

# Alicja Dobrosielska, Jan Gancewski

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## Summary of an International Conference Entitled the History, Ideology and Operations of the Teutonic Order - Historic Symbols, Olsztyn, 2 July 2010

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Alicja Dobrosielska, Jan Gancewski

SUMMARY OF AN INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ENTITLED  
*THE HISTORY, IDEOLOGY AND OPERATIONS  
OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER – HISTORIC SYMBOLS,*  
OLSZTYN, 2 JULY 2010

A Polish-German conference entitled “The History, Ideology and Operations of the Teutonic Order – Historic Symbols” was held on 2 July 2010 at the Faculty of Humanities, the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. The event was organized by the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the Order of Brothers of the German House Saint Mary in Jerusalem, the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the Institute of History and International Relations at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, the Olsztyn Branch of the Polish Historical Society, the City of Olsztyn, Purda Municipality, Olsztyn District Office and the Pruthenian Society. The conference was held under the auspices of the Rector of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Professor Józef Górniewicz, and the Marshal of the Warmia and Mazury Region, Jacek Protas. It was attended by eight speakers representing the University of Warmia and Mazury, the University of Bonn, the Central Archive of the Teutonic Order in Vienna, and the modern Teutonic Order. The opening ceremony was hosted by Professor Tadeusz Rawa, Pro-Rector of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Jolanta Szulc, Vice Marshal of the Warmia and Mazury Region, and Piotr Grzymowicz, Mayor of Olsztyn. The opening speech was delivered by Professor Norbert Kasperek, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn (UWM).

The conference was divided into two sessions. The first session was chaired by Dr. Jan Gancewski (UWM Olsztyn), and it opened with a lecture by Dr. Bruno Platter, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order in Vienna, entitled “*The historical characteristics underlying the contemporary Teutonic Order*”<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Platter discussed the evangelical roots of the Teutonic Order by tracing the historical characteristics that continue to underlie its operations today. The Teutonic Knights were described as a religious order, a provider of hospital services and a culture-promoting organization that was engaged in social, political and economic life to promote evangelical, social, charity, cul-

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<sup>1</sup> The original speech titles are listed in the collection of materials from the conference: *Zakon krzyżacki w historii, ideologii i działaniu – symbole dziejowe. Der deutsche Orden in Geschichte, Ideologie und Wirkung*, edited by J. Gancewski, Olsztyn 2010, p. 295.

tural and educational work throughout the centuries. By focusing on the evangelic, cultural and social aspects of the order's operations, the speaker was able to avoid historical controversies surrounding the Teutonic Knights' activity in Prussia which was marked by a great degree of evangelical ambiguity. Dr. Platter emphasized the Order's contribution to the promotion of welfare, charity and culture in modern times by citing numerous examples from the Teutonic Knights' recent history, including the persecution of the Order's members in various European regimes.

In his speech entitled "*The Warmia Diocese and the Teutonic Order in 1243-1525*", Professor Alojzy Szorc (UWM in Olsztyn) discussed two distinct periods in Warmia Diocese's relations with the Teutonic Knights. The first period began with the appointment of four bishops in Prussia, and it ended in 1466. According to Professor Szorc, this period was marked by the "protective embrace" of the Teutonic Order which clearly intervened in the diocese's internal affairs (in particular administrative and economic issues) to prevent Warmia's bishops from acquiring political sovereignty. According to the speaker, the Second Toruń Peace Treaty of 1466 was a breakthrough moment in Warmia's relations with the Teutonic Order which marked the onset of the second period. In line with the peace treaty, the entire region of Warmia was annexed to Poland, and the Warmia diocese was split between Poland and the Teutonic State. Teutonic Knights ceased to be the diocese's sole "benefactors". This was a serious blow for the Order which, according to Professor Szorc, "was thirsty for revenge". A truce was called only in 1521, and following the introduction of Lutheranism in Prussia, Catholicism was preserved only in Warmia, a Polish dominion as of 1466.

Professor Udo Arnold (University of Bonn) spoke about "*The Teutonic Order as an object of political ideology in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries*". By relying on analyses of school textbooks, press articles, posters and photographs, Professor Arnold argued that the history of the Teutonic Order, in particular the history of the Battle of Grunwald which was given the status of a political symbol, was a propaganda tool and a political instrument used in the past to create and uphold stereotypes in Polish-German relations. According to the speaker, these sensitive issues that were often used in political debate, no longer evoke such heated emotions from Poles or Germans. Professor Arnold attributed this success to the efforts of historical researchers, conferences, conventions, academic publications and scientific works addressed to the broad public.

Professor Arnold chaired the second session which opened with Dr. Kazimierz Grażawski's (UWM in Olsztyn) lecture entitled "*The first phase of the Great War – the Teutonic invasion of Dobrzyń Land in 1409*". The speech integrated new information into the existing body of knowledge on the annexation of Dobrzyń Land by the Teutonic Knights, including the results of archeological research conducted in the former Teutonic strongholds in Bobrowniki and Dobrzyń on the Vistula River. Dr. Grażawski summarized the

historical accounts of the war in an attempt to describe the military potential of those strongholds.

*“Selected economic aspects of the Teutonic Order’s activity in the 15<sup>th</sup> century”* was the title of a speech delivered by Dr. Jan Gancewski who attempted to identify distinct phases marking the development of the Order’s economic activity in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to the speaker, the turn of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries was an era of economic stability, while the period between the Great War of 1409–1411 and the 1420s as well as the Thirteen Years’ War (1454–1466) were a time of stagnation and great destruction. Dr. Gancewski noted that neither the Battle of Grunwald nor the Great War were able to break the Teutonic economy which, despite many negative trends (including the mass abandonment of crop fields), continued to flourish directly after the First Toruń Peace Treaty. The period that followed the Thirteen Years’ War was marked by frequent changes and new trends in the Teutonic Order’s economy. Property was privatized, and the ownership of land, farming estates and facilities in the Teutonic State underwent significant transformation.

Frank Bayard (head of the Central Archive of the Teutonic Order in Vienna) delivered a lecture entitled *“A change of times – a time of change. The long 19<sup>th</sup> century”*. The speaker discussed the key events in the Order’s most recent history in chronological order. He spoke of changes in ownership structure, legal issues and reforms that were carried out in the Teutonic Order during the reign of Emperor Maximilian when the Order became “an independent clerical and knighthood institution that reported directly to the emperor”. At the time of the Austrian empire, the Teutonic Knights resumed their charity and hospital work which is continued to this day despite many formal obstacles, such as the loss of Teutonic holdings in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century which were nationalized or annexed by new countries that refused to respect the Order’s historical privileges.

Dr. Dariusz Radziwiłowicz (UWM in Olsztyn) delivered a speech entitled *“The Grunwald tradition in Polish political groups’ fight for an independent Republic of Poland in 1918–1920”*. According to the lecturer, from among the two political trends that had the greatest impact on the formation of the Polish state, namely the movements headed by Józef Piłsudski and Roman Dmowski (National Democracy), only the latter was a continuator of the Grunwald tradition. The National Democracy was able to make full use of that tradition as a symbol of struggle against German oppression, the claims to restore Poland’s access to the Baltic Sea and recover Western territories.

The conference ended with Dr. Izabela Lewandowska’s speech entitled *“Teutonic castles in north-eastern Poland after World War II (1945–2005)”*. The lecturer discussed the condition of selected Teutonic castles on territories that had been annexed to Poland after the war. Dr. Lewandowska used the collective term of “Teutonic castles” to refer to strongholds built and operated by the Teutonic Knights, bishops and the chapter. According to the speaker, regard-

less of the owner and the assigned function, most castles were built in a similar style, therefore the identification of strongholds administered by the Order, the bishop or the chapter proves to be difficult today owing to their architectural similarity. The author also noted that the present condition of Teutonic strongholds largely reflects their fate before World War II.

The discussion was opened by Romuald Odoj, retired director of the Museum of the Battle of Grunwald in Stębark, who spoke of outdoor events marking the battle's anniversary in the previous years. He was followed by Professor Janusz Mallek, Doctor Honoris Causa of the UWM in Olsztyn, who thanked the organizers for staging this long-awaited conference. Dr. Bruno Platter also shared a few warm words of tribute for the event's organizers. Dr. Wiesław Łach (UWM in Olsztyn) talked about stereotypes and difficult moments in Polish-German relations. The discussion was closed by Jerzy Laskowski, the administrator of Purda municipality, who thanked all participants for attending the conference and commended the university for its efforts. Dr. Jan Gancewski gave a closing speech thanking the participants, lecturers, guests and all those who had contributed to the conference's success.

Witold Gieszczyński

ACADEMIC CONFERENCE:  
*UNDERGROUND PRESS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC  
OF POLAND, OLSZTYN, 3–5 NOVEMBER 2010*

Political censorship reigned supreme in the People's Republic of Poland, and anti-communist activists initiated measures to break down the authorities' monopoly on information. An underground press system, literally referred to as the second circulation, was born, and independent publications were produced by illegal printing houses. Underground press was a crucial part of illegal printing. According to estimates, more than 5,500 press titles had escaped communist censorship in Poland between 1976 and 1989. This phenomenon continues to spur fascinating research.

A national academic conference entitled *Underground press in the People's Republic of Poland* was held on 3–5 November 2010 in the Library of the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn. The event was organized by the Olsztyn Delegation of the Institute of National Remembrance and the University Library. The conference had an extensive program comprising 27 speeches delivered by historians, political scientists and sociologists representing key academic centers in the country: Warsaw, Łódź, Gdańsk, Toruń, Szczecin, Rzeszów, Bydgoszcz and Olsztyn.