

УДК 94(4) «653»

Impact of the Grunewald Battle Results on the Geopolitical Position of the Moscovia Tsardom

Eduard G. Kolesnik and Michael G. Tarasov*

Siberian Federal University

82/1 Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk, 660041 Russia¹

Received 4.04.2011, received in revised form 11.04.2011, accepted 18.04.2011

In meaning Grunewald Battle for Moscovia Tsardom, their on the international position of Russian State in the process of integration of Russian territories.

The given article is dedicated to the 600-anniversary of the Battle of Grunewald, which was celebrated in 2010. In the given work, we consider the influence of the victory of the join forces of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish Kingdom and regiments of the Golden Horde over the troops of the Teutonic Order in 1410 on the external political position of the Russian State. The authors come to the conclusion that the Grunewald Battle results had negative consequences for the Moscovia Tsardom. To our mind, the defeat of the Teutonic Order resulted in Lithuania's, Poland's and Golden Horde's strengthening and it significantly worsened the external political position of the Moscovia State, and delayed integration of the Russian lands around Moscow for a long period of time, postponed the fall of the Golden Horde's yoke and contributed to the rift of the integral ancient Russ nation. The article also analyses the reasons of formation of the positive estimation of the results of the Grunewald Battle in the native historiography, and considers the points of view of foreign leading historians on the results of the Battle.

Keywords: Foreign policy of the medieval Russian State, the Battle of Grunewald, Muscovite Tsardom, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish Kingdom.

Point of view

In 2010 we celebrated the 600-anniversary of the Battle of Grunewald. Native Historiography has always treated the results of the Grunewald Battle as positive ones. Though, if we consider the results of the Grunewald Battle and their meaning for the Russian State closer, then we start feeling doubtful about fairness of such estimation. It has been used to think that the defeat of the Teutonic Order stopped the expansion to the East, what corresponded to the

geopolitical interests of the Moscow State. In the given article, the authors make an attempt to analyze this settled estimation from a critical point of view and raise a question: how much advantageous was the defeat of the Teutonic Order for Moscovia. There are various points of view of the results the Battle of Grunewald in Native and Foreign Historiography. Considering the results of the Grunewald Battle, the authors come to the conclusion that this event had sooner negative than positive consequences on

* Corresponding author E-mail address: mihell@ngs.ru

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the Moscovia Tsardom from the geopolitical point of view.

There are various opinions concerning the results of the Grunewald Battle in Native and Foreign Historiography.

Taking into consideration drastic consequences of the Battle for the Teutonic Order, German historians estimate the Battle of Grunewald rather objectively (Oehler, 1910; Biskup, 1993). It is generally understandable that Polish historians consider the results of the Battle only in a positive key (Kuczenski, 1955; Nadolski, 1996). In the work «History of Lithuania» by E. Gudavichus, one can also find positive estimation of the results of the Grunewald Battle for Poland and Lithuania with the only difference that, according to the author's point of view, the decisive contribution to the defeat of the Teutonic Order was made by the Lithuanian regiments. Thereat, E. Gudavichus obviously derogates the role of the Russian Holy Flags in the Battle (Gudavichus, 2005). Modern Byelorussian researcher I. Litvin agrees on the whole with his Polish and Lithuanian colleagues in the general estimation of the Grunewald Battle. Thereat, he supports the point of view of E. Gudavichus concerning the decisive contribution of the Lithuanian Holy Banners to the defeat of the German knights, but, in comparison with the theory of Gudavichus, he does not diminish the role of the Russian regiments (Litvin, 2007). Thus, in spite of some discrepancies in estimations of the contribution of the Polish, Lithuanian and Russian troops to the victory, foreign historiography considers the results of the Grunewald Battle to be decidedly positive. We should also mark that certain differences in estimations of the course and the results of the Battle can be traced already in the works of medieval Polish and Lithuanian historians (Dlugosh, 1962).

It is quite an interesting fact that native historians have not paid enough attention to the

Grunewald Battle and its results for Russ. N. M. Karamzin and V.O. Kljuchevsky practically avoided the events of the Battle of Grunewald. S. M. Solovjov just quickly mentioned the Battle (Solovjov, 1993). The Grunewald Battle's significance for Russ is positively estimated by famous Russian historian Michael Klavdievich Ljubavsky (Ljubavsky, 2004). Michael Nickolaevich Tichomirov – a famous specialist in the question of Russian mediaeval times, sticks to the same point of view (Tichomirov, 1999). Modern native historian B. Florya considers the Grunewald Battle to be a result of a complex interaction of Lithuania and Poland, having been caused by the geopolitical situation in Eastern Europe (Florya, 2010).

Example

In 1409, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania launched a war against the Teutonic Order, striving to win back the Samogitian territory, which was populated by the Lithuanians. This way, precisely Lithuania was the initiator of the conflict. Proceeding from this fact, we can place the thesis, concerning the Teutonic Order's desire to launch a war against the Slavic territories in doubt. In the course of the war, Poland was on the side of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and its king Vladislav II Yagellon was a cousin of Vitovt, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. On 15 July, 1410, there was a general battle between the troops of the Teutonic Order and the Polish-Lithuanian forces on the field near by the Grunewald village, in Prussia. The Teutonic regiments were commanded by Ulrich von Jungingen, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, while the combined Polish-Lithuania forces were headed by Vladislav II Yagellon, the Polish King, who was also the commander of the Polish squadrons. The Polish-Lithuanian forces were under the leadership by Vitovt, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. The troops of the

brothers consisted mainly of the population of the Russian lands, having been conquered by Poland and Lithuania. The Polish regiments included not only proper Polish detachments, but also regiments of «the land of Podolsk», «the land of Galitsa», «the land of Peremyshl» and others. (Dlugosh, 1962). 36 out of 40 Lithuanian regiments were regiments of Grodnensk, Polotsk, Orshansk, Vitebsk, Kiev, Pinsk, Brest, Kremenetsk and many others, having been formed on the Russian territories, which had been conquered by Lithuania in XIII – XIV centuries. (Dlugosh, 1962). And the regiments, which had been formed from the citizens of Starodub and Smolensk principalities, completely vanished in this big mass. Tatar detachments under the leadership by Dzhelal-ed-din, the eldest son of Tokhtamysh also participated in the Battle on the side of Poland and Lithuania (Tikhomirov, 1999). Actually, in 1410, the Teutonic Order was opposed by the old Lithuanian-Tatar coalition, which had been already well-known since 1380. Later, the longtime allies fought against the Livonian Order. Moreover, they were enlarged by the Polish Kingdom, and the place of Ryazan was taken by Smolensk and Starodub.

In the course of the Battle, the troops of the Teutonic Order were completely defeated. Thereat, the Smolensk regiments were known to have no small share in the victory of the Polish-Lithuania troops. They withstood the onslaught of the German heavy cavalry, when the main part of the Lithuanian regiments backtracked, being endangered by the Germans (Dlugosh, 1962). The results of the Battle for the Teutonic Order turned out to be catastrophic. Practically all the Masters of the Order were killed, including their Grand Master. A half of 400 – 450 knights perished, and a lot of them were captured. All in all the losses of the Order numbered about 13 000 people (Dlugosh, 1962). Though, the siege of the main residence of the Order – Marienburg castle, was

a failure from the very beginning. The Polish-Lithuanian troops did not manage to win the castle and retracted after a short-term siege. On 1 February, 1411 they signed a peace treaty in the city of Thorn, according to which the Teutonic Order ceded the Samogitian territory to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the Dobzhinsk land and contribution payments to the Polish Kingdom (Dlugosh, 1962). In spite of rather mild conditions of the peace treaty, the strength of the Order was depleted and it never managed to restore its forces and its positions in the region, and this fact is traditionally considered by the native historians as a victory of the peace-loving Slavs over the aggressive Germans. Though, we think that here the only thing is evident, that the defeat of the Order was of big significance for Poland and Lithuania.

But, was the victory of the Polish and Lithuanian people over the Teutonic knights advantageous for the Moscovia state from the geopolitical point of view? Let us consider this complicated question; moreover, modern native historiographers estimate the consequences of the Grunewald Battle exclusively positively.

Since the middle of XIII century, being weakened by the civil discords and the Mongol aggression, Russian territories started to pass under control of the Lithuanian state, which was young, but was quickly gaining powers. Yet, in the middle of XIII century, at the times of the 1st Lithuanian Duke Mindovg, Lithuania gained control over the land of Black Russ and the Polotsk Principality. The capture of the Russian lands by Lithuania was continued also at the times of his successors. Gedimin was a special success – in the first part of XIV century, he managed to win almost all the territory of the modern Byelorussia – the Polotsk, Minsk, Pinsk, Turovsk and Vitebsk Principalities. Smolensk also turned out to be dependent on Lithuania. The next Lithuanian Duke Olgerd captured

already the entire territory of modern Ukraine – the lands of the Chernigov, Novgorod-Seversk, and the Kiev Principalities, and also of Podolia (Lyubavsky, 2004). Olgerd tried to occupy Moscow several times, and it would have meant final establishment of Lithuanian power on all the territories of the Russian lands. Though, marches on Moscow, which were undertaken in 1368, 1370 and 1371, ended with a failure for the Lithuanians. It is quite interesting that squadrons of Smolensk Duke Svyatoslav Ivanovich and Tver Duke Michail Alexandrovich were also in the part of the Lithuanian troops. Besieging Moscow in 1368 и 1370, the Lithuanian troops had to raise the siege also because they were anxious of that, that the Teutonic knights would take an opportunity and inflict a blow on Lithuania while Lithuanian regiments were far away. In 1380, the Tatars, Lithuanians and the natives of Ryazan were ready to unite their forces in order to attack and defeat the Moscovia Tsardom. And again, the threat from the Teutonic Order's side did not allow the Lithuanian troops take part in the Kulikovo Battle on the side of the Golden Horde. It let Moscow Duke Dmitry Ivanivich to conquer the field and made Moscow the only leader in the process of integration of the Russian lands. Nevertheless, the border between Lithuania and Moscovia passed eastwards of Kaluga, and the Lithuanian Dukes still hoped to move it more to the east. The Moscow Dukes, especially Vasily I and Vasily II, had to follow a flexible policy, maneuvering among Lithuania, the Horde, and the Teutonic Order, and trying to neutralize the Lithuanian threat. In 1404, Lithuania fully occupied the Smolensk principedom. In 1406 – 1408 the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Moscovia were in the state of war, because Lithuania strived to capture Novgorod and Pskov. And again, Moscow managed to keep those cities in its sphere of influence only because of dangerous exacerbation of relations

between Lithuania, the Teutonic Order and the Golden Horde.

By the beginning of XV century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a huge, powerful, and aggressive state and it nearly managed to establish full control over all the Russian lands and destroy the Russian statesmanship, being yet young and weak at that very moment. Thus, to the mind of the authors, precisely Lithuania was the archenemy of Moscovia, but not the Golden Horde, which was weakened and sunk into civil discords.

Moscow was vitally interested in weakening of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. And defeat of the Polish-Lithuanian-Horde forces in «the Great War» with the Livonian Order would have let Moscow rapidly strengthen its positions. Thereat, here, we surely do not speak about whatever inter-allied relations or about consideration of some common targets or common interests of the great dukes of Moscovia and the masters of the Teutonic Order. At that very moment, there was simply such a geopolitical situation, within which frames Moscovia and the Teutonic Order had common enemies – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish Kingdom; the same way as Moscow was the common enemy of Lithuania and the Golden Horde.

In this situation, it is impossible to consider participation of the Smolensk regiments in the Battle of Grunewald one-sidedly. In fact, they had to fight on the side of Poland and Lithuania only because Smolensk and Starodub were won at that moment by the Lithuanian state.

The meaning of the Teutonic Order's defeat is used to be connected to the termination of the German expansion to the lands of the Slavs. Though, by the beginning of XV century the Teutonic Order was already not so dangerous for the Slavic states. From the military point of view, the Order did not already have that power, which it had used to have in XIII – XIV centuries,

and which had let it have such aggressive plans in relation to the territories of the Slavs. New correlation of regional powers made the Order to change the policy of expansion for the policy of defense. One of the examples of this fact was that, that right at that time the Order maintained most friendly relations with Czech King Ventseslav, and a significant part of the Czech and Moravian knights took part in the Battle of Grunewald, though, the same we can tell about the Lusatians, Pomorzany, and Kashubians (Dlugosh, 1962). At that time, the border of the Order with the Russian lands had been steady in the course of several decades, while Lithuania was constantly trying to expand its vast territories on the account of the Russian lands again and again and not only on the account of the Russian ones. Here, we should recollect that «the Great War» against the Teutonic Order was started in 1409 and its initiator was precisely Lithuania. Before that period, in 1406 – 1408, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had been in the state of war with Novgorod, Pskov and Moscow, striving to get the Pskov lands. Moreover, since 1396 up to 1404 Lithuania had been striving to capture Smolensk, and finally it achieved its target. As we understand, under the mentioned conditions, the Teutonic Order involuntarily became a geopolitical ally of the Moscovia Tsardom. The old law was in action “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. In comparison with Lithuania, the Teutonic Order was not a serious threat for the Russian lands. As it has been said earlier, the border with the Order had been stabilized yet in the middle of XIII century, and the attempts of the Order to probe into the defenses of Novgorod and Pskov were seldom and inactive, and successfully defeated by the troops of those towns.

And what if the Grunewald Battle had turned out to be a victory of the Teutonic Order, though, we know that history does not have any subjunctive mood? In this case, Lithuania

and Poland would obviously have been much weakened, and the threat from the side of the Livonian Order for those states would have been much more serious. And it would have made them divert their significant forces from fighting Moscow in order to keep the control over the western Russian lands. And in the result of it, at the beginning of XV century, Lithuania could have been in a situation similar to that one, which happened to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at the end of XVIII century. If the Poles and the Lithuanians had lost the Battle of Grunewald, then «the Lithuanian pie» would have been divided among Moscovia, the Teutonic Order and the same and again Poland. We can see an analogy with the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth’s partition among the Russian Empire, Prussia and Austria. If at the beginning of XV century, in the result of spontaneous partition of the territories (a regulated partition was obviously out of the question) Moscow had got the lands, let us say, to the east of Dnepr, Moscow would have much strengthened its military, economical and geopolitical potential. It would have let the people get rid of the Horde’s yoke much earlier and unite the territories of «their grandfathers and fathers» before they witnessed the decay of the integral cultural and ethnical ancient Russian field. The Grunewald victory of Poland and Lithuania made such a variant of events development impossible. In the result of the Grunewald Battle, Moscovia, Russia had to fight a hot long war in the course of five centuries in order to unite the Russian territories, notwithstanding with the fact, that their population had already lost their common Russian identity and considered their former relatives with the increasing animosity. The time, when one could have gathered together the pieces of the ancient Russian nation, which had used to be united, had gone beyond retrieve in the course of those centuries.

Results

What is the reason of the fact, that in the course of centuries the native historiographic tradition has stuck to the point that the Battle of Grunewald positively influenced the position of Moscovia, though its results were drastically unacceptable for it? There are obviously several reasons for that. Firstly, in the basis of such an opinion there is surely a traditional consideration of the Livonian Order as an absolute enemy, not only as a military one, but also a religious enemy, which was striving both with fire and sword to impose Catholicism to Orthodox Russia. For centuries, Novgorod and Pskov were standing against the catholic knights, and their traditional perception of the Teutonic Oder was formed under the influence of the negative attitude of the citizens of those towns. Not the last role in formation of the given tradition was played by the fact that the Oder was opposed by much honored St. Alexander Nevsky. On such a background, Lithuania is perceived as a lesser evil, as far as Orthodox church was maintaining its steady positions in Lithuania for a long time, though in fact, Catholicism was imposed by force to a big number of Russian orthodox people precisely in Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Apparently, in comparison with the Order, formation of the positive attitude towards Lithuania was also influenced by that, that the main part of Russian aristocracy was of Lithuanian origin. The Russian «Gedeminovichis» gave way only to «the Rjurikovichis» by their nobility and status.

In XVI century, negative attitude towards the Teutonic (Livonian) Order was fixed by an exhausting, long-term and unsuccessful (that was the main) Livonian War.

In XIX – XX centuries, anti-German orientation of the native historical science was related to Slavophilic moods, which were widespread at that time, and it did not let objectively estimate the meaning of the Grunewald Battle. Here, not the last role was also played by the anti-authority states of mind, which were typical for the liberal intelligentsia. The ruling dynasty was sooner of German than of Russian origin, which was mainly basing on the conservative Baltic noblesse – the descendants of the Livonian knights. Such a dynasty could be perceived as a traditional enemy of the freedom-loving Slavs, first of all of the Poles, fighting for freedom and independence against «the despotic monarchy».

XX century, with its two hot wars, wherein Russia was fighting against Germany, contributed to the final setting of the stereotype, which could be formulated as follows: «everything German is bad; Germany's enemies are our friends». And as any stereotype, it has been preventing us from objective estimation of the real course of events. Now, it is obvious, that today the time has come to estimate objectively, deliberately and with a cold eye the meaning of the Battle of Grunewald for Russian history. And its 600-th anniversary, which was celebrated in 2010, must become a good motive for that.

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Влияние итогов Грюнвальдской битвы на геополитическое положение Московской Руси

Э.Г. Колесник, М.Г. Тарасов
Сибирский федеральный университет
Россия 660041, Красноярск, пр. Свободный, 82/1

Статья посвящена отмечаемому в 2010 г. 600-летию Грюнвальдской битвы. В работе рассматривается влияние результатов победы соединённых сил Великого княжества Литовского, Польского королевства и отрядов Золотой Орды над войсками Тевтонского Ордена в 1410 г. на внешнеполитическое положение Русского государства. Авторы приходят к выводу о негативных последствиях для Московской Руси итогов Грюнвальдской битвы. По их мнению, поражение Тевтонского Ордена привело к усилению Литвы, Польши и Золотой Орды, что значительно осложнило внешнеполитические позиции Московского государства, значительно задержало объединение русских земель вокруг Москвы, отсрочило падение ордынского ига и способствовало расколу единой древнерусской народности. В статье анализируются причины формирования положительной оценки итогов Грюнвальдской битвы в отечественной историографии, а также рассматриваются взгляды ведущих иностранных историков на результаты сражения.

Ключевые слова: Внешняя политика средневекового Русского государства, Грюнвальдская битва, Московская Русь, Великое княжество Литовское, королевство Польша.
