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THE STATE OF THE TEUTONIC ORDER AS  
A SOCIALIST SOCIETY

*I. INTRODUCTION*

History of the Order of Teutonic Knights in Prussia [German: *Preussen*] (1226-1525) has always been one of the most important and fascinating subjects for Polish medievalists. And yet there seem to be a number of problems with which they were hardly able to cope trying to conceptualize society of the state of Teutonic Knights within a framework apparently inadequate for the purpose. I shall quote here only two examples of such problems. Thus, it looks as if historians found it particularly difficult to account for the state-controlled type of economy characteristic of the Order:

Instead of protecting their subjects' exporting practices and instead of taking care of that their tradesmen should grow rich by getting engaged in overseas trade, the Order not only oppressed their own townspeople by means of a system of protective laws and by prohibiting all exports, but it also took up all kinds of trading itself. Never did historiography try to justify that policy; on the contrary, many a word of harsh criticism was directed against the practices. And one may only agree with the critics; for that kind of policy turned the Order's own subjects into their enemies, hindered any development of the sea trade in the Polish towns and made it extremely difficult for the Order to get along with those who traded along the Baltic coast (Koczy 1936, p. 50).

For whoever would think of German or Scandinavian sovereigns acting as tradesmen just like their own subjects? That could not have happened even in England and was all the more unthinkable in those places where the Hanseatic League might always seek protection of the Emperor against their immediate superiors. It is true that sometimes in Western countries – England may again serve as an example here – the sea might be closed to all imports and exports. Yet in all such cases the step was taken against foreign tradesmen and its purpose was to protect the local trade (Koczy 1936, p. 49).

The phenomenon of immutable Teutonic aggressiveness presents another problem which even the best of historians were traditionally trying to account for by evoking "the German spirit of eternal thirst for conquest":

The Teutonic Order laying the well-planned foundations of their self-dependent state in Prussia joined the German forces in their policy of *Drang nach Osten*, particularly those who moved coastwards along the Baltic Sea towards the mouths of the Vistula, Niemen and Dvina – having left the northern territories of Germany, Lübeck and other towns nearby, as well as the towns on the Elbe and Saale rivers (Zajączkowski 1935, p. 8).

The difficulties with which historians have to cope trying to explain certain trends in the history of the state of the Teutonic Order result most probably from the fact that the social structure of the state was clearly different from those of their neighbors. The fact was noted by the authors of one of the more recent monographic studies of the Teutonic Order:

The legal system in the Teutonic Prussia was quite distinct from that characteristic of estate monarchy which was prevalent at that time in the neighboring countries and which acknowledged to the privileged classes strong political influence (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 285).

Thus, the aim of civil society of the Teutonic order was to reach a class structure similar to that in the estate monarchies of its neighbors:

It was characteristic of the Teutonic state towards its close and during the first half of the fifteenth century that the opposition of its subjects against the authorities was constantly growing in strength; ... knighthood and townspeople were most active and what they primarily aimed at was transforming the state into a class-type state similar to the neighboring monarchies (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 503).

Therefore, if the social structure of the Teutonic state was distinct from a typical class-structure society, and if only the struggle of the subjects could bring about a necessary transformation, then we must face the following two questions: what type of society do we deal with when discussing the state of the Teutonic Order in Prussia? And what are the underlying principles of its evolution? The present paper will be an attempt at answering these two questions.

## II. THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY IN THE TEUTONIC STATE

Non-Marxian historical materialism assumes that there can be found at each of the three levels of the collective life (namely, in politics, economy and culture) a certain class division of roles which is based on the access a given social minority has to the material means of coercion, means of production, and of propaganda.<sup>1</sup> The minority having at its disposal the means listed above may turn into the ruling class. So, at the level of politics, the rulers by controlling the means of coercion will enlarge the sphere of their own influence (their power), restricting thereby the citizens' autonomy. In economy, the class of proprietors having at their disposal means of production is able to increase excessively profits. In the sphere of culture, the class of priests which monopolizes the mass media for propaganda purposes increases its spiritual indoctrination thus reducing the spiritual autonomy of the believers. Thus, we may say that social antagonisms resulting from such an uneven access to the material means (of coercion, production and indoctrination) are of self-generating nature in each of the three spheres of social life. Such antagonisms may only be amplified or weakened by other social divisions existing within other spheres of social life. Furthermore, social divisions themselves may sometimes lead to power concentration so that a given class in order to increase its social power may take the control of, say, both the means of production and coercion, or the means of coercion and indoctrination, and so on.

Thus, non-Marxian historical materialism views society as consisting of classes, membership of which is predetermined by the members' access to the material means. It is assumed that there are societies with separated classes of rulers, proprietors and priests as well as supra-class societies where the three overlap in various ways. Among the latter, one could distinguish totalitarian societies with a double-class of rulers-proprietors, fascist societies with a double-class of rulers-priests and socialist societies with a triple-class of rulers-proprietors-priests.

An answer to the question concerning the type of society the Teutonic community represents clearly depends on finding first what material means were at the disposal of the ruling class within that society. The class consisted of approximately a thousand monks-knights who ruled over half a million subjects. They were unquestionably in control of the means of coercion: "[the Teutonic Knights] organized the armed forces of their state, originally by recruiting their own subjects and later on –

mercenary troops" (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 279). The monks were organized in convents, several of which belonged to a single Komturié. The latter was a basic administrative unit of the state controlled by a Komtur, or a Commander-in-Chief of either a given Convent or a District (Komturié). Komturs wielded power over the military forces of the convent and/or district and thus assumed unquestioned authority over the Komturié: "Particularly powerful were those Komturs who combined the control of the army (their primary task) with the administrative, judicial and fiscal authority in their districts. Almost every single member of the Order worked as a clerk for his Komtur" (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 203). Therefore, as the monks-knights controlled the means of repression, they should be considered as belonging to the political class of rulers.

As for the medieval means of production, we must first of all look at land owners. It turns out that the class of Teutonic rulers owned most of land in their Komturies:

The Teutonic Order had a major share of land property in Prussia. Therefore, the Order was both the sovereign of the state and at the same time the greatest feudal lord of the country owning a huge and relatively compact area of arable land. There are no data available concerning the size and number of the Order's landed estates, but it is safe to assume that in the territory of the colonized Prussia proper the Knights could own two thirds of the area of arable land. In Gdansk Pomerania [German: *Pomerellen*], the Order either conquered or obtained by means of purchasing from lay knights and/or expropriating them up to 50% of arable land previously controlled by the Pomeranian Dukes. ... It owned the least (not more than approximately 40%) in the District of Chelumno [German: *Kulmerland*] where most of arable land was still in the hands of previous owners, that is either bishops or knights. It should be added here that the Teutonic Order was also the owner of most of the extensive woods and frontier deserts in Prussia proper which considerably increased its territorial property (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 300-301).

The Catholic Church was the second biggest landowner in Prussia with almost a third of arable land in its hands. The land was under the control of four bishoprics, namely those of Warmia [German: *Ermeland*], Pomezania, Sambia [*Kelm*] and Chelumno [*Kulm*]. The Catholic dioceses were, however, under strong influence of the Teutonic monastic authorities which made the economic control of the bishop-owned territories by the bishops purely nominal.

The administrators of the bishopric estates, called "voyt" [old German: *Vogt*], were appointed by either the bishop or the Chapter, but even in this particular case the Teutonic authorities tried to enforce upon the Church the principle that only a monk of their Order could be appointed a voyt, thus making the

administrators responsible to the Grand Master of the Order. The bishops of Warmia [Ermeland], (but not the Chapter) were among the first to accept the principle. In that way the Order through its officials had a decisive influence upon the internal affairs of bishops' estates which thus became a part of the unified administrative system of the Teutonic state (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 278).

In addition to the land property of the Order and, mostly nominal, property of the bishops there were also estates owned by individual knights (members of the single class of proprietors) limited geographically to the District of Chelumno [Kulmerland] and Gdansk Pomerania [Pomerellen]. Yet the double-class of rulers-owners gradually tried to limit the knights' rights of property by, for instance, forcing them to seek an approval of the Teutonic administration any time they attempted a legal transaction concerning their estates. The Order also "... reserved for itself the right to build mills and strongholds on the knight's property" (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 209).

The Teutonic Order had a decisive influence upon new forms of manufacture and upon the town economy in general. It founded 93 towns and tried to balance the influence of old pre-Teutonic town centers by setting them against the so-called New Towns. The latter were usually given more restrictive civic rights and were meant to provide economic competition against the pre-Teutonic towns. The dominance of Teutonic authorities was clearly visible in all the towns of the Order-controlled state:

The influence was exerted first of all by the Teutonic officials, particularly the Komturs ... who could and did interfere in all matters pertaining to the election of town authorities, town legislation, and (partly) to administration of justice, they meddled in problems of craft and trade and also in questions concerning the policy of the Hanseatic League. All that imposed harsh restrictions on the internal autonomy of the towns, including the biggest ones, and at the same time offered the Teutonic authorities an opportunity to abuse their power (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 322).

The tampering with internal town affairs went down as deep as the craftsmen's guilds: "The Teutonic Order not only wanted the statutes of various guilds to be presented to its officials for their acceptance, but also controlled the internal relations within the individual guilds and dictated the prices for the particular commodities produced by their members" (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 328).

The Order itself was at the same time directly involved with banking, trading and crafting activities:

During the first half of the fourteenth century at the latest the Order had a ready-made trading apparatus whose aim was to supervise all the transactions

over the huge trading area which included Prussia, northern Poland, Lithuania as well as western European countries, Flanders in particular. The apparatus was headed by two high officials of the Order, one in Marienburg [Polish: *Malbork*] and one in Königsberg [Polish: *Królewiec*, Russian: *Kaliningrad*], who were called Grand Pantlers (or Grand Dispensers; old German: *Schaffer*). The Grand Pantler of Marienburg was mainly responsible for the grain trade ... The Pantlers with the help of lower trade clerks, Commission Merchants and Trade Servants, controlled a vast network of buying and selling agencies. ... Also every single Teutonic stronghold had its own Pantler dealing with the trade at a local level (Biskup and Labuda 1986, pp. 330-331).

The Teutonic Order traded mainly in amber, grain, wood-ash and timber. In the west they were buying the famous Flemish woolen cloth which they sold inside the country. Furthermore, it took steps to monopolize all trade in agriculture; first, by making it obligatory throughout the state for grain producers to sell all their produce to the state buyers, then by licensing the towns to trade in only chosen goods, and finally by blocking the Baltic Sea to all foreign trading ships. Neither did they forget controlling the manufacturing business. Order-dependent handicraftsmen often provided unfair competition to the town craftsmen:

Teutonic officials installed in the settlements growing at the foot of the castles and outside the city walls their own handicrafts commonly known as *botchers* who did not belong to guilds and who offered strong competition to the guild-organized craftsmen in towns. The towns were also hit by the growing cost of services offered in the Order-monopolized workshops, particularly - in mills and fulleries. That could ruin the two trades most common in towns, namely cloth making and brewing. As for the latter, the output of Order-owned breweries had an Order-secured market in village inns which was economically disastrous especially for smaller towns for which beer-making and beer-selling were practically the only source of profit (Biskup 1959, pp. 28-29).

As for the monks' banking activities, the historians claim that: "The Teutonic Order ... was a great financier of the State and ... anyone could turn to it for a loan of money. Nowhere else was the sovereign able to afford that, for the simple reason that the rulers were always short of cash" (Górski 1977, p. 97).

The direct involvement of the Order in economic activities seems to have been something exceptional in Medieval Europe: "At that time never did any state in Europe engage itself in an economic activity of its own; the state usually did own land and salt mines but even that property was mostly leased to individual holders" (Górski 1977, p. 120).

Thus, there should be no doubt that the Teutonic Knights exemplified a double-class of rulers-owners. Furthermore, they managed within their state to subordinate the Catholic clergy completely:

The Order authorities, who were well aware of the influences and importance of the Catholic Church hierarchy already in the second half of the twelfth century decided to establish their own control over individual Prussian bishoprics by means of incorporating their Chapters into the Order. ... They paid particular attention to the election of bishops by the incorporated Chapters, usually "suggesting" the appointment of their own *protégés* (typically, they were the Grand Master's chaplains); they were also interested in the election of new members to the Chapter who were invited to join the Order by becoming monks. The Grand Masters as the Order's superiors insisted on having the right to inspect individual Chapters considering their members, including the bishops, to be the Order's subjects (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 426).

That kind of policy resulted in that

... the Prussian Church hierarchy was completely subordinated to the Teutonic authorities and played a subservient role. From amongst the Prussian clergy were recruited many of the Order's high officials (for instance, the Grand Master's chaplains) and convent's clerks (scribes, local prosecutors) who thus became instrumental in strengthening the Teutonic power. Also the lowest parish clergymen both in towns and in villages were dependent on the Order authorities (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 427).

The Teutonic Order was reluctant to accept other monastic Orders within the boundaries of their State. There lived Dominicans and Franciscans there, but the two Orders came to Prussia at the beginning of the thirteenth century. As for other Orders the Teutonic Order had a decisive influence upon the setting up of new monasteries and orders laying its claims to the right to accept or reject other orders' intentions; similarly, donations to other orders could only be made with the permission of the Teutonic Knights (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 428).

That total subordination of the Catholic Church to the Teutonic authorities prevented in Prussia a rise of such economically and politically independent bishoprics as those in the German Reich and in neighboring Livonia [Livland]. To their own subjects and to the outside world the power of bishops and the Teutonic Knights took the shape of a single unified system. Thus, by subordinating in its state the Catholic Church to the power of the Grand Master and by making the extra-monastic clergy completely subservient to its rule, the Order in fact managed to monopolize the access to the means of spiritual production.

Thus, the monks-knights had at their disposal all the means of coercion, they owned most of the land in the country and the key means of production in towns and were in control of the means of indoctrination. They must therefore be considered the class of triple-rulers, and consequently, society of the Teutonic state seems to have been a socialist society. If so, we must see now whether the internal development of

that society proceeded in conformance with the developmental mechanisms characteristic of socialist societies in general.

### III. THE EVOLUTION OF SOCIETY IN THE TEUTONIC STATE

The theory of socialism in non-Marxian historical materialism adopts a model of political society as its basic model.<sup>2</sup> In its initial version, the model leaves out the possible influence of economy and culture upon the social processes analyzed therein. Furthermore, the model disregards any possible influence of the existing institutions and/or the collective consciousness of the participants of political life upon those processes. Finally, the idealizing assumptions underlying the model — it will be further referred to as the “basic model” — also suggest that the analyzed society acts in isolation which means that the model admits of no explanation of social phenomena by means of external influence upon society. In society simplified in the way presented above there exist only two classes: the class of those who have access to and exercise control over the means of coercion (the class of rulers) and the class of those deprived of the access and the control (the class of citizens). It is in the interest of the rulers to gradually increase to a maximum the sphere of their regulation and, correspondingly, it is in the interest of the citizens to increase the sphere of their autonomy.

Now, let us assume that at the starting point of our analysis of social processes the class peace prevails. The mechanism of political competition makes those rulers who failed to increase to maximum their sphere of influence drop out of the game. The citizens are undergoing the increasing control of their activities. That, in turn, leads to an increase of social resistance which may bring about a revolution (it is called a revolution of the 1st type). The class of citizens may either win or lose the revolution. Let us assume for the time being that the citizens lost.<sup>3</sup> The disappearance of social resistance that follows (social resistance being — within the model accepted — the only factor that may prevent the rulers from resorting to further regulation) results in terror and in general enslavement of the class of citizens (with a margin of those citizens who can never be enslaved). Consequently, in the state of political totalization reigning in social life those spheres of life which are apt to be further controlled (regulated) by the rulers are reduced. The rulers can compete for power growth only by encroaching upon the power spheres of other rulers. A solution to the problem of political over-competitiveness is found in periodic purges which make a clean sweep of the surplus

candidates for power. This way, citizen enslavement turns into the self-enslavement of rulers which, starting at the bottom of power apparatus, gradually reaches the power center.

As a result, the only solution of the phenomenon of political over-competitiveness is by subordinating the resisting enclaves of the class of citizens. What follows is again the growth of alienation and further resistance of those who are not enslaved yet. By consequence, with a spread of rebellious attitudes there comes an outbreak of a revolution of the 2nd type. The revolution is crushed, but this time the rulers — in order to avoid a follow-on — reduce the scope of their control. These concessions made to citizens are at the same time clearly advantageous to the rulers, as they not only set the class free from the power self-enslavement, but also provide themselves with a possibility to compete for new spheres to control. Yet, with a new increase of power regulations, a new revolution (of the 2nd type) breaks out. Every new revolution is more mass one. It forces the rulers to offer still larger concessions and makes it more difficult for them to repress the rebels. Finally, there erupts a revolution so widespread that the authorities instead of starting off with repressions must allow sweeping concessions which reduce the rulers' control merely to safeguarding the class peace.

The above model of the evolution of a political society seems to be working rather well when applied to the history of the Soviet Union whose communist rulers not only refused to acknowledge any influence of independent public opinion, but they also got rid of private property and took control of all material means of production and indoctrination<sup>4,5</sup>.

Let us see now whether the dynamic model of a political society in its cycle (growth of civic alienation — revolution of the first type — enslavement — a series of revolutions of the second type) agrees with the history of the Teutonic society or not.

After they had come to terms with Prince Konrad of Mazovia, the Teutonic Knights settled in 1228 in the District of Chelmino [Kulmerland]. Before the settlement there were approximately 170 000 inhabitants in the Prussian territory. Native Prussians had no state of their own and they were organized into tribes. Free native Prussians formed an overwhelming majority of the population of Prussia; at the two extremes of the social ladder, there were a small group of nobles at one of its ends, and a small group of slaves at the other (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 76). The Teutonic rule undoubtedly reduced the autonomy of the Prussian people — it changed free men into feudal subjects. In the economic sphere, the feudal obligations must have been an extra burden for them, and in the spiritual sphere, they were subjected to enforced Christianization.

In the years 1231-1242 the Teutonic Knights subjected the Prussian tribes living east of the lower reaches of the Vistula river in the territories of Pomezania, Pomezania and Warmia [*Ermeland*] (the names of the districts come from those of the tribes). The rule of the Teutonic Knights resulted in drastic reduction of autonomy of the local tribes and consequently ended in an outbreak of the Prussian insurrection of 1242-49 which spread over the whole Order-occupied territories of Prussia. The uprising was finally crushed and that allowed the Knights to subordinate all the remaining Prussian tribes. In the years 1250-60 they conquered the territories of Natangia, Sambia and Bartia. And again the loss of freedom ended in another uprising of the Prussian population. It started in 1260 and went on for 14 years. With the exception of Pomezania, all Prussian tribes took part in the insurrection, in the initial stage of which almost all major Teutonic towns and strongholds fell into the hands of the insurgents. The strength of the resistance may be evidenced by the fact that only with the external help<sup>6</sup> (our model disregards that factor) of German and — to a lesser degree — Czech knights could the Teutonic troops put down the Prussian rebellion. As the Order's official chronicler puts it: "[the Teutonic Knights] destroyed the tribal districts one by one, razing all settlements to the ground, taking women and children prisoner and murdering all the men who were trying to defend the country."<sup>7</sup> The total loss of life in Prussian tribes equalled (depending on the region) from 20% to 50% of the whole population from before the rising. The south-east of Prussia became almost completely depopulated. And then, in 1283 the Teutonic Order finally managed to complete its conquest of the Prussians, subordinating the territories of Nadrowia, Skalowia and Sudowia.

After the defeat of the uprising, the influence of their subjects upon the Teutonic authorities was minimal. The Knights intervened in all spheres of social life, which was a natural and intended consequence of their enlarging the administrative apparatus to deal with trade, banking and even with the manufacturing of certain basic goods. Competing against their own subjects in towns, the Order succeeded in the 14th century in monopolizing grain trade. To limit social influence of the big towns, which either pre-dated their settlement or grew under their rule, the Teutonic Knights surrounded them with the "New Towns" of their own whose rights were as a rule considerably restricted in comparison to the old ones. Thus, for instance, in the 14th century, there were no less than four town settlements in Gdansk alone (i.e. Main Town, Old Town, New Town and Gdansk-Osiek). Next to Königsberg, there grew in 1300 a New Town and soon after that still another town was founded (Knipawa); close to the old Elbing [Polish: *Elbląg*], there appeared

a New Town in 1347. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in order to subdue the towns still further, the Order usurped the right to the municipal trade taxes paid voluntarily to a common treasury by all the towns belonging to the Hanseatic League.

The intensification of the rulers' regulative activity hit also the knights who had their property in the District of Chelmno [*Kulmerland*] and in Gdansk Pomerellen before the Teutonic Order was granted the former (in 1228) and conquered the latter (in 1308). They were granted their landed estates in conformance with the local Chelmno Law which, among others, allowed daughters to inherit property and made the knight's military service compulsory only within the borders of the country. Polish or Magdeburg locational charters, on the other hand, limited the rights of beneficiaries to male descendants only. In the absence of male heirs land in Prussia became the property of the Order. Furthermore, the Polish and Magdeburg law made it obligatory for the knight to perform territorially and temporarily unlimited military service and additionally requested of him some minor collateral performances. Thus, Polish and Magdeburg locational charters were undoubtedly meant to restrict the autonomy of knighthood more than the Chelmno ones. Therefore, after 1340, the Order started to limit the number of locational charters granted in conformance with the Chelmno law and after 1410 stopped doing that altogether. During the second half of the 14th century, several "variants of the Chelmno law" were used by the Order's officials. Pondering on the criteria of their choice of one rather than some other variant, historiographers are cautious: "probably the most important criterion ... was their [i.e. of the knights — K.B.] readiness to cooperate closely with the Order and its officials" (Maksymilian 1987, p. 151). Making use of the rights which Polish locational charters granted to the founder, the Order managed in the years 1308—1454 to become the owner of over 100 settlements which had been privately owned by the local knights before (Maksymilian 1987, p. 147).

At the end of the 14th century, the most powerful subjects of the Order (i.e. the knighthood of the Chelmno District) set up the so-called Society of Lizards whose aim was to defend the rights of that social group. That was a proof that state-independent social bonds did exist in Prussia. Gradually other social groups joined in. The Prussian Union organized in 1440 grouped in addition to knights also townspeople and rich peasants. In the opinion of historians: "Given the specific [the stress is mine — K.B.] conditions of the monastic state, the Prussian Union was both an embodiment and a representation of the opposition of a majority of the subjects and its aim was to coordinate their common strife" (Biskup and Labuda 1986, pp. 398-9).

An attempt at repressing the unruly subjects brought about an outbreak of the anti-Teutonic uprising of 1454 which started in the southern and western provinces of the state. The insurgents managed to take all major Teutonic castles in the towns of Pomerania even before they were helped by Polish troops. The support of Poland — a factor disregarded within our model — changed the uprising into a long-lasting Polish-Teutonic war. It ended in 1466 with a treaty of Torun [Thorn] under the terms of which Gdansk Pomerania [Pomerellen] and the District of Warmia [Ermeland] were joined to Poland and the Teutonic state was subordinated to the Polish Crown.

A weakening of the Teutonic rule forced the authorities of the Order to grant concessions. They were primarily of an economic nature as the rights of the Order diminished most in that sphere. Thus, first of all, the authorities turned away from the Magdeburg and Polish law they used to prefer and started to grant numerous locational acts on land formerly owned by the Order. The new class of landowners (the nobility) which grew up as a result and which was often granted administrative and judicial privileges as well, soon became an equal partner to the Teutonic administration (Carsten 1954, pp. 112-3). Also the attitude of the monastic hierarchy itself towards land underwent a significant change; many monks of lower administrative rank decided to take Order owned land on lease or security and to consider their spiritual function a source of some extra income only (Biskup and Labuda 1986, p. 456). That way they could become legal landowners (as members of the triple-class, they had always been real owners of that land anyway). The high administrative rank (those close to the Grand Master) were at the same time trying to gather in their hands all the purely political power.

The above is a plausible way of interpreting the social implications of the administrative and military reform of the Order of 1506. It deprived the Komturs of all their power in those two spheres and additionally, by centralizing the judicial authorities, it left them practically nothing to control. The reform gradually turned the Grand Master and his attendants into the center of purely political power and the monks of lower administrative ranks into possessors of purely economic power.

A factor which decidedly speeded up the disruption of socialism in Prussia was the lost war against Poland in the years 1519-21 that ended with a four-year truce. That war — which, as assumed, is a factor disregarded within our model — intensified all the changes going on within the power and ownership structure which made it resemble more and more the structure of a typical class society. Thus, the intensification concerned in the first place the process of monastic land allocation in order to compensate the freeholders for the damage they suffered in the

course of the war. The authorities feared that the class might otherwise be in favor of a fusion with Poland. In 1525, the Cracow treaty confirmed the secularization of Prussia which meant that the Order of the Hospital of Our Lady of the German House in Prussia (that was the official name of the Teutonic Knights) was finally dissolved. It seems that the institutional structure of a monastic order turned out to be dysfunctional for the political power within a class society. The previous monks gave up their monopoly of controlling the means of indoctrination and became members of a single class of either rulers or owners. In that way there grew in Prussia a typical class society with separate classes of rulers, owners and priests. The latter, as a result of the secularization, changed their ideological doctrine from Catholic into Protestant one.

Considering the strong simplifying assumptions of the basic model presupposed here — i.e. disregarding economic and cultural influences as well as institutions and of the collective consciousness of politics, and paying attention neither to society of neighboring states nor to possible influences coming thereof — we think that the pure model of the materialist theory of socialism is a relatively satisfactory approximation to the history of society in the Teutonic state. We can observe therein: the stage of growing civic alienation, the stage of social revolution of the first type, the stage of enslavement and cyclic revolutions of the second type. Yet there are also distinct discrepancies between the Teutonic evolutionary path and its idealized model.<sup>8</sup> I shall list here only the most important deviations:

(1) An unsuccessful revolution of the 1st type is characteristically supposed to bring about social enslavement. In Prussia, however, society included until the end of the fifteenth century the category of "Prussian freemen (or freeholders)".

(2) The basic model assumes there should appear at some period of time a sub-stage of power self-enslavement, a phenomenon totally absent from the history of society in the Teutonic state.

(3) This model also assumes a whole series of revolutions of the second type. Yet the stage of cyclic revolutions was definitely shortened in society of the Teutonic state — as a matter of fact, one revolution was sufficient.

All these deviations from the basic model might probably be accounted for by invoking the interference of those factors which were disregarded within the model. Thus, the persistence of the "Prussian freeman", for instance, could be explained if reference was made to the economic aspect of social processes in Prussia. The origins of the group in question goes back to the treaty of Dzierzgoń concluded in 1249. The treaty granted the right to own, to inherit and to bequest land to all those Prussians who would in return recognize the political power and serve in the armed

forces of the Order. In more general terms, one might put it like that: the Teutonic Knights who acquired all political and economic power were ready, when faced with revolutions of the Prussian subjects, to resign from a certain range of the legal regulation in the economic sphere in order to preserve their political control over society. In that way, they managed to disrupt the insurgents' solidarity and to shorten the uprising. The historian's intuitions in this respect seem correct: "The Knights had been trying to disrupt solidarity of the insurgents widely allocating land among Prussian noblemen whom — by means of that — they either kept loyal or made them take sides with the Order. The Order's activity addressed in particular to the noblemen in Sambia soon brought the expected results and speeded up the Order's re-conquering of the District" (Zajączkowski 1935, p. 26).

Similarly, if we paid more attention in our model to the influence the internal social relations have upon social development, we could account for the absence of power self-enslavement in society of the Teutonic state. Self-enslavement of rulers, as is understood in the materialist theory of power, is that stage in the evolution of a political society in which a particular ruler having won the control over everything there was for him to control, starts encroaching upon the power spheres of other rulers. Yet, given the social isolation assumption accepted within our model, the only solution to the problem of a sudden surplus of rulers is to eliminate some of the candidates for power. If, however, the simplifying assumption is waived there can be found other ways of solving the power over-competitiveness problem — external expansiveness, for instance (cf. Nowak 1988, model VII). Conquest of other societies is a very effective method of finding new and unexpected spheres of legal regulation for the competing rulers. It lets the ruler forget all social territories controlled by other rulers in a given society and increase his power at the expense of the so far autonomic spheres of social life in the neighboring (and conquered) societies. Thus, Teutonic aggressiveness by providing the rulers with those new and unexpected spheres of legal regulation could also be viewed as a blessing in disguise: for the rulers, it removed the threat of self-enslavement, for the rest of society, it weakened the danger of total enslavement.

Finally, with the social isolation assumption ruled out, we could pay due attention to the impact that unsuccessful aggressions had upon society of the Teutonic state in its final stages of development. The lost wars against Poland — a state in which the level of social autonomy was undoubtedly much higher — clearly contributed to the weakening of the rule of the Teutonic Knights. They also might have strengthened the process of formation of independent social bonds within Prussian society

itself, as the representatives of that society often stood as guarantors of the agreements between Poland and the Teutonic Order. Besides, the intervention of Poland in 1454 did conduce to the success of the civic revolution, and the war of 1519-21 clearly speeded up the final fall of the triple-power system in Prussia.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, I would like to test the presented image of the Teutonic rule on the two trends in the history of the Teutonic Order which were mentioned in the *Introduction*, and which were difficult to account for in a more traditional way.

One of them is the state-controlled type of economy characteristic of the state of the Order and resulting, first of all, in lowering the income of the townspeople there. The phenomenon is without a parallel anywhere else in the medieval Europe but, within the suggested approach, it seems quite easy to account for. Thus, economy, like all other spheres of public life, is for the triple-power merely an object serving the purpose of increasing to maximum the scope of their arbitrary regulations. Consequently, all matters pertaining to ownership, ways of manufacturing and trading come to be subordinated to that purpose. So, it seems that economy must automatically become less effective unless profit growth becomes the primary criterion determining the type of economy.

The other difficulty mentioned in the *Introduction* was the phenomenon of abnormal Teutonic aggressiveness which was traditionally explained in terms of the policy of *Drang nach Osten*. Both the terminology and the explanation seem to be related to the idealistic notion of the spirit of the times (or of the epoch) which was fatalistically predetermining the history of humanity. With respect to the Germans, the notion was expected to account for the expansion of the nation by invoking certain apparent regularities of their national character. The theory of *Drang nach Osten* tried to treat as a unified whole such disparate phenomena as, for instance, the campaigns of Charlemagne, the wars of the first German Emperors (Otto I, II, III), the early German settlements in conformance with German locational charters (of Magdeburg, Lübeck and Hamburg), the Teutonic aggressiveness, and even the participation of the absolutist Prussia in the 18th century partitions of Poland (Zientara 1984, pp. 1-2). In the approach proposed here, however, the aggressiveness of the Teutonic Order would not be viewed as a fragment of the self-realization of the spirit of the epoch, but rather as a natural consequence of the evolution of the material political relations inside the society of the

Teutonic state.<sup>9</sup> Actually, in the development of a typical socialist society there may be expected two peaks of aggressiveness (Nowak 1988, model VII). The first one is an attempt at reducing the growth of civic alienation inside one's own society. Thus, by conquering neighboring societies, the rulers obtain more power at the expense of the citizens of other countries. The second peak of aggressiveness comes in the stage of enslavement, and it is a result of an attempt at solving the problem of power over-competitiveness in order to prevent the self-enslavement of the rulers. Thus, the Teutonic wars of the 13th century against the Pomeranian Duke Świętopelk are examples of the aggressiveness of the first type, whereas the expansiveness of the Order after crushing the uprising of the Prussians (namely, the conquests of Gdansk Pomerania and Cuiavia, the campaigns against Lithuania and the colonization of Samogitia, as well as the conquest of Swedish Gotland) could all be quoted as examples of the second wave of aggressiveness.

If that is so, then the communist mass media must have been wrong when back in 1957, on the occasion of presenting the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany with an honorary cloak of the institutional Order of Our Lady of the German House (which survived the secularization of 1525), they accused the Federal Republic of Germany of continuing the policy of Teutonic aggressiveness. For at that time, it was the socialist G.D.R. that was the actual successor of the state of the Teutonic Order.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The theory in question is formed with the help of the method of idealization and gradual concretization. In conformance with the methodology of that kind, theory construction consists in a selection of a set of factors having impact upon a given phenomenon. The set is hypothetically subdivided into main and subsidiary factors. Then, idealizing assumptions are adopted which allow the investigator to disregard the influence of all subsidiary factors upon the investigated phenomenon. In this way a basic model is constructed which is meant to define only the impact of the main factor upon the phenomenon. Thus, the most basic interdependencies are shown between the phenomena investigated. Finally, the idealizing assumptions (disregarding the impact of subsidiary factors) are being gradually waived in the concretization process and attention is paid to the modified interdependencies by including the effects of one or more of the subsidiary factors. Every theory seems to be a complex of models from the highly idealized ones to the more realistic ones. (See Nowak 1977).

<sup>2</sup> The approach in its entirety can be found in: Nowak (1988), model I. Cf. also this issue, pp. 357ff.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Nowak (1988), model I.

<sup>4</sup> If my conjecture here concerning the socialist structure of the society in the Teutonic state is correct, then one could only conclude that the evolution of the societies of the Soviet Union and of the Teutonic state went on in conformance with the same regularities expressible in terms of the basic model. A distinction must be made between regularities of social evolution on the one hand, and manifestations of those regularities, on the other. A direct comparison of the two evolutionary ways would be feasible, if the manifestations of the regularities in the societies of the Soviet and Teutonic states had been similar. Therefore, it is possible to compare directly the evolution of, for instance, the society of contemporary Poland to that of the Soviet Union (taking, naturally, into account the impact of subsidiary factors) but it is impossible to make that kind of comparison between the societies of the Soviet and Teutonic states.

<sup>5</sup> The model of the evolution of the political society as presented here is a materialistic-political model only. Thus, it cannot capture the more subtle phenomena of the institutional or consciousness nature. Cf. Nowak 1988, models II and III.

<sup>6</sup> The campaign of the Teutonic Knights against the Prussian insurgents was supported by Albert, Duke of Brunswick (in 1265), Albrecht, Landgrave of Thuringia (in 1265), Otto III, Margrave of Brandenburg (in 1266), Ottokar II, king of Czech (in the years 1267-1268) and Theodoric, Margrave of Meisen (in 1272).

<sup>7</sup> This fragment of the chronicle of Peter of Duisburg is quoted here after Łowmiański (1947), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> It might be worthwhile to ponder at this point on the role of historical narration in explanatory models. The structure of historical narration seems to be similar to that of an idealizational scientific theory. Two levels can be roughly discovered in any historical narration; namely, the superficial and the essential ones. The superficial level of historical narration tries to give account of all processes and phenomena that happened to take place in a particular period of time. The essential level of historical narration – isolated by means of adopting, either overtly or tacitly, certain theoretical assumptions – makes note of only those processes and phenomena which are thought to determine all other phenomena within the scope the historian's interest. The former presents reality in terms of the most basic rules of the basic model, while the latter aims at a more subtle description of reality making use of the terminological apparatus of the basic model already concretized (in the sense: encompassing the impact subsidiary factors may have upon the basic model). That is why the historical narration presented in our paper does not pretend to describing "everything". We have made no note of – which would seem outrageous to a historian-empiricist – for instance, the paramount importance of the Great War against the Teutonic Knights of 1409-10. Yet, in view of the idealizational method adapted here, our silence can be fully justified. The basic model simply assumes that the investigated society is analyzed in total isolation. Therefore, the historical narration, at least at its level which describes reality in terms of the basic model must also disregard the influence (in this case, an unsuccessful war campaign) that the societies of neighboring countries might have upon the evolution of the society in the Teutonic state. See Nowakowa (1990), pp. 31-40.

<sup>9</sup> On the impact successful aggressions may have upon the evolution of a political society, see Nowak (1988), model VII.

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*Discussions*

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SOCIAL SYSTEM, RATIONALITY  
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