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Mobilisation of the European Periphery against the Mongols

Innocent IV's All-European Policy in its

Baltic Context - A Recantation

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The scène

In an earlier contribution to the *Culture Clash or Compromise* (CCC) project, entitled 'Collaboration and Confrontation between East and West on the Baltic Rim as result of the Baltic Crusade' I related how, according to the Novgorod Chronicles, newly arrived crusaders, together with the Sword Brothers, allied themselves with the Russian-Orthodox Pskovites before they went on to their crushing defeat at the hands of the Lithuanians at Saule in September 1236. I then made the claim that This was the last time where Russians and crusaders collaborated on a larger scale. With the entry of the Teutonic Order on the scène after the battle at Saule the previous potential allies, Novgorod and Pskov, became themselves potential victims of the crusading movement'.¹

The reasons for my claim were twofold. First it has been the almost universally accepted opinion that Aleksandr Nevskii, the Russian prince who was to be the dominating figure in Russia's affairs, both internal and external, from the 1240s until his death in 1263, was a staunch defender of the Orthodox Church against the papally sponsored crusading movement of the Catholic Church right from the time of his first

appearance on the political scène as prince of Novgorod at the tender âge of twenty. Secondly, Pope Gregory IX, who was pope from 1227 and died in August 1241, deliberately advocated a policy of confrontation by the newly established Catholic powers in the Baltic région with the Orthodox Russians in the neighbouring Russian principalities. As early as 1232 the Pope had written to the bishop of Semigallia forbidding the Catholic powers in the région to conclude peace or armistice with the pagans and Russians.² Then, in November 1234, Pope Gregory laid the ideological foundation for this policy when he summoned the Sword Brothers, the archbishop of Riga and other leading ecclesiastics in Livonia to Rome to answer a number of charges. Among these was precisely the allégation that they had allied themselves with the 'heretic Russians' (*Rutenos hereticos*)? By pinning such a label on the Russians, the Pope singled them out as potential targets of future crusades.

It was a policy in which the Pope sought to involve all the Scandinavian countries. First of all he wanted once more to engage the Danish king who, after he had had to ransom himself from his kidnappers in 1223-25, had lost most of his Baltic possessions and, with them, his influence. Having repeatedly attempted to persuade first the

Sword Brothers, then the Teutonic Order, to hand over the former Danish possessions in Estonia to the king of Denmark, Pope Gregory finally, through the good offices of his legate, William of Modena, managed to get the Order to relinquish the three northernmost Estonian provinces to the king in the Treaty of Stensby on 7 June 1238⁴ A year before, in a papal bull of December 1237, Pope Gregory had urged the Swedes to continue their expansion towards the East with a crusade in Finland against the Tavastians,⁵ probably as a preliminary to their further crusade against the Russians in 1240. In 1241 the Pope even attempted to involve distant Norway in the fight against the Orthodox Russians. At least he permitted King Håkon to commute the vow he had made to go on a crusade to the Holy Land, provided he instead directed a crusade against his pagan neighbours.⁶ For this to make sense, these pagan neighbours can only have been Russian-allied Karelians in the North.

After these preliminaries the scene was set for an all-out fight with Novgorod. The result was the two famous battles with the Novgorodians and their young prince, Aleksandr Iaroslavich. First, in July 1240, the Swedish crusaders with their Finnish and, according to Aleksandr's biography, Norwegian allies were routed in the Battle on the Neva, the battle that earned Aleksandr the cognomen Nevskii.⁷ Then, in April 1242, the combined forces of the Danish king and the Teutonic Order suffered their ignominious defeat in the Battle on the Ice of Lake Peipus, after the two western allies had managed a year before to conquer first Izborsk and then, by treason, Pskov, thereby threatening the very existence of Novgorod.⁸

Re-assessing papal policy

These disasters of the Catholic armies would alone suggest the need for a change of papal policy. Another factor that worked in the same direction was the Mongol onslaught on Europe. When the Battle on the Neva took place, the Russian principalities were so far the only European victims of the Mongols. But by 1242 Catholic Europe had also been severely hit and had been utterly unable to cope with the onslaught. Only the voluntary withdrawal of the Mongol armies early in 1242 seemed to have saved Europe.

After Pope Gregory had died in August 1241 and the first successor elected, Celestine IV, only managed to stay alive a few weeks, there was an interregnum of almost two years before the election of Innocent IV took place at the end of June 1243. Only then was it possible for the papacy to formulate a co-ordinated policy in which the sudden appearance of the Mongols was also a factor.

On the surface, two Unes seemed open to the Pope. To maintain the traditional policy by pressing on against the Russians in the Baltic, exploiting the weakening of the Russian principalities which the Mongol attack had caused, and, perhaps, in a similar manner exposing the Muslims in the Levant to a corresponding two-front war by forming some kind of alliance with the Mongols. This does not seem to have been a policy Pope Innocent actually thought possible or desirable. At least, as early as August 1243, few weeks after he had started his pontificate, he sent a letter to the Norwegian archbishop to the effect that Earl Knut could be freed from his vow to go on a crusade to the Holy Land,

if instead he gave support to the Hungarians against the Mongols.⁹

Sounding out the Mongols

Nevertheless, at the Council of Lyons in 1245 it was decided at least to sound out the possibility of, on the one hand, converting the Mongols to Christianity and, on the other, inducing them to enter into an alliance against the traditional enemies of Christianity in the Holy Land. Here the newly formed mendicant orders proved to be invaluable tools in the papal system of communication. Over the next few decades a number of Franciscans and Dominicans travelled to some of the new Mongol centres.

Most important at this stage was undoubtedly the mission to Kara-Korum which the Franciscan Johannes de Piano Carpini undertook in 1245, accompanied by a Polish friar, Benedict. It was probably the information he brought back that formed papal policy as regards both the Mongols and crusading policy in the Baltic region.¹⁰ First of all, Pope Innocent once and for all gave up the thought of forming an alliance with the Mongols; instead he seems to have realised that they constituted the main danger to Christianity. "From now on Pope Innocent endeavoured for the rest of his papacy to form an all-European alliance against the Mongols, which, judging from the letter to the Norwegian archbishop, had apparently already been on his mind when he started his pontificate.

At Kara-Korum Carpini had also met Iaroslav Vsevolodich, father of Aleksandr Nevskii and the Russian prince who emerged as senior after the decimation of the

Riurikid dynasty during the Mongol onslaught. Iaroslav was himself killed soon after the meeting with Carpini, but had before that indicated his willingness to consider entering into a union with the Catholic Church.¹²

Carpini was back in 1247 and could inform the Pope both of Iaroslav's acceptance of church union, but also that he had later been killed.

Both on his way to the Mongols and on his way back Carpini had also met other Russian princes who had survived the Mongol attacks. First, in Poland, he met Vasilko, brother of the most powerful of the West Russian princes, Daniil Romanovich of Galich-Volynia, a principality that by now had closer links with Hungary and Poland than with the other Russian principalities.¹³ To Vasilko Carpini had, it seems, proposed on behalf of the Pope that the Russians should enter into a church union with the papacy. Since Daniil was at the time visiting Khan Batu, a decision on the proposal had to await Daniil's return. But while Carpini was staying with the Mongols Daniil had met with representatives of the Russian Church in his principality to discuss the proposal and by the time of his return he had, according to Carpini, accepted.¹⁴

The Aleksandr Nevskii we thought we knew

In January 1248, acting on this, Pope Innocent circulated a number of interrelated letters to rulers in Eastern Europe.¹⁵ Among the recipients were also Russian princes. Thus Daniil and his brother Vasilko, both addressed as kings of Russia (*Régi Rusciæ Illustri*), each received one. Here the Pope

urged them, on the one hand, to explore whether the Mongols planned an attack on Christianity and, if so, to inform the master of the Teutonic Order in Prussia. On the other hand the Pope urged Daniil and his brother to unite in the defence against the Mongols and, by putting themselves under papal protection, to enter into a church union with Rome.¹⁶

A similar letter, dated 22 January 1248, was sent with the same emissaries to Iaroslav's son, Aleksandr Nevskii, urging him too to be on the look out for signs of a Mongolian attack and likewise to inform the Teutonic master. This letter, in contrast to the letters to Daniil and Vasilko, was addressed to Aleksandr as 'the Noble man, Duke of Suzdal' (*Nobili viro Alexandre Duci Susdaliensi*). In the letter Pope Innocent recalled the talk Carpini had had with his father concerning the latter's willingness to return to obedience to the Roman Church. Now the Pope recommended that Aleksandr, as his father's legitimate heir,¹⁷ should likewise put himself under the protection of the Pope and accept the teaching of the Roman Church.¹⁸

Finally, a letter was sent to the master of the Teutonic Order, with copies of the letters to the Russian princes. Here the Pope requested the master to forward any information he might receive from the Russian princes to the Papal See, where co-ordinated initiatives would then be taken.¹⁹

It is well known in historical literature that Daniil agreed to submit to and unite with the Roman Church and that he also, as we shall see, later received a royal crown from the Pope, as a sign of this.²⁰ In the context of the Russian principalities and the Russian Church in general, this acceptance is of minor importance, because Galich-

Volynia was already more closely linked to Central Europe than to the new Russian centres in the north-east, Vladimir-Suzdal'. In that respect an acceptance by Aleksandr Nevskii would carry much greater weight. Scholars have, however, been reasonably sure that they knew that Aleksandr Nevskii had scornfully rejected the proposal. This we have learned from the Life of Aleksandr that was written soon after his death in 1263. Here it is said that an embassy arrived from Rome, for which the Pope had selected from among his 'twelve cardinals' the two most cunning, Gald and Gemont. These had brought a letter from the Pope, in which he urged Aleksandr to obey the teachings the two cardinals were prepared to give him. Having sought counsel from his advisers, Aleksandr rhetorically and vigorously expounds the teachings of the Church from the Flood to the Seventh Council, i.e. the last ecumenical council in 787. This he finishes by proudly declaring 'all this I know well and by you I will not be taught'.²¹ Taking into account the confrontation Aleksandr had had with the Catholic Church and its crusading movement in the early 1240s, this answer, despite its origin in hagiographic eloquence, has been perceived as consistent with an anti-western attitude that Aleksandr is believed to have acquired during these early confrontations. Therefore it has been almost universally believed - also by the present author - that Aleksandr had indeed rejected Pope Innocent's overture.²²

The real Aleksandr Nevskii we did not know

With very few and generally unobserved exceptions it has, however, gone unnoticed by scholars in the field of Russian studies that there was a second letter from Pope Innocent to Aleksandr. A letter he dated 15 September 1248, nine months after the first. The main reason why this second letter has been unknown to scholars, despite the fact that it has been published at least twice, is that the Vatican Register containing Pope Innocent's above-mentioned letters finishes at the end of May 1248. Letters dated later than May 1248 and all the letters from 1249 were entered in the following register. This register has for some reason, at least since the eighteenth century, been located in France, where it is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale.²³ That meant that when in the 1830s A.I. Turgenyev prepared his edition of Latin documents concerning Russian history, *Historica Russiae Monimenta*, and had the relevant documents in the Vatican Archive copied, the September letter to Aleksandr Nevskii was not among them. And few scholars concerned with Russian history suspected that further relevant documents existed. There are, however, traces of the existence of the September letter in the various eighteenth-century indices in the Vatican Archive. That is how the present author became aware of it, having at first suspected a mistake in the dating of the January letter (of which Turgenyev in fact made numerous copies). It soon turned out, however, that the second letter, dated in September, really did exist.²⁴

This time Pope Innocent addressed Aleksandr not as 'Noble man, Duke of Suzdal' but as 'illustrious king of Novgorod'

(*Alexandre Illustri Régi Novgardiae*). In the letter the Pope first congratulated Aleksandr on returning to the (Roman) Church. Further he asked him to allow a Latin cathedral church to be built in Pskov: consequently, it was foreseen that while an Orthodox archbishop resided in Novgorod a Catholic bishop should reside in Pskov. Finally he recommended that Aleksandr should receive the newly created Archbishop of Prussia, Livonia and Estonia, Albert Suerbeer, who in his capacity as papal legate wished to visit Aleksandr.

Papal letters that form part of an ongoing correspondence usually start by quoting contents of letters received from the person to whom the pope is writing. Therefore there can be no doubt that before writing his September letter Pope Innocent had received a letter or, at least, a message from Aleksandr.²⁵ Just as there can be no doubt, judging from the contents of Pope Innocent's letter, that Aleksandr here had expressed his willingness to accept the church union and, consequently, join the papally sponsored alliance against the Mongols.

Furthermore, it must have been Aleksandr who in answering the January letter chose to do so as 'King (rex) of Novgorod'. That meant that he appeared, not as a prince of the Mongol-controlled Russian principality of Suzdal', but as king of the still independent Novgorod, the only Russian principality entirely to escape conquest by the Mongols. Considering that Daniil Romanovich, who after the withdrawal of the Mongol armies from Central Europe could once more act, for a time at least, as an independent agent, also had accepted the church union and joined the anti-Mongol alliance, that meant that in 1248 the whole of Christian Europe outside

Mongol control had formed an alliance in defence of Christianity against the Mongols. An alliance championed by the papacy. To support the alliance Pope Innocent had, as we can discern from the corpus of letters he circulated at the beginning of 1248, endeavoured to set up a System of communication with a sub-centre in the Baltic with the Master of the Teutonic Order and, presumably, the new papal legate, Archbishop Albert Suerbeer, as focal points. As a complément to this northern sub-centre it seems that Hungary was to play a similar rôle on the southern front. At the time the papacy was in constant contact with the Hungarian king on the question of defence against the Mongols.²⁶

The Russian princes and the papal alliance

With knowledge of this second letter from Pope Innocent and its wider implications, some events in Russia during the next two or three years, which the traditional interpretation of Aleksandr Nevskii's policy has had difficulty in explaining, suddenly fall into place.

The first event that can be linked to initiatives taken by Russian princes in order to strengthen the alliance concerns Aleksandr's brother, Andrei.

In the winter of 1249/50 Aleksandr and Andrei had visited the Mongol Khan Batu, who had appointed Andrei grand prince of Vladimir, while Aleksandr, apart from still being prince of Novgorod, had received the honourable but fairly unimportant principality of Kiev.²⁷ That meant that Andrei in principle had been appointed senior prince in Russia. Without knowledge

of Aleksandr's acceptance of the alliance, scholars, who have been inclined to assume a conflict between the two brothers, have seen the outcome of the visit to the Mongol Khan as the first rupture. The fact that as grand prince Andrei soon after, in 1250, married a daughter of Daniil Romanovich can, however, only be interpreted as indicating that he had decided to join the anti-Mongol alliance with Daniil and Aleksandr.²⁸

Then, in 1251, according to the Saga of Håkon Håkonsson, Aleksandr, once again as king of Novgorod, sent an embassy to the Norwegian King Håkon. Apart from resolving some border problems along the Arctic Coast, the envoys were to ask the King for his daughter in marriage for one of Aleksandr's sons, who could at the time hardly be more than 10 years old.²⁹ As long as it was assumed that Aleksandr was at that time already a stubborn defender of Russia against western intrusions, this overture on Aleksandr's part has been puzzling indeed. Especially when it is taken into consideration that there had been no dynastic links between the Riurikid dynasty and the Scandinavian royal houses for almost a hundred years. The marriage proposal, however, came to nothing. According to the Saga, the Norwegian king refused precisely because he was worried by the Mongol threat.³⁰ Aleksandr's attempt once more to link up with a western, Catholic, dynasty is, however, the best confirmation we can wish for of the fact that Aleksandr did indeed join the papal alliance and that, at the time, he made a determined effort to strengthen it.

Europe's 'last' pagan prince joins the alliance

In 1251 Pope Innocent could record a further success when the last major pagan ruler in Europe, the Lithuanian Prince Mindaugas, accepted baptism from Rome. The circumstances that led to this are not entirely clear. Apart from a number of bulls from the Pope to Mindaugas and other authorities in the région concerning Mindaugas' previous décision to convert to Christianity, ail dated 15 July 1251,³¹ two narrative sources offer slightly divergent accounts of the event. They are the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle³² and the Russian Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle.³³ According to the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle it is Mindaugas who takes the initiative by inviting the Livonian master, Andréas of Stierland, to visit him. During the visit Master Andréas advises Mindaugas to adopt the Christian faith. Immediately upon Mindaugas' acceptance, Andréas sends his envoys to Pope Innocent, who with joy empowers Andréas to confer a royal crown on Mindaugas. The author ends this section by reporting how Master Andréas has been taken ill and has to resign his office.³⁴ The account in the Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle has some similarity to the Livonian Chronicle, but présente a more complex picture. Hère the process starts when Mindaugas expels a number of his relatives, who go into exile in Galich-Volynia. Hère Daniil tries to muster support from Poland and the Teutonic Order for one of them, Tautvila, declaring 'now it is time to engage the pagans'. The Teutonic Order promises help and together Daniil and Tautvila visit Riga, where Tautvila is baptised. Only when he is confronted with this alliance does Mindaugas approach the Livonian master, offering him

gold and possessions, if he withdraws from the alliance. This Master Andréas accepts, provided Mindaugas on his part agréés to be baptised. Mindaugas accepts and it is now Mindaugas who approaches the Pope, by whom he is then baptised - insincerely the Russian chronicler claims.³⁵ These intrigues, however, resulted in internai divisions among the Catholics in Livonia. The bishop and provost of the Vironians thus continued to support Tautvila, claiming, according to the Chronicle, that had Master Andréas not changed sides, the Lithuanians would hâve become Christians under Tautvila. This assertion probably reveals that the chronicler already knew about the later pagan reaction. However, as a result of his 'treachery' the Teutonic Order forced Master Andréas to resign.³⁶

There can be little doubt that the Russian account better reflects what really took place than the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle and that there was a definite élément of calculation in Mindaugas' move.³⁷ On the other hand, this was a period when a number of Lithuanian princes genuinely did convert to Christianity. For example, Mindaugas' own son and immédiate successor, Vaisvilkas (Voishelk), founded an Orthodox monastery in Nowogrodek, in which he became a monk, before he decided once more to 'enter the world' in order to put down the pagan uprising after Mindaugas had been murdered in 1263.³⁸ The support Mindaugas expressed for the alliance was later strengthened, when in 1253 he finally received the royal crown from the Pope.

For about 10 years Lithuania became at least formally a Christian state. Despite the original hostility between him and Daniil, Mindaugas nevertheless joined the System of dynastie alliances that was formed to

bolster the solidarity of the papal alliance, when one of Daniil's sons, Shvarn, married one of Mindaugas' daughters.³⁹ According to the relative chronology of the Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle, this happened soon after Daniil, like Mindaugas, had accepted a royal crown from Pope Innocent, presumably in 1254⁴⁰

The alliance breaks down

The conversion of the Lithuanian ruler in 1251 was undoubtedly the culmination of Pope Innocent's attempt to imite Europe and ail Christians in an alliance against the Mongols. But it was to be the last major success of the alliance we know of. It is not possible precisely to pinpoint when the alliance began to break down. But the Norwegian refusai to enter into such a hazardous connection as a marital alliance with Novgorod obviously appeared to the Norwegian king to be may in fact hâve been the first nail in the coffin. The next was hammered in almost immediately after.

In 1251 or 1252 both Aleksandr and Andrei were once more called to the Mongols. Aleksandr went, but this time Andrei refused to go. According to one chronicle he had sought the advice of his men and decided no longer to serve the Mongol khan.⁴¹ As result of this insubordination the Mongols sent a punitive expédition against him. With no help forthcoming from anywhere he lost a battle and decided to flee into Danish-held Estonia. There, at first, he left his queen in Tallinn while proceeding himself to Sweden, presumably to seek help or secure asylum. Then he fetched his wife to Sweden, too.⁴² Andrei's appearance in Sweden is confirmed by the Saga of

Hâkon Hâkonsson. There he is reported to hâve joined Earl Birger at the meeting with King Hâkon at Lindisholmen in 1253, and the Saga explicitly states that Andrei, King of Suzdal', 'had fled from the east before the Tatars'.⁴³

We do not know what Aleksandr Nevskii's attitude to the alliance was after Andrei's defeat and flight. The Mongols, however, must hâve been convinced that Aleksandr had no part in Andrei's uprising, because in the meantime they appointed him to succeed Andrei as grand prince of Vladimir. After that we can point to a number of events which stage by stage must hâve furthered a renewed aliénation between Aleksandr and the West. In 1253 the Teutonic Order once more directed a raid against Pskov, which the Novgorodians were nonetheless able to repulse. They in their turn responded with a counterattack over the River Narova into Danish-held territory, before the parties late in the year renewed the peace.⁴⁴ Soon afterwards Aleksandr and the Novgorodians were once more in conflict with the Swedes. In 1256 the Swedes tried to establish a stronghold on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland east of the River Narova. This too was prevented by Aleksandr and the Novgorodians, and once more they responded with a counterattack into Swedish Tavastia⁴⁵ About this time, perhaps as a preliminary to the attack, the Swedish King Valdemar procured from Pope Innocent's successor, Alexander IV (1254-61), the first crusading bull against the Russians since the time of Gregory IX.⁴⁶ In 1255 Pope Alexander also issued a bull to Mindaugas authorising him to annex Russian lands.⁴⁷ Perhaps these developments convinced the Mongols that they could put their trust in Aleksandr Nevskii, because by 1256 at the

latest he must have been able to persuade the Mongols to let Andrei come back. In both 1257 and 1258 the two brothers travelled together to the Mongols, who did not punish Andrei for his earlier insubordination.⁴⁸ The first event that clearly shows that Aleksandr had at last forsaken the western alliance and had instead settled for the pro-Mongol policy for which he is remembered occurred in the years 1257-59. When Aleksandr left Novgorod in 1256, he left his son, Vasilii, as his deputy. In 1257 the Mongols had decided to raise a tax from everybody in Russia. Therefore they also demanded for the first time that the Novgorodians should pay tax to them. When the rumours of this reached Novgorod, unrest very soon broke out in the population, and when the Mongols arrived accompanied by Aleksandr and Andrei, Vasilii decided to flee from Novgorod to Pskov. This may indicate that he had not expected his father to side with the Mongols. However, Vasilii was brought back and his counsellors severely punished. Then, when the Mongol tax collectors finally arrived in Novgorod in 1259 and started to collect the taxes, violent disturbances broke out, causing the tax collectors to fear for their lives. At this point Aleksandr, who was staying at the princely residence in (Riurikovo) Gorodishche, decided to move into Novgorod together with the tax collectors to protect them while they in their turn forced the Novgorodians to pay the tax.⁴⁹

During Aleksandr's and Andrei's few remaining years there are no signs that either of them confronted the Mongols, although the fact that Aleksandr, on the way back from his last visit to the Mongols, was taken ill and died has given rise to speculation that he was, in fact, poisoned like his father, because he was suspected of plotting

against them. But no firm evidence can be found to support these views.

Even the staunchest supporter of the papal alliance among the Russian princes, Daniil Romanovich, began to have misgivings concerning the value of the alliance, despite his many traditional ties to his Catholic neighbours.⁵⁰ His distrust of the alliance is reflected in the complaint the author of the Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle attributes to him when Pope Innocent (in 1255 according to the Chronicle, but it cannot actually have been later than 1254) sent envoys to him offering him a royal crown. On this occasion Daniil is reported to have answered 'the Tatars never stop their animosity, how can I receive a crown from you, when I do not get any help from you'. Then, when new envoys nevertheless brought the crown, they are reported to have promised: 'there will be help for you from the Pope'. Just the same, only assurances from Polish princes and noblemen present at the ceremony, that they would come to his aid 'against the pagans', persuaded Daniil to accept the royal crown." Daniil's attitude to the alliance during the next years seems to have cooled even more. At least Pope Alexander found it necessary in 1257 to address a bull to Daniil in which he reproached Daniil for having abandoned the Catholic faith.⁵² In any case, like Andrei before him, he had to face the Mongols alone when one of their most able commanders, Burundai, who at the time, presumably in 1259, was targeting the Lithuanians, demanded that Daniil join him. When Daniil hesitated Burundai forced him and Vasilko to demolish their fortified towns, before Daniil decided to flee first to Poland and then to Hungary.⁵³ As a result Daniil had ultimately to accept Mongol supremacy, although Mongol rule

hère proved short-lived as during the next century and a half the Lithuanian princes showed themselves able to expand towards the east and south-east at the cost of the West Russian principalities. But before that happened, even Mindaugas, unaided during Burundai's campaign, had to watch the Mongols overrun his country.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The attempt by Pope Innocent IV to create an all-European alliance that could withstand the threat posed by the Mongols and in the process unite all Christians under Rome and the Pope failed - unless the fact that the Mongols did not seriously threaten Western, Catholic Europe again as they had done in 1241-42 is seen as an effect of the alliance. The alliance did not save the Russians from remaining under Mongol rule for at least a century and a half, and, although Daniil's Galich-Volynia only came under Mongol rule for a short time and Mindaugas' Lithuania never did,⁵⁵ none of them were saved from seeing their countries overrun by Mongol armies without receiving any help from Catholic powers in the West. As a result the Russian Orthodox population of Galich-Volynia remained Russian Orthodox and Mindaugas, together with most of his clan, resumed their pagan faith soon afterwards.⁵⁶

Nevertheless Pope Innocent's initiative had proved that it was still possible in the mid-thirteenth century to obtain a union of the two conflicting denominations of the Christian Church. In the expectation that the Pope would be able to muster sufficient military power behind the alliance, Christians all over Europe were willing to accept

the demand by successive popes that they should rule the Universal Church. But despite his success in establishing a communication network that seems, judging from the information that passed to and fro between the papacy and the eastern periphery of Christendom, to have worked fairly well (although probably never rivalling the communications the Mongols were able to establish), it proved impossible to provide the military complement to this network. Obviously the Pope hoped in the crusading movement to have had an instrument that could produce this necessary military capacity. But all the Pope could positively do in that respect was to order prelates around Europe to preach crusades against the Mongols⁵⁷ and then hope that kings or noblemen would take the cross in sufficient numbers. If that turned out to be the case, it was probably foreseen that the Teutonic Order in the north and the Hungarian king in the south would organise the crusaders as a sufficiently effective military force. However, as time went by and the memory of the horrors of the Mongol intrusion into Central Europe in 1241-42 faded, rulers in the west found other issues closer to home more pressing. We only have to look at Scandinavian kingdoms, where both the Swedish and Norwegian kings became more occupied in securing the hereditary rights to possessions in Denmark of their respective queens⁵⁸ than in fighting distant Mongols. Therefore Aleksandr Nevskii met with a refusal when he tried in 1251 to involve the Norwegians in the dynastic network that was beginning to form as a companion to the papal alliance; therefore his brother Andrei was unable to muster Swedish help when he fled to Sweden after his defeat in 1252 and had instead to return and

submit to the Mongols. At any rate, even at the best of times it must be said that realistically the crusading movement was unlikely ever to be able to compete with the ability of the Mongols to move armies fast over long distances, and to concentrate enough forces to equal them.

In contrast the Mongol threat remained a reality to the Russians and the Lithuanians. The Mongols were there, either in their midst or on their border, and during the thirteenth and most of the fourteenth century, whenever they wished to do so, they were able to send their detachments against more or less defenceless Russians and Lithuanians either to punish insubordination or simply to exact taxes. Soon, therefore, Pope Innocent's all-European alliance lost its attraction to these rulers and their people. Consequently, some ten years after the Pope had made his effort to form the alliance the situation was more or less back to where it was before. To the extent that the Scandinavians and Germans continued to

participate in crusading in the Baltic region, Russians once more became their main target. And the movement towards a Europe divided between East and West could once more accelerate.

It is important, however, to bear in mind that in the middle of the thirteenth century there was a papally led strategy for the unification of all free Christian people, with one of its centres in the Baltic region, that could have stopped and reversed this development. And, from the point of view of Russian history, it is also important to remember that before an Aleksandr Nevskii in the hagiographic tradition and, eventually, the popular imagination became a symbol of Russian defence against, and defiance of the West and the Roman Church, he was himself part of that Roman Church. Only the failure of Pope Innocent's all-European Alliance forced Aleksandr to submit to the Mongols and thereby made it possible for later generations of Russians to turn him into that symbol.

Notes

¹ Lind 2004, p. 124.

² Turgenev no XXVIII.

³ Diplomatarium Danicum 1:6, no. 199.

⁴ Diplomatarium Danicum 1:7, no 9.

⁵ Finlands medeltidsurkunder, no 82.

⁶ Diplomatarium Norvegicum I, no 24.

⁷ Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' 1950, p. 77, pp. 290-294.

⁸ Diplomatarium Danicum 1:7, no 62; Livländische Reimchronik, vss 2065-2280; Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', p. 78, pp. 295-297.

⁹ Diplomatarium Norvegicum no 27.

Carpini later wrote a valuable account of his experiences and the knowledge he collected, which has been preserved in various versions as *Historia Mongolorum*. The most recent edition is to be found Giovanni di Pian di Carpine 1989 in an Italian translation. An anonymous English translation is published in Dawson.

¹ In contrast, the French king, Louis IX, during his crusade to the Holy Land later in the 1240s, still tried to engage the Mongols.

¹² Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, pp. 246-247, p. 319, 323, 331. In his published account Carpini refers repeatedly to his meetings with Iaroslav but not to the particular conversation in which Iaroslav declared his willingness to join the church union, but Pope Innocent quoted Carpini on this in his first letter to Iaroslav's son, Aleksandr, see below.

Both these princes had earlier shown themselves to be potential papal allies. Thus, when Emperor Frederick II, in constant conflict with the papacy, attacked the Austrian Duke Frederick of Babenberg in the 1230s, they supported the Duke (Ipatievskaja Letopis' 1928, cols. 776-777)

¹⁴ Giovanni di Pian di Carpine, pp. 302-303, p. 330.

¹⁵ These can be found entered in the papal registers, which is where papal policy and its changing priorities are best reflected.

¹⁶ Reg. Vat. no 21, f 555r.

In the Russian System of succession Aleksandr was not in the sense the Pope meant his father's heir, and in fact Aleksandr did not succeed his father as senior prince. That post was at first filled by Iaroslav's brother Sviatoslav.

¹⁸ Reg. Vat. no 21, f 555r-v

¹⁹ Reg. Vat. no 21, f.555r.

See e.g. Bol'shakova 1976, pp. 122-129.

²¹ Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', pp. 305-306.

Since, at least until the break up of Soviet power, Russian and Western scholarship have often been marred by sharp discrepancies in how they view almost all periods of Russian history, it has to be emphasised that on this point there has been almost complete agreement. See for instance the special studies on Aleksandr by Walter Leitsch (Leitsch 1978, pp. 202-216), on the one hand, and Vera Matuzova - Valentin Pashuto, on the other (Matuzova & Pashuto 1971, pp. 133-140); and for the two most recent authoritative expositions see Simon Franklin's account in the section on Russia in *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Franklin 1999, pp. 803-804) and Aleksandr Nazarenko's article on Aleksandr Nevskii in *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia* (Nazarenko 2001).²³ In 1810 Napoléon had all the registers moved from Rome to Paris, from where they were returned with great losses in 1817. Innocent IV's register from 1248-49 was not among them, however, because we can see that eighteenth-century officials at the Vatican, who made inventories of the registers, did not know it.

A search for the text of the letter and the reasons why it was not known soon disclosed that it had actually been published at least twice (most recently, to my knowledge, by August Theiner in his *Vetera monumenta Poloniae et Lithuaniae gentiumque finitimarum* (Theiner 1860, p. 46), although in editions that are not readily available to scholars in Russian studies. Therefore it would take an unusual approach to become aware of the letter. In the further investigation of who knew and who did not know the letter, it turned out that a few scholars had actually known and discussed it. Foremost among these were James J. Zatko, presumably of Ukrainian Uniate origin, who in 1957 published a study 'The Union of Suzdal, 1222-1252' (Zatko 1957, pp. 33-52) - for having referred me to that study I am grateful to Fil. lie. Mari Mäki-Petäys, Oulu University. Zatko however flawed his account by making a number of unfounded suppositions in support of the view that the union established by Pope Innocent had in fact already been established in 1222. This led an otherwise susceptible historian like Oscar Halecki to discard the idea and, without noticing the second letter, instead confirm his adherence to the traditional view: 'Les tentatives pontificales de s'entendre avec son prince

f.

le plus éminent, Alexandre Nevsky, devaient rester vaines parce que ce futur saint de l'Eglise orthodoxe, connu par ses exploits contre ses voisins catholiques, Suédois et Allemands de Livonie, considérait l'apaisement des Mongols comme le moindre mal' (Halecki 1965, p. 9). As a curiosity it must be mentioned that Albert M. Ammann, author of perhaps the most quoted (at least in the West) study on Aleksandr Nevskii and his relationship to the papacy, was well aware of the letter but simply refused to believe that a letter of such content could have been sent to Aleksandr Nevskii despite being addressed to 'Alexandro Illustri Régi Nougardias': "An Alexander Newski als Adressaten den päpstlichen Schreibens zu denken, ist also unmöglich" (Ammann 1936, pp. 271-22). Later I discovered that at least one Russian scholar, AA. Gorskii, had by 1995 also become aware of the letter and discussed it in a short article with the meaningful title 'Two "inconvenient" facts in the Biography of Aleksandr Nevskii'. Here Gorskii, accepting the second letter as an indication of a rapprochement with the papacy (his first 'inconvenient' fact, the second being the view held by some that in 1252 Aleksandr betrayed his brother Andrei, cf below, which Gorskii in my view correctly rejects), sees this not as a betrayal by Aleksandr of the Orthodox Church but as the result of a calculating policy on his part. Gorskii, like Zatko, seems to have considered Aleksandr's acceptance of a rapprochement with the papacy to have been an episode which hardly survived 1248. The reason is that he assumes Birger Magnusson's so-called Second Crusade to Tavastia to have taken place in 1249 with the support of the Papal Legate William of Modena. This was, according to Gorskii, an act Aleksandr must have considered unfriendly. Here Gorskii not only accepts a dating of Birger Magnusson's crusade which is hardly tenable (rather the date must be 1238/39) but he is also, like Zatko, unaware of Aleksandr's attempt in 1251 to secure the hand of a Norwegian princess for one of his sons, see below (Gorskii 1995, pp. 64-75).

²⁵ The formula used in the letter 'quia, sicut Venerabili fratre nostra Archiepiscopo Pruscie, apostolice sedis legato, accepimus intimante...' (Theiner 1860, p. 46), might indicate that Aleksandr's letter or message had reached Pope Innocent through Albert Suerbeer. Albert Suerbeer had originally been appointed bishop of Riga in 1229 by the archbishop of Bremen, who had until then appointed all bishops in Riga, but this time the chapter in Riga elected its own

candidate, Nicholas, who eventually received the support of Pope Gregory IX. Instead Albeit had been appointed archbishop of Armagh in Ireland in 1238. When Pope Innocent instituted his new anti-Mongol policy he created a new archbishopric in the Baltic region, the archbishopric of Prussia, Livonia and Estonia, and appointed Albert to that post in 1246 while at the same time making him apostolic legate to the region and to the Russians. Obviously Pope Innocent intended Albert to play a key rôle in the region.

²⁶ Selch Jensen, Villads Jensen & Lind 2001, pp. 11-14.

²⁷ Lavrentievskiaia Letopis' col. 472.

²⁸ Lavrentievskiaia Letopis' col. 472.

²⁹ Hakonar Saga, pp. 266-267.

³⁰ At that time there was great warfare in Novgorod; the Tatars were attacking the realm of the king of Novgorod. And for that sake there was no looking for the wooing which the king of Novgorod had made them ask for', the Saga reads in English translation.

³¹ Turgenev nos. 82-84.

³² The chronicle, written in Middle High German, was completed soon after 1290 and describes the conquest and conversion of Livonia, based on a number of sources, most of which are now lost. It is thought to have been written by a member of the Teutonic Order.

³³ The Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle constitutes the last part of the so-called Ipatievskiaia Chronicle following upon the Taie of Bygone Years (Nestor Chronicle) to 1118 and a Kiev Chronicle 1119-1200, and covers the period 1201-1292. The section covering the period relevant in this context (1246-1261) is thought to have been written by Bishop Ioann of Kholm. While there is no absolute chronological framework in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle, the Ipatievskii MS, based upon which the Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle is published, does contain an annalistic chronological framework. But in this case the annalistic structure has been superimposed on the original text. This is clear both from the fact that some of the sister MSS, most importantly the Khlebnikovskii MS, lack this chronological framework. In stead of 'in the year 1252' etc., they use 'in the same year', 'later', 'at the same time' or nothing. Furthermore, when the chronology of the Ipatievskii MS can be checked, it is often wrong by several years. For instance according to the Ipatievskii MS Aleksandr Nevskii's father, Prince Iaroslav, is said still to rule in Kiev in 1250, although, as mentioned above, we

know he died in 1246. Finally the author of the Chronicle explicitly states in one place that he does not intend to enter exact dates but wishes to let the story unfold by going forward and backward in time (Ipatievskaja Letopis', col. 820).

Livländische Reimchronik, vss 3451-3608.

When writing the chronicle probably already knew of Mindaugas' presumed apostasy. There are, however, sufficient indications that Mindaugas at least for a time seriously wanted to incorporate his country in the European family of Christian nations (Turgenev nos. 82, 83)

Ipatievskaja Letopis', cols. 815-818.

According to the absolute chronology of the Ipatievskii MS these events took place in 1252 (A.M. 6760),

Both the First Novgorod Chronicle and the Galitsko-Volynskaia Chronicle contain detailed accounts of Vaisvilkas' achievements (Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', pp. 84-85; Ipatievskaja Letopis', cols. 830-831, 858-859).

Ipatievskaja Letopis', cols. 830-831.

Ipatievskaja Letopis', cols. 826-827.

Lavrentievskaja Letopis', col. 473.

Lavrentievskaja Letopis', col. 473; Sofijskaia pervaja letopis', p. 327. In the Russian chronicles there is some confusion with regard to Andrei's destiny. This reflects the fact that they were written almost immediately after the event, before further news of Andrei's whereabouts became known, which they were to many chroniclers at least by 1256, when he had already returned to Russia (Lavrentievskaja Letopis', col. 524). The version reflected here is the one found in the First Sofia Chronicle, which on the other hand claims that Andrei was killed in Sweden. In fact Andrei only died a year after his brother Aleksandr in 1264.⁴³ Hakonar Saga, p. 275-276.

Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' p. 80, 307.

Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', p. 81, pp. 308-309.

Sverges traktat, no 106. The Russians are not mentioned as such but since the bull targets 'Karelians

and other pagans' it had also to target Novgorodian territory.

Turgenev no 90.

Lavrentievskaja Letopis', cols. 474-475. Scholars have often expressed the view that there existed a conflict between the two brothers and that Aleksandr tried to profit from Andrei's disaster in 1252. But even the closest reading of the sources fails to produce any evidence of such a conflict. However they did make different choices in 1252, when Andrei openly rebelled against the Mongols while Aleksandr decided to obey the call to travel to them. In fact the only 'evidence' of a conflict is the mistaken assumption that Aleksandr already adhered to a pro-Mongol position prior to Andrei's uprising.

Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', pp. 82-83, 310-311.

Daniil was involved in most of what went on in Central Europe and is several times involved in conflicts with Emperor Frederick II and was in that sense, too, allied with the papacy.

Ipatievskaja Letopis', cols. 826-827.

Turgenev no 95.

Ipatievskaja Letopis', cols 847-849.

Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis', p. 82.

As Lithuania expanded during the following centuries it absorbed not only Daniil's principality but also a number of other smaller West Russian principalities.

To the extent that Lithuanians became Christians before the Lithuanian-Polish union of 1385-86, they became Orthodox Christians, helped by the fact that the expanding Lithuanian principality soon acquired a Russian Orthodox majority population. Furthermore, the one genuine Christian in Mindaugas' clan, his son and, for a short time, successor, Vaisvilkas, introduced Orthodox monasticism and himself became a monk both before and after his brief rule on the Lithuanian throne.

See e.g. Turgenev no 88.

They were both daughters of King Erik Plovpenning, murdered in 1250, and the new king, Erik's brother Kristoffer, tried to deny them these rights.

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