

The Forgotten Crusaders

*Poland and the Crusader Movement in
the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*



By
Mikołaj Gładysz



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The Forgotten Crusaders

The Northern World

North Europe and the Baltic *c.* 400–1700 A.D.
Peoples, Economies and Cultures

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

This book has been translated from a work which was the fruit of research carried out in 1994–2000 during my studies, first as an undergraduate and then as a doctoral student, in the Institute of History at the University of Gdańsk. The Polish version appeared in print in 2002. Six years later, mainly as a result of the interest expressed by Professor Piotr Górecki of the University of California and of financial support from the Foundation for Polish Science, work began on the present translation.

Over ten years have passed since the end of the research which produced the results presented here, and it therefore needs to be said that to a large extent the text of the *The Forgotten Crusaders* reflects the state of research, on the range of topics considered, in about the year 2000. This has been supplemented here only by a few additions of later works to the bibliography. Many topics which the book touches upon have been considered in later publications, but—as far as the author is aware—none of these works has required a serious revision of the conclusions presented in this book. Things would perhaps have been different if the Polish version of *The Forgotten Crusaders* had met with a more lively reception. While it is true there were a couple of reviews, it did not provoke a wider discussion, nor did it lead to increased interest in the subject. The question of Polish involvement in the crusading movement remains a topic of marginal significance for Polish medieval studies.

This is all the more reason then for the subject of the book to appear even more exotic to the foreign reader, even to one who is familiar with the topic of the Crusades. What can the analysis of the involvement of a country lying on the peripheries of Latin Europe, far from the main centres of the crusading movement, offer to our knowledge of the crusading expeditions?

The answer to that question directly depends on the perspective from which we look at the history of the Crusades. If we narrow our field of interest to the struggle of European knights for the Holy Land and the history of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, then the effect of investigations into Polish participation in the Crusades is limited to the discussion of a few poorly-documented episodes. If however we take an interest also in the organisation of the campaign of preaching of the Cross and the collection of resources for the support of the Crusades by the Church, an analysis

of the place of Poland in these phenomena may be cognitively valuable. The further widening of the scope of enquiry, to consider the application of the motifs of crusading against Poland's pagan neighbours, local heretics or political opponents of the Church provides even more conclusions which may interest the international reader. Finally, the wider context of the Crusades, looking at the influence of the crusading ideology on different areas of life in medieval Poland—one of the countries of 'young Europe' (to use J. Kłoczowski's term)—would form an interesting contribution to our knowledge of European culture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. *Forgotten Crusaders*, being an attempt to take a wider look at the relationships between Poland and the crusading movement, therefore has the potential to make a contribution to the state of our knowledge of medieval history as a whole.

Another feature of the book ought to be pointed out to the foreign reader; this concerns the research methodology adopted, which has had a decisive effect on the form of the narrative. The work considers a period in Poland's history which is very poorly reflected in the written sources. This means that a significant portion of the discussion necessarily has more the character of a hypothetical reconstruction of events, created on the basis of analysing the fragmentarily preserved information. The reader must therefore be prepared for detailed discussions of the contents of single documents, sentences or even phrases, the laborious determination of chronological facts or the identification of individuals, and sometimes—when the state of the sources gives too few indications—the discussion of parallel alternative hypotheses. It cannot be denied that this method, similar to the gathering of circumstantial evidence in criminal investigations, makes *The Forgotten Crusaders* a work which in places is not easy to read, and requires familiarity with the scientific methodology of the medievalist. At the same time, however, it allows a full view of the manner in which the reasoning is constructed, and thus facilitates the evaluation of the conclusions presented. I hope that among the readers of this English version will be researchers ready to enter into a discussion of these conclusions.

Finally, this book is based on a doctoral thesis defended in December 2000 in the Institute of History at the University of Gdańsk. The author would like to thank all those who, through their comments, their help in identifying sources and the giving of their time to discussing the work and facilitating access to their own libraries, greatly aided in the completion of this study. Thanks are due especially to the founder, now no longer

with us, of the Gdańsk medieval school, Professor Dr. hab. Jan Powierski, without whose good will this work would never have been undertaken. Special thanks are also due to Dr. hab. Wiesław Długokęcki, who took over the promotion of the work after the death of Professor Powierski, and to whom its completion owes a great deal.

Mikołaj Gładysz
Gdańsk, June, 2010