barrier of forests, swamps, and rivers lay between the Christian outposts and the nearest villages and castles of the Lithuanian pagans. The military arrangements that had worked so well for the conquest of Prussia proved unequal to the needs of offensive warfare; deeper in the interior; the burghers and natives could not leave their fields and workshops for the necessary weeks. Moreover, the old justification that the crusaders were defending converts could no longer be made with the fervent conviction of past decades.

In the fourteenth century the Teutonic Knights developed a new means of warfare, one more suited to the distant campaigns across the border wilderness. They recruited professional troops: crusaders from Bohemia, France, England,
Scotland, and Germany; and mercenaries from all of western Europe. Seeing the
chivalric interests of these secular knights, they emphasized show and spectacle,
provided banquets and entertainment, and promised that participants would meet
famous and powerful nobles who were fulfilling crusading vows. Concepts of
chivalry thus came to be dominant in the counsels of the order.

The grandmasters understood there was a connection between war, chivalry,
and the welfare of the burghers. They valued burghers for their willingness to pay
taxes and to raise large sums of money in emergencies. Since the Teutonic Order
was becoming famous for its lavish expenditures on chivalry, the grandmasters
took care to curry favor in towns and to support the interests of the Hanseatic
League. They consulted the burghers and secular knights and from time to time
called together a representative body to debate policy and pass laws. Low taxes
and good laws were the basis of the relationship between the grandmasters and the
citizenry.

The Teutonic Knights survived the great crises of the fourteenth century—the
Avignon papacy, the plague, the economic dislocation—without significant loss
of purpose or identity, and even made some slight territorial advances in
Samogitia, but they were adversely affected by one of the Christian achievements
of the era—the conversion of the Lithuanians following the 1386 marriage of
Duke Jagiello of Lithuania to Queen Jadwiga of Poland. That dynastic union
threatened the very existence of the crusade, first in eliminating the justification
for the holy war, then in unifying the military forces of Lithuania and Poland. As
the Teutonic Knights built larger and more elaborate brick fortresses (the castle at
Marienburg was one of the largest and most luxurious in the world), they saw a
changing world from their ramparts. But as the fourteenth century became the
fifteenth, they ceased to adapt to the changes. Having achieved all their goals,
including the conquest of Samogitia, the pagan heartland in western Lithuania,
they changed their role from an offensive force to a defensive one. Chivalry was
no longer sufficient justification for the crusade, nor when the Turkish menace was
becoming ever more obvious and Samogitian rebels were loudly declaring that
they were now converts to Christianity. After their defeat at Tannenberg in 1410,
the Teutonic Knights remained on the defensive. The First Peace of Thorn (1411)
burdened them with a heavy financial indemnity to be paid King Jagiello, and
subsequently they could not afford mercenaries or recruit crusaders in sufficient
numbers to challenge him on the battlefield again, the giant castles alone
permitting them to hold their lands at all.4

IV. The Teutonic Order in Decline

The leadership of the Teutonic Knights failed in this era. Perhaps the
grandmasters merely reflected the regressive instincts of the order’s knightly members,
who saw every change as a threat to their way of life. Indeed, life had become
comfortable in the chivalric era from 1330 to 1390, and the knights had come to
appreciate the fine meals, the heavy beer, the warm baths, and the commodious
lodgings now available. They had come to expect victories. With unbelieving eyes
they saw the money for such luxuries disappear with their military glory. 1410 was the watershed: before that date money had flowed into their coffers, now it flowed out. The grandmasters became more punitive concerning discipline: members who failed to live chastely, to follow orders unquestioningly, to achieve the impossible on the battlefield were replaced, punished, humiliated. Never were the personal standards so high. Never was the spiritual content that gave meaning to the outward virtues so low. There was chastity without love or self-sacrifice. The leaders could not inculcate those quiet virtues because they lacked them themselves. The fate of the heroic order resembled that of Sparta in its decline: seeking to regain a position of power in a world that had changed and left them behind, they resorted to excesses of discipline; and they fell to quarreling among themselves, thinking that personal shortcomings and petty sins were somehow responsible for their troubles.

Disaster stalked the grandmasters like avenging furies. The heroic Heinrich von Plauen (1410-1413), who had saved Marienburg and ultimately all Prussia from the Polish and Lithuanian attacks, was removed in a coup d'état by Michael Küchmeister (1414-1422), who could never understand why he was not trusted thereafter or why the vacillating policies he adopted were unable to inspire confidence and wide-spread support. Paul von Russdorf (1422-1441) provoked a revolt by the German and Livonian branches of the order against his efforts to gather authority into his own hands. His dictatorial and paranoid nature was combined with a puritanical concern for personal behavior that crushed independent thought and initiative among the knights and priests. Konrad von Erlichshausen (1441-1449) healed the schism with a hands-off policy that had the unfortunate result of encouraging nobles and burghers in Prussia to resist the continued collection of emergency war taxes. When Ludwig von Erlichshausen (1450-1457) sought to reverse the trend toward representative government, he provoked the Thirteen Years' War (1454-1466), which forms the background to the events discussed in this essay.

V. The Kingdom of Poland

Poland was unable or unwilling to profit from the Prussian difficulties in order to press its advantage in numbers, wealth, and unity to destroy the Teutonic Knights. Although King Jagiello had the best opportunity to obtain a total victory, he was unable to maintain his alliance with Duke Witold, with the result that he could not rely on the aid of Lithuanian armies. Jagiello's successors had similar problems. The Polish-Lithuanian union was ineffective until death removed the generations which could remember the many conflicts between the two states.

Outwardly the Polish kings who succeeded Jagiello had to contend with the Ottoman Turks, who were advancing rapidly from the south. King Ladislas III (1434-1444) died at the battle of Varna in the most significant crusading effort of the era, and his brother, Casimir IV (1445-1492), cautiously sought to stem the Turkish advance without risking a similar disaster. Talk of a united European resistance to the Turks was in the air, but not even the efforts of the papal legate,
Early Humanism in Prussia

Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, could help the Byzantines in 1453 when the Turks closed in on Constantinople. The Poles watched in horror, as did all concerned Europeans, as the Turks besieged, then took, the ancient Christian bastion. No one could act alone, and no one seemed able to bring a coalition of Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Italians, and Frenchmen into being. Pope Nicholas V (1445-1455) preached a crusade, but in vain. Practical difficulties abounded, not the least of which was the effort by the Holy Roman Emperor, Friedrich III (1440-1493), to assist the Teutonic Knights in regaining their strength so that their armies could distract the Polish king from Friedrich’s efforts to obtain possession of Silesia, Bohemia, and Hungary. The Polish king responded by encouraging the burghers and nobles in Prussia to seek independence from the Teutonic Knights and obtain the autonomy enjoyed by many free cities in the Holy Roman Empire.

The conflict of central authority and the estates of nobles and burghers was a phenomenon present in most European states. Nowhere was it more important than in Poland. Polish nobles resisted royal ambitions to act independently of the parliamentary body that approved taxes, wars, and new laws. In fact, they tended to see every effort to give leadership to the nation as a threat to their own rights and privileges. Unwilling to see royal power extended in any way, they refused to participate in or support wars in Prussia that might give their monarchs more lands, more taxes, and more prestige.

The selfish policies of the Polish magnates (as the greater lords are often called) not only frustrated royal efforts in foreign affairs, but they periodically frightened German-speaking farmers, knights, and burghers, who could easily imagine the loss of their fundamental freedoms to those lords. These groups looked upon the Teutonic Knights as a potential ally, should the magnates attempt to subject them to the same laws and customs which repressed the lower and middle classes of Poland. The grandmasters fondly but inaccurately interpreted this attitude as a real desire of the Royal Prussians to become their subjects again.

Encouraged by the external and internal problems of Poland, the grandmasters of Prussia dreamed of regaining the power and prestige their predecessors had possessed in the fourteenth century.

Given a situation in which Polish kings and Prussian grandmasters were in financial and political difficulty, it is at first glance difficult to see how or why they would support humanist scholars and rhetoricians and create centers of humanist learning in Cracow and Prussia. Yet they did, impelled by an internal logic that can be understood by looking once more at the traditional practices of the Polish kings and the Teutonic Order.
PART TWO: ORIGINS OF PRUSSIAN HUMANISM

1. Prussian leadership in northern culture

During the Teutonic Knights' first century in Prussia their grandmasters had not concerned themselves with intellectual or artistic matters. They had been preoccupied with defeating their pagan enemies and with settling immigrants from Germany, Pomerania, and Poland in underpopulated regions. Their achievements in these endeavors made their successors so wealthy and respected that later generations could wage successful wars against a variety of powerful enemies—pagan Lithuanians, Orthodox Russians, and Roman Catholic Poles.¹

Throughout this time the Teutonic Order was an international organization. Although almost all the membership was of German birth or spoke German, many of the knights lived abroad and managed lands for the order in the Holy Roman Empire, Greece, France, Spain, and Livonia. From origins and an early history which were similar in many respects to the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers, the Teutonic Order became unique through its acquisition of territorial states in Prussia and Livonia and its relative freedom from noble or ecclesiastical supervision. Nominally subject to the Holy Roman emperor and the pope, the Teutonic Order was in reality independent; what seemed to be a military arm of the Church and the Empire was in truth an autonomous state run by a small, effective clerical bureaucracy.

The grandmasters of the order and the bishops in their lands built castles, churches, and hospitals which impressed visiting crusaders from Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, and served as models for future construction throughout the Baltic. They celebrated the knightly virtues at a Table of Honor—a sumptuous banquet in the style of King Arthur—held at the conclusion of raids into pagan Lithuania (and famous to us through Chaucer's Knight, who was frequently honored at this banquet as the foremost warrior present on crusade). They encouraged the production of literature, especially of histories. In short, for almost exactly one century, from 1309 to 1410, the Teutonic Order and its grandmasters enjoyed power, fame, and wealth. By personal example and by sponsorship they created a small northern court renaissance.

This era of greatness came to an abrupt end in 1410 when the knights were overwhelmed on the battlefield of Tannenberg. By 1450 the order was on the brink of bankruptcy—without money, without friends, and without a sense of purpose or usefulness.

Successive grandmasters did not accept this as the proper order of affairs. They refused to acknowledge Poland's superiority, despite that kingdom's greater resources. This would be an admission that the crusading mission in the Baltic had run its course and that the Teutonic Knights should seek a new field for their crusading energies. Rather than acknowledge this harsh truth, they redoubled their efforts to recover their military glory and lead Europe in chivalric excess and splendor. They increased taxes, checked the spiritual and moral condition of the
Early Humanism in Prussia

members, and asked traditional supporters for money, privileges, and favors. They supported artists, scholars, and writers even during the worst of financial crises, in times when less ambitious men might have abandoned efforts to maintain cultural leadership in order to concentrate on warfare.

The grandmasters maintained students on scholarship in Italy throughout this period—in fact, they seem to have increased the number of students sent to the South. Despite their own desperate financial problems, they provided these students with incomes, housing, and occasionally employment.

The bishops supported students as well. Some students supported by the grandmasters were given prebends in Prussian cathedral chapters, so that, technically, they were from the diocese of Culm, Pomesania, Samland, or Ermland. These bishops had long been supporters of education and the arts. Uniformly they were men who had grown up in Germany, had studied in German universities, and had been consecrated into the priesthood before joining the Teutonic Order.

The Teutonic Knights controlled three bishoprics, which made it necessary for the bishops and most of the canons of these cathedral chapters to join their order, but they had been unable to incorporate the largest bishopric, that of Ermland; moreover, the canons were never fully integrated into the knightly membership of the order, since their social origins, their interests, and their duties were so different. The canons had lands of their own to administer, and although they had religious duties, they were university men rather than priests. They had reasons of their own for collecting paintings and books, building great brick churches, and resisting the efforts of the grandmasters to tax their resources. Moreover, unlike the order's knights, many canons had family ties to the burghers and secular knights of Prussia. Through their relatives and friends they were part of a great mercantile network extending from Russia to the Low Countries—they understood the impact the grandmasters' tariff policies were having on the welfare of the country. As a result, each grandmaster had difficulties with the canons, who tried to protect their posts from his authority and disagreed with many of his policies. It became increasingly more difficult for the grandmasters at the death of each bishop, because the canons wished to use their rarely exercised right to elect their bishop, while the grandmasters saw in their right to nominate the bishop the last hold they possessed over vital territories.

The Bishopric of Ermland was the most independent of the four in Prussia. It had never been completely subject to the grandmaster, even though the bishops had been dependable allies and advisors for many years. In 1450 the aged Franz Kuhlschmalz (1424-1457) proved more energetic in defending the order's interests than grandmaster Ludwig von Erlichshausen, but even he was unable to persuade a majority of his canons to support his efforts. Only in the area of giving students scholarships for study in Italy did he win their cooperation, perhaps because some of them benefitted personally, perhaps because they could see the obvious advantages of having a chapter with a properly trained membership.

The ties to Italy were long-standing and of great importance. Since the thirteenth century the grandmasters had maintained a staff of lawyers (procurators) at the Curia, supervised by an official with the title of procurator general.
These officials saw that the order’s far-flung interests were protected and that the grandmaster, the Livonian master, and the German master were kept informed about events in Italy. The procurators general aided students at the universities and were responsible for providing them with funds. Students often lived in the order’s convents in Padua and Bologna, and, when traveling, stayed in the convents in Venice, Rome, the summer papal retreats, and in Avignon. They were joined by students from Danzig, Thorn, Elbing, Königsberg, and Dorpat—cities subject to or allied with the Teutonic Order.

Very important to guarding the grandmaster’s interests was the Cardinal protector, who was responsible for the direct representation of his views to the pope and the cardinals. From 1437 to 1458 this was Domenico Capranica, whose secretary for a brief period was Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini. An exceptionally hard-working man, Domenico earned his deserved salary of one hundred ducats and numerous small presents. His responsibilities included determining that the popes appointed the right men to bishoprics in Prussia and Livonia, that lawsuits by disgruntled citizens were settled, and that Polish claims to all of West Prussia and parts of East Prussia were deferred indefinitely. The procurator general assisted him by providing background information, documents, and detailed instructions. Often the procurator general gave presents to reward the order’s friends and to encourage the harassment of its enemies.

The numerous lawsuits provided an exposure to Italy for many Poles, Lithuanians, citizens and canons from Prussia, and occasionally some Teutonic Knights. These rarely resolved lawsuits were seldom forgotten and never taken lightly. The litigation provided generations of Italian lawyers, inkeepers, and landlords with a livelihood.

It is such lawsuits and the coincidental vacancies in Ermland which bring two early humanists to our attention. The first is Laurentius Blumenau (c.1420-1484), an advisor to the grandmaster; the second is Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (later, 1458-1464, Pope Pius II). These two men can be said to have brought humanist letters and rhetoric to Ermland and Prussia, thus preparing the way both for the secular reorganization of the state and for the education of Nicholas Copernicus.

II. Laurentius Blumenau: a Lawyer on the Make

It has been said that there were three generations of humanists in Germany—a small number of pioneers, a large number of scholars who spread the ideas through schools and universities, and a group of young reformers who brought about the Reformation.

Laurentius Blumenau was the most important pioneer. He was from a prominent burgher family of Danzig, the leading mercantile city in the Baltic. Presumably educated in the city school, he attended German universities under some understanding with the grandmaster (or his chaplain, who managed the correspondence) that he would eventually find employment with the order. Unfortunately, the grandmaster found himself in such desperate financial straits that he could not assist Blumenau in completing his studies. In fact, the grandmaster had great
Early Humanism in Prussia

difficulty in raising even the Peter's Pence—the tax he owed the pope for Culm and West Prussia—and he dared not miss that payment if he wished for papal favor in the coming crisis.

In late 1449 a vacancy opened in the ranks of the Ermland canons. Blumenau, who was working for the grandmaster in Marienburg, suggested that this post would be very suitable for supporting his studies in Italy, and the grandmaster appointed him to it. However, the canons refused to cooperate and selected a rival candidate. The procedure in such cases was to defer the final decision to the pope. Blumenau was not worried about his chances, since the procurator general, Jacob Hogenstein, was very efficient (and was already working on securing Blumenau a similar expectancy in Lübeck). Only when he could see that no decision appeared to be forthcoming did Blumenau set out for Rome to see to the matter himself.9

Blumenau was no stranger to Italy. He had traveled there at the age of nineteen after completing his work in Leipzig, having already studied grammar, logic, and rhetoric, read Donatus, Priscianus, Petrus Hispanus, and "other books in rhetoric," which probably meant Cicero's works. We know a surprising amount of information about his education at Padua and Bologna, which began in 1439 and 1444 respectively—one of his four examiners was a noted humanist later active in the Augsburg Circle; he was elected procurator of the fifty German students in Bologna, with the responsibility of organizing masses and banquets, as well as managing funds; and he was a gifted student.10

His friends of this period are worth noting—Andreas Ruperti, a canon from Culm and member of the Teutonic Order, a student in Bologna, and procurator general from 1446 to 1447; Jakob Pleske, Ermland canon and doctor of laws; Leonard Rotehose, who had studied in Perugia and was soon to leave for Livonia with his doctorate to marry in Reval and serve the Livonian master as a lay lawyer; Hermann Birken, Ermland canon; Laurencius Musterberger; and Heinrich Senftleben, canon from Breslau who became a bullator at the Curia, a valuable friend of the procurators general in days to come, and a close friend of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini.11

When Blumenau passed his examinations in civil and canon law in May and June of 1447 with the highest marks, it was not a promising moment for the Teutonic Order. Grandmaster Konrad von Erlichshausen had been unable to reverse the downward course of events from the reign of Paul von Russdorf, who had reached his hand into the cash boxes of individual convents and sought to appoint officials even in Livonia and Germany (which were traditionally semi-autonomous), thereby provoking a schism in the order that his successor could heal but partially; Russdorf's heavy taxes had provoked the Prussian towns and nobles to form the Prussian League in 1440 and, thus united, to agitate for tax relief and representation in the government. Grandmaster Konrad, himself a moderate and a sensible administrator, needed capable young men like Blumenau, whom he put to work immediately.

When the assembly of Prussian nobles and burgheers noticed how heavily the grandmaster relied on his educated assistants, they demanded that those officials
be excluded from all deliberations between the grandmaster and the assembly. The grandmaster refused such a request, noting that the assembly had hired foreign lawyers to aid them as well. Such debates often ended with harsh words.

Blumenau’s first task was to defend the order against the claims of a Liebstadt citizen who demanded repayment of certain alleged debts. It was a very complicated suit, one requiring Blumenau to travel to Vienna and Rome. While in Rome he was named acting procurator general during Jacob Hogenstein’s absence. His duties were not onerous—in August he hurried to Perugia, supposedly to get some documents, but more likely to escape the heat. There he met the grandmaster’s chaplain, Sylvester Stodwescher, who was in Rome to seek nomination as Archbishop of Riga over the protests of citizens and canons; and he was named papal cubicularius, an important honorary post. He was relieved of his duties in the spring and was back in Prussia by late 1448.12

Soon afterward, following diplomatic missions to Nuremberg, Vienna, Denmark, and the Hanseatic cities, Blumenau began his campaign to fill the Ermland vacancy. In September of 1450 he went south, via Vienna, to Rome. His suit failed. The canons are likely to have argued he was not their choice but had been imposed by the grandmaster; he was not a priest; he was too ambitious; and he would be an absentee member of their chapter. But the decision probably resulted more from imperial and papal displeasure with the Teutonic Knights, who had recently rejected suggestions to combine with the Hospitallers to create a large crusading order capable of fighting the Turks more effectively.

One could not by any means consider Blumenau’s stay in Rome a failure, because he had struck up a close friendship with the educated Bishop of Augsburg, Peter von Schaumburg, who was named cardinal the following year. From him, Blumenau received free lodging and meals for himself, his servants, and his horses. Moreover, he was named Auditor of the Rota and, there being no German auditor at the moment, he was encouraged to enter the papal service immediately. This friendship was extremely valuable in the years to come, when Peter von Schaumburg proved to be an irreplaceable ally to the order’s interests. Later, he also became Blumenau’s employer and introduced him into the group of humanists known as the Augsburg Circle. Because Blumenau was determined to become a great man (“eyn gros man zu werden”), he rejected von Schaumburg’s advice to remain in Rome; apparently he saw real opportunities for advancement in the service of the grandmaster.13

It was the Bishop of Ermland who gave him the opportunity to play the great man. Since 1446 Bishop Franz had been looking for a way to dissolve the Prussian League, but he had been frustrated by Grandmaster Konrad von Erlichshausen (1441-1449), although his successor, Ludwig von Erlichshausen (1450-1467), permitted the bishop to press the matter. It was a touchy issue, since the cities and nobles had been permitted to gather and offer advice and consent from time out of mind. The formal organization of a league of these “estates” on March 13, 1440, had not been considered a radical innovation at the time, but later the Prussian assembly went beyond the traditional limits of competence and sought to emulate civic leagues elsewhere in Germany, thus undermining the grandmaster’s
remaining authority. Ludwig's subsequent arrogant statements about the assembly's excesses did nothing to end the crisis but rather frightened his opponents into defending themselves at every point.

A particular issue at stake was the tariff, which the cities clamored to remove—or at least reduce to the level which had existed before the emergency. The cities warned they would rely on their "right to resist" tyranny and refused to give the oath of allegiance in the form demanded by Grandmaster Ludwig. In the back of many minds was the possibility of Polish intervention. With both the financial and political integrity of Prussia threatened, Bishop Franz believed the very survival of the Prussian state hung in the balance and that deferring action would be fatal. Although urged to make haste, Ludwig had proceeded cautiously. He first appealed to the pope to rule on the legality of the League, arguing that the "conspiracy" was oppressing the Church as represented by a crusading order and several bishops. In August of 1450 three cardinals (Dominicus Capranica, Peter von Schaumburg, and Nicholas von Cues) agreed to send a legate to speak to the League members. However, the legation was a total failure—burgers and nobles alike refused to acknowledge the full authority of the papal representative to resolve their quarrel by decree. Having thus demonstrated the League's obstinacy, Ludwig instructed Blumenau to seek rulings at the imperial and papal courts which would dissolve the League. This clever but underhanded strategy frightened the estates and led to a division of opinion even among the membership of the Teutonic Order. Inside the order advocates of a strong policy became dominant, and those espousing a conciliatory policy (especially Hans von Baysen) lost influence in the grandmaster's council.

Blumenau, in Rome, and Bishop Franz, in Vienna Neustadt, pressed their suit. However, when the emperor issued a document requiring the League to dissolve, it had no effect—the Prussian estates declared the paper a forgery and claimed to possess letters from Friedrich III himself confirming the right of the League to exist. (Evidence seems to indicate the League had procured forgeries from the imperial chancery.) The emperor, whose chancery seemed unable to determine what was genuine and what was forged, then summoned both parties to appear and present their arguments in person.

Blumenau was meanwhile urging that the pope not be informed of the proceedings at the imperial court until he had obtained a papal statement which could influence the imperial judges favorably. When he finally obtained a bull dissolving the Prussian League and promises from Peter von Schaumburg and Nicholas von Cues to support him at the imperial court, he journeyed to Vienna to join the order's delegation.14

The Teutonic Knights, preparing their case carefully, had hired as their representatives two of the most famous lawyers of the time, Gregor Heimburg and Peter Knorr. The Prussian League, for its part, hired Martin Mair, an equally powerful spokesman, and brought pressure via Nuremberg to force Heimburg to withdraw. As a result, much of the responsibility for prosecuting the suit fell to Blumenau.15

It was in this way that the rhetorically trained Blumenau came to do the work of a lawyer—or, to phrase it more accurately, an advocate. He was to use his skills
at gathering materials to make a case, then use his oratory to plead it. Rhetoric, not the sheer massing of documents, was his weapon; and he felt sure of his ability to wield it.

III. Piccolomini: Humanist-Crusader

This lawsuit at the imperial court came to the attention of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-1464), an Italian-born humanist who could be included with the best-traveled, most avidly curious, and idealistic men of his era. Little was outside his field of knowledge and nothing lay outside his interest. He knew much about the Teutonic Order from his days at the Council of Basel, when he heard disputes between the order’s representatives and the Polish and Lithuanian delegates. At that time he spent one memorable evening listening to a missionary tell stories about his missionary work among the Lithuanians and their difficulties with the Teutonic Knights. At the imperial court he had been in constant contact with Bishop Louis of Silvius, the Portuguese-born prelate who had been papal legate in Prussia in 1450-1451. At this very moment he was seeking to bring about greater unity among Christian states so that they could oppose the advancing Turks. Naturally, he was interested in the fate of a crusading order.

Piccolomini had been in favor of crusades since his earliest employment as secretary to Emperor Friedrich III in 1442, and he had become increasingly enthusiastic about their potential as his ecclesiastical career advanced. The siege of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 gave his convictions new significance. He could talk of little else and saw it his duty to bring the pope and emperor together, then to assist them in recovering Constantinople and rescuing the Christians of the Balkans from supposed Moslem bondage and torture. Moreover, he saw the Turks as a threat not only to the Christian religion, but to all learning and to western civilization; he believed the triumph of the Koran would be followed by the destruction of all letters, libraries, and scholars.

This view was consistent with Piccolomini’s role as “Apostle of Humanism to the Germans.” He had come to the imperial court determined to enlighten the northern barbarians about the new achievements of the Italian Renaissance. Although initially rebuffed with rough humor, practical jokes, and occasional outright hostility, he eventually won a following among the scribes and notaries. His style—free, pure, lucid—began to appear in imperial correspondence. He developed a close relationship with the chancellor, Kaspar Schlick, and was often asked to draft imperial statements. After joining the papal service, he returned often to Germany to speak before the emperor and the princes in an attempt to sway them in the name of Christendom to support efforts to unify the empire, give leadership to Europe, and repel the Turks.

He had worked closely with individual princes—for one he wrote stories, for another letters of encouragement, for another histories, always calling upon their sense of history, idealism, and chivalry. He was almost always disappointed: the Duke of Bavaria had no time for Reichstage, but after shouting to Piccolomini to get a horse and join him, he dashed off to the hunt, leaving the gout-ridden
humanist to cool his heels. For young Ladislas of Hungary he felt a particular
obligation, because Ladislas was of an age to be influenced for the better.
Piccolomini wrote him a treatise on education warning about the dangers of
alcohol (a timely reminder to a great-nephew of Wenceslas IV, a notorious
drunkard). Unfortunately, Ladislas, like the others, lacked the interest, the talents,
and the means to become a new Maecenas.

The principal difficulty faced by Piccolomini was the combination of self-
interest and nationalistic outrage which lay behind many German demands for
Church reform, demands which would make effective papal leadership impos-
sible. Piccolomini well understood such demands because his career had begun
at the Council of Basel, where he himself had written tracts attacking papal
corruption. But he had come to see that many papal abuses were necessary in order
for the popes to guide the Church and unify Europe. For example, whenever a pope
appointed absentee officials to northern posts, he was certainly depriving some
areas of resident priests and scholars, but at the same time he was thereby staffing
his own offices, creating an effective bureaucracy and supporting legates and
other officials abroad. If popes occasionally sold too many indulgences, it was
because there was no alternate method for raising large sums—they could not levy
taxes, and, moreover, people were more willing than ever to spend the money. If
reforms had to be made, Piccolomini reasoned, they should be along the lines
advocated by Nicholas von Cues, who was singlehandedly having more impact on
the German Church than all the recent councils. Of course, Nicholas' reforms
were not popular, because they went to the heart of clerical life rather than
concentrating on financial relief and would have deprived many noble families
of their traditional influence in local church affairs.19

The cry for reform could not be dampened, and as a result, the princes of
Germany continued to demand that Roman control over appointments, taxes, and
indulgences be lessened or eliminated completely—along the lines followed in
France and Spain, where the monarchs obtained effective control of ecclesiastical
appointments and used the church resources for national goals. In contrast, the
authority of Emperor Friedrich III weakened every year, and the princes consid-
ered reforms to be essential. However, the situation was largely the fault of the
princes themselves. On the one hand, they claimed to want a strong emperor who
could defend national interests and lead an energetic foreign policy. On the other
hand, they did not want to pay taxes or be required to serve in imperial wars.
Therefore, they avoided electing as emperor anyone who could force them to carry
out national policies, even those decided by the Reichstag. Friedrich III was the
product of this system—in 1452, after his magnificent coronation in Rome, he
failed to keep the teenaged Ladislas of Hungary as his guest and hostage. If he had
forced or persuaded Ladislas to become his loyal vassal, Friedrich would have
acquired a frontier directly facing the Turks—a necessary condition for prosecut-
ing a holy war—as well as obtaining the service of many knights and the taxes of
rich provinces. Besieged by rebellious nobles, he released Ladislas to the Count
of Cilly. By surrendering Ladislas he lost control of Hungary and gave up his claim
to Bohemia and Silesia. Reduced to his household lands in Austria and the upper Rhine, Friedrich began to lose hope of achieving anything of importance.

Piccolomini's noted antipathy toward the German "barbarians" came from frustration with this disintegrating social order as much as from the poor wine, dirty quarters, and lack of intelligent conversation. It was not that Germany lacked educated men or even a sense of mission. He would probably have complained even in Italy, which did not yet have a savant in every village and where the ghost of crusading idealism could hardly be raised. But he was in Germany, with Rhine wine and roast meat, cold winters and cool summers, dealing with men so filled with contradictory ideas and strong emotions that they could not keep their arguments straight. Moreover, some educated men in Germany already viewed Piccolomini as an ambitious menace. Consequently, when they read excerpts from his intercepted correspondence, they were outraged at his Italian arrogance and snobbishness.20

Piccolomini saw the requirements of the day clearly and simply—Germany needed a unity that only the emperor and the pope could give; therefore, both secular and ecclesiastical princes had to yield their powers to tax, to appoint officials, and to keep the peace, then the emperor and the pope had to be persuaded to provide the leadership. His problem was that nobody, neither princes, nor pope, nor emperor, seemed to understand this. His effort to work with the princes was made more difficult by the rise of leagues. In other countries burghers and nobles could make their voices heard in the national parliaments, but in Germany the Reichstage were dominated by the princes, who were striving to reduce their subjects to obedience so that they could tax and govern them. Consequently, the country was torn by frequent wars within the states, as the lower classes fought for their liberties and the princes strove for power; and while many of those liberties and powers were relatively recently won, the parties defending them fought no less intently. Piccolomini did not see a parliament as a likely solution to the German problem, and therefore he sought to do what he could to preserve the power of the princes.

Piccolomini saw the Prussian League as a typical threat to his plans. Ignoring the noble element in the League, he spoke about the cities' rebellion, warning that centrifugal forces could bring ruin to all hopes of reunifying Christendom and driving back the Turks. In this he was in perfect accord with Blumenau, who portrayed the Teutonic Knights as rulers of a state which advanced the cause of the crusade, which provided order and protection to the people, and defended German national interests. Blumenau wrote of the rebels as plebs and combined that classical term with quotations from Sallust to promote the fear that the "plebs novarum rerum cupida" would destroy all ordered society.21

The Reichstag sessions of May and June, 1453, were conducted in a tense atmosphere—the Turkish Sultan was besieging Constantinople, and prospects for a successful Christian defense were not good. Piccolomini wrote to Senftleben that everyone was quarreling, that no one, except the pope, was seeking to provide for the common good.22

The representatives of the Prussian League rejected such simplistic analyses of the situation and relied upon long acknowledged common law to resist tyranny.
They called the Teutonic Order despotic and *innovative*. It was the Prussian League, they said, which defended tradition and justice. Thus, the views of both the Prussian League and the Teutonic Order sought to stand on high moral principles, but each had feet of clay mired in the mud of self-interest. No one could imagine terms of compromise which would be acceptable to both sides; nevertheless, a compromise had to be sought. To Siena Piccolomini wrote that "in the noble province of Prussia, fifty-five cities have made a pact against the order of Saint Mary of the Germans, about which issue the imperial tribunal is deliberating, but there are some who think more about the power of arms than of drawing laws and who count on the aid of the powerful King of Poland. It is a perilous matter and much blood will be drawn unless it is resolved first."²³

In the first session the German master asked the princes to help the Teutonic Order against the rebels, emphasizing the need for national unity, arguing that Prussia would be lost to Germany unless they acted. The Polish representative then angered the princes by warning that if any outsiders mixed into the affair, King Casimir would not participate in the crusade against the Turks. While the infuriated princes shouted and wrangled, Piccolomini kept his own counsel.²⁴

In the second session (made more complicated by the fact that someone had apparently waylaid the Prussian League's delegates and stolen all their papers) the nationality question became even more heated. Blumenau compared the rebels to Lucifer, who wanted to be seated equally with God and was therefore properly cast down into hell, and asked that the League be declared illegal for violating the *Golden Bull* and the rights of the Teutonic Order granted by numerous popes and emperors.²⁵ Piccolomini spoke as well, delivering one of his major addresses. He later wrote of this occasion that "the Prussian affair was debated at length, (the rebels) having risen against religion and denied their lords and subjected themselves to the King of Poland; this matter has disturbed all Germany as much as the Turkish invasion."²⁶ Seeing that a ruling in favor of the Teutonic Order would result in civil war, Piccolomini sought to have the decision postponed. This was a practical suggestion, not the solution he would have preferred, which was to provide aid to the Teutonic Order: Piccolomini detested civic leagues and supported potential crusaders. But he had to deal with hard facts: and he did not believe the grandmaster was strong enough to defeat his opponents, who had potential allies in Hanseatic cities and the King of Poland. Failing to delay the vote, he moved to have a special commission investigate the matter further. That suggestion was rejected as well.

Piccolomini failed to resolve the quarrels. His rhetoric was unable to overcome that of Knorr and Blumenau. In December Friedrich III ruled in favor of the Teutonic Order. In January of 1454 representatives of the League opened talks with King Casimir for a military alliance and in February they formally renounced their allegiance to the grandmaster. On March 6 the king sealed his *Incorporation Privilege*, making Prussia a part of his kingdom, and announced his intent to award his new subjects extensive guarantees of traditional rights and privileges amounting to virtual autonomy. War between the League and the Teutonic Knights was now inevitable.²⁷ After Piccolomini and Blumenau were
formally invested as Counts of the Palatinate on December 14, as a reward for their services to the crown, Piccolomini receded into the background. Blumenau came to the fore again.

IV. Blumenau and the Insufficiency of Rhetoric

War broke out immediately. A large Polish army invaded Prussia and joined the forces of the Prussian League in besieging Könitz. In the meantime, the Teutonic Knights had been recruiting mercenaries in Bohemia, with Blumenau making many of the diplomatic arrangements with Georg Podiebrad, Ladislas' regent. It was important to be able to hire these mercenaries, for they were the best in all Europe. When the Bohemian mercenaries finally arrived at Könitz, they routed the royal forces and almost forced Casimir to abandon the war—he could not persuade his nobles to approve special taxes for raising another army. For his part, the pope excommunicated the rebels.

Blumenau went to Marienburg as the grandmaster's principal advisor, where he found himself responsible for paying the mercenaries. As the order had hardly any ready money in Prussia, this was no easy matter. Ludwig derived most of his cash income from tariffs paid by the rebellious cities. The returns from amber, furs, and forest products were important, but even those products were sold through the cities to other Hanseatic cities. If Blumenau could keep the mercenaries in good humor until the Prussian League surrendered, all would be well; but if the mercenaries went on strike first, then all was lost. His best hope was that mercenaries expected employers to have difficulties raising money. Also, one common way to guarantee mercenaries' loyalty was to rely on their desire to collect back wages.

The Bohemians proved to be hard bargainers. Many were heretics in any case, as Piccolomini had noted during two visits to their homeland—a good number were Hussites, whose fathers and uncles had ravaged Prussia two decades earlier. Certainly they had no interest in granting credit to the Teutonic Order—the representative of all things German and therefore the sworn enemy of Bohemian nationalism—and would not work without pay. The leaders had expenses of their own and by September of 1454 were so pressed by their men for back pay that they gave Blumenau an ultimatum. The best that Ludwig could do was give them three major castles (Marienburg, Könitz, and Schlochau) in pawn until money could be raised in Livonia and Germany. Meanwhile, Ludwig appealed to the electors for permission to sell property (he ultimately sold the Neumark to Brandenburg, thus providing the basis for its eastward expansion).

The Prussian League adopted a policy that worsened the grandmaster's financial situation. They frankly called it "buying out the enemy." They offered hard cash to any mercenary who would change sides, and they promised to pay well for any castles surrendered by the mercenary leaders. Such a policy was bound to be successful if the hard-pressed cities could continue to raise funds. Fortunately for them, they had little difficulty in obtaining grain from Poland for the export trade so important to their economic survival.
Early Humanism in Prussia

The offer of cash payment had its effect on the mercenaries. In February of 1455 food and fodder in the castles ran out, and so did the Bohemians' patience. They seized the lower castle at Marienburg but were then satisfied by partial payments rushed from Germany. In April of 1456, their wages were again in arrears, but this time they seized the high castle. That summer they opened negotiations with the Poles for the sale of Marienburg and several other castles.

There were many efforts to block the agreement—the emperor threatened to circulate a list of names so that none of the mercenaries could ever work again or even return to the empire; the pope warned that he would take action; and Ludwig promised again that money would soon be available. But the mercenaries' leaders had heard too many promises without seeing any money and had no fear of their threats.

Blumenau and Ludwig were being held as hostages and could do little to affect the situation. By the time the Livonian maser could raise the entire sum owed the mercenaries, they had made a new demand—a payment equal to that offered by the King of Poland! In August the Bohemians sold the impregnable fortresses to Casimir, but they cautiously maintained possession until he could raise the money. This was a prudent move, because even Casimir, with his wealthy kingdom, found it impossible to raise the 400,000 Galden he had promised. When Casimir turned to the Prussian League for half the money, the decisive moment in the history of this era had arrived. The cities' governments knew that victory depended on their efforts to raise the money. Otherwise, the chance for victory might slip through Casimir's fingers (everyone remembered that Marienburg had slipped through Jagiello's). Therefore, they added extraordinarily high taxes to the crushing burden already borne by the citizenry, especially the poor. When riots broke out in Thorn and Danzig, the governments quelled them and collected the taxes to pay the mercenaries. This sealed the fate of the Teutonic Order.

This free-will gift by the League to the king illustrates well how little modern concepts of nationality can be applied to sixteenth-century events. German-speaking nobles and burghers pledged their loyalty to a Polish king because of the protection he gave them in defending their lives, livelihoods, and liberties. Casimir, who already ruled a multinational kingdom, saw no reason why he should not guarantee these new subjects the autonomy and freedom he gave his other subjects.

The war was not over, though the decisive moment had now passed. Blumenau made a last effort to sway the Bohemian resolve through rhetoric. He argued with the Bohemian leaders that it was illegal for mercenaries to sell their employer's castles. On November 2, 1456, he delivered them an especially eloquent speech, saying that it was "against God, against justice, and against holy scripture" not to take the wages offered and give back the fortresses. He assured the mercenaries that they could not sell the castles "at auction" and, if they carried out their designs, friends of the Teutonic Order would complain to the pope and the emperor. The mercenaries answered by beating and robbing him, then throwing him out of Marienburg. Bernhard von Zinnenberg could appeal to their sense of honor with some hope of shaming them into further delay—and they
would respect the words of such a rough warrior. For a miserable scholar they had only disdain. 28

In May of 1457, the Bohemians accepted payment from the League, giving the castles to Casimir’s troops and releasing the grandmaster from house arrest. Blumenau did not remain long in Ludwig’s employment. He saw no prospect of winning the war, and he had other offers, which included a salary, a luxury he could not boast of at the time. He resigned and went to Augsburg to work for Cardinal Peter von Schaumburg. There he circulated a draft of a history of his experiences. 29

As Blumenau departed the scene, Piccolomini returned to stage center. Now a more important man than before, thanks to his elevation to cardinal in 1456, he was again attempting to unify Germany and organize a crusade to drive back the Turks from Belgrad (then under siege) and save Hungary and Austria from attack.

V. Piccolomini: Bishop of Ermland

In the summer of 1457, in one of the least known and most misunderstood actions of his career, Cardinal Piccolomini became bishop of Ermland. German historians, led by Georg Voigt, have condemned this in unequivocal terms. 30 Italians have generally not heard of the episode. 31 In truth, it is a complicated tale, but one that gives a significant insight into the personality of the future pope.

It will be remembered that Bishop Franz of Ermland was one of the principal enemies of the Prussian League, that he had opposed its existence for many years, and he had led the delegations to the imperial court to fight it. He was now nearly ninety, and as his health declined, Casimir and the Prussian League saw an opportunity to replace him. In 1456, through the Braclau canons, with whom Bishop Franz was spending his exile, they offered to give him a pension if he would resign his office and support the election of Johann Lutkonis, a Polish undershadow. This offer was tempting to the bankrupt bishop, and when it was reported to Ludwig that the bishop was wavering, the grandmaster hurriedly sought a favorable appointment from the pope before the bishop died. He sent the Ermland cantor, Bartholomew Liebenwald, to Rome to solicit the aid of Cardinal Piccolomini.

Liebenwald had known Piccolomini for years, having been at the imperial court in Rome, where he had served as procurator general. In such a situation, the two men could exchange their views freely and in confidence. In fact, neither ever revealed what was said, but Piccolomini seems to have suggested that Ermland needed a bishop who was a powerful personality, a man known to both emperor and pope, a man who could use the power of both Empire and Church to repress rebellious vassals and restore the diocese to peace and prosperity.

Liebenwald returned to Silesia, where he learned that Bishop Franz had died on June 10, 1457. He gathered the six canons residing there and held a hurried election, choosing Cardinal Piccolomini. The grandmaster had meanwhile suggested Arnold Coletz, an Ermland canon, to the seven members of the chapter whom he had arrested on suspicion of sympathy with the enemy; they dutifully
sent Coster’s name to the pope. The three pro-League canons in Danzig nominated Lutkonis, saying that his election would make it possible for Casimir to aid in the crusade against the Turks. In this manner three names were sent to the pope, each one of them chosen by questionable means. Therefore, the right to choose or appoint a substitute fell to the pope, who was under the influence of Piccolomini in all matters pertaining to Germany. The pope named Piccolomini bishop and authorized him to arrange matters in Ermland as he wished.32

The cardinal realized that the situation was far from resolved. The step from appointment to acceptance was a long one, and the diocese was a battleground. Piccolomini armed Liebenwald with papal letters naming him vicar, with full powers to negotiate with mercenaries, appoint officials, and raise taxes. Then he began writing letters. He assured Casimir that he would support Polish ambitions; indeed, that he had always been an advocate of Polish interests (which might indicate that he expected Casimir to have a poor memory), and he urged the king to send a representative to Rome to negotiate for the removal of ecclesiastical penalties from the members of the Prussian League. However, he simultaneously struck at Lutkonis, rebuking him for his disobedience. This combination of sweet reasonableness and toughness had no effect on the monarch. Not even letters from Friedrich III could persuade Casimir to desist.

At that moment the Bishop of Culm died. This complicated matters even more. Since the bishop was a member of the Prussian League and his support was crucial to the success of the insurrection, the right to appoint a successor was naturally claimed by both the grandmaster and the king. When two candidates appeared for papal approval, it seemed the Teutonic Order would prevail—with Cardinal Capranica speaking on behalf of the grandmaster and Cardinal Piccolomini angry at the Poles, how could it be otherwise? To almost universal surprise, Piccolomini spoke for the Polish candidate, with the result that the matter was turned over to a Roman jurist, who referred the decision to Piccolomini!

The cardinal made no choice between the candidates. Instead, he wrote to both sides, encouraging each to hope for a favorable decision. Moreover, when the grandmaster’s candidate died in Rome and the procurator general, Jacob Hogenstein, presented himself as a replacement, Piccolomini persuaded Hogenstein to support his own candidacy instead. The nineteenth century German historian, Voigt, condemned all this maneuvering, exclaiming: “Welch ein Gewewe von Ränken und Schlichen.” Certainly one must ask what the cardinal’s motives were.33

Obviously, Piccolomini wanted control of Culm and Ermland. Just as obviously, no one understood why he wanted them. The pope was ill and apparently did not know what was going on. Ludwig assumed that Piccolomini was interested only in their incomes and therefore tried to argue that there was no money to be made, that Ermland was worth only four hundred Gulden annually when there was peace, and now that war had ravaged the diocese, there was practically no income at all. In an attempt to bribe him, he offered Piccolomini a pension and urged Cardinal Capranica to discuss with him the need for a resident bishop, not an absentee governing through a vicar. He was joined in these requests
by the Archbishop of Riga, the Bishop-elect of Kurland, the Bishops of Samland and Pomesania, and the Master of the Livonian Knights. All emphasized that the bishopric would be nothing but work and trouble, with no monetary profits. Without any doubt, they were reflecting the opinions of the reform party in Germany which saw every Italian grasp at power as nothing more than a lust for money; moreover, they were probably worried that he would require the Prussians to resume the payment of Peter’s Pence, which had not been collected since 1450. Some of the order territories already lay under a papal interdict because that tax was in arrears—rebel areas, we might note.

Piccolomini rejected the offers of money and wrote Liebenwald that he would not give up the prospect of being recognized as bishop; moreover, he informed him that he might even appoint the grandmaster’s choice as administrator if he cooperated; if the grandmaster’s candidate persisted in making trouble, however, Piccolomini would deal with him as he had with the Polish candidate. In short, Piccolomini was serious about becoming bishop and being able to exercise effective authority.24

As a matter of fact, there was a crisis in Prussia. The loss of the largest castles seemed to doom Ludwig’s hopes for success in the peace talks that appeared imminent. Piccolomini may have welcomed Ludwig’s troubles, since the Teutonic Order would now have to sue for peace, but he still did not want the Prussian League to achieve a total victory. He preferred a peace settlement giving the pope and emperor greater influence in northern politics, a peace settlement allowing Prussian resources to be directed toward aiding the wars against the Turks. Such a result could be achieved only by a representative of both the empire and the papacy who would be able and willing to dictate the terms of peace. In order to be the key figure in negotiations to end the war, Piccolomini had to exercise authority somewhere in Prussia. His powers as legate and imperial counselor were inadequate. Ermland and Culm gave him leverage to force his terms of peace upon the grandmaster and representatives of the Prussian League.

He may have planned to open negotiations in Prague during the wedding of Ladislas of Hungary to a French princess, but Ladislas died suddenly, and the assemblage of crowned heads of state was called off. Piccolomini had to resort to writing letters, a slower and less effective means of negotiation.25

Casimir should have been able to deduce Piccolomini’s intentions from a letter written by the cardinal on August 31 to say that the canons residing in Silesia had chosen him as bishop probably because “they thought they could expect in me the support of a future pope.” Having made the unsubtle hint that Casimir would do better to have him as a friend than as an enemy, he declared that his first aim was to restore peace and order, then to lead a crusade against the Turks. Until peace was restored, his administrator would be placed in charge of the churches in Ermland and Culm. Since Casimir could do nothing, it would therefore be wise for him to start peace talks and seek the removal of ecclesiastical penalties. Piccolomini’s correspondence in the next days with papal officials, the emperor, the Bohemian chancellor, and the Polish candidate indicate how seriously he considered the matter. But he could not prevail. His interest diminished, and after his
Early Humanism in Prussia

election as Pope Pius II, he had but few moments to concern himself with Prussian affairs.36

VI. Peace in Prussia

Piccolomini's concern for Prussia is to be understood in terms of his general interest in northern Europe. Although he did not care to live in the transalpine regions, he had personal interests in the welfare of the North reflected in his speeches, his letters, and his histories. These were years when he was composing his History of the Germans and beginning his History of Bohemia. When he wrote about Prussia, Poland, and Lithuania, he was not performing a dilettante exercise, as is occasionally alleged. He was in the midst of political negotiations over matters of peace and war. He had a deep personal commitment in helping unify Germany and leading the princes on crusade. When he said, "All men shall know that I am a German rather than an Italian cardinal," few believed him. But his actions then as well as later confirm this.

If he had been interested in Ermland and Culm for the money or the prestige alone, surely he would not have rejected the bribes or followed events there after his elevation to pope—but he did. On September 20, 1458, he named Paul von Legendorf administrator, the very title indicating that although he was now Pope Pius II, he had not given up his claim to be bishop of Ermland. Furthermore, he declared that Ermland was without a secular lord and was an exempt bishopric subject solely to the papacy.37 He renewed the excommunication laid on the Teutonic Order in 1455 for invading the diocese and arresting the canons. In November of 1460 he approved the treaty made by his administrator and the canons with the mercenaries for the evacuation of the diocese.

What Pius II did was to restore Ermland to an independent status and encourage the administrator to work within the political situation toward a definitive peace settlement. Paul von Legendorf was first an ally of the Teutonic Order, then neutral, and finally, in 1464 a member of the Prussian League. His change of allegiance was decisive; Grandmaster Ludwig von Erlichshausen found it necessary to sue for peace. Pope Pius II sent Bishop Rudolph of Lavant as legate with full authority to mediate between the parties. Apparently he had also instructed him in the nuances of Prussian politics, because the legate was so well prepared for the grandmaster's delaying tactics that he frustrated them all. The Second Treaty of Thorn in 1466 made an end to all pretensions by the Teutonic Order of being a major power. West Prussia and Culm became "Royal Prussia;" Marienburg became the center of Polish administration and was renamed Malbork; the grandmaster withdrew to Königsberg; assemblies of nobles, clerics, and burghers assumed new importance. Poland was confirmed as the dominant state in the East.38

The future Bishops of Ermland were independent of the grandmaster and reasonably independent of the king. The next bishop, Nicholas Tünge, had to fight a weary conflict known by a pun as the "sausage war" (his opponent was a Polish chancery official named Kielbasa) or the "priests' war" and at its conclusion he had to promise that the canons would henceforth choose only bishops acceptable
to the crown. Nevertheless, so rapidly was authority over the Polish estates slipping away from the king that Ermland, too, later attained practical independence under a general oath of allegiance.39

Pius II and Laurentius Blumenau crossed paths one more time: in 1460 Blumenau represented the canons of Brixen who had objected to reforms demanded by Nicholas von Cues, the pope’s most valued subordinate. Pius II excommunicated the canons, the Count of Tyrol and their lawyers, Blumenau and Gregor Heimburg.40 Blumenau subsequently retired to a quiet monastery in Prussia and passed his last days reading and corresponding with old friends.41

The intertwined careers of Blumenau and Piccolomini illustrate some of the problems of the Holy Roman Empire and the crusades at mid-century. Both favored strong leadership and the defense of German interests, both saw the Prussian League as a danger to stability and order, both were humanists and rhetoricians, both were historians, both were politicians, and both ultimately failed in their endeavors. Indeed, even in Ermland each failed in his ambition: Piccolomini to be recognized as bishop, and Blumenau to become a canon.

What, if anything, was learned from their careers? First, some of the canons and politicians of Prussia not only spent time with highly educated men who possessed skills developed in rhetoric and argumentation but also listened to them and read their letters and histories. They had daily contact with Blumenau over a period of years, through conversations, business affairs, legal disputes and diplomacy. Whether one agreed or disagreed with him, one had to rise to meet him on a higher plane. In the case of Piccolomini, his literary impact was greater, as he had little personal contact with Prussia. His descriptions of negotiations at the imperial court were printed in the 1470's and presumably read by every educated man in Prussia. Secondly, they had failed to save the traditional religious and political structure in Prussia. If men of such stature, backed by the power of the papacy and the empire, could not save the Teutonic Order, perhaps the time had come for them to consider some basic structural changes in their organization. Thirdly, young scholars saw a connection between humanistic education and high office. Blumenau and Piccolomini were examples of the heights to which they could aspire. These two pioneers provided models for a second generation of humanists in the North, a generation that began to fill offices and hold prebends for the years to come. These younger humanists understood that it would make its mark on the world by putting its organizational and rhetorical skills to the service of the state.

If, in this light, we ask what it is that humanists do other than write eloquently, we can say that Blumenau and Piccolomini, at least, worked very hard at their careers, by perfecting the art of persuasion, in the hope of serving their employers. Often they were unsuccessful. They worked in difficult situations, in which the natural right of liberty conflicted with the need for order. They could talk about the terrible consequences of war and the danger of the Turk, but they could not persuade burghers and patricians to endure the heavy taxes and restrictions on their self-government so necessary for papal and imperial authority if it was to be centralized for the purpose of better government and the protection of Christen-
dom against its enemies. Blumenau could not persuade the Prussian League to dishand nor the mercenaries to wait for their promised wages; Piccolomini could not inspire the princes to follow the advice of pope and emperor, to tax themselves and to serve in the crusades. In the short run both men failed miserably to convince ordinary men to act in a manner contrary to their own interests. They failed because they swam against rather than with the tide of history; neither did they create new institutions to carry out their ideas. By attempting to join new ideas to old institutions, they were unable either to defend the old or introduce the new.

In the long run their ideas did prevail as men ultimately recognized that basic reforms were needed, that states had to be reorganized so that princes could give direction to political and economic affairs. It was only when the local states had been reorganized that there was a possibility for a rebirth of national power. It is the process of the formation of a strong local government and a trained bureaucracy (mostly humanistically educated) that will be treated in the next two essays.

VIII. Blumenau’s History of Prussia

Laurentius Blumenau’s *Historia de Ordine Theutonicorum Cruciferorum* was not a finished, polished composition. He wrote under conditions that no historian would envy—as a prisoner under house arrest in Marienburg, with soldiers searching his rooms, taking his belongings, and threatening his life; in that tumultuous period of waiting, in 1456-7, and later in exile, he drafted his text in the hope of influencing Cardinal Peter von Schaumburg to intervene on behalf of the Teutonic Order. He had few materials at hand to consult, and he apparently gave up the project after completing a first draft of the first part of a longer history.42

Since his intended audience was a humanist cardinal, he first set out to demonstrate his credentials, citing numerous ancient historians who had mentioned Prussia (or at least eastern Europe) in their works. Then he reverted to chronicle sources to give a survey of the grandmasters’ exploits over two and a half centuries, and finally he began an eyewitness description of contemporary events. The composition is uneven, following only very generally Cicero’s advice on the proper method for writing history.

He did break definitively with the Prussian medieval chroniclers in several respects. First he included documents in the text, probably the result of his experience at the imperial court, where he found it necessary to demonstrate the existence of documents and to explain their importance. He relied on these original sources only occasionally, probably because he had no access to the archives. Secondly, he had a strong sense of class as a factor in history. This was not exceptional for contemporary Prussia, as was shown by its use in the anonymous *Geschichte wegen eines Bundes*,43 but it was unusual for the time and may be partially traceable to Sallust, an author he quoted several times. Lastly, he abandoned poetic forms and wrote in prose.

His Latin did not impress later generations, although it is clear and straightforward; he wrote rather like a chancery official and made few efforts to be
elegant. On the other hand, he succeeded in carrying forward his story, in conveying a sense of excitement when denouncing the Prussian League and the Bohemian mercenaries, and he remained thoroughly secular in his explanation of events.

It is unlikely that his history ever made a significant impact on his contemporaries. The copy that he presented Peter von Scharnburg later appeared among the papers of one historian of the Augsburg Circle. At most the manuscript circulated among men who were already either committed to the support of the Teutonic Knights or had no political importance at all. A second copy was left in Salzburg, apparently presented to the archbishop, a later employer. It could not have had extensive circulation, and in any event, Blumenau was at that time involved in the Brixen affair that earned him a papal excommunication. A third copy was in Prussia but has since disappeared. It was read in the next century by the colorful but untrustworthy Simon von Grunau but does not seem to have been noticed by others. The History of Johannes Plastwitz of Ermland was written in 1463, completely independently of Blumenau's work.45

Blumenau's history was of great importance to later generations of historians. It is unlikely that a full account of the Thirteen Years' War could have been written without access to it. Blumenau's history was completely secular, and while he saw the Teutonic Knights as representatives of law and security, very much as Piccolomini saw the emperor and the princes in Germany, he did not hesitate to criticize individual grandmasters. In particular, he perceived that the pursuit of benefices had become immoderate and unwise. Moreover, he admitted that many errors had been made over long periods of time, errors that could only partially be corrected later. These mistakes were not merely of commission, but also of omission, i.e., failure to act: Konrad von Erlichshausen's passive acceptance of the formation of a league of cities was as fatal as Ulrich von Jungingen's impetuosity at Tannenberg. Minor dangers have to be dealt with realistically and quickly, before they become public menaces.46

Blumenau had taken leave of the middle ages in one very significant way: he ignored the crusading role of the order and concentrated on his thesis that the state was the provider of law and order, peace and security. He did not dwell on glorious deeds, strange events, or marvelous and fearsome enemies; he ignored all the conventions of romance so prominent in the histories of the Teutonic Order with its concept of service and honor. Instead, he wrote of politics and money, of the deeds of lawyers and administrators. These were the men who managed Prussia now. Their duties were more important than those of the man-at-arms and that was all that mattered. Everything else was secondary.

As Blumenau's biographer, Hartmut Boockmann, put it, Blumenau was a burgher intellectual who had become an adviser to princes.47 In this he was a careerist much like other humanistically trained courtiers in Germany and Italy. He had learned a good Latin that could be produced for letters to friends, and he was among the very few who could write a good letter in the German language.
VIII. Piccolomini as a Historian

Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini was quite as famous as Laurentius Blumenau was obscure. His compositions in almost every realm of letters brought him more than fame; he was notorious. Consequently, everything he wrote about Prussia was avidly read there; and since not all the sections concerning the Baltic regions were lengthy or gathered together in one work, editors seem to have selected the relevant passages for printing and distribution. In this way his histories had an immediate impact beyond what one might have expected.

His longest and most important work on northeastern Europe was entitled _de Prutenorum origine_. He began, as did Blumenau, with an excursion into myth and ancient history, citing Jordanes and Justin, and accepting improbable philological explanations for the name Prussia. Then he wrote an inaccurate paragraph on the Teutonic Knights’ conquest of Prussia, mentioned the battle of Tannenberg, and hurried to the formation of the Prussian League. Having reached this point, he shifted the emphasis of the mistitled essay to the deliberations at the _Reichstag_ of 1453. Here he was at his best, repeating word for word the eloquent speeches of Peter Knorr and Martin Mair, and quoting himself as if to say, “If only you had been wise enough to listen to me, all that has happened in Prussia could have been avoided.” He demonstrated that he had worked toward a peaceful resolution of the dispute and that he had foreseen the disaster that lay hidden in efforts to win victories in the courtroom or on the battlefield.

Piccolomini made it clear to his readers that he was proud of the oration he had delivered. Certainly he should have been. It was one of his best accomplishments, at least from the rhetorical point of view. He had begun, “This quarrel, most high Caesar, seems to me to be neither small nor contemptible.... It is not the fields of Arpinas or Tusculanus that are contested, but great provinces which are desired by a powerful king.” And he concluded with a plea for delay and further negotiations, “Laws are mute where kings speak” (_Mute sunt leges, ubi loquentur reges_).

Resuming his narrative, he continued the story into the next year, describing his efforts to raise an army in Bohemia and to dissuade Casimir from intervening. Then he ended with the phrase, _Explicit de situ et origine Prutenorum._

A second, shorter essay appeared in chapter eighteen of his _History of Europe_. Again he opened with a review of ancient history, citing Jordanes and Ptolemy concerning the Massagetae and the Scythians, but this time he was more accurate concerning the history of the Teutonic Order: he related that Friedrich II had sent them to aid the Duke of Masovia, who ceded the Prussian territories to the order; ultimately, after long struggles, German immigrants were introduced, bishoprics established, and fortresses built. He recognized that the Teutonic Order was divided into three magistracies (Germany, Prussia, Livonia) and that the grandmasters fought as often against Poland as against Lithuanians and Tatars. He described the battle of Tannenberg in vivid terms. Then he quickly reviewed events at the _Reichstag_ of 1453 and the battle of Könitz, suggesting that delay by the princes and the emperor would have been a policy superior to permitting this
costly war. He concluded, saying authority should be exercised by those who desire the public welfare, not by those who protect personal interests. "Et sic est finis." 30

In his Commentaries he described briefly his election to Ermland and his authority to dispose of Culm, but his point was not to review affairs in the North; instead, he was merely preparing the way for his summation: "This increased Aeneas' reputation among the cardinals to no small degree. In two disputes he had defeated his opponents and restored causes that had almost been given up." 31

Piccolomini could have written an account of his activities without attempting to put them in the context of history. However, his humanist training made such an act impossible: a man is to be understood only relative to his situation; to know a man, one must know his past. Piccolomini instinctively imitated the classical authors in explaining the background to his Prussian experiences. The next generation of scholars assumed that his approach was the proper one and imitated it without question. 32
ENDNOTES


Research (ed. Steven Ozment. St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1982), p. 41: "The single most important development in studies of Renaissance humanism over the last twenty-five years has been the broad acceptance of Kristeller's thesis that humanism should be understood as a phase in the rhetorical tradition of western culture. As a result, scholars no longer assume that anyone identified as a humanist will share in a set of philosophical assumptions. Rather, they will assume he will share a set of intellectual interests starting with a love of classical Latin, as distinct from the language of the Church and the universities, and branching out into new conceptions of the traditional arts of language, grammar, rhetoric, and logic."


8. Kristeller, Renaissance Thought and its Sources, pp. 256-9, an acknowledged Platonist, is more concerned with the sense for absolute truth; he is also profoundly discouraged. The Burckhardtian optimism is not there. The spirit that animated the fifteenth century humanists has cooled to the reflective, private scholarship of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—better grammar, more thorough knowledge, but without the ambition to change the world. See Ozment, The Age of Reform, p. 307: "Humanists, as orators and rhetoricians, gave right living and good deeds—the active civic life—priority over right thinking and correct confession."


part one


3. The efforts to establish a university in Culm are described by Zenon Nowak, "Die Bemühungen um die Gründung einer Universität in Kulm im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert," in Der Deutschordensstaat Preussen in der polnischen Geschichtsschreibung der Gegenwart (Marburg: Elwert, 1982), pp. 189-217; for


part two


2. Gustav Knod, Deutsche Studenten in Bologna (1289-1562) (reprint by Aalen: Scientia, 1970), pp. 421-22, lists fourteen students identified solely as “de Preussen.” Hartmut Boockmann, “Die Rechtstudenten des Deutschen Ordens. Studium, Studienförderung und gelehrter Beruf im späteren Mittelalter,” Festchrift für Hermann Heinze (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1972), II, 313-75, offers an exhaustive article on the students sent to Italy, pointing out that the Prussian contingent was the largest of all the bodies of students at Bologna. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that most Prussian students attended German universities, especially Leipzig. Max Perlbach, Prussia scholastica: die Ost- und Westpreußen auf den mittelalterlichen Universitäten (Braunschweig: Wicichten, 1895), vol. 6 of the Monumeta Historicae Warmiensis.


1507), Raffaello Sansoni Riaio (1508-1517), and Giulio de’Medici (1516-
1523).
7. Lewis Spitz, “The Third Generation of German Renaissance Humanists,”
Aspects of the Renaissance (ed. Archibald Lewis. Austin: University of Texas
8. Agostino Sottili, referring to Matthias Niethart’s correspondence with a wide
circle of acquaintances that included Blumenau, remarked: “nomi tutti che non
sono vane parole ed erudizione aneddotica, bensì personalità tra le più importan-
ti nel movimento umanistico tedesco.” Studenti tedeschi e umanesimo
italiano nell’università di Padova (Padova: Anenore, 1971), p. 6; he was the
first humanist in Prussia, according to Klaus Murawski, “Laurentius Blumenau,”
9. Hartmut Boeckmann, Laurentius Blumenau; fürstlicher Rat-Jurist-Humanist
(Göttingen: Munsterschmitt, 1965), pp. 124-6; Erich Maschke, Der Peter-
spennig in Polen und dem deutschen Osten (rpt. Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke,
10. Knod, Deutsche Studenten, p. 50; Boeckmann, Blumenau, pp. 21-25; Ralph,
Renaissance in Perspective, p. 203, notes that these universities were Aristotel-
ian (i.e., secular and anticlerical) rather than humanistic.
12. Blumenau was mentioned by name in one such dispute, April 21, 1450. Acten
der Ständetagen Preussens unter dem Deutschen Ordens (ed. Max Toeppen.
32-43; Hogenstein was a friend of Bessarion, wrote a commentary on Petrus
Hispanus, and studied Platonic philosophy. Forstreuter, Deutscher Orden, pp.
173f.
13. Toeppen, Acten der Ständetagen, pp. 698f; Boeckmann, Der Deutsche Orden,
pp. 197-207; Boeckmann, Blumenau, pp. 44-5; for the Augsburg Circle, see
Hans Ruprich, Die Deutsche Literatur vom späten Mittelalter bis zum Barock,
IV, Part 1 of Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur (ed. Helmut d. Boor and
14. Edith Lüdicke, “Der Rechtsskampf des deutschen Ordens gegen den Bund der
1-43, 173-218; Boeckmann, Blumenau, pp. 65-88; Peter Gerrit Thielen, Die Ver-
waltung des Ordensstaates Preussen vornehmlich im 15. Jahrhundert (Köln-
Crag: Böhlau, 1965), pp. 60-64; Burleigh, Prussian Society, pp. 39f and 158-
65, on the hostility of the knights toward the burghers and the growing mutual
hostility that led to civil war; Carl Lückenah, Paul von Rudosch (Bad Godesberg:
des Abfalls Danzigs vom Deutschen Orden. Unter besonderer Berücksich-
tigung der nationalen Frage,” Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und
Ostdeutschlands, 13(1965), pp. 1-23; Marijan Biskup, “Die Rolle der Städte in
der ständischen Représentation des Ordensstaates im XIV. und XV. Jahrhundert;”

15. Boockmann, Blumenau, pp. 88-92; “Gregor Heimburg,” Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, XI, 327-30; Heimburg had already crossed swords with Aeneas Silvius. M. Creighton described their meeting to debate Church reform: “There could not be a greater contrast than between Aeneas and Heimburg; they may almost be taken as representatives of the German and Italian character. Heimburg was tall and of commanding presence, with flashing eyes and a genial face, honest, straightforward, eminently national in his views and policies, holding steadfastly by the object he had in view. He was the very opposite of the shifty Italian adventurer.” A History of the Papacy from the Great Schism to the Sack of Rome (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), III, 78-79. Little need be added to illustrate the German-English prejudices about the subject of this essay. For a commentary on the sad state of justice at the imperial court, see Clemens Brockhaus, Gregor von Heimburg (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1861), p. 119.


31. For example, Gioacchino Papparelli, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, L’umanesimo sul soglio di Pietro (Ravenna: Longo, 1978), p. 124, has heard of Culm, but not of Ermland. The entire history has been described by a noted Polish historian, but only in Polish. His English summary does not describe the problems of the bishoprics! Marian Biskup, Trzynastoletnia wojna Zaken Krzyżacki 1454-1466 (Warsaw, 1967); for a description of Polish work in this era, see Marian Biskup, “Die Erforschung des Deutschordensstaates Preussen. Forschungsstand-Aufgabe-Ziele,” Der Deutschordensstaat Preussen, p. 13-20.

32. Voigt, Enea Silvio, pp. 223-6; for Liebenwald’s own sparse account (mainly of his money), see “Memoriale Bartholomei Liebenwald,” Scriptores rerum Warmiensi, I, 305-7.

33. Voigt, Enea Silvio, pp. 227-8; Voigt’s charges echoed those made by Martin Mair in 1457. See Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the
Early Humanism in Prussia


38. *Staatsverträge*, pp. 239-40, 245f, 254-9, 262-87; this is very much in line with the idealist concept of a united Christendom that Battaglia describes, *Enea Silvio Piccolomini e Francesco Patrizi*, pp. 70-1, but not as complete a success as he had wished; *Acten der Ständetagen*, V, 31, 49-51, 94-7, 155-6, 182-96, 237, with a summary of events, pp. 198-219.


42. Bookman, *Blumenau*, p. 223; we have a summary of his arguments at the January 1455 negotiations in *Acten der Ständetagen*, IV, 450-55.
45. Toeppen, Scriptores rerum Prussicarum, p. 214; the only other eyewitness account similarly disappeared into a variety of private archives, to reappear only much later; that was the continuation of the chronicle by an anonymous author (presumed to be Georg von Egloffstein). Erich Weise, "Georg von Egloffstein (ca. 1409-1458) und die I. Fortsetzung der Älteren Hochmeister-Chronik," Preussenland und Deutschen Orden; Festschrift für Kurt Forstmeister (Würzburg: Holzner, 1958), pp. 344-373; "Johannes Plastwici, Decani Warmiensis, Chronicon de vitis episcoporum Warmiensium," Scriptores rerum Warmiensium (ed. Peter Woelky. Braunsberg: Eduard Peter, 1866), I, 10-137 (vol. 3 of Monumenta Historicae Warmiensis).
48. Toeppen, Scriptores rerum Prussicarum, p. 213.
50. Scriptores rerum Prussicarum, pp. 231-7; Sven Ekdahl commends his description of Tannenberg in Die Schlacht bei Tannenberg 1410, Band 1: Einführung und Quellenlage (Berlin: Duncker und Humbolt, 1982), pp. 244-59.
52. Paul Joachimsen, Geschichtsauffassung und Geschichtsschreibung in Deutschland unter dem Einfluss des Humanismus (Leipzig, 1910. rpt. Aalen: Scientia, 1968), I, 28, 37, 42, 46-7; Hipler, Literaturgeschichte, pp. 47-8, describes the history of Ermland that Johannes Plastwich wrote at Bishop Paul von Lengendorf's command "verrath bereits das Zeitalter Pius II und den Einfluss der aus Italien nach Deutschland herüberdringenden humanistischen Studien." The truth of this is easily verified. Highly interesting are his memorial poems for the deceased bishops he had known personally. "Johannes Plastwici," pp. 94-5, 101; Karol Gorski remarks about the increase in literary production among the new canons of Calm, compared to those whose studies had been subsidized by the Teutonic Order; he concluded that the government of the Teutonic Knights had held back scholarship in the bishoprics. "Das Kulmer Domkapitel in den Zeiten des Deutschen Ordens," Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1980), No. 26 in Vorträge und Forschung, p. 332.
REVIEWS


The two conferences organized by the Comitato di Scienze Storiche at the instructions of Pope John Paul II in the summers of 1986 and 1987 were announcements that the Roman Catholic Church had not forgotten the Baltic peoples. The conferences were carefully organized to represent a wide variety of scholarly viewpoints, a variety of confessional backgrounds (even some speakers who did not belong to a church), and the highest standards of scholarly competence. However, the message which was heard in the Baltic and in the exile communities was that the historic ties between the Church and the Baltic were not broken forever, no matter what efforts official atheism might exert to stamp out religious observances.

The public response largely ignored the scholarly aspects of the program—public interest concentrated on the ecclesiastical celebrations. This was especially true of the 1987 program commemorating the six hundredth anniversary of conversion of Lithuania. Perhaps not since Pope Gregory I visited the slave market has any holy father seen as many blondes as were present when John Paul II read mass in St. Peter's. That occasion and the mass sung by the Lithuanian bishops in Santa Maria Maggiore could perhaps be listed among the events signalling the birth of the Lithuanian independence movement.

Little of this will be found in these two volumes, which might be seen as academic footnotes to the greater story. However, as academic footnotes go, they stand up well—every library which subscribes to the JBS should possess the set. The first volume covers the process of conquest and conversion in Livonia (modern Latvia and Estonia), the second the conversion of Lithuania. Neither offers much praise for the crusaders; both provide excellent summations of current scholarship.

William Urban
Monmouth College (IL)


Vilna on the Seine is not about a Lithuanian neighborhood in Paris. It is, however, a fascinating book about two generations of Jewish intellectuals in France: the older, born at the turn of the century, emigrated from Lithuania and was raised on Jewish and European cultures while the younger, the product of a secular education in France, assumed a new Jewish identity of their own after the May 1968 events.

JBS, Vol. XXII, No. 1 (Spring 1991) 87
What this younger generation rebelled against was the secular emancipation granted to Jews by the French Revolution, as exemplified by Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre's famous declaration: "We must refuse the Jews everything as a nation and give them everything as individuals; they must constitute neither a political party nor an order within the state; they must become citizens as individuals." (43) Becoming "Frenchmen of the faith of Moses," Jews became like everybody else, and Sartre could argue in his Réflexions sur la question juive that a democrat was, in spite of everything, a minority's best friend: indeed, the democrat defended mankind stripped of all specificity and could not protect the Jew as Jew or the Black as Black, or any minority as minority. The 1968 events changed this perception: radicals challenged the ideal of a single French culture and called for the national rights of all ethnic minorities living in France. On the way to the renewed awareness of their Jewishness, some embraced the political agenda of the Jewish Bund, a socialist party of secular Jews founded in Vilna in 1887 while others, following the teachings of the Lithuanian-born philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, rediscovered their heritage in the sacred books, the Talmudic tradition of rabbis from Vilna and neighboring towns.

Friedlander focuses on two philosophers, Emmanuel Lévinas, his secular disciple, Alain Finkielkraut and Jacob Gordin, as representatives of the Jewish Enlightenment or Haskalah. Especially interesting are Chapter 7 ("From Mao to Moses [via Lithuania]: The Return to Orthodox Judaism by Intellectuals Identified with May 1968"); Chapter 8 ("From Trotsky to Moses: The Return to Orthodox Judaism by an Intellectual Identified with October 1917-Olga Katalina"), and the Appendix (about less known figures), stories of people taking a rather circuitous road, attempting to find a place for themselves between the three groups that have emerged: the minority nationalists committed to a secular Jewish culture in France, the reaffirmed assimilationists who gained a deeper insight into the Jewish Enlightenment, and the ultra-Orthodox Jews, who retreated to communities modeled on the old Lithuanian yeshivas. Such choices suggest possible avenues open to Diaspora Jews, all over the world.

Roger Noël
Monmouth College (IL)


Some words which were wise when written may appear foolish when read. This reviewer suspects that readers' appraisals of Smith's work will fluctuate wildly in the coming year. (He has already modified them considerably in February's Frontline program, "Guns, Tanks, and Gorbachev.")

A highly respected New York Times reporter, Smith knows the present-day Soviet Union better perhaps than anyone currently writing; moreover, it is first-hand knowledge based on an amazing variety of interviews. Smith's thesis (one he had never imagined possible when he wrote The Russians in 1974—a best seller which won the Pulitzer Prize) is that a new Russia is emerging from the Soviet
Union. A democratic spirit identified with Perestroika and Glasnost is now so imbedded in this new Russian society that it cannot be stopped.

Smith contends that this desire for more freedom has been exploited by Mikhail Gorbachev between 1985 and 1990 in an effort to save socialism from the deadly Stalinist combination of incompetence, corruption, and dogmatism. The narrative leads the reader through the twists and turns of the reform proposals, demonstrating the ad hoc nature of Gorbachev’s efforts to wrest power from the entrenched bureaucrats of the communist party. A native of south Russia whose entire career had been in the central and southern regions of the Soviet Union, Gorbachev had never visited the Baltic states before becoming President. Nevertheless, he expected that the Baltic states would embrace Perestroika enthusiastically and serve as the model for the other republics. It came as a distinct shock to him that as soon as he allowed the Baltic peoples to express their wishes, they were much less interested in Perestroika than in regaining their national independence. At first he dismissed the Lithuanian declaration of independence as the political maneuvering of a handful of ambitious party chiefs. However, when he flew to Vilnius and went among the public in an effort to demonstrate that the man in the street had no interest in breaking away from the Soviet Union, he learned that he had made a significant miscalculation.

There is little question that Gorbachev needed the votes from Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia to push through Perestroika. Even more, he needed examples of ways the command economy could be transformed peacefully and quickly into a freer socialist model. What he got was the reappearance of one of the oldest Russian nightmares: the collapse of the empire and civil conflict. Smith concludes his narrative with the likelihood that Gorbachev will change policies again, this time allying himself with the “right-wing” elements of the party and the army to preserve the territorial integrity of a state which generations of Russians have sacrificed to acquire and defend.

Smith argues that Gorbachev’s political fate is essentially irrelevant to the movements already underway toward greater freedom and away from Stalinism (see following review). There may be setbacks along the way, but a democratization of Russia is inevitable, and democracy in Russia must be accompanied by more freedom for those peoples unwillingly held inside the Soviet Union.

William Urban
Monmouth College (IL)


These volumes are welcome additions to the growing body of literature on Stalin and his meaning for Soviet history. Both are based on exhaustive research in the available official and non-official Soviet sources. Both demonstrate a
thorough knowledge of Western interpretive literature of the Stalin era. As the
titles suggest, the authors have different purposes. McNeal relies heavily on
official sources in his efforts to explain Stalin’s political career and the role that the
official Stalin cult played in Stalin’s system of rule. While not denying Stalin’s
uncongenial personality traits and cruelties, McNeal concludes that Stalin was in
his way a committed, albeit distorted Marxist-Leninist; and that this, as well as his
Russian nationalism and political acumen, was a significant factor in explaining his
successful rise to power.

Medvedev’s purpose is to make a moral judgment of Stalin in the light of
socialist ideals. He concludes that Stalin’s “pseudosocialism” (Chapter 15) was an
economically inefficient perversion of the ideals of the 1917 revolution; and that
the complex evils of the Stalinist legacy must be rooted out if the Soviet Union is to
progress toward a humane democratic socialism. Neither author adds anything
new to our knowledge of Stalin’s policies toward the Baltic countries. Both see
Stalin’s 1939-40 Baltic policies as motivated initially by his perception of Soviet
security needs, soon reinforced by his desire to recover parts of the Tsarist
Empire lost in the revolutionary period.

Douglas Spitz
Monmouth College (IL)

Astrumbaltijas un Skandinavijas Kontakts Vides Nacionālos Kontaktos (ed. Evalds
61 p.

This booklet contains summaries of the papers delivered at the International
Conference October 23-25, 1990, on Contacts between the East Baltic and Scandi-
navia in the Early Middle Ages. The summaries are written in English and German.
The contributions are listed in alphabetical order rather than grouped accord-
ing to subject matter. Māris Aizācis, "First Finds of Three-armed (Trefoil)
Brooches in Latvia;" Tatjana Berga, "Münzwagen in Lettland;" Zāiga Blumber-
berga-Vasarīņa, "Die wikingerzeitliche Kunst in Skandinavien und ihr Einfluß auf
die baltische Kunstentwicklung;" Andris Caune, "Die Lebenszentren des 10.
12. Jh. im Gebiet des Daugava-Unterlaufs und ihre Beziehungen zu skandinavis-
chen Ländern;" Kristina Creutz, "Schwedische Gold- und Silbergegenstände in
estländischen Schatzfunden von der Periode 800-1200 n.Chr. 19;" Johan
Engström, "Die vorhistorischen Burgen Gotlands;" Ingrid Jansson, "Wikin-
gerzeitlicher skandinavischer Frauenenschmuck in Lettland, Finnland und der Rus’
— ein Vergleich;" Kenneth Jonsson, "Hoards and Stray Finds from the Middle and
Northern Baltic Sea Area c. 1050-1150;" Vitautas Kazakevičius, "Scandinavian
Bindings of the Tips of Sword Sheaths from Lithuania;" Wladimir Kulakow,
Bestandteil der nordosteuropäische Communications und des Stadtentwick-
lungsprozesses;" Brita Malmer, "On the Scandinavian Element in the 1964
Kolodesi Hoard;" E. Mugurėvičius, "Skandinavische Geschichtsquellen des 9. bis

We look forward to seeing the full text of many of these presentations.

William Urban
Monmouth College (IL)


This volume is a selection of approximately half the presentations given during the June 1988 FUSAC conference at the University of Windsor. (A list of the other presentations is given by Nevis on page vii.)

Part One offers four articles from the special session on Finno-Ugric folk music: Gyula Décsy, “The Pentatonic Puzzle: Inheritance or Coincidence?” Jyrki Nummi, “What do People Sing? Singing in Väinö Linna’s The Unknown Soldier”; and Ingrid Rüütel, “The Setu Folk Song in Finno-Ugric and Balto-Slavic Contexts” and “Ethnic Research in Folk Music: Possibilities and Difficulties”. One of the selection criteria for this section appears to have been accessibility to non-musicians, and aside from some short rhythmic examples in Rüütel’s first article, no musical notation is employed.


J. Betts
Monmouth College (IL)

Because of the publication date (March 5, 1990), some of the information contained in this volume of essays on language planning in the Soviet Union is already invalidated by the tremendous changes sweeping through the Soviet Union. Baltic Studies scholars will be interested especially in Chapter 8 by Francis Knowles, “Language Planning in the Soviet Baltic Republics: An Analysis of Demographic and Sociological Trends.”

In the Baltic Republics, as elsewhere, language has been used to Sovietize the whole population for political and linguistic purposes, i.e. to establish a Soviet culture in lieu of a multiplicity of cultures in national groups (pp. 150-51). The main linguistic vehicle used has been Russian but it has become Sovietized in its own way. It is virtually impossible for foreigners to be allowed to conduct any type of truly independent investigation in the Soviet government’s policy to create a truly Soviet, inter-ethnic family of peoples: Western researchers have to rely on Soviet census-takers’ data based at times on ambiguous phrasing, and techniques used by socio-linguists outside the USSR cannot be implemented there (p. 155). The education system is of utmost importance, especially at the elementary and secondary level, and figures show that the number of children taught in Russian exceeds that of children whose native tongue is Russian because it is perceived as the language of “upward mobility.”

Knowles is pessimistic about the survival of traditional languages in the Baltic Republics: the biggest losses of language allegiance are occurring among small minorities—Finns and Jews in particular—in the three republics. Russian emigration is also wreaking havoc on the national languages: barring a change in immigration patterns, by the anniversary of the Great October Revolution in 2017 Estonian and Russian could be on equal footing; Russian and Soviet immigrants would outnumber Latvians; only Lithuania would remain linguistically and ethnically homogeneous, but it, too, would have a very comprehensive second language (Russian) knowledge across the population. So far, the Soviet Union has not shown the sensitivity, delicacy and adroitness needed to effect a harmonious linguistic modus vivendi with the population of those republics which are determined, at a minimum, to nurture their native language and culture and, at the maximum, to become politically independent again.

Roger Noël,
Monmouth College (IL)
CONTENTS

ARTICLES

William Urban, Renaissance Humanism in Prussia:
Early Humanism in Prussia ................................................. 95

Ants Viires, The Development of Estonian Ethnography during
the 20th Century ............................................................... 123

Dzintra Bond, Vowel and Word Durations in Latvian ..................... 133

Janina Reklaitis, Inflectional Simplication in the Lithuanian Language... 145

Argirdas Tupciauskas, The Genesis of Academic Science
in Lithuania ...................................................................... 157

Jouzas Krikštopaitis, The Subjection of Lithuanian Sciences to the Soviet
State System: Consequences and Prospects ................................ 169

Airieh Kochavi, Britain, the Soviet Union, and the Question of the Baltic
States in 1943 ...................................................................... 173

Douglas Spitz, The World Looks at the Baltic:
South Indian Perspectives, Spring 1991 ....................................... 183

REVIEWS

Norbert Angermann, ed. Die Hanse und der deutschen Osten
(William Urban) .................................................................. 187

Elise Kimberling Wirschafter, From Serf to Russian Soldier
(William Urban) .................................................................. 188

Alfred Erich Senn, Lithuania Awakening
(Robert A. Vitas) ................................................................. 189

Trevor Fennell and Harijs A. Johansons, Baltic Studies in Australia
(Roger Noel) ...................................................................... 191

William A. Clark, Soviet Regional Elite Mobility after Khrushchev
(Ira Smolensky) .................................................................. 192
The *Journal of Baltic Studies* is covered in the Arts & Humanities Citation Index and in Current Contents/Arts & Humanities. Articles on history appearing in the Journal are abstracted by the American Bibliographical Center and appear in Historical Abstracts. Articles dealing with the medieval period are abstracted in the International Medieval Bibliography. Abstracts of articles on literature, linguistics, and folklore appear in MLA Abstracts of the Modern Language Association. Articles on art abstracted in RILA (International Repertory of the Literature of Art) and those on music in RILM (International Repertory of Music Literature). The Journal is available on microfilm from University Microfilms, a Xerox Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, USA.

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RENAISSANCE HUMANISM IN PRUSSIA:
THE COURT OF THE GRANDMASTERS

William Urban, Monmouth College (IL)

I. The Renaissance and Prussian Traditions

Scholars of the German Renaissance have faced problems in attempting to explain the forms Humanism adopted in the Holy Roman Empire. To some degree, this results from the fact that fifteenth century Germans did not find Italian political and cultural models very attractive. Their Holy Roman Empire was not a successor state to Rome, and many recognized this, official protestations to the contrary. For centuries Germans had returned from Italy with feelings both of inferiority and superiority, emotions which assured them that they were not Italians. They called themselves Deutsch, a name with connotations of uprightness and honor, and they left Romano to the Byzantines, whom they despised for their very lack of those virtues. Now, confronted by a growing sophistication and arrogance in Italian society, and realizing they had lost their former military power, their ambivalence toward Italian intellectual achievements became more pronounced. Germans genuinely believed themselves to be more devout, more honest, and more valiant than Italians. Why this was so is debatable, but whatever the reason, they had ideals concerning religion and politics far removed from reality, incompatible even with the corruption in Germany and totally irreconcilable with the stories they heard about the Renaissance papacy.

Among Germans the ideal state of the Renaissance era was one which resembled the great medieval empire, not pagan Rome. Of course, this ideal state never existed. In theory German princes voluntarily accomplished great deeds under the inspired leadership of valiant and selfless emperors. In practice they paid lip service to the emperor and viewed every suggestion for united action suspiciously. Germany was not a nation, nor was the Holy Roman Empire a state. Germany was a collection of territories, each with traditions of its own. These traditions reflected the origin of the population, the geography, the natural resources, and the patterns of trade of each territory. The important tradition was
language, and Germans of one region did not necessarily understand the dialects
spoken by Germans elsewhere. This was part of a wider cultural diversity inside the
Holy Roman Empire. Swabians were not Saxons, and Hanseatic merchants had
little in common with Tyrolean mountaineers. Germany had little real unity—and
that was the way the princes and nobles preferred it.

If one accepts this viewpoint as a starting place for discussion, it is possible
to bypass some confusion as to what the princes wished to achieve: there was no
program, only sets of mutually contradictory ambitions. This is not to deny the
importance of unifying institutions. Such institutions did exist, and they worked
toward creating a sense of being German. First, there were the universities, most
of which had been recently founded, where intellectuals and a few princes
obtained an education in the liberal arts. Educated men saw themselves as more
alike than different. Secondly, the Reichstage (representative assemblies of
nobles and cities meeting in the presence of the emperor) and courts provided
frequent opportunities for an exchange of information and ideas among lawyers
and professors. Thirdly, the intermarriage of princely houses was usually
accompanied by an exchange of such trained personnel as companions, courtiers,
and advisors. Fourthly, the trade networks were defended by leagues of cities and
their hired protectors, the great princes. Lastly, there was immigration from west
to east, from country to city, and this development affected every class and
reminded everyone that provincial boundaries were not the end of the known
world. As a result, no territory was so distant, not even Prussia and Livonia, that
it did not have a share in the national dreams, that it did not have some wish for
a more effective unity of the German people. However, there was no group of
people so desirous of such a state that they were willing to sacrifice the slightest
bit of their autonomy to achieve it. Hence, unifying institutions did not create any
significant political unity.

The new way of thinking which made an impact on this situation was
essentially secular and logical—to create from old forms new methods of
governing, new approaches to managing the Church, and new means of raising
money. All change, however, had to be accomplished with as much deference to
tradition and accepted practice as possible. The role of Rhetoric was to persuade
the skeptical that innovations were really returns to old practices, reestablishment
of old institutions, and revitalization of ancient morality. This, in turn, required the
study of history, especially the history of the Church and its relationship to the
State. The study of the past was put to the service of the present, with practical,
secular goals, not moralistic or theological ends. Thus the humanists and rhetori-
cans of Germany in the era of the Reformation introduced what appeared to be
administrative and educational reforms, but which in reality was the seculariza-
tion of society.

While it would be polemical and incorrect to suggest this process was
occurring everywhere in Germany or even that humanists were consciously aware
of what they were doing, one might want to compare the view of the ideal Holy
Roman Empire of 1450 to that of 1525. In the former period the vision of Friedrich
Barbarossa and Friedrich II still stirred the imagination; seventy-five years later
this was not the case. The swiftness with which secular and ecclesiastical rulers transformed their states into Lutheran principalities and Roman Catholic princebishoprics indicate that by 1525 they had abandoned hope of reform. Now they had reason to fear a strong emperor who might take away their usurped rights and privileges.

Even in religious reform there was a secularist tendency. Gone were the flagellants and Beguins, having been replaced by witchhunters seeking out those who had sold their souls to the devil for worldly advantage or revenge. Gone were the simonist abbots and bishops who worked for family advantage—having been replaced by compliant, married, but impoverished clerics in the Protestant states and, in the Catholic regions, by unmarried but definitely unchaste men who were more prince than bishop. Gothic art was replaced by Renaissance styles, which were later covered over by Baroque extravagance or puritanical whitewash. Religious belief was still deep, but after the Peasant Rising of 1525, it was no longer tied to hopes of social and political reform.

Why this change came about cannot be explained without a detailed history of German humanism, because it was the men with a humanist education or at least an appreciation of the advantages to be gained by employing educated men, who advocated reforms and carried them through against much opposition. The Reform era was tumultuous, and no two regions experienced quite the same history. The nature of the reforms and their success or failure depended as much upon regional conditions and traditions as upon the personalities of the men in power at the time. Once the more universal influences have been studied, one must turn to regional influences to see why one region made one set of changes, and another area others.

The Teutonic Knights in Prussia reflected this predicament of the German people as a whole very well. They represented a traditional national viewpoint—they had convents, churches, and hospitals throughout the Holy Roman Empire; they drew their membership from every corner of the country; they had very close ties to their patron, the Holy Roman Emperor; and their very name (translated literally the German Order) emphasized their role as defenders of German civilization and culture. On the other hand, knights stationed in Prussia and Livonia developed regional viewpoints and demanded that their particular needs receive priority over imperial or national projects. Their political interests were not concerned with Italy or the Turks, but with Poles and Russians, Danes and Swedes, the rise of civic leagues, and episcopal efforts for independence. For knights in Prussia, unlike those in the empire, local problems outweighed national ones. This divergence of interests was the major cause of a growing schism in the ranks of the crusading order.

The military disasters of the Thirteen Years War had broken the Prussian branch of the Teutonic Order in its various roles as war machine, as vehicle for crusading, and as an effective government. The loss of the most important castles, almost half the land possessed in 1453, and the secure land route to Germany placed the grandmasters in an impossible and intolerable position vis-a-vis Poland. Some change had to be made. Either new crusading goals had to be found
or advantage taken of Polish difficulties to regain the lost territories or even more radical solutions taken (such as dissolving the order—as was often proposed by the Poles). Between 1466 and 1525 each of these possibilities was explored, and in the end the most radical was adopted.

The role of humanism in this process was to provide a new body of administrators who slowly replaced the Prussian knights in important offices and ultimately ousted them from all posts of authority. The viewpoint of the humanists was that of an educated middle-class elite with international training and experience. They replaced men of noble background whose lives had been dedicated to the church, to war, and, increasingly, to personal enjoyment—beer, the hunt, and, occasionally, loose women.

II. The Court of the Grandmasters to 1497

Grandmasters Heinrich Reuss von Plauen and Heinrich von Richtenberg (1467-1477) possessed limited options after the Second Peace of Thorn in 1466. The military defeat at the hands of the Prussian League and Poland had been almost total. It was absolutely necessary to allow the economy to recover, to organize the administration of the remaining lands, and to develop a new set of institutional goals. To accomplish these aims they had fewer warriors than any grandmaster in two centuries, which led them to move cautiously and make but few changes.

Not only did these grandmasters face a strong Polish monarchy and hostile West Prussians, but their religious order was disintegrating. The German convents were effectively independent and the Livonian ones were demanding more autonomy. The recruiting of members was difficult, and there were no more crusaders. This increased the grandmasters' dependence on the gentry. Wide stretches of the countryside were depopulated, and runaway peasants were common. The grandmasters—who had rewarded many mercenaries of the war by grants of land—had to give them permission to force the peasantry to work at the wages they chose to give. Vagrancy laws were strictly enforced. The nobles did not flourish, due to the depressed economy everywhere in eastern Europe; but they survived—and they demanded a controlling voice in the government through the assembly, forcing administrators to report to them rather than to the grandmasters.

The grandmasters reorganized along limited, sensible and logical lines—if they could not recruit knights from Germany in any numbers, they would be satisfied with a handful; they used this handful as officers, not warriors; and from that moment on, the majority of the troops were mercenaries, led by these knights. Never again would the grandmasters hire mercenary armes, foreign troops under foreign commanders. Instead, they would hire German troops led by their own knights. This resulted in significant monetary savings, particularly when they refrained from antagonizing the Polish king and could therefore reduce the numbers of the standing army.

Grandmaster Martin Truchsess (1477-1489), discussed the revival of crusading endeavors. Unfortunately, Polish encouragement of this was linked
with a plan to take away the Prussian lands and resettle the few knights on the Turkish frontier. Unwilling to commit institutional suicide, or even to fulfill the terms of the Second Peace of Thorn requiring the order to accept Polish members, Truchsess marked time, hoping that the reform movement in the Holy Roman Empire might provide some relief from a difficult situation. His efforts at internal reform made little headway because he had to deal with a financial rather than a moral problem. So much of the order's income was absorbed by knights stationed around the country in fortified convents that little was left for improving military preparedness. Yet reform was impossible, because the commanders of the convents could block the grandmaster's efforts to change any arrangement. The grandmaster survived an important crisis when King Casimir IV (1445-1492) sought to appoint the bishops for vacancies in Royal Prussia. That would have ended all hope the grandmaster had of ever recovering authority in that region, and he spent money lavishly to frustrate Polish designs. Though he was successful, the effort left him closer to bankruptcy than ever.

The next grandmaster, Hans von Tiefen (1489-1497), did go on crusade against the Turks in Moldavia as an ally of the Polish monarch Jan Olbracht (1492-1501). However, the expedition was a disaster. Most of the equipment and many of the troops were lost to bad weather and disease, and the aged grandmaster himself died of illness during the campaign. Clearly, neither the policy of marking time nor the revival of crusading seemed to be achieving results.¹

Through this quarter century humanist influence seems to have lain dormant. Except for bursts of activity, the grandmasters were not often acting as patrons in support of the advancement of art and architecture. They were even drawing in the purse strings on diplomacy. Clearly valuing rhetoric and disputatation far less than austerity, reserve, and patience, they spent almost nothing on scholars. There was some evidence of the quiet presence of humanists or humanist ideas: schools were founded in the cities—usually civic institutions rather than those of the church; Jacob Hogenstein—friend of humanist popes and the first procurator general to use the new handwriting—was gone, but he had left behind a quietly functioning office which fulfilled its traditional duty and served as a center for visiting students and delegations, and provided information about papal affairs; Grandmaster Martin abandoned the traditional seal (the order cross and the Virgin Mary) for one representing a female figure standing before an altar with a tripod and feeding a snake! But humanism was more truly represented by debates over political theory. Whether or not Plato and Aristotle were ever mentioned (one tends to doubt it), the knights were discussing the most fundamental assumptions about their organization and its governance. The officers were debating a plan to reorganize the Prussian state so that all authority came directly from the grandmaster instead of being transmitted through the commanders of the convents; it was even proposed that the grandmaster be a secular duke rather than the head of a monastic order. These issues were discussed quietly but persistently, as best we can tell, and apparently the example of Saxony came up repeatedly as a model for reform.²
Saxony was of interest partly because the elector there had faced and overcome some of the same difficulties faced by the Teutonic Order during the past half-century. A relatively small state surrounded by powerful neighbors, plagued by an insurrection of the estates between 1446 and 1451, Saxony had become a leader in the empire by the 1480’s. It was not easy to see how the elector had accomplished this; the Teutonic Order could not simply adopt the same reforms which had been carried out in Saxony and expect them to have the same effect. Should, for example, a grandmaster imitate the founding of Wittenberg University? Should he follow the Saxon reorganization of local administration by giving each advocate (Vogt) authority over the nobles, cities, and monasteries in his district? Neither proposal seemed practical. The former was expensive and would not produce quick results, the latter would meet with resistance from the estates. Although Prussian administrators did not see how they could emulate the elector’s example, they were impressed by their accomplishments. They saw that Saxon advocates and their assistants (Schreiber or Schloesser) had created surpluses which went into the general treasury, that limiting court hearings to three sites had created a central administration, and that a proper use of bookkeeping had made it possible to determine where the money was, how it was being spent, and how much income could be anticipated. Furthermore, the use of specialists in banking and justice as well as in the council improved the quality of advice given to the elector. Those specialists, many noted, had been trained in the liberal arts, often in Italian universities.

It was not that Germany faced a lack of qualified scholars—Italy was being flooded by unemployed Germans. In the papal Rota, three-fourths of the officials serving in 1471 were Germans, one-third of the notaries between 1490 and 1526 were Germans, as were almost three-quarters of the substitute notaries. There were also many German inn-keepers, merchants, and soldiers. Such men lacked opportunities at home and had adopted the traditional remedy of emigration.

Yet opportunities were becoming more abundant at home, too. The increasing popularity of Roman law had the effect of centralizing administrations and eliminating the chaotic and strangling net of local laws and customs. To devise and supervise the new bureaucracy required administrators who were, first of all, literate enough to understand the laws and, second willing to spend a lifetime with books and papers. (This was not an occupation for men who loved socializing and the hunt.) Moreover, the administrators had to know the world, whether through experience, travel, or reading, and to delight in innovation and order—the two words which separate the new processes from the old. Humanists were without question the best men available for these posts—not because they loved poetry and could discuss literature, but because their training gave them skills which could be used in the new bureaucracies.

Princes who observed the success of Saxony and Austria did not copy their methods exactly, perhaps because they did not understand them, but strove for the same results along lines traditional in their territories. The knights of the Teutonic Order, at a loss for means to achieve these results (they could not, for example, defeat the Prussian League and tax the cities), concluded that the best
policy might be to import a Saxon duke with his advisors and counsellors, then
support them in whatever innovations were necessary to revitalize the state.6

In addition, there was a general feeling throughout the Holy Roman Empire
that the moment had come for basic reforms. The Reichstag of 1495 had passed
a series of resolutions establishing procedures for settling legal disputes and
providing for defense. Time and experience had not yet shown how illusory those
procedures were to be. Consequently, when the general chapter of the Teutonic
Order met in 1498 to elect a new grandmaster, the knights rejected the monastic
reforms proposed by two principal leaders, Count Wilhelm von Isenburg (1460/
70-1532, the Grand Commander since 1495), and Count Heinrich Reuss von
Plauen (c. 1465-1524/37, the Quartermaster General or Trappier), and elected a
young Saxon duke who was not yet even a member of the order. Secular reform,
not religious innovation, had won the day.7

III. Friedrich von Sachsen

Friedrich von Sachsen was but twenty-five years of age in 1498 and he was
sickly—qualifications which would have removed him from consideration in
earlier eras. However, infirmities were to be expected in any great noble who
would forego his secular life and become the head of a monastic order. Vigorous,
virile men were no longer eager to make vows of chastity and poverty and even
less interested in promising unconditional obedience to superiors. This was an age
of activity, luxury, and a belief in one’s own innate worth. Even if Renaissance
narcissism had penetrated wherever humanist letters prepared the way, the old
chivalric joy in life was still important. The combination of a long-existing self-
aggrandizement on the part of the knights with a new secularism and self-serving
ambition resulted in further deterioration of monastic morals—members of the
Teutonic Order were becoming more famous for their dissipation (especially for
their drinking and whoring) and abuse of power. However, many knights were
elderly and there were fewer of them every year, facts which confirmed a popular
impression that the order was dying. Friedrich’s physical condition thus seemed
somehow symptomatic of his order as a whole.

Fortunately for Friedrich, the representatives at the general chapter were
not greatly concerned about vigor. In fact, Friedrich’s lack of vitality would make
it all the more possible for him to practice traditional monastic virtues without
making far-reaching reforms. This undoubtedly pleased the knights who governed
the convents and who could make administrative changes very difficult, should
they choose to oppose them. First of all, the knights were concerned about the fact
that Friedrich’s mother was a daughter of Georg Podiebrad of Bohemia and that
his brother had married into the royal house of Poland. Thus, family influence
could be used to support the order’s foreign policy. Secondly, he had advisors who
could reorganize Prussia along Saxon lines and restore the political greatness of
the Teutonic Order.8

How Friedrich was to accomplish these reforms was not at all clear, but the
fact that he was learned and well-travelled probably helped the knights believe he
was a young man of promise. Friedrich had, in fact, received an excellent education. At age thirteen he had acquired as tutor Paul Watt, a professor of law from Leipzig, a layman with wide-ranging interests. Five years later the two went to Italy, staying briefly in Bologna and for a prolonged period in Siena. In 1495 and 1496 they were at the court of the Archbishop of Mainz, a noted humanist who liked to assemble educated men about him. What Friedrich read and discussed in those days is difficult to determine, as the records have been almost completely lost, but Ovid was one of the authors later kept among his books of law. Such a book does not appear in earlier library listings!

Friedrich repaid his tutor's care by naming him Prussian chancellor in 1499 and awarding him the Samland episcopacy in 1503. When Watt died shortly after entering the clergy, his life was memorialized in a composition from the pen of the Ermland canon, Johann Scultetus, who was rewarded for his effort by being appointed procurator general and sent to Rome.

The chancellor's first interest was in establishing two new offices (Landgerichte) to be occupied by appointed officials who would be responsible for all aspects of government administration and, more important, who could intervene directly in matters of justice, shortening the slow process of litigation that had made enforcement of the law so difficult. He was also active in reopening the roads, disarming the peasants, and in other ways providing for law and order, the protection of commerce and trade, and for the improvement of agriculture. He abolished two convents (Balga and Brandenburg) and appropriated the incomes to his own use. With this act he eliminated two important posts which had traditionally been filled by knights and correspondingly reduced the voice of the conservative warrior-friars. Moreover, he passed sumptuary laws to limit wasteful luxuries; the money the citizens saved by these economy measures flowed eventually into the grandmaster's coffers. In addition, he designed the ordinances of 1503 to revitalize the sluggish economy, to end quarrels with the bishops, and to strengthen the role of the council in the government. These steps were so successful in reorganizing the finances that they were followed by others in years to come.²

Due to the fact that King Jan Olbracht of Poland experienced military defeats in his contest with the Turks, and his brother Alexander, who succeeded him in 1501, had to fight the Russians and Tatars as well, Friedrich feared no attack from Poland. When Sigismund I (1506-1548) came to the throne, Poland remained in conflict with those three dangerous enemies, causing it to become ever less a danger to Prussia. Grandmaster Friedrich and his advisors did not fully appreciate the changing situation. The opportunity was there to rise above the traditional hostility and establish a lasting peace. Instead, they saw the Polish predicament only as an opportunity to restructure their own government and to seek allies among Poland's enemies. Their intent was to wage war at a later time. All they could think about was revenge for Tannenburg and the two peace treaties signed at Thorn. In short, they had a Versailles mentality.

As Watt reorganized the administration, he placed his men in important posts. Some he took into the grandmaster's retinue, others he assisted in placing
in episcopal service. He worked closely with bishops who would have mistrusted a more traditional chancellor but who appreciated the potential advantages of the reforms for their own ambitions. As a result of Watt's bureaucratic approach, humanists came to dominate the administrative apparatus both in the order's lands and in episcopal territories.

Watt's successor was Dietrich von Werthern (1468-1536), a Saxon who had studied in Erfurt and Bologna. Though a lay lawyer, he had sufficient respect for the tradition of celibacy not to marry while in the order's service. Nevertheless, he broke the clerical domination of court life and in his nine years as the principal force behind the administration firmly established secular practices in the government. He set a style which clearly separated the new etiquette from the old; he even formalized this in a written description of each officer's duties.10

Von Werthern's greatest success was to gain the cooperation of the estates and the Bishop of Ermland. His friendship with Bishop Lucas Watzenrod was a personal coup, because a hostile prelate in Ermland could have stirred up opposition to the basic reforms and provoked Polish interference in local administration. Since the cities' influence had declined after 1466, the role of the Ermland bishop who presided at League meetings necessarily grew more important. The establishment of a twelve-man advisory council (Kammergericht) in 1507-1508 was accomplished against almost universal public objection because the absence of the grandmaster after 1507 left a vacuum of power which no one wanted filled by a single individual. Soon the knightly and burgher estates realized that if they each named four members and the chancellor named two lawyers, then the two conservative-minded knights of the Teutonic Order would...
be a hopeless minority. Moreover, the stalemates that occurred because one estate or the other refused to consent to legislation could now be avoided; even tax bills were passed. Headed by Hans von Schönberg, the council was supposedly balanced—Bishop Hiob of Pomesania and Bishop Gunter of Samland against Grand Commander Simon von Drahe and Marshal Wilhelm von Isenburg. By assigning important matters to this council and giving it judicial powers, von Werthern won the support of the estates and denied the outnumbered conservatives an effective check on his policies. Next, he sent the powerful Count Wilhelm von Isenburg back to Germany on business and used a complaint by the Bishop of Ermland to deprive von Isenburg of his offices. The policy of removing enemies was thus firmly in place by 1512 when von Werthern retired from the grandmaster’s employment in order to serve the Elector of Saxony.

The grandmaster approved his chancellor’s program. In fact, Friedrich depended on advice—he could not formulate ideas himself. He was not only weak physically, but he was a hopeless hypochondriac whose mental state worsened his congenitally poor health. However, he could make decisions once he had heard a variety of opinions and had weighed the options. Therefore, he listened carefully to the recommendations of every important person in the administration before making a decision. Usually he agreed with his imported humanists rather than with the traditional council of officers or with the assembled castellans and representatives of the convents.

Most prominent among this second line of advisors was his doctor, Erasmus Stella (c. 1460-1521), a Saxon with training in Leipzig and Bologna. While in Italy Stella had assisted his teacher, Giovanni Garzoni, write De rebus Saxoniae and later (in 1518) saw that it was published in Basel. It was in Italy that he met the young Friedrich, to whom he dedicated the book. While in Prussia Stella composed a treatise on the antiquities of the country which was published in 1510 and a book on jewelry which was printed in 1517. He left the court in 1507 but continued to correspond with his friends there.

Stefan Gerdt of Königsberg was one of several gifted Prussian boys who had studied in Leipzig at the end of the previous century and gone on to Bologna. Returning to Leipzig as a professor, he entered the Prussian service in 1509 as a lawyer, canon in Samland, and member of the Teutonic Order. In his Saxon career he had written poetry which praised his employers; presumably he continued this practice for the grandmaster until his death in 1519. Unfortunately, his voluminous writings have been almost completely lost.

Sebastian von der Heide (d. 1531), better known as Miricius, had an almost identical early career, serving originally with Bishop Hiob von Dobeneck. When the grandmaster became ill and returned to Saxony in 1507 to recuperate, Miricius went with him. In 1501, shortly after publishing three short Latin poems praising Prussia, he received a Prussian pastorate whose incomes allowed him to live comfortably in Leipzig. He remained active in the grandmaster’s service, traveling to Reval on diplomatic business in 1515.

A similarly short residence was the experience of Johann von Kitzscher, a Saxon scholar who had met Friedrich in Italy and later became a well-known
humanist. Friedrich recruited him from Pomeranian service to become procurator general between 1508 and 1512. He thrived on hard work in the bureaucracy.  

Most important of the Königsberg-born and educated clique was Johann Scultetus (1470-1526). One-time professor and rector at Heidelberg, he became a canon in the Ermland chapter in the mid-1450’s and dominated the regional intellectual scene until his death in 1526. A man of peace, he sought to bring the various Prussian governments into harmony—a goal which eluded him in the end. He was an Erasmian figure who dominated a generation of Prussian humanists but was unable to quiet the controversies raging through society. Unfortunately, his poetry has been lost, for it was considered good, but his real importance lay in his moderating influence on Grandmasters Friedrich and Albrecht.  

Another Ermland canon who worked for Grandmaster Friedrich was Georg Prang, a native of Guttstadt in Ermland. A skilled Latinist, he was secretary to the demanding humanist, Bishop Watzenrode, in the 1480’s and 90’s. As a student in Bologna he had met the bishop’s nephew, Nicholas Copernicus, and in 1501 went to Rome to assist the energetic but unlearned procurator general, Georg von Eitz. This defection earned him the displeasure of Bishop Lucas Watzenrode, so that he was unable to resume his place in the Ermland chapter after his return from Italy in 1503; instead, he took a post in the grandmaster’s chancery until his death in 1509. Prang became a noted historian, the first in Prussia to abandon the chronicle form in favor of a legal history based on the texts of treaties and of papal and imperial grants, using logical argumentation to pull everything together and writing in the vernacular with the intent of reaching a popular audience. He relied heavily on a draft manuscript by Watt, but by adding information from chronicles he created a history out of what might have been merely a collection of documents. Like Watt, he died too early to achieve a wider reputation in literary circles; thus his fame remained purely local.  

Of lesser importance personally was the councilman, Hans von Schönberg (d. 1514), whose younger brother Dietrich came to assume his duties and ultimately to become the principal figure at court. We will hear more from him later.

These officials and advisors managed to achieve considerable success in their reorganization of finances and legal administration. Such accomplishments were made in the face of obstinate resistance on the part of knights of the Teutonic Order, who saw each change as a threat to their traditional life style. Proverbially addicted to drink, women, and a willful exercise of power over helpless subjects, the castellans and their subordinates in the countryside yielded authority only slowly and reluctantly to the grandmaster’s humanistically educated advisors. They clung to the minor posts—tax collector and justice of the peace—which required little effort or thought but lent them local prestige. Nevertheless, Watt, von Werthern, and their friends made important progress in limiting the autonomy of these knights. Watt’s energy, persistence, and inventiveness eventually wore down the opposition, until his officials had reduced the knights to powerless figureheads. Unfortunately for the administrators, their efforts at grand politics were not as happy. Prussia was too weak to affect the balance of power.
between Russia and Poland-Lithuania, or to assist the Livonian Order in its hour of peril. When Livonia was threatened by Ivan the Great, the Prussians sent no aid. Further reforms of the internal administration were still necessary. One can only speculate as to what these reforms would have been, had Grandmaster Friedrich lived; but it is likely he would have secularized the state while maintaining monastic leadership. He might have become a prince-abbot, with the emphasis on abbot. Prussia might well have remained Roman Catholic through the Reformation. If so, the history of Prussia would have resembled that of the southern German states rather than the northern ones, as was the case.

IV. Albrecht von Brandenburg

The determination of the membership of the general chapter to elect a German duke as grandmaster regardless of his other qualifications can be seen in their choice. The twenty-year-old Albrecht von Brandenburg was a youth unsuited in every way to monastic life. The accident of birth provided his major asset, his mother being Princess Sophie of Poland, daughter of King Casimir, and following that, having a brother who ruled in nearby Brandenburg.

Albrecht had made it clear he did not believe he could live by the vow of celibacy, whereupon it was explained that while the members would, of course, be expected to follow it, he, as grandmaster, could be excused from the requirement. All he would have to give up was an orderly family life—wife, legitimate children, heirs. That being the only sacrifice expected, he could otherwise live like a prince, making war and peace, establishing an enjoyably social court, hunting, whoring, and so forth. Albrecht accepted these conditions, took the vows of the order, and became grandmaster. He brought with him a clever mind, physical vigor, and a willingness to listen to learned advisors. The reform program was to continue along lines advocated by the humanists.

The reforms of Albrecht were to differ in direction and intensity from those of the previous administrations. He seemed to recognize, however dimly, that the future lay with the absolutist states. The introduction of professional armies meant that larger amounts of money would be required. Only by taxing the peasants and burghers could this money be raised, which meant that the nobles had to be elevated in authority still higher and a government bureaucracy established that could take some of the gains from the castellans, the secular knights and the patrician merchants.

Albrecht's principal advisor was the "iron bishop," Hiob von Dobeneck, Bishop of Pomesania from 1502-1521, who had acted as regent while Friedrich was dying. He consolidated his control of the Council in 1513 by buying the cooperation of Heinrich Reuss von Plauen, guaranteeing him the unrestricted control of the convent, territory, and taxes of Bartenstein for his lifetime. Although a Saxon, Bishop Hiob had not had much contact with the grandmaster until Friedrich's last days; instead, he had remained at his seat in Riesenbug, administering his estates and attracting a number of learned young men to his court, which was famed not so much for the strength of his humanist achievements, but because of his encouragement of others.
Foremost among his proteges was Helius Eobanus Hessius, an Erfurt scholar who wrote a poem about the intellectual life at Riesenburg. Moreover, he wrote several widely distributed poems, one praising life in Royal Prussia, another contrasting the material well-being of the people with their backwardness. Finally, in 1512, there was his famous contest with Polish poets to describe the wedding of King Sigismund with Barbara Zapolya. In fact, he used so many classical allusions in the wedding poem, that he had to defend himself against charges of being a pagan (he had called on Apollo as a witness rather than Christ). At that memorable occasion he met Johann Dantiscus. The attraction of mind and talent was mutual. They remained life-long friends. Certainly, in the era of the Reformation it would be hard to find two other men who in their own lives illustrated so well the effect of the religious schism: Dantiscus remained in the Polish service and was sent to Augsburg in 1533 to represent the cause of King Sigismund and Albrecht of Prussia, while Hessius appeared in the delegation of Melanchthon. They were two moderates who had originally worked for maintaining unity in the church, but by virtue of employment ended in opposite camps. Hessius left Prussia in 1513, not yet famous, but soon to be one of the best-known humanists of Germany. Dantiscus became bishop first of Culm and then of Ermland. He was a formidable foe of all Protestants.

Bishop Hiob's predilection for humanist studies was not lost on his Polish opponents. They cited Aristotle and Cicero in their carefully drafted letters and used all their talent at rhetoric to sway him from the path of confrontation. Their efforts failed. When the bishop died in 1521, his government had lost a war with the Poles; his bishopric was occupied; and Luthern ideas were spreading through his court. No better proof need be given of the role of Fortuna in human affairs.

Bishop Hiob had been an advocate of tradition and stability. He had managed but barely to maintain his offices in recent years, and now that his presence was removed, Grandmaster Albrecht was free to move in the direction of a complete secularization of the Prussian state, a move he hoped might resolve the difficult matter of the order's relationship with the Polish king.

This move toward secularization was championed by Dietrich von Schönberg, a humanist cut from the Bürckhardtian pattern. Born in 1484, a student in Leipzig and Italy, he established residence at the Königsberg court in 1515. A firm believer in the fashionable practice of astrology, he encouraged the study of mathematics and astronomy. As his star rose to dominate Albrecht's horizon, Bishop Hiob saw the setting of his own.

Von Schönberg was a phenomenon. He did not hold any academic degrees, but he impressed all listeners and readers with his abilities in Latin, French, and Italian. An enthusiastic womanizer, he escorted Albrecht on late evening escapades and did not hesitate to enter the costs of prostitutes on his expense accounts. (Albrecht eventually died of syphilis.) He loved extravagant clothing, gambling, and travel. He knew art and taught Albrecht what to appreciate and what to buy, thus establishing the beginning of the Königsberg collection. All these lay interests were easily communicated to Albrecht, who was becoming less and less satisfied with his role as the head of a monastic order.
Von Schönberg was an unashamed nepotist as well. Just as his brother had brought him to Prussia, he found posts in the order's service for brothers Hans the younger and Anton. Another brother, Nicholas, entered the Church and rose to the rank of cardinal.

It was Dietrich von Schönberg who encouraged Albrecht to seek a military victory over Poland that would give him dominion over Royal Prussia and Ermland. To that end he traveled to Moscow to sign a military alliance. To persuade the Prussian estates to support the war preparations, he gave a speech to the assembly in January of 1518, warning the representatives of all the dangers that lay ahead unless they fought: that in the future half the members of the Teutonic Order would have to be Poles, which would quickly lead to a tyrannical government such as those in Poland and Lithuania; East and West Prussia would be dominated by poverty and serfdom. His emotional appeal was successful: he, managed to confuse the differences between those parts of Poland ruled by great magnates in an oppressive manner and Royal Prussia, which was not misgoverned (and would be the model for any future Polish administration). Thus, his rhetoric overcame common sense.

The resultant war of 1519-1521 proved a disaster for the grandmaster. Albrecht arranged for payment of the troops as best he could, but his funds were inadequate to keep a strong army in the field; moreover, he wasted his resources on diversionary assaults and raids. As a result, Albrecht achieved nothing and had to sue for peace. The king granted him a four-year truce but made it clear that within that time Albrecht would have to resolve the future of his order's relationship with Poland. The Teutonic Order in Prussia would have to find either the means to defend its independence or become a part of the Polish commonwealth.\(^{21}\)

In the following year Albrecht attended the *Reichstag* in Nuremberg, where he heard the preacher, Andreas Osiander. Many years later Albrecht called him "his spiritual father," for at that time he learned from him the principal ideas of the Protestant Reformation.\(^{22}\) He did not act on these ideas immediately. Instead, he wrote to Luther and talked with his closest advisors; what they said in private was known only to each other.

Albrecht's behavior was now that of a secular prince. The Brandenburg coat-of-arms replaced the representation of the Virgin Mary. He was the second grandmaster to have his portrait painted (Friedrich was the first), he collected Cranach and Dürer and had his own court painter, Wolf Rieder. He corresponded with Luther, who shrewdly deduced what Albrecht wanted him to advise: to abandon the false chastity of celibacy and enter into the true chastity of marriage.\(^{23}\) Albrecht was not famed for his chastity in any case; perhaps marriage would improve him. On the other hand, when Luther responded to the Livonian master's inquiries on this matter, he gave the response that the correspondent wanted to hear: that the form was not important, so long as the spirit was sound. Walter von Plettenberg, Albrecht's Livonian counterpart, was a chaste and honorable warrior with no desire to found a dynasty. Consequently, the Livonian Order remained Roman Catholic.\(^{24}\)

Luther was a highly skilled scholar and a master of rhetoric who used all his skills on Albrecht. The meeting of the two men in Wittenberg in the fall of 1523
seems to have been decisive in the grandmaster's decision to introduce reforms. Although Luther gave advice about about the general direction of reform, he left the details of implementation to others, assuming correctly that local conditions would require regional variations. As a result, men like Dietrich von Schönberg, who assisted Albrecht in choosing policies meeting the special needs of Prussia, came to be of decisive importance in determining the form the Lutheran reforms took there.

Dietrich von Schönberg did not live to introduce his proposed reforms: he was slain at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, before the secularization of the Teutonic Order was completed. Nevertheless, his personality had dominated the crucial years 1521-1525, when Grandmaster Albrecht was considering various alternatives to his ambiguous situation: as head of an international monastic order Albrecht could not make a lasting peace with Poland, for the Polish monarch would accept nothing less from a vassal than full submission; if Albrecht became a vassal in spite of the legal complications involved, he would see his order's other properties confiscated by enemies of the Polish king; as grandmaster he had duties both to the emperor and the pope, who were very unlikely to consent to any change in his status; and he had to obtain the approval of the German and Livonian masters, who were certain to refuse permission. In the absence of von Schönberg, who had gone to Italy to speak with Charles V, Bishop Georg Polenz of Samland persuaded Albrecht that he would be unable to become a Polish vassal as long as he remained a Roman Catholic friar with all its restrictions on his freedom of action, but that as a Protestant duke he could do as he wished. He could even marry and establish a dynasty. The deadline for action was the spring of 1525, when the four-year truce expired. Albrecht went to Cracow and swore personal allegiance to King Sigismund, who enfeoffed him with Prussia as Duke Albrecht. Personal motives and raison d'état were thus both important in the introduction of Lutheran reforms into Prussia.

On May 27, 1525, Duke Albrecht announced the actions he had taken to the members of the order and the representatives of the assembly in Königsberg and asked for their approval. When the assemblymen withdrew to debate the matter, a few knights chose to approach Albrecht and object to the proposed dissolution of their branch of the religious order. However, Albrecht's armed retainers began shouting, "Wir erstechen die Kreuzpaffen" (We'll run the friar-knights through!) and intimidated the knights into swearing the oath of allegiance along with the assemblymen.25

Albrecht was now an experienced and more forceful ruler. After Dietrich von Schönberg death, he took the direction of the state into his own hands. He encouraged his clergy to emulate Polenz, who ceded his lands to the duke and lived on a salary. In effect, Albrecht became his own chancellor. Though he filled the post with capable servants, he made all decisions himself.

The secularization and centralization achieved by Duke Albrecht made him an effective autocrat. Of course, there was no body of theory to guide him toward the age of absolutism, and he made mistakes, such as sharing power too greatly with his landed nobles and the burghers in the Prussian assemblies, but he learned
from his errors. Though he had not read the book of his contemporary, Nicolo Machiavelli, Albrecht seemed to have brought back some of the same principles from his youthful visit to Italy and was just now determining their application to the northern situation.

The actual implementation of church reform was supervised by Bishop Polenz (1478–1550) and Bishop Erhard von Quels (d. 1529) of Pomesania, both humanists educated in Italy. Though untrained for the clergy and technically still laymen, they had nevertheless been confirmed in office by the pope in 1519 and 1523. They embraced the Lutheran teachings wholeheartedly and were thoroughly loyal to Albrecht. They persuaded the fifty-five members of the Teutonic Order stationed in Prussia to accept secularization and in four days coerced the six who refused to cooperate to abandon their sit-down strike and leave the country. Through all this they had the fullest cooperation of the Polish government.

The most serious opposition came from Heinrich Reuss von Plauen, the oldest and most powerful of the conservatives, who was castellan at Barnstein. He originally resisted the new teaching, but gave way once he was again guaranteed the lifetime possession of his office and income. Minor nobles were similarly won over by being granted extensive rights over the peasants on their estates. Through confiscations of peasant holdings and acquiring rights to supervise the daily lives of the workers, these Junkers became accustomed to exercise authority. This policy completed Albrecht's secularization of the state and made the hitherto divided and almost powerless nobles into a united body which would support him against future peasant and burgher complaints.

The news from Prussia displeased the pope and the emperor, who were nevertheless unable to change matters. The Livonian master protested but could not send troops without denuding his border posts, and therefore he did nothing. The German master had troubles of his own: the Great Peasant Rebellion was sweeping through southern Germany; many of his castles and convents were being plundered and burned. As a result, he was fully occupied with the bloody suppression of rebel peasants, and, in 1526, resigned his office. His successor contemplated an invasion of Prussia but ultimately abandoned the plan in the face of tactical difficulties. Then, seizing the opportunity to become grandmaster himself, he reorganized the Teutonic Order around the territories possessed in southern Germany, with Mergenthurm as the new administrative center.

Some objected to this resolution of Duke Albrecht's personal and political problems, but Albrecht's officials were able to persuade or coerce compliance with the decrees of secularization and reform. Some of the burghers and nobles rejoiced to accept the reforms sweeping northern Germany, and those who were hesitant did not resist long; the peasantry became overtly enthusiastic, starting a short-lived rebellion and had to be put back in place by the most violent repressive measures. Among those who counted—the rulers of the northern lands—there were no complaints: the former grandmaster opened marriage negotiations with kings and dukes eager to negotiate good marriages for their daughters, and the King of Poland gladly accepted the incorporation of Ducal Prussia into the Polish kingdom alongside Royal Prussia.
It would be a dire mistake to conclude that the Prussian Reformation was the sole work of two somewhat disreputable personalities; Dietrich von Schönberg and Albrecht von Brandenburg. The educated minority and the middle class had been deeply penetrated by the ideas of the time and many of them were very much in favor of the Lutheran proposals. This educated minority was sizable: between the years 1480 and 1525 four hundred and seventy Prussian students had gone to universities; even a few sons of nobles had been sent to Rome. Their members had been reinforced by immigrants from the Holy Roman Empire and Poland. As a result, there was hardly a town or cathedral without its small circle of educated men who could knowingly discuss the news of the day, adding bits of wisdom from their study of mankind, their travels, and their recent conversations with friends in other population centers. Humanist attitudes had penetrated deeply into their ways of thinking, and these were often combined with anger at what many Germans considered to be Italian mismanagement of the Church. Moreover, a deep piety remained among these people who had until recently expressed their faith by going on pilgrimages and buying indulgences; now they reacted against perceived excesses with a thorough-going reversal of habits. Some individuals were ready to advocate the formation of a German Church, one that would be pure, closer to the original intent of the Apostles, and run by trustworthy, pious Teutons.

In addition, education was penetrating throughout Prussia. Libraries were springing up. Even the Franciscan friary in Wehla (surely the most provincial of all possible posts) had a library of five hundred and fifteen volumes. Doctors, pharmacists, poets, painters, and musicians resided in Königsberg. There was a demand for a local university that ultimately resulted in the foundation of Albertus University.38

Even though Albrecht rarely intervened personally in the reform of the church, his toleration of dissenting ideas was of great importance. He permitted Dutch and Silesian dissenters to settle in Prussia, allowed Anabaptists to serve as clergymen in his churches, and even received the radical reformer Caspar Schwennckfeld as a guest. Only in 1532 did he resolve any religious disputes by holding a debate. When the Lutherans won, he expelled their radical opponents. But he did not persecute the dissenting communities and even invited more to come to Prussia.39

The Reformation also succeeded in Royal Prussia, thanks to the same classes of independent-minded burghers, canons, monks, and administrators, who overcame all efforts to repress the new religion through education, intimidation, and force. Although the Protestant church was not officially recognized until 1550, when Danzig, Thorn, and Elbing paid the crown 100,000 zlotys for permission to organize a Lutheran Church, it existed semi- legality from the 1520's. Willingness to take risks and to pay hard cash indicates a definite commitment to the Protestant cause on the part of the citizenry. Nevertheless, just as it would be easy to underestimate the level of intellectual life in Prussia on the eve of the Reformation, it would be just as easy to overestimate the religious enthusiasm behind the reforms. Although there were outbreaks of icon-breaking—when puritanical mobs sacked churches and convents—such disturbances did not
represent the feelings of those people in society who made the final decisions. Instead, the movers of the state—priests, politicians, merchants, gentry—were relatively conservative and cautious. They shared the surge in pietism that had appeared in recent years, and they, too, expressed their unhappiness with impious elements in the Roman Church—the dissolute popes, the arrogant knights of the Teutonic Order, and sinful priests—but they did not enter into the reform movement solely on the basis of religious feelings. Theirs was also an intellectual movement, based on a conviction that the Church needed to be reduced in size and controlled locally, and that its influence should be used less for political ends and more in affecting the behavior of the citizenry. Political administrators may have taken the lead in advocating such changes, but many burghers and nobles considered them worthwhile objectives, too.30

The Prussian nobles came from a variety of origin: German immigrants, Old Prussians, and mercenary soldiers of the 1450's and 60's. Yet they had common interests in protecting their estates through a long period of economic trouble and took advantage of the situation to do so. Although they had once been able to attract immigrants to fill the countryside, depopulated lands now lay untended. Only by forcing the peasants into serfdom and farming the estates on a large scale could they survive the crisis. Since they could no longer make their wishes felt through the Assembly—now of no importance—they demanded and achieved control of the local offices of administrator, tax collector, and justice as former members of the Teutonic Order died off. Although the ex-friars had been guaranteed possession of their offices for their lifetime, few married and established dynasties. Their offices came into the hands of the gentry, whose estates were too small to guarantee them a living and who therefore eagerly sought employment in the army or state service.31

These reforms were made while all Germany was agitated about the same issues. The people of Prussia did not live in a vacuum. Most of the men responsible for governing Prussia were born in Germany, educated in German universities, and influenced by German thinkers like Ulrich von Hutten. Consequently, their achievements at this time were essentially those which had been done elsewhere. The manner in which they accomplished these reforms, of course, did reflect Prussian traditions and the exigencies of local politics. In this respect the wishes of King Sigismund of Poland cannot be forgotten. It is, therefore, important to review the history of such recent events from the Polish point of view.

King Sigismund wanted to ward off a dangerous political coalition threatening him on his southern and western borders. To the south he saw the powerful Hapsburg emperor, Charles V (1500-1548), and to the north the Teutonic Order. Sigismund had narrowly escaped several assassination attempts and feared for the stability of his kingdom. With Charles V growing in strength but temporarily preoccupied with troubles of his own, Sigismund chose to eliminate the Teutonic Order as an independent entity. He was willing to accept Albrecht, a close relative, as a vassal, but he would no longer tolerate him as an ally of the Holy Roman emperor. Albrecht's acceptance of the Lutheran reforms and the consequent secularization of Prussia was a response to this pressure. Religious enthusiasm had little to do with it, either for Duke Albrecht or King Sigismund.32
The opposition of pope and emperor to this development had the effect of drawing Prussia ever more into the Polish orbit. If Duke Albrecht had dreams of resisting his new lord, he had to abandon them quickly, for nowhere could he find the military aid that would be necessary to maintain himself in office. The bonds of blood were drawn tighter by practical politics. Sigismund knew that he could rely on Albrecht, and Albrecht had no choice but to be loyal to Sigismund. Neither wished for Prussia to return to the Roman Catholic past.

Neither Duke Albrecht nor King Sigismund can be accused of deliberately breaking faith with the Church. Each knew that the Church was stubbornly opposed to giving up any prerogatives and that it had to be led by the nose, often rather brutally, to accomplish any change. Moreover, the Church was hardly being led well at this moment. Rome had neither prestige nor power. If the pope could not suppress even a rebellious monk in Wittenberg, how could he hope to control a powerful king in the distant north? Sigismund and Albrecht realized their own power. They knew that they had no hope of obtaining prior approval for their acts, and at this time they had no reason to fear papal anger. In whatever they wished to accomplish they were accountable to public opinion only in their own domains. They could worry about the pope later. Moreover, at that date, in 1525, the fate of the reform movement was not yet apparent. It was still a reform, not yet a Reformation.

Albrecht and Sigismund could not have foreseen the ultimate results of their actions. They were merely carrying out programs advocated by humanistically trained administrators to meet their personal and political needs. Therefore, they found themselves somewhat embarrassed later when the Reformation divided western Christendom into two armed camps, making it necessary to justify their actions to a changing public opinion abroad, a justification which became necessary sooner than anyone had anticipated. Swiftly moving events swept along the men governing Prussia and Poland. They could not go back, did not want to go back, and they could hardly see what the future held.

V. Humanists defend the Treaty of Cracow

Duke Albrecht’s problems were not solved by declaring his order secularized and being accepted by Sigismund as a vassal. Although Prussia was surrounded by Polish territories and could not easily be attacked from without, he could nevertheless imagine situations in which King Sigismund could not provide him protection. Thus, it was entirely possible that he might lose his newly created state and be punished for his sins. The German master of the Teutonic Order was interested in an armed expedition to reconquer Prussia, and the Livonian master evidenced hostility as well. Therefore, Albrecht sought to obtain papal and imperial approval of his acts. This could blunt criticism from the Roman Catholic ranks and save him from possible future troubles with the Polish king as well. Sigismund was a thoroughgoing Catholic who might later be persuaded to reconsider his arrangement with Albrecht. Promises to heretics were not binding and Roman Catholics were beginning to consider Protestants heretics rather than overly enthusiastic reformers.
His first approach was to the pope, Clement VII had been the order's cardinal-protector from 1516 to 1523, and after his elevation to the papacy he had appointed as his successor a fellow Florentine, Niccolo Ridolfi. The immediate problem of communication stemmed from the cautious nature of the procurator general, Georg Busch, who had fled Rome when the Cracow Treaty was made public. A new representative, Dietrich von Reden (d. 1556), soon appeared in Rome where he remained for five years despite the excommunication laid upon him for his part in the duke's renunciation of his vows. He was unable to accomplish anything. Those were tumultuous years, during which all decisions were made by the emperor, Charles V, who saw Prussian submission to Poland as a personal insult.

Charles V was an ambitious man in those years. He had no inclination to give up any territory, any prerogative, or any claim to authority. Prussia, though not part of the Holy Roman Empire, had been traditionally associated with the empire; the grandmaster had borne the imperial coat-of-arms; the Deutscher Orden that we call the Teutonic Knights was literally the "German Order." All were reasons to object to Albrechts' actions. For the emperor the loss of Prussia as an ally on Poland’s northern flank was even more serious.

Albrecht, knowing the emperor's mood, sent Georg Klingenbeck to Madrid in 1525. Klingenbeck was a well-known humanist, popular for his correspondence with Andreas Cricius, the Polish genius; it was anticipated that his rhetorical skills could win over a hostile emperor. He argued that the duke had not had a real choice in the matter but had been forced to secularize his duchy in order to save it. Present in Madrid at the same time was the Polish representative, Johann Dantiscus, who, too, was famous for his rhetorical ability. In his way Dantiscus supported the duke as much as possible—after all, Albrecht was now a royal vassal—but he was more interested in defending his king, who was being cast as the villain of the piece. Dantiscus put the blame on Duke Albrecht, arguing that if the pope and the emperor were unable to prevent him from carrying out the secularization of an ancient and powerful religious order, how could a mere king of Poland expect to achieve anything? Charles V listened while the two humanists attempted to refute each other's arguments. However, he was not amused. Nor was he convinced.

The debate spread abroad. Reformers and conservatives drew lines over the issue. Even Erasmus spoke out in 1527, remarking that peace was better than war and noting that the treaty had indeed brought peace to Prussia, something no pope or emperor had ever been able to achieve. Humanist rhetoric was stretched to the utmost, but ultimately it was the practical inability of any Catholic prince to change the situation that left Albrecht a Protestant duke.

Albrecht's marriage to a Danish princess brought more changes to the Königsberg court; the womanly influence was felt in etiquette and expenses—wife and family required different luxuries and different companions. Albrecht changed in this new environment; he became less ambitious, more tolerant, more religious, and he took an interest in music, art, and education, all of which was good for the future development of high culture in his country. Prussia became a
land of Luther, Melanchthon, and Cranach, a land of the Reformation and secularization. Humanism was at last able to exert a strong influence beyond the councils of state.

VI. Humanism in Prussia 1490-1525

The influence of humanism in Prussia during the last years of the Teutonic Order is to be noted in three areas: in civil and religious administration, in literature, and in education. The impact on the first of these has been discussed sufficiently. Humanists brought a talent for organization and critical thinking, a wide-ranging enthusiasm for achievement and innovation, and supreme self-confidence to their tasks. The creation of the sixteenth-century Prussian duchy and the Lutheran Reformation was the result of their efforts. Only then was the way clear for humanism to have a truly significant impact in the fields of literature and education.

There had been some writing of literature in the order territories in Prussia, but it paled beside that of the bishoprics. Albrecht’s literary scholars produced only one small historical chronicle appropriately entitled “A Little Latin Chronicle of the Grandmaster.” Perhaps a case could be made that the post-Reformation generation of historians and antiquarians had their roots in this era, but that would be pushing the point too far. Likewise, before the secularization of the order, poetry had only local significance and little of it survived. The great men who served in Prussia did so either very early in their careers, Hessius being the best example, or very late—Johann Crotus Rubianus, author of the first volume of Letters of Obscure Men, being the most famous. Rubianus, at least, left a well-ordered ducal library in Königsberg from his service between 1524 and 1531, but he missed his books in Leipzig and eventually moved away. The procurators general in Rome were noted humanists—Michael Senetus, Georg von Eltz, and Johann von Kitzscher—but they transferred little literature or culture directly to the north. The last procurator general was evicted from his house next to the Palazzo Farnese and expelled from Rome after the secularization of the Prussian Order. Not even in religious thought was anything achieved except indirectly: it was at the grandmaster’s request that Luther wrote his treatise on the celibacy of the clergy, thus precipitating one of the major reforms of Protestantism, but the ideas were all Luther’s, not those of Prussian humanists at Albrecht’s court.

In short, the local Prussian humanists at the grandmaster’s court were not great poets, writers, or original thinkers. However, greatness should not be required for someone to qualify as a humanist. They fell far short of their own goals but did what they could. They certainly met one important characteristic of humanists of this era, which was to share knowledge widely. Wherever humanists went, printing presses followed; the first printing press in Königsberg appeared in 1523. It was apparently set up by the court printer, Wolf Rieders, under the patronage of Dietrich von Schönberg. Rieders left Prussia in 1524—after the first productions came off the press—but he returned later and was among the leading
personalities in the court. Duke Albrecht and the bishops of Prussia became active supporters of the publishing houses in Königsberg and Danzig.

It was in education that the humanists left their greatest mark. The foundation of new schools did not result in the immediate production of great scholars, but all great things come from small beginnings. Two centuries later Albertus University was graduating men who made great names in science, literature, and philosophy. The output from this one state—relatively isolated, underpopulated, and economically underdeveloped—is impressive, and becomes even more so when one considers the hardships endured during the Thirty Years' War. The fruits harvested in the eighteenth century were planted by humanists in the sixteenth.51
Endnotes

1. Boockmann, Der Deutsche Orden, pp. 210-213; Christian Krollmann, Politische Geschichte des Deutschen Ordens (Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1932), pp. 161-175; Otakar Israel, Das Verhältnis des Hochmeister des Deutschen Ordens zum Reich im 15. Jahrhundert, No. 4 of Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte und Landeskunde Ost-Mitteleuropas (Marburg/Lahn: Herder, 1952), pp. 57-63; Lothar Dralle, Der Staat des Deutschen Ordens in Preussen nach dem II. Throner Frieden (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1975) pp. 128-51; for selected complaints against the Church from this era, see Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation, pp. 64-88; Carsten, the Origins of Prussia, pp. 112-3, 165.

2. Kurt Forstreuter, Vom Ordensstaat zum Fürstentum; Geistige und politische Wandlungen im Deutschordensstaate Preussen unter den Hochmeistern Friedrich und Albrecht (1498-1525) (Kitzingen/Main: Holzner, 1951), pp. 8-11; Marian Biskup, “The Role of the Order and State of the Teutonic Knights in Prussia in the History of Poland,” pp. 337-9, 359-62, and “Das Ende des Ordensstaates Preussen im Jahre 1525,” Die geistlichen Ritterorden Europas, p. 403: “Man sucht auch die Hauptursachen de: Säkularization Preussen in den äusseren Einflussen—Humanismus, Reformation, fürstliche Hochmeister und ihre sächsischen oder meissnischen Ratgeber (so besonders Kurt Forstreuter).” But the Polish viewpoint in that the secularization was essentially a question of a feudal relationship—how can the grandmaster become a vassal?


6. Walter Ullmann says that the first impact of secularization was the secularization of the government. Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism, pp. 8, 127-8, 148; Krollmann, Politische Geschichte, p. 176; Thielin, Die Verwaltung des Ordensstaates Preussen, pp. 66-7; the management of expenditures under the new grandmaster was successful: income exceeded expenses—a rare accomplishment in that era. Lothar Dralle, “Die Ausgaben des Deutschordenschöchmeisters Friedrich von Sachsen (1498-1510),” Zeitschrift für Östforschung, 30(1981), pp. 195-228; Burleigh comments that “there were efforts to reform the corporation in the fifteenth century. At no time did this involve a discussion of what the Order was for.” When people began the discussion, the old aristocratic state was doomed. Prussian Society, p. 173; a very useful survey of


17. Kurt Forstreuter, *Preussen und Russland* (Göttingen: Musterschmidt, 1955), pp. 75-108; the limited success of the humanists at this point is emphasized by Walther Hubatsch, “Die inneren Voraussetzungen der Säkularisation des deutschen Ordensstaates in Preussen,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 43(1952), p. 163, who sees the dead hand of the outdated monastic tradition as still paramount. While the humanists seek to reform the government, the dominant characteristics of the knightly officials are drunkenness, disobedience, carelessness, and neglect. The countryside was filled with bandits, the cities with tumults, and the nobles with outrage. (ibid., pp. 157-163.)


19. Forstreuter, *Ordensstaat*, pp. 54-9; the comparatively early date of Bishop Hiof’s support of humanists is approximately that of contemporary Poland. Casimir von Morawski, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Humanismus in Polen*, No. 3 of the *Sitzungsberichte der kais. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien*, 118(1889), p. 5.


25. Acten der Ständetagen, V, 756-65, 770-78; Die Reformation im Ordenland Preussen 1523/24 (ed. Robert Stupperich. Ulm: Unser Weg, 1966. No. 6 in Quellenhefte zur Ostdeutschen und Osteuropäischen Kirchengeschichte), pp. 6-12; Helmut Freiwald, Markgraf Albrecht von Ansbach-Kulmbach, pp. 94-104; Vota, Der Untergang des Ordensstaates, pp. 231-51, 312-9; Leopold von Ranke, History of the Reformation in Germany (New York: Ungar, 1966), II, 476-9, 483; Karol Górski, L’Ordine teutonico (Turin: Einaudi, 1971), pp. 253-4; Not so generous was Henry Vedder, The Reformation in Germany (New York: MacMillan, 1914), p. 267: “Albrecht had shown how the pretext of zeal for religion could be made a mask under which there might be wholesale spoilation of the Church and increase of political power.” Much more admiring was Walter Hubatsch, “Die inneren Voraussetzungen der Säkularisation,” pp. 151f, who sees the policy as a brilliant resolution of an otherwise impossible dilemma. The Teutonic Order had forfeited the loyalty and confidence of its subjects by a vacillating policy that emphasized ineffective monastic reforms to the neglect of more basic social and economic problems; by ending the quasi-ecclesiastical government, Albrecht was able to unify his country and introduce basic reforms that quickly changed the nature of the entire society for the better. See Hubatsch’s essay “Albert of Brandenburg-Ansbach, Grand Master of the Order of Teutonic Knights and Duke in Prussia, 1490-1568,” Studies in Medieval and Modern German History (London: MacMillan, 1985), pp. 41-69.
28. Friedrich Merzbacher, "Die Stadt Mergentheim und der Deutschen Orden," *Von Akkon bis Wien*, pp. 51-2; Bernhard Demel, "Der Deutsche Orden zwischen Bauernkrieg (1525) und Napoleon (1809)," *ibid.*, pp. 177-82, 191, 196-7; Forstreuter, *Ordensstaat*, pp. 98-112; see the chronicle by Philipp von Creutz and Liborius Naker's Tagebuch in vol. 5 of *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* (Frankfurt/Main: Minerva, 1965), pp. 362-84 and 289-314; Johannes Voigt argued that religion soon brought about a change in Albrecht, awakening him to a realization that he had wasted his youth in sinful levity and changing him into a man so intellectually alive that he could correspond usefully with the most learned men of Europe. *Briefwechsel der berühmtesten Gelehrten des Zeitalters der Reformation mit Herzog Albrechts von Preussen* (ed. Johannes Voigt. Königsberg: Bornträger, 1841), pp. 4f; Bernd Moeller emphasized popular feelings in "Piety in Germany Around 1500," and so did Gerhard Ritter, "Romantic and Revolutionary Elements in German Theology on the Eve of the Reformation," *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective* (trans. Joyce Irwin. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1971), pp. 50-64, 5-46. Moeller further stated (p. 62): "The later historical effect of humanism, and the tendency of its representatives to appear to have greater force than they actually possessed, easily misled the historian into overevaluation. The humanists are not representative of piety in Germany in the late fifteenth century." Neither were they representative in the 1520's—their role was to open the way, not to lead the flock along it.


31. Dralle, *Der Staat des Deutschen Ordens*, pp. 39-42; Francis Ludwig Carsten, "Die Entstehung des Junkertums" in *Preussen, Epoche und Probleme*, pp. 66-76; Carsten, *The Origins of Prussia*, pp. 106-116, 150-2; see the testimony of Phillip von Greut, *Ordensritter und Kirchenfürsten* (ed. Johannes Buhler. Leipzig: Insel, 1927), pp. 233-4, and Vota, *Unergang des Ordenstaats*, p. 315, in my translation: "I was worried that if I did not take the oath, everything I had would be taken away, and so I swore it to save my estate, for I received great sums from my office, more than any other knight." A few of the knights married: Friedrich von Heideck and a former nun married in Liegnitz the next April, Bishop Polenz in June, and of the rest the minister Bressmann wrote to Luther, that the knights were becoming engaged like the priests and nuns, seven and eight at a time.

37. Toeppe, *Geschichte der Preussische Historiographie*, p. 87; The writing of history, with the exceptions noted in the text, fell to monks and burghers who disliked the Teutonic Order intensely. Several of these are collected in volume six of *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* (Frankfurt/Main: Minerva, 1968). The most important historian, Simon Grunau, has been traditionally considered unreliable, but Frank Borchardt praises him highly for his style, imagination, and interest in new topics. *German Antiquity in Renaissance Myth*, p. 157.
REVIEWS


Although the role of the Hanseatic League in the medieval Baltic economy is well-known, modern German contacts with the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea have been so long interrupted that, when the organizers of the 1987 Lüneburg conference on the Hansa and the German East first sent out invitations to scholars, they anticipated that relatively few would volunteer to make presentations. To their surprise, they found themselves with forty! (This boded a long conference: unlike North Americans, who in theory confine their remarks to fifteen or twenty minutes, many German scholars believe that their efforts in preparing a paper entitle them to at least an hour of the audience's time.) This publication is a selection of the best eight papers from that conference; six directly concern the Baltic.

An unusually broad historical perspective for the beginnings of German trade is found in Erich Hoffmann's “Die Anfänge des deutschen Handels im Osteuropa.” In contrast to most surveys, which start with the late twelfth century, Hoffmann emphasizes earlier Prussian-Scandinavian mercantile activity. This becomes the basis for his description of the twelfth-century Danish and Welfish efforts to establish trade emporia at strategic locations (esp. Lübeck) and to eliminate pirates and political rivals.

Picking up this subject in the fifteenth century, Antje-Kathrin Grassmann's “Lübeck und der deutsche Osten im Spätmittelalter” attempts in a few pages to summarize the complexities of Lübeck trade policies. She argues that the popularity of Lübeck law among the Livonian towns and the recurring need to interpret the law uniformly across the Baltic created ties which were perhaps much stronger than mutual economic interests. Nevertheless, while Lübeck's attention was concentrated on the war with Denmark and the associated effort to keep Dutch and English merchants out of the Baltic Sea, the Livonian cities began to limit the direct contact with the Russian markets which Lübeck merchants had previously enjoyed.

Reversing Paul Johansen's famous query, “What was the significance of the Hanseatic League to Livonia?” Norbert Angermann's “Die Bedeutung Livlands für die Hanse” presents Riga, Reval, and Dorpat as centers of a lively trade between Russia and the West, not as distant, somewhat boring outposts of western civilization. When Dutch merchants began contracting the purchase of rye directly from the owners of large estates, the impact was quickly felt in the Livonian countryside as well as in Riga, Reval, and Lübeck.

Udo Arnold echoes this theme in “Die Harze und Preussen.” In contrast to the divided sovereignty in Livonia, Prussia had been effectively unified by the Teutonic Order—and the grandmasters' agents understood the financial advantages the order would enjoy by encouraging trade. The grandmasters, having no maritime ambitions, saw the Hanseatic League as a natural partner for exploiting commercial opportunities. Consequently, the grandmasters were easily able to develop a mutually beneficial relationship with the Hanseatic League. This unoffi-

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cial alliance ended in the mid-fifteenth century when Danzig and the other West Prussian towns turned to Poland for help in throwing off the heavy taxes necessitated by the grandmasters' ambitions to recover from their repeated military disasters. When the grandmasters chose to support Denmark in its losing contest with Lübeck, they opened the way for Danzig to emerge as the dominant power in the eastern Baltic.

The final offerings are Harald Witthöft's description of economic statistics, "Der Export Lüneburger Salzes in den Ostseeraum während der Hanseatzeit," and Eckhard Jäger's reworking of his exhibit of early maps into an illustrated article, "Zur Entwicklung der Kartographie in der Hanseatzeit." Although the small size of the pages required Jäger to reduce the maps significantly, that defect is more than offset by the excellent quality of the paper and printing. One must be impressed by the high quality of the maps and illustrations throughout the volume.

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The refusal of Baltic youth to serve in the Soviet armed forces is one of those issues which drives current debate into extreme camps: those who see military might and national pride as necessary to prevent the dissolution of the Soviet Union see little alternative to centralized coercive authority; those who sympathize with the young men from ethnic minorities who are beaten, raped, and murdered in brutal hazings demand complete political independence. Wirtschafte's book is a timely reminder that this situation is not new: anyone with an ancestor who fled Russia to escape military service will appreciate anew the horror of his situation. Nor is the debate about the role of the army new: then, as now, many Russians believe that the army is Russia.

In theory, those drafted into the tsar's service in the first half of the nineteenth century were elevated in social class: men who came from the ranks of the serfs left as free men with claims for pensions and special privileges. However, they first had to endure twenty to twenty-five years of strict discipline, arbitrary treatment, and the danger of death and dismemberment. Consequently, they made every effort to evade conscription—including self-mutilation, hiring replacements, and fleeing the country.

The author has exhaustively mined the military archives for insights into the soldier's daily life. The refined product is, not surprisingly, similar to descriptions of soldiers' life in other armies—in fact, strikingly like that of the American army stationed on the pre-Civil War frontier. Some units ate well, others starved; some had good officers who cared for their men, some suffered under martinet's who relied on brutality to make unenthusiastic recruits into soldiers. The result was a partial success: the men fought well in every war, but they were not a modern
army—they could defeat primitively armed tribes in the interior, they could maintain law and order, but they were not ready for war with a major foe.

Wirtschaftsma concentraes on the Great Russian soldier. Only occasionally does a reference to the Baltic slip in—and that usually when she discusses feeding and housing the troops. Nevertheless, this is another excellent volume in the Princeton series on the history of the Russian army which Baltic historians will want to buy.

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In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Friedrich Nietzsche takes his main character on a journey along with his friend, the troll. Ultimately, they reach the Gate of Eternal Return, where the pair has to decide whether or not to repeat history. Nietzsche, who believed in a cyclical view of history, did not want humanity to constantly relive its past, but to forge new paths.

For better or worse, Lithuanians appear destined to enter the Gate of Eternal Return. Indeed, the events of the past several years are paralleled in those of a century ago, when Lithuania was experiencing her national renaissance. However, that process took five decades, whereas current events of the same magnitude have been compressed into less than five years. It is difficult to keep track of these swiftly moving events from the bits and pieces garnered from the media and eyewitness accounts. Senn provides a monograph which meets two needs: the informational one of immediacy and the scholarly one of synthesis.

Senn, who earlier focused on *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania* from czarist occupation, now focuses on 1988, which saw the genesis of effective political action vis-à-vis Soviet authorities. Senn has been able to supplement his exhaustive research with first-hand observations in Lithuania at this crucial juncture.

Though not explicitly labeled as historical parallels, two which emerge in Senn's work are the importance of history and the prevalence of factionalism. Events of 1988 grew out of the seed of historical consciousness. Just as political action a century ago was predated by studies of Lithuanian history, 1988 saw history giving birth to a national consciousness, which in turn impacted upon political action. The attack on Soviet historiography by the Lithuanian intelligensia specifically focused on interpretations of the events of 1918 and 1940. Soviet historians had built a house of cards using Marxist-Leninist analyses as a foundation. Contemporary Lithuanians demolished this structure by going beyond those analyses to actual documentation. The publication of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact removed the keystone of Soviet historiography. When fleshed out by the memoirs of Independent Lithuania's last foreign minister,
Jozas Urbys, Soviet historians, economists, and social psychologists were essentially powerless. Their citations of fabricated events, blatant falsifications, and tortuous logic could not withstand the simplicity and strength of these primary documents. Thus history was utilized as a practical weapon for action, not merely relegated to the ivory tower.

Once this historical assault had been made, Lithuanians were able to enter the realm of consciousness and action. Perhaps the most galvanizing single moment in this mosaic of events was the first raising of Independent Lithuania’s tricolor on 14 June 1988, when “spectators felt both exultation and fear.” There was no going back.

As Lithuanians tackled the Kremlin, another historical parallel emerges, namely factionalism and disputes over policy and implementation. As one century ago, Catholics, nationalists, socialists, and others squared off as to how to deal with the czar, democratic action brought its own share of problems for contemporary Lithuanians. The Lithuanian Freedom League was an early political actor in the reform movement. The League and its more confrontational approach were soon eclipsed, however, by the Sajudis Reform Movement. Sajudis, which focused on matters of language, culture, and ecology, used the political system and the opportunities of glasnost to achieve its aims. Once the occupation by the Soviet Union was articulated as a premise, it was not a matter of boycott and quarantine, but of negotiation and engagement with the authorities.

Senn in detail paints a picture of this cauldron of activity, with its publishing, programs, and educational and historical action. While the common enemy was easily identifiable, it was necessary to determine the validity and place of mass rallies and hunger strikes, while addressing the question of who speaks for Sajudis itself. The bridge between policy making and policy implementation is always difficult to cross. On the one hand, internal policies and rivalry between political activists from Kaunas and Vilnius caused upheavals within the Lithuanian camp. On the other hand, the Lithuanians were concerned with external matters, such as a possible Polish-Russian alliance. Finally, the Lithuanians were also cognizant of the emigre population. While the emigres had initially supported the Freedom League, they gradually came to support Sajudis, which was more savvy in its dealings with the Soviets. Though not mentioned by Senn, the emigre connection has been a factor in Lithuanian opposition since the days of the postwar partisans.

One sad fact, borne out by the events of January 1991, is that the Lithuanians were essentially alone in their struggle. Despite support from the Armenians, Byelorussians, Georgians, and Tatars, and a burgeoning Baltic interdependence, Lithuania, as in 1918, is destined once again to fight for herself with minimal assistance from the outside.

Senn’s book is a good start, strengthened by detailed research. His citations are the hallmark of a scholar, not a journalist. This basic information is vital to the Lithuanian movement now and to Lithuanian scholarship in the future. Without it, precious details could be lost forever.

The synthesis of the events of 1988 has been accomplished. What is needed now is an analysis, perhaps along the lines of the work of Thomas Oleszczuk, who
CONTENTS

ARTICLES

William Urban, Renaissance Humanism in Prussia: Copernicus, Humanist Politician ............................................. 195

Helle Martinson, The Development of Chemical Science in Estonia from 1945 to the Present ......................................................... 233

Steven Young, "Bear" in Baltic .............................................................. 241

Alfred Senn, Lithuania's Path to Independence ..................................... 245

Toivo Raun, The Re-establishment of Estonian Independence ............... 251

Andrejs Plakans, Latvia's Return To Independence ................................ 259

REVIEWS

David Kirby, Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period. The Baltic World 1492-1772 (William Urban) .......................... 267

Leonas Sabaliausas, Lithuanian Social Democracy in Perspective, 1893-1914 (Robert A. Vitas) .................................................. 268


Vera Tolz, The USSR's Emerging Multiparty System (Douglas Nicholl) ................................................................. 271

Michael Mandelbaum, ed., The Rise of Nations in the Soviet Union: American Foreign Policy and the Disintegration of the USSR (Ira Smolensky) .................................................. 271

Heinrich Knapp, Das Schloss Marienburg in Preussen. Quellen und Materialien zur Baugeschichte nach 1456 (William Urban) .... 272

Vladimir Dedijer, The War Diaries of Vladimir Dedijer (William Urban) ................................................................. 273

Friedrich Scholz, Die Literaturen des Baltikums. Ihre Entstehung und Entwicklung (Trevor Fennell) ........................................ 274

Peter Stenberg, Journey to Oblivion. The End of the East European Yiddish and German Worlds in the Mirror of Literature (Roger Noël) ................................................................. 276
BRIEFLY NOTED

Egil Levits, "Der politischen Konflikt ...in Lettland..." Dokumentation Ostmitteleuropa, 14 (1988) .......................................................... 277
Joseph Harrington and Bruce Courtney, Tweaking the Noses of the Russians: Fifty Years of American-Romanian Relations, 1940-1990 .................................................................................. 277
Tatyana Zaslavskaya, The Second Socialist Revolution ......................... 277
Stanley Winters, T. J. Masaryk (1850-1937), vol. 1: Thinker and Politician ....................................................................................... 277
John Pinder, The European Community and Eastern Europe ............... 278
Alan Pollard, ed., USSR Facts & Figures Annual ................................... 278

PERSONAL NOTES ........................................................................ 279

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RENAISSANCE HUMANISM IN PRUSSIA: COPERNICUS, HUMANIST POLITICIAN

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I. The Education of Copernicus

Through much of this period of humanist activity in Prussia the learned scholar, Lucas Watzenrode (Waczenrode) was Bishop of Ermland (Warmia). Born in Thorn in late 1447, he grew up in a city which had been one of the main rebel centers in the Thirteen Years' War. Since Thorn was allied with the Polish king throughout this war and as it ended became a part of the Polish kingdom (Royal Prussia), it was natural when Watzenrode went abroad to study in 1464, that he attended the Jagiellonian University in Cracow rather than a German university. Afterward he followed the traditional route to Italy and in 1473 earned his doctorate in canon law at Bologna. After a brief period as a schoolteacher in Thorn, he entered the Church; by 1479 he was a canon in the Ermland chapter.

Lucas's ability soon became apparent, and he was selected for diplomatic service, first in Rome at the Curia and later at the court of the powerful archbishop of Gniezno, primate of Poland, Zbigniew Oleśnicki. In 1489 he was elected Bishop of Ermland, replacing the deceased Nicholas Tonge who had governed during twenty-three difficult years, always seeking to keep Ermland from domination by either the Polish king or the grandmaster. The Bishop of Ermland was important because his was the largest territory and because he presided at all the meetings of the Prussian Assembly—the effective successor organization to the League representing the nobles and cities. Naturally, King Casimir sought to appoint a man who would be obligated to him and, therefore, for five years refused to recognize the right of the canons to elect their own bishop. It was not his opposition to Lucas Watzenrode which caused the king to take such a stand; it was the principle of the matter. For Lucas, in contrast, it seems to have been the post itself that was most important. When a more permanent compromise was finally reached with King Jan Olbracht (1492-1501), the terms of the agreement seem-

JBS, Vol. XXII, No. 3(Fall 1991) 195
ingly confirmed Polish predominance in the election process. Although the canons had defended their right to elect whomever they pleased on this occasion, Lucas gave away their future rights in return for royal confirmation of his own possession of the office. Moreover, he made himself so useful to the king in other ways that he soon became an important figure among the royal counselors.¹

Lucas had apparently concluded that the Polish king was no threat to his political independence. On the other hand, he had reasons to fear the ambitions of the grandmasters of the Teutonic Order, which caused him to seek closer ties with Poland. This in itself was no guarantee of security, for although the Polish king was far more powerful than the grandmaster, he was also incomparably farther away; unlike the rest of Royal Prussia—which, except for the bishopric of Culm, was on the west bank of the Vistula—Ermland was surrounded by the grandmaster's lands; moreover, Ermland was part of an economic system that was oriented toward the Baltic Sea. Ermland, Royal Prussia, and the lands of the Teutonic Order had much in common, which was all the more reason for royal officials to worry about the loyalties of the men who held office in those territories. Every medieval state, not just Poland, had centrifugal forces threatening to pull the body politic apart. Lucas was supposed to supply the gravity which held Ermland in the Polish orbit. One of the means by which he accomplished this was through his support of humanist letters, both by his constant use of the improved Latin of the humanists in correspondence and daily business and by sending canons and other young men to study in Cracow for at least three years. Cracow was the center of humanism in the east, thanks to royal patronage of the Jagiellonian University there and the fact that nearby Wawel Castle was the principal residence of the king. This undermined efforts by the grandmaster to maintain cultural leadership in the North. Thus, for Ermland citizens, submitting to royal authority and seeking a humanistic education in Cracow became identified as one and the same thing.

It was not that one spoke Polish in Cracow, except in the shops. The students spoke Latin. National identification and loyalty to a king were not bound to language. Lucas Watzenrode could grow up in German-speaking Thorn and live in German-speaking Ermland, where to talk with a fishwife or a delinquent taxpayer one had to know Low German. He was nevertheless a loyal subject of the Polish crown.

Watzenrode's most important contribution to humanism was not in his service to the Polish king, in his letters, or his employment of scholars, but in the results of his charitable care of his orphaned nephews and nieces in Thorn. These acts of kindness, from a man who was never known to smile, brought immortal fame to his diocese and his nation—a result that certainly would have surprised him if he could have divined it. The nieces and nephews were the children of his sister Barbara, who had married an immigrant businessman named Nicholas Kopernik. Nicholas, a native of Cracow who came north in 1454, had been a prominent judge, patrician, businessman, and a leading advocate of sustaining the wars against the Teutonic Order. His marriage into the family of Judge Watzenrode was proof he had been accepted by the paricians of Thorn; his death from the plague in 1483 left his family in the care of canon Watzenrode.
The two Kopernik boys, Andrew (b. 1467) and Nicholas (b. 1473), began their education in the Thorn school and later transferred to the episcopal school in nearby Wrocław. In 1491 Andrew and eighteen-year-old Nicholas enrolled in the Jagiellonian University. Cracow was the capital of a large, wealthy, and creative kingdom, and lay far to the south, on the trade routes to Bohemia, Hungary, Austria, and Italy; the very buildings demonstrated the many ties to the art and architecture of the Renaissance. The university was international, attracting students from all Roman Catholic areas of eastern Europe; and those students were not always peaceful—occasionally German humanities students and Hungarian scholastics rioted in the streets. In 1490 the scholastics expelled the professors of the humanities, so that during Nicholas’ stay in Cracow the humanists were not important. In Cracow Nicholas encountered his first serious discussion of astronomy (his reputed work on the sundial at Wroclawek hardly amounted to an introduction), through reading Albert of Brudzewo’s commentary on Peuerbach’s *Theorica nova planetarum*, a solid introduction to the Ptolemaic system by the man who was later to be Poland’s foremost astronomer. All other studies concerning astronomy were based on Aristotle. In 1494 he left Cracow, probably to avoid the plague: in 1495-6 he may have visited some of the German universities (his uncle had studied at Cologne as well as Cracow) and, thanks to his uncle, obtained a small income as a clerk in the diocese of Culm, which indicated that he had taken at least one of the minor orders. This was extremely common among students and did not mean that he intended to study for the priesthood.

Sometime in this period Nicholas began to spell his name Copernicus, a clear indication of his humanist identification. Latinizing names was a popular affectation of intellectuals, a public announcement that one was now a member of the educated elite. Henceforth, the changed name implied that Nicholas was to be identified not only with his family, but with the classical world, the universe of the mind and literature, and international scholarship.

In 1496 Nicholas spent a short time in Ermland with his uncle, who had sought in vain to appoint him as a canon to the cathedral chapter (vacancies were filled alternately by election and by papal appointment). Then he went to Bologna, where he was later joined by his brother. His uncle, anticipating that a vacancy would appear in Ermland, presumably paid the costs of his travel and education. At the university he studied under Domenico Maria de Novara and probably roomed in his home. It might be noted that Novara’s teacher had been the famous astrologer Regiomontanus (died 1476), whose *Épitome*, published in Venice at this time, was the first major criticism of Ptolemy’s lunar theory. In Copernicus’ mental universe astronomy was already challenging canon law for domination, but its time had not yet come. In 1499 Nicholas and his brother went to Rome, where they met the Prussian scholar, Bernhard Scultetus, and remained a year. Both brothers were by then canons of the Ermland chapter and in 1501 returned home to be installed formally in office.

They did not remain in Prussia. Almost immediately Nicholas was on the way back to Italy. He studied medicine in Padua and completed his preparation for the law examination, then went to Ferrara to take the degree (probably because the
fees were lower there). It was during this period that he learned Greek, a skill that came to be of considerable use to him in working with the ancient astronomers, Aristotle and Ptolemy, and absolutely necessary for reading the untranslated minor philosophers. He also painted a self-portrait; and he learned the skills he later used to draft a map of Prussia, perhaps even assisting Bernard Wapowski in preparing the map printed later in Rome (1507) by locating northern towns for him. The longitude of any city was very difficult to estimate, but latitude could be measured accurately by anyone possessing elementary training in astronomy.

He returned to Ermland in 1504 and worked under the strictest supervision of his humorless uncle, in whose footsteps he was expected to follow. With this in mind he accompanied Bishop Lucas to Cracow in 1507 to attend an assembly of nobles; he was to observe the behavior of those he would one day join. This was quite a contrast to his daily routine of petty administrative tasks.

In the Frauenburg chapter Nicholas was one of sixteen canons, few of whom were priests (perhaps only one). He himself never became a priest, not even late in life when threatened by a hostile bishop. His brother Andrew did not live with him, having contracted some terrible disease that was feared to be infectious; Andrew left the country and died in 1518. Apparently the brothers did not meet during this long period and no correspondence survives. All Nicholas' medical training could not help him in this crisis. Nevertheless, his reputation as a doctor was formidable, and during his lifetime he treated every important figure in Prussia.

Nicholas demonstrated his ability in every endeavor he attempted; and, try though he might to avoid duties, he was constantly given new assignments. For a while he served as his uncle's business manager at Heilsberg; consequently, he could work on astronomy only at night. That might seem obvious, but mathematical calculations can be made best during daylight hours—candlelight being hard on the eyes—and the nighttime was essential only for the observations, which were not always time-consuming. Generally speaking, anyone with a minimum of training can make observations, but only a skilled mathematician can make sense of the numbers. Under the press of duties Copernicus was obviously stretched to his limit. Nevertheless, astronomy became increasingly more of an obsession with him, an urge that must have conflicted with his work. In what was undoubtedly a difficult decision, he turned away from his family's ambition that he succeed his uncle as bishop. Obtaining permission to withdraw to the coastal post at Frauenburg, he gave more and more of his time to astronomy.

About 1510 Copernicus circulated his *De hypothesibus motuum caelestium a se constituis Commentariolus*, the earliest description of a heliocentric planetary system. In this he discussed aspects of the mutual gravitational pull of the earth and the moon, theories that came from Aristotle and other Greek authors, especially the stoic philosophers. The core of his ideas was that a planet went round in a circle whose center ran around the circumference of another circle; only the center of the latter circle had a uniform orbit around the sun. Thus he attempted to reconcile the failure of mathematics to demonstrate concentric circular orbits for each of the planets. He was not yet ready to publish, though others would have
done so. About 1515 he began to refine these ideas, simplifying them to the forms he described much later in *De revolutionibus*.

These years at Frauenburg were among his most productive. The town was prosperous from farming, fishing, and cattle production. The splendid brick gothic cathedral was enclosed in an extensive fortification, of which the most formidable bastion was an octagon-shaped tower thirty-six meters high. Copernicus had as an emergency residence a square tower of less imposing dimensions. Although this tower has been called the Copernicus tower since the seventeenth century, it was unsuitable for most astronomical observations. Without question Copernicus used the brick tower he built next to his house (the vicarage of St. Stanislaw) in 1513, about a hundred meters from the castle at a site where the sea provided an almost unrestricted horizon for his use.

He gave as much time as possible to astronomy. When he accompanied the next bishop to Cracow in 1514, his intent was apparently to meet scholars at the Jagiellonian University to discuss astronomy. In 1516 Copernicus was assigned to a more important post, the administration of Allenstein (Olsztyn). Astronomical studies could not be pursued intensely during these years, but Copernicus' fame began to spread.

Locally he was appreciated for his astrological charts—the ordinary citizens laughed at his concept of a heliocentric universe. In the Holy Roman Empire and Poland his astronomical ideas were appreciated for their novelty perhaps, but also for the attractiveness of the theory, which promised to resolve various difficulties inherent in the Ptolemaic system. His was an important but limited notoriety, and he made no effort to publicize his work; therefore, he was hardly known in the Italian peninsula—during his lifetime the only area where worldly success could be achieved through science. In 1514 Pope Leo X called churchmen and scholars to gather and discuss a revision of the calendar, now badly out of synchronization with the heavens. The call for aid was proof that astronomers were not so isolated, so unappreciated, or so out of step with the times as is often believed. Copernicus was not invited; Italians still dominated scholarship, and although they were not yet able to suggest a mathematical model for calendar reform, they felt secure in their ability to resolve the immediate problem facing the Church without calling on an obscure canon who dwelt on the shores of the distant Baltic and had never published anything of importance.

II. Copernicus the Political Spokesman

Much as Copernicus may have wished to avoid the controversies and responsibilities which consumed time and emotional energy which could have been given to his studies, he knew that men of talent and education were needed in the political arena. As noted above, as the best trained canon in the chapter and the nephew of Lucas Watzenrode, Copernicus could not escape involvement in the complicated diplomacy of his era. Until 1510 he was in Heilsberg, observing his uncle and learning the trade of government. The experience gained at Lucas Watzenrode's elbow proved invaluable later in his career.
It would have been at this period that he drew the map of Prussia which Bishop Lucas showed to Danzig representatives in 1509. Though nothing exists to prove his authorship, he did possess the skills needed for the task, and legend records that a spy for the Teutonic Order sought in vain to steal it. Unfortunately, the map did not survive, though its existence was documented.\(^{11}\)

Bishop Lucas died in Thorn in 1512, while returning from Cracow, where he had attended King Sigismund's wedding; Copernicus was with him, having been compelled to accompany the old man. The election of a successor had been the usual contest of chapter, grandmaster, and king. This time the chapter had won by conducting a hasty election and sending the name of their choice to Rome as quickly as possible. The king (and later the pope) agreed to the choice of Ermland canon Fabian von Lossainen—son of a German father and a noble Polish mother—because he was no threat to either of their pretensions to authority. Bishop Fabian (1470-1523) was a well-educated man; he had met Copernicus during his studies in Italy. Nevertheless, Fabian was not a strong figure and was unable to protect his diocese from attack. It was said that he read mass only once, that being on the day of his consecration as bishop. His severe case of "the French disease" handicapped him in politics; and he was not an active bishop.\(^{12}\) Neither did Fabian use his subordinates to their fullest potential. Only in 1516 did he assign Copernicus to serve in a demanding capacity, at which time he sent him to the threatened castle at Allenstein, which was the center of the diocese administration. He made Copernicus responsible for one hundred and twenty villages, the treasury of the bishopric, the supervision of licensing of mills and inns, the settlement of seventy abandoned villages, and the regulation of trade. Copernicus' duties involved visitations over the entire diocese—investigating, holding hearings, and collecting money—and the supervision of the food supply for the convent. Moreover, the bishop required him to visit Heilsberg often, to confer about administrative policy.

Throughout this period rumors of impending war abounded. Although Fabian had been a close friend of Dietrich von Schönberg before becoming bishop and had expressed a desire to work for the return of the Royal Prussian lands to the Teutonic Order (he wrote of "this fatherland"), he changed his mind as he came to realize that such plans could be achieved only through war; and he hated war.\(^{13}\) The rumors of war increased in 1517 following Dietrich von Schönberg's visit to Moscow in an effort to form an anti-Polish alliance with Russia. If von Schönberg succeeded, war would be inevitable. The administrators of Ermland feared this greatly, for simple logic dictated that Ermland could expect the first attack—the grandmaster could never be confident of his military security while an enclave loyal to the Polish king, such as the bishopric surely was, existed literally in the middle of his territories; moreover, it was no secret that Grandmaster Albrecht wanted to reestablish the autonomy and prestige of his state, and that such an ambition could be accomplished only by his regaining control of Ermland and Royal Prussia. Fortunately for the Ermland administrators, the grandmaster's ambitions required him to smash the Polish forces, which he could not do alone. They watched tensely as Grandmaster Albrecht and von Schönberg sought
powerful allies—Basil III of Russia or Maximilian I of Austria—who would first pay the Teutonic Knights annual subsidies to maintain an army against Poland and then engage the Polish army until the proper moment came for them to strike. The Teutonic Knights' professed desire for peace fooled no one in Ermland.

The one real hope for peace lay in the grandmaster’s caution. Albrecht did not dare move too quickly, before a Russian or Austrian army had engaged the Polish armies; and since Russian and Austrian plans were essentially a mirror image of his—they wanted him to attack the Polish monarch and keep him busy on his northern frontier while they stole away unprotected borderlands—he could not trust them to follow him into war; and, even if they honored their promises to aid him, he might be defeated before his allies could get their armies into motion. King Sigismund of Poland, for his part, did not want to waste his treasure and soldiers in a preventive war, and he was hindered by his subjects in his efforts to carry out an effective foreign policy. His nobles feared that any extension of royal authority would result in encroachments upon their own liberties. Unable to eliminate the source of trouble in the North, the king had to be satisfied with diplomatic efforts to keep the grandmaster isolated and impotent. This elegant game of diplomacy had as its backdrop border raids and provocations such as destroying villages and crops, mobilizations and training exercises. There were continual inconclusive diplomatic contacts, during which each party tried to win small advantages without making promises or giving up anything of value.

The presence of mercenary troops along the borders increased the likelihood of incidents. Those fearful professionals could hardly be controlled or restrained: discipline was slack and part of their payment came from booty. At every opportunity, they crossed the frontiers, destroying whatever they could not carry away. They showed little mercy to their victims, and their commanders and employers were equally unconcerned. Ermland was practically at war, and Allenstein was a vital military base.

Copernicus was busy with non-military duties, too. He was seeking to settle peasants on vacant lands and see that they flourished, a difficult task in those years. All of eastern Europe suffered from economic depression and vast stretches of land stood empty—the soil exhausted and the people fleeing from poverty, disease, and war. The Teutonic Knights, who were seeking to keep their peasants from escaping forced service, considered this settlement activity provocative, and they harassed Copernicus' new villages. Copernicus' activities were not stopped, however, as we can deduce from the locationismansororum desertorum, the ledger listing abandoned estates. Even notations about individual peasants can be found, and a fairly detailed itinerary for Copernicus and his two assistants can be established.

Copernicus' administrative seat was the castle, an old fortress on the Alle (Lyna) River. His large quarters in the main wing are even today called the Copernican Room, and two other rooms nearby were used for conferences, receptions, and worship. The decorations were splendid, as befitted an important official.
The fortifications were extensive, with deep moats protecting the walls facing the city—the weakest point. The tall round tower was the most prominent feature, but the amalgamation of the three buildings into the defensive works—a regional characteristic—gave the impression of a tall, highly defensible position.\textsuperscript{14}

The war that began in 1519 had long been planned by Grandmaster Albrecht and his chancellor. However, nothing went as planned, not even the declaration of war. Albrecht’s treaty with Russia required that Poland attack Prussia first. Since King Sigismund had no such intent or even the desire to do this, the grandmaster found it necessary to provoke him. These provocations were small at first, but they increased rapidly and prepared the way for Grandmaster Albrecht’s surprise attack later. Most provocations were made against Ermland, because it was surrounded by order territories. The aroused king warned the grandmaster against continuing his armed incursions, thus giving the conspirators what they wanted—a threat which could be used to activate the treaty with Russia. They continued their provocations.

The rest of the grandmaster’s plan went completely awry. The German Dukes of Saxony (Johann Friedrich, 1503-1554) and Brandenburg (his cousin Joachim, 1499-1535), who were supposed to join in the war, opposed any participation by the Holy Roman Emperor in a venture that would disrupt the military campaigns against the Turks; the Livonian master, Walter von Plettenberg (1494-1535), refused to cooperate in a war that would pit him against his best ally, Lithuania, on the side of his most dangerous foe, Russia; and the Russians could not be informed of the imminent outbreak of hostilities because not even Grandmaster Albrecht was sure of the progress his plans were making in Germany. Albrecht was still waiting for his allies to act, when the war began almost by accident: Count Wilhelm von Isenburg, who had been in his native Rhineland recovering from a long illness, on hearing a rumor that hostilities had commenced, marched east with a small party of mercenaries. He did not even have a contract with the grandmaster, but he assumed he would obtain one, because soldiers would be needed. Moreover, his previous experience as grand commander and marshal in Prussia led him to believe that the long-planned decisive battle was at hand. When he entered Brandenburg in September of 1519, his arrival with 6000 men caught everyone by surprise, including the grandmaster. Albrecht had no money at the moment, and Dietrich von Schönberg advised against trying to fight the Poles with such a small force; moreover, Heinrich Reuss von Plauen, who disagreed with almost everything else the chancellor proposed, used his influence to keep the peace; consequently, the mercenaries were dismissed.

The plans of the grandmaster, however, could not be concealed any longer. Once the Polish nobles were persuaded of Albrecht’s treachery, their opposition to war diminished, and Sigismund began to muster his forces. Conflicts broke out all along the border—with both sides guilty of misdeeds. Bishop Fabian spoke to the king at the Prussian Assembly in Thorn, demanding action. Albrecht, who apparently expected King Sigismund to move against him, decided to strike first, “in self-defense,” as soon as he could raise his forces—on January 1, 1520.\textsuperscript{13}
Albrecht had counted on Russian money to pay his troops. In the previous summer Moscovite forces had invaded Lithuania, but the grandmaster had not moved then, and now that peace had been restored, the Russian ruler saw no reason to send all the promised subsidy. Albrecht was in a predicament. The old adage, "Se vis pacem, para bellum" had proven only partly true: Albrecht’s long preparations for war had brought him war. Albrecht had not wanted peace, but he did not want to break it right at this moment; he was faced by an awful choice—give up his military ambitions or fight in a difficult situation. Without either allies or money, Albrecht decided on war. He could only pray that the Russian grand duke would immediately send subsidies and attack Lithuania soon. Albrecht found many troops available (so many came from Franconia that the conflict was later popularly known as the Frankish War) and willing to serve, but their patience was limited. They had to be hired quickly.

Such a mobilization could not be conducted secretly, and King Sigismund was able to anticipate the attack. In early December he rode to Thorn with a thousand knights and perhaps as many as twenty thousand infantry. The king was reluctant to make war on his sister’s son and probably would have accepted a compromise, but when Albrecht disregarded Bishop Fabian’s advice that he throw himself on his uncle’s mercy, Sigismund had no choice. On December 28, when his last offer was rejected, King Sigismund declared war.

Albrecht’s forces struck first. Three hundred cavalry took Braunsberg on New Year’s Day without encountering resistance. The grandmaster then promised to treat the bishopric as neutral if no resistance was made. Bishop Fabian answered with proud words from his stronghold in Elbing, but he sent no troops into the field: there was no point in wasting men and money, when the royal forces guaranteed him eventual victory. Since no decisive action could be expected in Ermland, both
sides then declared the bishopric neutral. One of the two peace commissioners sent by the bishop was Nicholas Copernicus, accompanied by mounted squires; the other was the dean, Johann Scultetus.

Despite Albrecht’s long preparations for war, his forces were not ready for combat: not the regular army, nor the militia, nor the hastily-gathered mercenaries. As a result, there were no regular battles—just raids. Burning and pillaging, the various armies devastated all parts of Prussia. The troops behaved badly because they were unpaid; they were rewarded with booty and the fun of ravaging the countryside. Rarely did the amorality of war come more palpably to the surface than in this unnecessary bloodshed.

The grandmaster had insufficient money, despite von Schönberg’s desperate efforts to raise it from Russia, Livonia, and Germany, and, since cities in Royal Prussia controlled trade, he was unable even to buy powder and lead. Consequently, his military efforts in the winter months had little success, and he knew that the Polish feudal levy would be put into the field in the summer. By June he was in Thorn, negotiating unsuccessfully for peace on favorable terms. A month later a Polish army was outside Königsberg; and, though Albrecht lost no major castles, his territories were thoroughly plundered. The Polish troops included units of Tatars, the most feared cavalry of the era, whose fearful atrocities terrorized whatever country they entered. The major effort of the Polish raid was to recover Braunsberg, but a spirited defense and skilled use of cannon destroyed the earthwork emplacement that had been dug to protect the assaulting troops. This victory gave Albrecht confidence to continue fighting.16

In July the German branch of the Teutonic Knights voted to send men and money to the grandmaster. (That they were not offered immediately as a matter of course shows how far the dissolution of the Teutonic Order had already proceeded.) Also, Albrecht obtained some help from his brother, Georg (1484-1543), from Brandenburg. The western force of 12,000 men led by Wolf von Schönberg entered Polish territory in October and were met by a Polish official bearing a declaration of war.

The devastation of Ermland had meanwhile begun in earnest. Though everyone had promised to treat the bishopric as neutral, no one could make the soldiers believe it; both sides plundered the countryside and a royal garrison entered Heilsburg. At last, in August, the grandmaster ordered the bishop to surrender and became his vassal. Bishop Fabian defied him and put his lands under papal protection (which had little value in these days).

The grandmaster had been employed in the investment of Heilsberg, when the newly-arrived mercenaries called for him to meet them at the Vistula. He had written on October 29 that he hoped to take the city in three weeks, but Wolf von Schönberg’s reproach that he should use his forces quickly and not waste them caused Albrecht to give up the siege and hurry west to join him. Most historians consider Albrecht’s Ermland campaign an utter misuse of time, men, and materiel. He should have been concentrating on Royal Prussia, bringing all his forces to bear on his most important enemies and ignoring those who lacked any ability to hurt him.17
Copernicus was at Frauenburg during this period; apparently his office as administrator of Allenstein was given to Johannes Krapitz. He had watched his home outside the Frauenburg walls burned by an invading army, and even part of the fortifications went up in smoke; the city was totally destroyed and the fourteen hundred inhabitants dispersed. As soon as the attackers had withdrawn, Copernicus took the other canons to Allenstein. It was impossible to stay in Frauenburg, because the town and countryside offered neither shelter nor food, and it was important to encourage the small garrison in Allenstein to fight well. The journey was a perilous one, two days of hard riding through territories infested by enemy troops.

The situation in Allenstein was not good. The episcopal troops were few in number and needed both valiant leadership and reinforcements. The canons chose Copernicus to give leadership, reinstating him as administrator in November of 1520. Meanwhile, the canons had written to the king to ask for soldiers. Although one of their letters was intercepted by the Teutonic Knights, another copy apparently reached Sigismund: he sent a hundred Polish soldiers to reinforce the garrison. Fortunately, Allenstein, a very strongly fortified position, was never attacked during this period; the grandmaster's spies reported that the castle was impregnable.18 Johann Scultetus wrote Copernicus to be careful, not to surrender the castle even to a Polish captain (who might occupy it on behalf of the king) and that as long as he himself had two coats, he would willingly give Copernicus one, so that he could hold the fort against all comers.19 Later he sent cannon, powder, and lead.

Albrecht's large combined army marched on Oliva, the ancient cloister in West Prussia, then on Danzig. Wilhelm von Isenburg demanded that the city surrender, shouting, "You have many cooked geese on the spit, and we have come to help you eat them!" But the citizens made a tart reply and relied on their strong walls. Everyone knew that if the grandmaster could capture Danzig, he might consider the war won; but everyone also knew that the fortifications were too strong to storm. Albrecht could not hold the army together, and had even less power to force the soldiers to assault the formidable walls; as he scrambled to raise money, the soldiers drifted off or ran away. Soon only a small army remained.

The grandmaster, almost at a loss for any policy at all, returned to the siege of Heilsberg. Frustrated there, he moved to Gutstadt, which his troops stormed and plundered. He did not have the same success at Wromditt, but the city surrendered after a few days, with the Polish garrison being allowed to withdraw freely.

A truce was agreed to in early 1521 and finally went into effect February 27. A delegation of commissioners visited the grandmaster but failed to obtain his agreement to return to the status quo ante bellum; Albrecht wanted the terms of the Second Peace of Thorn changed to give him political independence. Copernicus had, meanwhile, returned to Frauenburg. The only episcopal official in residence, he exercised authority as Commissioner to restore civil government and repair the war damage.20

Copernicus was one of the peace commissioners at Thorn. In that capacity he probably participated in compiling the demands for war reparations and in efforts
to obtain the withdrawal of Albrecht's forces from districts still occupied in violation of the truce.\textsuperscript{21}

As it happened, the four-year truce ended not only the war but also the threat of war. The Teutonic Knights were finished as a military power. Ermland was secure from further invasions. Furthermore, when the Teutonic Knights in Prussia were secularized in 1525, and the former grandmaster became Duke Albrecht, a Lutheran vassal of the Polish king, military problems were reduced considerably and economic troubles lessened. When war and customs barriers ceased to hinder farmers and merchants from pursuing their occupations, the task of administration became both easier and more pleasant. In the years to come Copernicus was not as indispensable to the bishop as he had been during the time of trouble, except when illness arose, because his contemporaries relied on him and his medical library in emergencies. Peace meant that he had more opportunity to pursue his studies, to study the stars.

Some tensions remained, of course. The progress of the Reformation in Germany caused both the Polish royal family and the Hapsburgs in the empire to mistrust Protestant vassals; and Duke Albrecht thus found himself in real danger—Cracow suspected him because of his religion and his continued ties to Germany, and Vienna for his religion and his new ties to Poland. To prevent further deterioration of his position, Duke Albrecht sought to make friends in Royal Prussia and especially to encourage the bishops and cities to defend their tradition of autonomy from what were perceived as policies that would centralize administration in Polish hands.

Among Copernicus' accomplishments of this period was the completion of a study of currency reform. He arrived at conclusions which anticipated work done later by an English economist and are known, accordingly, as "Gresham's Law." The recent war had caused many states and cities to devalue their coinage; this now wreaked havoc on commerce. In 1522 an assembly was held at Graudenz to discuss the matter. Copernicus, at the delegates' request, described his theories. However, the assembly did nothing; the problem was too complex and every conceivable solution was painful. In 1525 another assembly invited him to speak; again he explained that debased currencies were recirculated and good metals hoarded (people spent coins which had little gold or silver content but kept good coins against inflation), so that good money disappeared from communication and trade. Meanwhile, the value of everything increased, because sellers required more of the debased coins for their goods; hence, there was inflation. Therefore, any policy which devalued money hurt the poor and brought commerce into confusion. Although Copernicus explained the problem clearly, the assembly still did nothing. In 1528 the assembly called him again, to Marienburg, but only in 1530 did the assembly pass a law regulating minting, and even then it ignored Copernicus' suggestions to limit the number of mints and watch over the quality of workmanship.\textsuperscript{22}

In 1523, when Bishop Fabian died, the canons made Copernicus the acting administrator of all episcopal affairs. He dwelt in the castle at Heilsberg until the election of Maurice Ferber (1471-1537), who was a determined opponent of the
Reformation, thus an enemy of Duke Albrecht. Nor did the following years spare Copernicus. Because Ferber was often ill, he asked Copernicus to fill a wide variety of offices, including administrator of the diocese in 1537. Copernicus' contacts with the outside world, with noted humanists, increased as time passed. This occurred without his having published anything, almost solely on the basis of what his friends in Ermland and Prussia were telling their acquaintances in Germany and Italy. His reputation, spreading through the network of humanists, was being heard at ever greater distances.

Life in Frauenburg was complicated by the presence of the bishop, who lived there after 1526. The residence had perhaps been damaged by the Teutonic Order in 1520 when it burned the city; Dean Johann Ferber (1496-1530), the bishop's cousin, had enlarged the church complex with such skill that by 1524 Bishop Maurice Ferber came to prefer Frauenburg to Heilsburg. Thus, the bishop had his eye on Copernicus daily and was not limited to communication by letter; he could interrupt his work at any time. In 1531 Copernicus issued price regulations on bread for Ermland. He described the relationship of supply and price of grain to that of bread and stressed the importance of maintaining a true weight. The price of bread should include the cost of grain and the bakers' salary and expenses, he said, but not the profit. This reflected traditional church teaching on prices.

The principal fear of the moment was the spread of the Reformation. Danzig, Thorn, and Elbing had converted to Lutheran Protestantism as early as 1520; in that same year Protestant services began in Braunsberg in Ermland. Many feared that these examples would be followed by the smaller Prussian cities, which were much closer in culture and religious practices to the Hanseatic cities of Germany than to Poland. Consequently, the bishops and canons (who stood to lose the most) were the bulwark on which King Sigismund and the Polish church relied. Copernicus, like his fellow canons, came to recognize this slowly and reluctantly, since orthodoxy, whether of Protestant or Roman Catholic origin, did not promise to be a friend of humanist thought.

The Protestant movement was apparently checked in 1525, when King Sigismund marched on Danzig at the head of a large army to put down the disorders associated with the Reformation; overawing resistance, he ordered a commission to investigate, then on its recommendation beheaded fifteen of the revolutionary leaders. The lesson was given, but the king was unable to implement policies that would strengthen the Roman Catholic Church in the hearts of the people. The Protestants did not have political power, but their numbers continued to grow. Only in mid-century, realizing the impossibility of reversing the situation, and in return for a huge sum of ready cash, did King Sigismund II (1520-1572), grant the Protestants freedom of worship.

Fortunately for Copernicus, his lifetime was not again marked by the fierce disputes of 1520-1526. As Calvinism added its fiery spirit to the religious controversies, he was already too infirm to be called upon by the bishop; thus his last years passed without his being asked to participate in religious disputes.

In all this activity Copernicus had performed the same duties as the other humanistically trained administrators in Prussia: political reform, polemical
letters, diplomacy, financial administration, medicine, and in addition, poetry, art, and music. There was no area in which expertise was not expected. The specialist had been replaced by the generalist—or, should we say, by the man who was a master of every aspect of human knowledge and activity: the universal man, the socially active humanist, the Renaissance genius.

Such men were not needed as clerks or accountants, or even as traditional administrators, but when experience and tradition failed, the rulers called upon men with a humanist, liberal arts education, who demonstrated not only competence, but also a willingness to try new approaches and to apply lessons learned from reading and conversation. Prussian humanists did not have patrons; they had employers. Copernicus, like Blumenau and von Schönberg, had to be a politician and diplomat, bookkeeper and inspector, physician and physicist, artist and artisan. Though reluctant to assume these roles, he performed them well.

III. Copernicus as a Literary Figure

From his earliest studies Copernicus had been immersed in the humanistic culture of his era. Quite in contrast to the usual picture of his lonely vigil in the distant north, working out in isolation answers to the riddles of the universe, he was never completely alone. As has been demonstrated, educated and intelligent men were living and working in Prussia, and more than a few were in the Ermland diocese. Moreover, he had wide-ranging interests that made it possible for him to enjoy the company and conversation of such men; and, as we shall see, he contributed in his own small way to the general fund of knowledge and even of literature. In 1509 Copernicus had printed a collection of poems by Theophilactus Scholasticus (Teofilakt Symokatta), a sixth century Byzantine philosopher and writer known to contemporaries as The Scholar. These poems were not of unusually high quality or profundity, but they were of interest—everything pertaining to Greek culture was of interest in those days—and they had not been translated before. Moreover, these pieces were the first Greek poetry to be printed in Poland. To accomplish this Copernicus involved himself in what was effectively the creation of a new art, printing in Greek; and we must not forget how recently movable print itself had been introduced.

Several important facts about Copernicus’ life and his activities can be deduced from this work. For example, Laurentius Corvinus, a married public official who had spent two years in Ermland, after leaving Prussia to return to Silesia, composed a pastoral poem which repeats themes and even passages from Juvenal, Horace, and Virgil. It was good Latin for the times. Copernicus was sufficiently pleased that he used it in his book. Since this tells something about his taste in literature (and mentions him specifically), the English translation is worth reading. This one, by Professor Emerita of Monmouth College, Bernice Fox, renders Corvinus’ intent faithfully:

The Poem by Laurentius Corvinus, Recorder of the royal city of Wratislau, in which he says goodbye to the Prussians and
describes how much pleasure the following letters of Theophi-
lactus brought him and how sweet is the return into his own
fatherland for a person exiled from his native soil.

Prussia, on whom the Great Bear always shines,
Farewell to your fields of grain and fish-laden streams,
Your vine-covered hills, your herds, the pebbles of amber,
Brought in by the Baltic tides — a miser’s dream.
But you are not happy with all the vast resources
Of your own realm and your own bounteous shore;
Your search extends to far-off seas and countries,
Forever trying to heap up your wealth even more.
To Thorn, the jewel of your many cities,
A special word of thanks from me is due.
So, thrice and four times, Thorn, fare you well,
My future years bring only good to you.
Twice did the golden sun make its yearly round
While you took care of me from day to day.
Your kindnesses, too many to ever number,
Are something that I never can repay.
But may your government forever prosper,
And on your people may sadness never fall.
In great affection I shall always hold you,
While the Vistula River glides along your wall.
The starry grandson of the hero Atlas
Justly protects you from the reach of harm,
For you are the kindly mother of a host
Of men endowed with incomparable charm.
Preeminent among these stands one man,
Lucas by name, a leader and high priest;
With Ermland and much of Prussia at his command,
Esteem and love for him is ever increased.
Aeneas’ friend Achates was to him,
A friend HE has, as faithful and as true,
Who turned this work Theophilactus wrote
In Greek to Latin, equally pure and true.
This friend himself is a scholar, and he has
Studied the changing moon and wandering stars;
The works of Almighty God he has carefully probed
And traced them back to see what their origins are.
I omit many others whom I could easily name,
For my horses and driver impatiently move around,
And my dear wife Anna is urging the utmost speed,
With a very deep longing to return to her native ground.
So, Thorn, again and again I bid you farewell,
And pray that the glory you have will never cease;
May your great accomplishments always bring you acclaim,
And may praise for your achievements ever increase.
From here through the pines of the fragrant forest I ride,
Through dense-wooded groves, through mountainous heights
and dales.
Through cities where you, King Sigismund, have control.
For three days I cross vast kingdoms on my homeward trail.
Such a trip could became quite boring except for one thing:
I had brought some delightful reading along for relief.
I found the works of Socrates so enchanting
That the time to the Polish border seemed very brief.
Here a winding stream divides this land from Silesia,
A sandy stream, through rush-covered rocks wending along;
The waves are broken as they encounter the stones,
And their soft ripple grows into a more noisy song.
Here we stop for a rest at a ramshackle hut by the roadside,
Where a bustling old woman feeds us some half-ready cheese,
Hardly a meal to refresh a very tired traveler,
Especially when served with a bread too dry to please.
I allayed my parching thirst in the nearby river,
And Anna, with cupped hands, drank from the silvery pool.
And she said, "The taste was like that of winter grape juice,
The water to my mouth was so very sweet and cool."
When the fourth day dawned, beloved Silesia received us,
With very mild weather and a really beautiful day.
My wife, so delighted to be again in her homeland,
Missed for so long, had these words she wanted to say:
"Hail, oh my country, my savior, my joy, my love,
In my childhood you nursed me with such a tender care.
Receive me, returning from Prussia. Be gentle and kind
To your daughter, who would rather be with you than anywhere.
I never forgot you one moment of all of my exile,
Your memory gave me comfort on each passing day.
If Prussia's dark ship in her sail-dotted harbor would bring me
A treasure or, as my dear husband so often would say
To poor ignorant me, if the Hermas would pour out its gold
On the shores for me to pick up, or the storms would wash down
To my feet in their flood more gold from Caucasian heights
Than the gold that gives opulent Colchis its prosperous towns,
Even so, fatherland, you to me are far more precious
Than what any foreign country might give or do
To entice me away from the land where my heart always dwells.
Nothing lives in the world which I value more deeply than you."
Having spoken these words, the sacrifice promised she made
And asked for the help of the household gods. And then I
Added my prayers to what she had already said
And spoke thus to the heavenly beings that might be nearby:
"Oh, most genial gods, who have caused this great land to prosper,
And Hedwig, whose special concern is Silesia's shore,
Bring it to pass that the king of all-powerful Olympus
To our dearly loved home will take us back safely once more."
While I was speaking, the mountains' cloud-covered summits
Long sought by our eyes, appeared in the distance to us,
The dark tower was there on the ridge, and also Wratislav,
Whose lofty walls reach as high as the orb of Phoebus.
As the sinking sun disappears in the Western waters,
We happily climb to the city and greet refound friends.
Then we think again of the home to which we're returning,
The haven where after long years our pilgrimage ends.
Here, where the fish-bearing Oder makes seven huge curves,
God graciously gives back to me and my wife our old home,
Unharmed through the many long years of our long-lasting exile.
Here we shall live out our days without yearning to roam.
Let another seek wealth for himself in the storms of the Northland
And ride the wild waves clear to Calpe, Hercules' town;
Or let him set sail past the hot-burning arms of Cancer,
And beyond the bright stars of the altar let him push down
Under the Zodiac signs of the broad Southern skyline,
And much tossed about on distant and unknown seas,
Let him bring us dried pepper from the other side of the world,
Or perhaps foreign wealth and land let the rich exile seize.
As for me, let me have peace of mind in my own little cottage,
Ambition and wealth will be left outside my door.
If there's food for my mouth and a glowing fireplace to warm me,
I shall never again pray the gods for anything more.
To possess just one little acre at home is far sweeter
Than to have in a foreign land quite a vast estate
Where a hundred oxen are needed to turn the ground.
I would not exchange my own life for this rich exile's fate.
As the letters of the wise Simocritus came to light,
They illustrate numerous points in notable ways.
One talks of customs, another the countryside shows,
A third deals with matters of love and its happy days.
As a well-watered garden can produce from one little plot
A varied bouquet of different flowers and color,
Just so the reader can gather from this little book
Many thoughts and precepts that contrast and blend with each other.
Such is the best humanistic poetry in the North. The combination of mythology, geography, love of nature, patriotism, humility, flattery, and classical wisdom may sound strange to modern ears. But it passed for high culture in those days and was proof that the writer and reader were of an elite that had no doubts about their worth or their role in the world.

Copernicus himself did not attempt poetry: he wrote his dedication and the translations in Latin prose. Although Copernicus reveals his love for his uncle, he hides completely the novelty and importance of his work; in this characteristic it is similar to the self-effacing approach that Copernicus took in his astronomical publication. One might even conclude that this humility cost him a reputation as a humanist scholar, for in the eyes of subsequent generations the worth of a Renaissance man was judged by his ego: those who proclaimed themselves great, were thought to be so; and those who were quietly confining their reputation to a small circle of friends and colleagues were believed to be of little importance.

Copernicus dedicated the book in the following words:

To the most reverend lord Lucas, Bishop of Ermland, a letter of Nicholas Copernicus.

It seems especially fitting to me, most reverend lord and father of our country, to have compiled the moral, pastoral, and erotic letters of Theophilactus Scholasticus, considering how variety above all customarily pleases, for as men differ, so are they pleased by differing things. Some like gravity, others lightness; some like severity, others enjoy fancy, and each enjoys his own tastes. So he has combined the light with the heavy, and the amorous with the grave, that it is possible for the reader to collect from him, as in a garden, from a wide variety of flowers, whatever pleases him most. In all these letters he has created such usefulness that they seem to be not letters, but rather the laws and precepts of the structure of human life, which, from the evident argument of their brevity, he has collected from diverse authors in a condensed and pithy manner.

It would be difficult, I suppose, for someone to hesitate about the moral and pastoral poems; the love poems, however, although they seem to offer randiness, are added just as the doctor usually tempers the bitter medicine with something sweet so that it will be more pleasing to the patients; moreover, they are so restrained that they might no less be dubbed morality tales. In this case, thinking it unjust that the letters could be read only in Greek and not in Latin, I have attempted to translate them as best I could into Latin.

To you, most reverend lord, I dedicate this little gift, though it does not compare to your benevolence, for any effort or result of my modest talent is to be ascribed to you. As Ovid once said to Caesar Germanicus, “my talent stands or falls by your expression of approval or disapprobation.”
In reading this one can see that Copernicus had mastered humanist arguments for free thought and the freedom to write as one pleased; moreover, one sees that he did not shrink from translating erotic poetry or from defending the propriety of the translation. This he did at a time when violent attacks were being made in Germany against Reuchlin and others who were doing nothing more subversive than teaching Greek and Hebrew grammar. Copernicus was safe in Royal Prussia, protected by a strong-minded king, and an Italian-born queen, both of whom loved Renaissance art, architecture, and poetry; and he was protected by the humanist foundations laid by previous generations as well. Moreover, his uncle was bishop. Appropriately, it was to his uncle that Copernicus dedicated the translation.

As the years passed, the climate of opinion changed. Copernicus did not continue to translate literature. As Corvinus had indicated, he had already taken up his astronomical studies, besides being busy with the management of episcopal business. Those were not easy times. Even so, Copernicus had friends who possessed talent and energy, and it is worth our while to look at the educational background of two men with whom he worked and conversed.

The first of these was Tiedemann Giese (1480-1530), a native of Danzig who had studied at German and Italian universities, then was twenty years a canon in Ermland. He was with Copernicus at the peace conference, where together they presented the account of the damages done by the armies of the Teutonic Knights and demanded compensation. His early fame rested on a letter to a Lutheran bishop that bore the hallmarks of the moderate, traditional attitude toward reform which marked the peace-loving attitude of an Erasmian humanist, and he was consequently widely read. This Antilogion not only rejected Protestant theory but also criticized the evils within the present Church that had so outraged Protestants. On the whole it was a friendly effort to persuade the Protestants to return to the ancient church; Giese understood that a directive would have been read only by Roman Catholic partisans. His quiet rhetorical attitude was shared by Copernicus but not, unfortunately, by everyone. When the long shadow of religious strife fell over Ermland, Giese found himself in such difficulty that he left the diocese and became Bishop of Culm. His departure was a hard blow for Copernicus, since he depended on his friends as his great refuge against loneliness, intellectual isolation, and religious fanaticism. In the darkness of the years to follow, Copernicus studied the stars and left the turmoil of controversy to others.29

His second great friend was almost a generation younger than the astronomer. Moreover, Alexander Scultetus' (c. 1490-1564) early career had been in Rome and Dorpat. Once in 1519 he came to work for Copernicus in Frauenburg and was closely involved with proposed coinage reforms. In 1529 without help he drafted a map of Livonia. In 1530 he became dean of the cathedral chapter and for the next nine years was Copernicus' superior, thus able to shelter him from potential difficulties. This was not an easy task to accomplish. Scultetus was known for his monetary troubles and his close attachment to his "concubine" and children, awkward proofs of a lack of chastity, which caused him great difficulties later in his career. It would have been acceptable, had he abandoned or disowned them, but he was too honest to hide his beliefs or activities—just as he did not
conceal his correspondence with Protestants—and so he suffered. When a search of his house in 1540 turned up a book by the Swiss reformer, Heinrich Bullinger, with notes in Scultetus’ hand, he was exiled from Polish territories. His effort to win a reversal of the decision from the pope resulted in his being held in a Roman prison from 1541 to 1544. He was unable to return home until 1550, after Giese became Bishop of Ermland. He used his talent as writer in his old age when he wrote histories and published genealogies of King Sigismund Augustus and Duke Albrecht. Copernicus, who also had a housekeeper and corresponded with Protestants, shared his struggles and troubles for almost two and a half decades.30

Copernicus’ work was familiar to Melanchthon, thanks to Tiedemann Giese’s correspondence, and it was Giese more than anyone else who kept the Protestant world informed about his progress. Protestants were initially more receptive to ideas about a heliocentric universe than were Copernicus’ fellow Catholics, but their attitude changed as the Reformation moved into a more settled era. Once the Protestants ceased to expand and even found themselves on the defensive, their leaders began to worry about the implications of astronomy for their world-view. They believed in astrology. Was this well-established “science” to be abandoned, as would be logically necessary if the heliocentric theory were correct? Moreover, if the Bible was the source of direct, unequivocal authority which stood opposed to the prestige of the pope, could they adhere to theories which undermined the stories of Genesis and Joshua? If they rejected these stories and others, where would they stop the process of editing? It was easier for them to quash Copernicus than to deal with his ideas. Luther and Melanchthon issued denunciations. However, they were unable to crush an astronomer who lived in a Roman Catholic diocese. Local protestants made efforts at suaire: the citizens of Elbing called him “the stargazer of Frauenburg” in derision and in 1531 mocked him in a burlesque, casting his character in a role similar to Aristophanes’ Socrates.31 That at least proved the playwright to have had a humanistic education.

Roman Catholics saw more clearly and early the implications of the heliocentric theory, but Copernicus had highly-placed supporters who defended him. His most prominent champion was Nicholas von Schönberg (1472-1537), the brother of Dietrich von Schönberg, Grandmaster Albrecht’s chancellor. Nicholas had come to Prussia in 1518 as a papal officer with instructions to accompany Dietrich to Moscow and seek a means of uniting the Greek and Roman Churches. However, Dietrich refused to take him along, because he saw the matter as completely hopeless and Nicholas would have interfered with Dietrich’s plans for a military alliance with Russia. Disappointed, Nicholas visited his former fellow-student, Bishop Fabian in Ermland. It is quite likely he met Copernicus at that time, but there is no proof of it. Nicholas’ career in the Church advanced rapidly as he became Archbishop of Capua in 1520 and cardinal in 1535. He might have disappeared from Copernicus’ life entirely had two of his friends, Alexander Scultetus and Dietrich von Reden, not been intimately acquainted with the astronomer. Reden had been working in Rome for the Teutonic Order until 1531; in 1532, with the help of Duke Albrecht and Scultetus, he was given a post in the Ermland chapter. Reden was in Frauenburg in 1534, then returned to Rome to represent the interests of the duke and the Royal Prussian cities and clerics. Shortly
afterward letters began to arrive in Ermland, asking for information about the heliocentric theory. This was no coincidence. That Reden had been talking to everyone he visited can be proved from a letter from Nicholaus von Schönberg dated November 1, 1536, asking Reden to obtain a copy of Copernicus' works for him. The cardinal died in September of 1537 without mentioning the theory again. However, the letter was proof that officials high in the Church approved discussion of the heliocentric theory and it was shown to potential enemies with great effect.\textsuperscript{22}

Although Copernicus was free to discuss his scientific theories, he was not free to arrange his private life as he wished. After 1538, he found himself in conflict with the noted humanist, Dantisius, a native of Danzig originally named Johannes Flachsbinder von Höfen. He was an extraordinarily well-traveled diplomat-soldier and in his youth had been a notoriously dissolute humanist-scholar. Named poet laureate of Poland in 1512, he was known throughout eastern Europe by his chosen Latinized name referring to his native city. In 1538 he became Bishop of Ermland. Now elderly and harried by years of exchanging polemics with the leading Protestants, he turned his anger against Copernicus and his friends, whom he suspected of being both secret Protestants and sinners. Life became difficult for canons accustomed to the earlier, more tolerant regimes.\textsuperscript{23} For example, Dantisius saw in every contact between churchmen and women a move toward acceptance of the Lutheran heresy of clerical marriage. This came to have a direct bearing on Copernicus' life because Copernicus' housekeeper was a female relative named Anna Schillings, who had left her husband and come to Frauenburg with her children. For Copernicus this was both a practical arrangement and an act of charity. However, the bishop saw this as a secular household (similar to the concubinage practiced by Giese). If Anna Schillings had been aged or extremely ugly, Dantisius would have objected less, because every canon needed a housekeeper who could cook and wash. Unfortunately, Anna was neither aged nor ugly, and she had children. The “affair” resulting from Dantisius' persecution of this innocent relationship cost Copernicus heavily: Anna Schillings was turned out. Dantisius believed that Copernicus was too much a humanist to be trusted not to behave like an Italian pagan (or like the bishop himself in his youth) at the first opportunity. Copernicus was too much the pious northern humanist not to be deeply shocked by such suspicions of impropriety. At his age, with his poor health, who would think him capable of such a sin?

Although Copernicus sent the Schillings family away, he did not end all contact with his relatives. As his health declined, he obtained permission to have the son of a nephew become co-adjutor, to share his duties on the expectation of inheriting his post. This was a common practice in the Baltic region. In nepotism, too, Copernicus was a man of his time.\textsuperscript{24}

IV. Copernicus the Astronomer

Copernicus was fated to publish his astronomical works in an atmosphere of religious controversy. Moreover, free discussion of his ideas was complicated
because Copernicus' decision to offer his ideas to the world was inspired by a Protestant visitor, Georg Joachim (1514-1574), professor of mathematics at the unholy university of Wittenberg.

Copernicus had delayed making this step until his failing health made it imperative to publish or risk having his life's work disappear into oblivion as later happened with many of the poems and speeches written by his humanist friends. He decided to seize the opportunity. Fortunately, Bishop Dantiscus gave him his full support.

Copernicus had written the basic text of De Revolutionibus by 1532. Although he did not distribute the manuscript widely, the ideas contained in it were described to Pope Clement VII and a small group of cardinals the next year by a papal secretary named Johann Widmannssadt, who later took employment with Cardinal von Schönberg. In 1535 the Cracow canon Bernard Wapowski published an Almanach that contained the astronomical tables from Copernicus' manuscript. By 1538 a report of the heliocentric theory had reached Wittenberg, exciting the imagination of Georg Joachim.

Joachim, best known as Rheticus (the man from Rhaetia, the Austrian Tyrol), was a protégé of Melanchthon. Coming to Ermland in 1539, he spent two years in the region, often visiting Duke Albrecht and Tiedemann Giese in Culm. Rheticus brought numerous books with him as presents for the master, the most welcome of which were a new, improved translation of Euclid (from Greek, not Arabic) and the first printed Greek edition of Ptolemy's Almagest, Witelo's Optics, and Regiomontanus' Triangles, all useful for Copernicus' ever more complicated calculations. In 1540, in Danzig, Rheticus published a short First Account of the Frauenburg canon's work and took copies back to Germany to distribute among friends. A year later he published a second edition in Basel, and in 1542 he excerpted a section of Copernicus' manuscript. Copernicus was apparently happy with the reception the book received. With the encouragement of Dantiscus, who had written an introductory poem for the First Account, he rewrote the description of his theory and updated the summary table of his astronomical calculations.

Copernicus' effort was fortunately timed, for he had but little time left to live. The new manuscript for De Revolutionibus was barely finished, dedicated to Pope Paul III, and sent to press in Nuremberg, under the care of Rheticus, when he suffered a series of paralyzing strokes. The fate of his manuscript lay in the hands of Giese and Rheticus and depended on the protection of other influential churchmen: the pope—who was well-known as a patron of artists and scientists—and the foresightedness of Cardinal von Schönberg, now deceased, whose letter helped ward off attacks by conservative churchmen. The printed book may have arrived in Frauenburg on the very day of Copernicus' death, May 24, 1543.

It was Copernicus' humanist training that made his theory acceptable to the Roman Church in the coming decades, not his overwhelming scientific evidence. (In fact, his calculations were not a significant improvement over the Ptolemaic ones.) In organizing his work, Copernicus first of all dedicated the book to Pope Paul III, a scholar who could be expected to understand the theories he proposed to discuss. Secondly, he went directly to the ancient authorities, pointing out that
there were already two conflicting planetary theories (Aristotle's and Ptolemy's), each of which had certain methodological problems: Aristotle gave no tables for calculations, and Ptolemy was known to be in error on several points of planetary movement. Other means of calculation were therefore admissible. Thirdly, he discussed several little-known ancient authors (most notably Philolaus, Heracleides, and Aristarchus), who suggested looking at the heavens from the point of view of a rotating earth. Lastly, he suggested that since he could resolve the problem of the seasonal year, he could reform the calendar and bring Easter back to the proper date. The humanist approach, citing classical authors to defend every new idea, is clearly seen in his preface and exposition:

So the earth is not flat, as Empedocles and Anaximedes believed; nor in the shape of a drum, as did Leucippus; nor in the shape of a bowl, as did Heraclitus; nor in any way hollow, as did Democritus. Nor again is it cylindrical, as Anaximander believed; nor does its underside go down in an indefinitely thick root, as did Xenophanes; but it is of perfect roundness, as the Philosophers are aware.

He was less open in describing his acquaintance with Islamic scholarship. Though no proof survives regarding the way he acquired his knowledge of Arabic concepts and techniques, he could either have had access to unknown translations or have encountered a knowledgeable instructor; probably it was through conversations with some expert he met during his student days in Bologna, perhaps from Domenico Maria de Novara.

In short, Copernicus followed the conventions of his era, claiming very little credit for innovative thought and attributing his basic ideas to the ancients. This was perhaps too clever a device, for few persons were capable of appreciating the mathematical aspects of his work; consequently, few contemporaries realized what he had achieved. His modesty went beyond a denial of originality. It extended to a statement that he had not wanted to publish at all. Although cardinals, scientists, and his close friends (especially Tiedemann Giese) had urged him over the years to share his discoveries with the scholarly world, he had declined because he was certain that ignorant men would misunderstand his theory (indeed, only shortly before a prominent theologian had argued against the world's being round—a fact beyond dispute in 1543). Also, his ideas were not completely novel. Thomas of Aquinas and Averroës had discussed the “two astronomies” and the University of Padua, where Copernicus had spent part of his student years, was a center of Thomistic-Averroist studies. It was possible even for learned men to agree with Copernicus' own modest assessment that beyond the mathematical tables he had presented nothing new.

As we know today, Copernicus had done more than repudiate previously worked ground. He understood that, too, no matter how much he denied it. The denial came from his awareness that his ideas challenged accepted authority so fundamentally that he might be prevented from further study. Therefore, as long as he could see years of work ahead of him, he sought only peace and quiet. But
it was more than just a desire to work. He possessed the humanist's desire for posthumous fame. This was far greater than his concern about his afterlife. In fact, he was so much more humanist than churchman that he could not disguise his fundamental lack of interest in theology or the salvation of his soul. What he worried about was scientific truth and the salvation of his life's work. If premature publication made him the center of a controversy in which he could be accused of pagan or Protestant tendencies, not only would he be ruined but his work would be destroyed, too. Therefore, it was only after he became ill and despaired of recovery that he authorized publication, and even then he took care to make it difficult for potential enemies to attack his theory.

As a good humanist, Copernicus cited ancient scholarship even when he was not always pleased with what he found there. What seemed to delight him was to find disagreements among the authorities, because such lines of reasoning supported his thesis that alternative hypotheses, however unlikely to be true, should be investigated. He placed much weight on the Pythagoreans, who had expressed a belief in the rotation and movement of the earth; moreover, he may have sought to connect the Pythagorean "Music of the spheres" to the heliocentric theory. According to Rheticus, he did compare the orbits of the planets to the chords in an octave—the magical number seven being reflected in the heavens as in music. All mathematics was simple, direct, and perfect—as in geometry. Astronomy was the geometry of the skies and its representation must be more elegant than the concept of ellipses purported it to be.

Copernicus avoided any fateful contest with the Church, the path incautiously pursued later by Galileo. He knew, either instinctively or by observing the fate of others, that he dared not touch upon religious values or theology at any point beyond offering to aid in correcting the calendar and thereby calculating Easter and other holidays more exactly.

His approach for warding off Catholic criticism was strengthened in the second preface to his book written by the Lutheran minister, Andreas Osiander (the very man who had first introduced Duke Albrecht to Protestant ideas), who completed the editing after Rheticus took a position at Leipzig. Osiander's unsigned preface loudly proclaimed that the heliocentric universe was but a theory which provided an alternate form of astronomical calculation. The reader, unaware that Copernicus was not the author of this preface, took it as the summary statement of the book. When several Protestants realized the implications of the heliocentric theory for their literal interpretation of the Bible, they were outraged at the implicit undermining of sacred Scripture. Nevertheless, most Protestant scholars who believed that the sun could well be the center of the solar system were not punished by their princes, who were not uniformly zealous or able to understand the issue; and Roman Catholic scholars such as Galileo were free to discuss the heliocentric theory until the last decades of the century, by which time every scientist was aware of it, and many believed in it. It is worth noting that Copernicus' theory was first put to practical use by Erasmus Reinhard, who published an important set of mathematical calculations entitled The Prutenic Tables. The patron of this work was Duke Albrecht of Prussia, who authorized its
publication in 1551. Reinhard's Tables was not accompanied by an open endorsement of a heliocentric worldview, but since the Tables make little sense without the accompanying theory, his publication led to the survival of Copernicus' ideas into a more receptive era. Another scholar, the Königsberg librarian, Heinrich Zell, may have guaranteed the survival of Copernicus' cartographic efforts in a similar way by publishing a map of Prussia in 1540/41. Rheticus seems to have provided Zell with the information needed to draw the map, and Rheticus could only have acquired his knowledge from Copernicus or Scultetus.\textsuperscript{42}

V. Recapitulation

Copernicus was not a lonely scholar, isolated in a cultural wasteland, working by himself on problems uninteresting to his boorish northern contemporaries. He was surrounded by educated men who took an interest in his work and encouraged him in it. In fact, his work might have been lost completely if these friends had not written other scholars about his investigations and, in the end, assisted him in publication. Copernicus was a Prussian humanist, working as an administrator and bureaucrat in a variety of tasks. Unlike Italian scholars and artists, he had no patron. He had to work hard and long hours through war and peace. Fortunately, he had employers and friends who saw to it that he was able to continue his research. At no time did any king of Poland act directly or indirectly as a patron or even a protector. Copernicus looked to humanist popes and cardinals and, above all, to the Ermland bishops and in later years to Duke Albrecht. It was no accident that such employers and friends existed; they were characteristic of the culture of a sixteenth century Prussia created by the humanists.

VI. Conclusion

Humanism was defined earlier (Spring 1991) by quoting Myron Gilmore as a faith in "the power of the human intellect to bring about institutional and moral improvement." We must add to this Walter Ullmann's statement that Renaissance humanism was "an infinitely rich, pregnant, and fruitful phenomenon capable of evolving in many varied directions," and that "the humanist renaissance made its first appearance within the political and governmental orbit and was throughout its development a politically inspired movement." Ullmann summarized this, saying, "the process began with the secularization of the government itself and went on to engulf society at large."\textsuperscript{43}

Ullmann came to this conclusion in a volume never mentioning Prussia, yet his observations are more apt there than almost anywhere else. Before the first humanists arrived, the government of Prussia was dominated by noble-born knights who supervised middle-class clerks. The former had no desire to make reforms, the latter had no power to do so. The humanists took hold slowly, profiting both by their ability to work with books and records and their larger experience in the world. Their training in literature gave them insights into administration that one would not have anticipated: they read about practices used
in the ancient world and corresponded about innovative solutions; and they were taught to despise the authority of the uneducated.

The humanists took their place as counselors—men who could see beyond the immediate problems, but men who could also conduct diplomacy, persuade enemies, and placate friends. They replaced the knights in the council, then in the offices, and ultimately removed them forever from the positions of power. They secularized the government and opened the way for the Reformation. Opportunities to study literature, art, and science followed.

This phenomenon occurred throughout the Holy Roman Empire and the North. In Prussia it moved more quickly than elsewhere because of regional traditions.

Regionalism is not a new field of study. Excellent scholars have spent lifetimes in sorting the mass of local legends, documents, and written accounts into usable histories. It is necessary for us to use these materials against the background of general intellectual, social, and religious history to seek new insights into our past. Such, it is hoped, will be one effect of these essays on the activities of Prussian humanists. If the traditions of the Teutonic Order and its allied bishops can be traced in their political, literary, and educational evolution from 1450 to 1525, then this is likely to be the case in other small states as well.

To be sure, the lesson of these essays is that much thinking and much research remains to be done. If the study of humanism, certainly one of the most thoroughly worked fields of intellectual history, can yield new ideas in an unexpected province as Prussia, what might be done elsewhere? In Prussia local traditions and regional politics mixed with international movements to produce a new political and religious climate, and the revolution in thought helped bring forth a new understanding of the movement of the planets. Copernicus can be best understood in the humanist climate of his homeland; isolated by distance and personality from other astronomers, he was nevertheless sharing in the great world of ideas; he was at home in the intellectual world of educated Poles, Germans, and Italians. Ermland offered everything he needed to achieve his life’s work. That Ermland offered this was no accident. It was the fruit of three generations of humanist endeavors in creating a climate for genius to flourish.\(^4\)

These three generations do not provide a clearly defined break between the medieval and the modern. As Huizinga put it:

*The transition from the spirit of the declining Middle Ages to humanism was far less simple than we are inclined to imagine it. Accustomed to oppose humanism to the Middle Ages, we would gladly believe that it was necessary to give up the one in order to embrace the other. We find it difficult to fancy the mind cultivating the ancient forms of medieval thought and expression while aspiring at the same time to antique wisdom and beauty. Yet this is just what we have to picture to ourselves. Classicism did not come as a sudden revelation, it grew up among the luxuriant vegetation of medieval thought. Humanism was a form before it was an inspiration. On the other hand, the characteristic modes of thought of the Middle Ages did not die out till long after the Renaissance.\(^5\)*
This insight goes far to explain the otherwise curious development of humanistic thought and letters in Prussia. The uneven evolution of scholarship, the arts, and governmental practice is the result of the perceived needs of the time. The grandmasters and the bishops saw the political implications of cultural leadership clearly and understood that governmental reforms could not only make the inadequate revenues go farther, but they could even generate new income. Thus, the humanists of the North were perforce statesmen rather than poets. Blumenau and Copernicus were administrators. They were following the Burckhardtian model of the Renaissance man; they were creating a modern state.

In following this argument we should be careful in ascribing modern concepts of nationality to Renaissance writers and politicians. They were loyal to a person, be he king, bishop, or grandmaster. While individuals in Prussia did consider themselves German or Polish, they did not do so in the nineteenth century sense of such identification; and they felt themselves even more strongly to be citizens of their local community than of a national or supra-national state. Thus, citizens of Thorn and Ermland who spoke German could think of themselves as loyal subjects of the King of Poland. They could also defend their traditional rights against the king without contradicting their professions of loyalty, and they did insist upon limiting royal authority over them; and in so arguing that the king had only certain specified powers, they did not consider themselves any less true to their oaths of allegiance.66

The inhabitants of Prussia could also feel a deep local patriotism that was important without being identical to nineteenth-century romanticism or nationalism (which was marked by deeper emotional commitment, by a need to act on one’s feelings, and by a wish to be separated from all ties not incorporated in “the nation”). They did not shrink from writing or acting on this sixteenth century patriotism, and this “civic humanism” was important in their poetry and their politics; by keeping that in mind we can better understand their actions than if we attempt to put them in the context of German or Polish.

Doubters might well consider Ermland Bishop Marten Kromer’s proposal in 1580 to install a commemorative marker at the grave of Copernicus in the Frauenburg cathedral. The inscription was to note that “Copernicus was an ornament not just to this church but to all his homeland, Prussia.” The words, “ornamento...toti Prussiae patriae suae,” should make one rethink the concept of fatherland. Kromer was no rebel: he was of Polish birth and grew up near Cracow; he had studied in Cracow and Bologna; he had served as secretary and diplomat for two Polish kings; and he had faithfully carried out the reforms ordered by the Council of Trent. What Kromer was saying, as his long explanation made clear, was that Poland was a nation of provinces, each with its own traditions, government, and feelings of pride and exclusivity. One could be both Polish and Prussian.67

All that will be accomplished by modern efforts to claim the great thinkers or writers for any contemporary nationality will be to perpetuate the hatred and jealousy that has been such an unfortunate and prominent part of the recent history of this region.68 It is time to move beyond such concerns and seek to understand
our past in more constructive terms: if possible, we should try to recreate more exactly the mental climate of the age in question.

Modern Polish and German scholars have done precisely that. They have shown that Royal Prussia and ducal Prussia drew together in culture, religion, and administrative practices after 1525, thus reuniting a region that had drifted apart after 1466. The inhabitants of the two parts of Prussia were loyal subjects of Poland until that state, by failing to move into the era of centralization and absolutism, fell apart in the seventeenth century.49

Historians have labored far too long under the influence of the nineteenth-century Kulturkampf, the conflict between Protestant Germanism and Roman Catholic Polonism. There was never such a profound mistrust and hatred in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as was the case later. The conflict between the Teutonic Knights and the Polish kings, the disputes between the Prussian estates and their overlords—the king on one hand, the grandmaster on the other—rested on different bases entirely. What one must remember about the earlier period is that the Germans represented no real threat to Poland or to the Roman Catholic Church. Moreover, Poland represented no threat to the Germans. Nationalism became a serious problem only in 1772, after the first partition of Poland, when the rulers of Brandenburg-Prussia had to deal with a minority that refused to accept their inferior status. Believing that the Poles represented a potentially disloyal element within the state, the rulers made efforts to "Germanize" them.

This intolerance stood in sharp contrast to Polish traditions. Even though the Counter-Reformation had triumphed in the Polish kingdom during the so-called Sarmatian era (1620-1750), the king was too busy repelling foreign invaders during that time to contemplate upsetting the delicate political and economic balance that had made Lithuanians, Russians, Germans, and Jews satisfied with their lot. Moreover, the ideals of the aristocracy of the baroque era were very attractive to the nobles of Prussia, who adopted the rural life style, the dress, and to a certain extent even the speech of the Polish nobles. Among these ideals was the autonomy of each region, which for Prussia meant effective self-government in the duchy and in Royal Prussia. Nobles everywhere in Prussia sought to maintain this autonomy, which led inevitably to disputes with the crown about the limits of royal authority. The disputes did not mean that there was any wish to become separate, for such autonomy was possible only under the protection of a larger state. The citizens and nobility of Prussia preferred the loose Polish sovereignty to the closer supervision of a Swedish king or a Brandenburg elector. The development of local law and local traditions was most easily accomplished within the framework of the multi-national Polish state. Lastly, the burghers of Prussia were merchants, buying Polish products and selling them in Holland, Germany, and Scandinavia; if they had been in a separate state, they would have had to deal with the taxation policies of a new ruler (whose military needs might be considerable) and would have had no good arguments to present to the Polish king, who was constantly besieged by his nobles to guarantee them a greater share of the profits from trade. As it was, Prussian burghers benefited from low taxes and a monopoly in the export of grain. Moreover, because the aristocracy had become
rusticated, Prussian merchants had less competition when selling in Polish markets.

One can see how the traditions of Sarmatia Poland helped to develop the feeling in Prussia that all inhabitants were both Prussian and Polish. No matter what the background of the population—in religion (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, or refugees from persecution elsewhere), in speech (Polish or German), in class (noble, burgher, clerical)—all had an interest in maintaining the status quo, in protecting their privileges, and in governing themselves.

One important aspect of this regional feeling was the furtherance of classical literature. All scholarly instruction, both Lutheran and Roman Catholic, was in Latin; the basic texts were Latin classics; the architecture and music were baroque. In short, when the humanists of the North set their program of education into motion, it was similar everywhere, just as was their secularization of the political administration.59

This process of education and secularization spread beyond the borders of Prussia. Lithuanian students went to Albertus University in Königsberg as well as to Cracow, then to further study in Italy and Germany alike. This reflects, one suspects, their fear of Polish cultural domination. Prussia offered an acceptable alternative and, consequently, some of the first Lithuanian humanists were schooled there.51

Livonian humanism was less significant, one suspects, because the peculiar dynamics of the Prussian situation were so fundamentally lacking. There were Livonian humanists, of course, but the study of their activities has been sadly neglected; literature and reform gave way to the political, religious, and military crises of the era.

To summarize, Prussian humanism had deep historical roots in the traditions of the Teutonic Order and its allied bishoprics—roots strengthened by grafts from the Hanseatic merchant community in Prussia. In the fifteenth century the students sent to Italy came home with humanistically-tinted educations; and other, non-Prussian scholars saw opportunities for professional advancement in the service of the grandmaster and the bishops. The Church encouraged this process, sometimes indirectly (through Piccolomini's personal example and publications), sometimes directly (through the appointment of bishops and canons). The Polish crown sought to strengthen the Prussian ties to Cracow by having students attend the Jagiellonian University. The result gave a decided rhetorical and humanist coloring to the secular affairs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the North that was first made apparent in government reform, then in the arts and education.52
Endnotes

1. Angus Armitage, *Sun, Stand Thou Still: the Life and Works of Copernicus, the Astronomer* (New York: Henry Schuman, 1947), p. 63; Hans Schmauch, *Nicolaus Copernicus* (English trans. Helen Taubert. Göttingen: Göttingen Research Committee, 1954), pp. 5-13, 25-27; Marian Biskup, *Polska a Zakon Krzyżacki w Prusach w początkach* (Olszty: Wydawnictwo Pojezierze, 1983); Michael Rusinek, *The Land of Nicholas Copernicus* (New York: Twayne, 1973), pp. 10-11; Knod, *Deutsche Studien*, p. 612; Heinz Neumeyer, "Zur polnischen Kirchenpolitik in Westpreussen," pp. 437-9; Toeppen in *Acten der Ständetagen, V*, 779-80; Hubatsch, "Das westliche Preussen und das Ermland," p. 146; Jasienica, *Jagiellonian Poland*, pp. 313-328; *Studien zur Geschichte des Preussenlandes*, pp. 436-9; Sikorski, *Monarchia Polska i Warmia*, emphasizes that Polish kings adopted the techniques of past grandmasters to secure the loyalty of the bishops, therefore not introducing anything new into the relationship between the overlord and the bishop. Moreover, he says that the entry of the Bishop of Ermland into the assembly caused his attitudes to change in that he came to share the wishes of the nobles and the cities for a close relationship with Poland; on the other hand, Forstreuter stresses the closeness of Ermland and Prussia in this period. *Vom Ordenstaat zum Fürstentum*, p. 119; Karol Górski, *Lužajci Watzendorfe, zycie i dzialalnosci polityczna (1447-1512)* (Wrocław, etc.: Osolineum, 1973) *[Studia Copernicana]*) the struggle between the Ermland chapter and the king is well illustrated in the documents from Royal Prussia. *Acta Statuum Terrarum Prussiae Regalis* (ed. Carol Górski and Marian Biskup. 5 vols. Toruń: Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu, 1953-73). The editors, who employ a Marxist analysis to the political crisis of that era, saw Watzendorfe supported by the cities and the Prussian lords, opposed by the middle nobility. *Ibid.*, II, 464-6, and III, part 1, 234. Watzendorfe's correspondence is of interest: like all Prussian contemporaries, to the cities he wrote in German, to the king in Latin; but his German was occasionally spelled in the Polish style, with some sentences in Polish. *Ibid.*, III, part 1, 44. His proverbial harshness toward his canons and subjects is demonstrated in *Ibid.*, V, part 3, p. 257; his pro-Polish attitude was noted by Hipper, *Literaturgeschichte*, p. 89; this was exaggerated by Gale Christianson, *This Wild Abyss, the Story of the men who made modern astronomy* (New York: Free Press, 1978), pp. 114-15; in contrast, Schmauch, a noted proponent of the "Germaness" of Ermland and of Copernicus, emphasizes strongly Lucas' commitment to German culture and language, citing his refusal to take the oath of allegiance in Polish in 1504 at Thorn, when King Alexander was present in person. *Nicolaus Copernicus*, p. 26; Schmauch does demonstrate that Copernicus was never a priest, "Um Nikolaus Copernicus," in *Studien zur Geschichte des Preussenlandes*, Festschrift für Erich Keyser (Marburg/Lahn: Elwert, 1963), pp. 417-431.


3. Andrzej Wróblewski, "The Cracovian Background of Nicholas Copernicus," *The Polish Renaissance*, pp. 147f; Hans Koeppen, "Die Schreibwesen des Namens Copernicus," *Nicolaus Copernicus zu 500. Geburtstag*, pp. 185-234; Ullmann, *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 201-2, remarks that the classicization of names marks the era of “secondary renaissance humanism,” which was more concerned with literature, art, and science than in the reform of society through governmental action. Specialization was beginning to drive out the universal man.


ibid., 14(1975), pp. 65f; Rybka, Four Hundred Years, pp. 74-81; Hans Schmauch argues that Copernicus made the decision to concentrate on astronomy in the second half of 1510, thereby abandoning a promising career in ecclesiastical politics. “Aus dem Leben des Nikolaus Copernicus,” Westpreussenjahrbuch, 15(1964), p. 64.


9. Armiage, Sun, Stand Thou Still, pp. 105-6, is in error, believing he was involved; Rosén, Three Copernican Treatises, pp. 358-62.

10. All available documents are in Akta Stanów Prus Królewskich, V, see summary, Part III, 259.


13. Ibid., pp. 45-54; Hermanowski, Nicolaus Copernicus, pp. 84; Marian Biskup, Działalność publiczna Mikołaja Kopernika (Toruń: TNT, 1971), pp. 37-43; for his travels, see the register in Sikorski, Mikołaj Kopernik na Warmii, pp. 40-50.


16) Vota, “Der Untergang des Ordenstaates Preussen und die Entstehung der preussischen Königswürde,” pp. 96f; “Aufzeichnungen zur Geschichte des letzten Hochmeisters,” Scriptores rerum Prussiarum, V, 331, 336; Hermanowski,
Nicholas Copernicus, pp. 99-102; Biskup, Działalność Publiczna Mikołaja Kopernika, pp. 45-7.


22. Kazimierz Tymieniecki suggests that the choice of religion was really a declaration of ethnic identification: the Germans becoming Lutheran, the Poles remaining Roman Catholic. History of Polish Pomerania, p. 76; for Copernicus' medical activities, it might be noted that even as late as 1541 Duke Albrecht summoned him to Königsberg for several weeks to treat a favorite councilman. Guasce, Königsberg in Preussen, pp. 58-59; about his medical practice, see Rosenberg, Nicolaus Copernicus, pp. 47-56 and Schmauch, "Aus dem Leben des Nikolaus Copernicus," pp. 62-5; for his monetary theories, see Hermanowski, Nicolaus Copernicus, pp. 133-38.


24. Reinhard Stasiewski, "Nicolaus Copernicus als ermländischer Domherr," in Nicolaus Copernicus zum 300. Geburtstag, pp. 74-7; contrast these responsibilities and activity with those of the retiring figure described by Christianson, This Wild Abyss, pp. 121-22, 250-51.


28. Ibid., pp. 50-1; see Harold Segel, Renaissance Culture in Poland (Ithaca: Cornell, 1989), 127-137.
34. Armitage, Sun, Stand Thou Still, pp. 101-3; Hermanowski, Nicholas Copernicus, pp. 156-64.
wrote; “All men of science in the Renaissance were humanists at least in the sense that humanistic erudition was part of their intellectual equipment both in natural sciences and in the humanities.”; Copernicus also started from a humanistic position. He remained a humanist, though his work opened a new direction in scientific thought. Robert Westman, “The Astronomer’s Role in the Sixteenth Century: a Preliminary Study,” History of Science, 18(1980), pp. 106-109; Armitage, Sun, Stand Thou Still, pp. 132-4; Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution; pp. 135-143.

37. Duncan, Copernicus: On the Revolutions, p. 38; Westman argues that Copernicus used these humanistic techniques—“the audience is persuaded not merely by arguments, but by arguments presented in the right way”—as a wedge of hypothetical reasoning to split open conventional wisdom and make a place for the astronomer between mathematics and philosophy that had not existed before. Few scholars accepted his heliocentric ideas before 1600, because Copernicus was not able to present convincing mathematical proofs, but they were persuaded of the propriety of listening to his criticisms of the Ptolemaic model of the universe and considering alternatives. “The Astronomer’s Role,” pp. 109-112; Edward Rosen, Nature of Scientific Discovery, pp. 325-6, agrees; Kuhn, The Copernican Revolution, p. 126, takes the opposite point of view: that the humanists were opposed to scientific work of all kinds. “The work of Copernicus and his astronomical contemporaries belongs squarely in that university tradition which the humanists most ridiculed.” He credits neoplatonism with reintroducing mathematical studies, pp. 127ff, and even moving toward sun-worship; for ancient astronomers influencing Copernicus, see Christianson, This Wild Abyss, pp. 53-67.


39. Kraft, “Copernicus Retroversus I,” p. 123; Christianson, This Wild Abyss, pp. 140-41, credits Copernicus with radically altering our concept of the size of the universe and describing the modern view of the solar system—in fact, he views him as the founder of modern science.


43. Ullmann, Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism, pp. 6-9, 148; see also James Tracy, “Humanism and the Reformation,” p. 46: “the concept of humanism must either be abandoned altogether, or treated as polyvalent in its capacity for combinations with other currents of thought,” and “Kristeller’s re-definition of the humanist movement as a network of intellectual interests permits precisely the sort of distinctions that may help to explain some of humanism’s varying ramifications.” Also, Hermann, “Georg von Eltz, p. 148; Davies, God’s Playground, I, 150-151.
46. Bogucka, “Towns in Poland and the Reformation,” p. 64; Schmauch, who demonstrates the Prussian or German origin of fifty-two of the fifty-four canons of Ermland who held office during Copernicus’ lifetime, Nicolaus Copernicus, p. 30, leaves one wondering why the country was not seething with unrest at the Polish efforts to infiltrate. It may have been “a German area both as regards the composition of the inhabitants and its Regents” (p. 33), but it was also a Polish area in the sixteenth century understanding of the term. Marian Biskup argues this forcefully in “List Kapituly Warminskiej do Króla Zygmunta I,” pp. 3-11, with an English summary. Opposing Hans Schmauch’s 1943 concept that Copernicus had not addressed King Sigismund as “Our lord and most gracious king,” he demonstrates that a statement of loyalty had indeed been made in November of 1520, but that it had been intercepted by the Teutonic Knights—thus surviving unknown in the order archives until recently.
47. Erst Manfred Wermer, “Das polnisch-litauische Staatwesen aus der Sicht des ermländischen Bischofs Martin Kromer (1512/13-1589),” in Acta Prussica, pp. 163-86; how one can agree with this and still argue with its logical conclusion that one must be “Polish” if one is a subject of the king can be seen


50. For some of these ideas I am indebted to Professor Stanislaw Salmonowicz of Torun, who spoke at the 186th Wissenschaftliches Gespräch im Johann-Gottfried-Herder-Institut on July 21, 1983.


Bibliography


For works specifically on Prussia, one looks almost in vain for anything suitable. The books and articles are either dated, or polemic, or not to the point. The best one can do is to piece the story together. Even original sources are hard to find. The historical accounts are collected in *Scriptores rerum Prussicarum* (6 vols. Frankfurt/Main: Minerva, 1968-).
