

AGAINST POLAND

A dispute over the succession to the Duchy of Pomerelia embroiled the Order in further conflict at the beginning of the 14th century. The Margraves of Brandenburg had claims to the duchy that they acted upon after the death of King Wenceslaus of Poland in 1306. Duke Władysław I the Elbow-high of Poland also claimed the duchy, based on inheritance from Przemysław II, but he was opposed by some Pomeranians nobles. They requested help from Brandenburg, which subsequently occupied all of Pomerelia except for the citadel of Danzig (Gdańsk) in 1308. Because Władysław was unable to come to the defense of Danzig, the Teutonic Knights, then led by Hochmeister Siegfried von Feuchtwangen, were hired to expel the Brandenburgers.

The Order, under Prussian Landmeister Heinrich von Plötzke, evicted the Brandenburgers from Danzig in September 1308 but then refused to yield the town to the Poles and massacred the town's inhabitants. In the Treaty of Soldin, the Teutonic Order purchased Brandenburg's supposed claim to the castles of Danzig, Schwetz (Świecie), and Dirschau (Tczew) and their hinterlands from the margraves for 10,000 marks on 13 September 1309.[citation needed]

Control of Pomerelia allowed the Order to connect their monastic state with the borders of the Holy Roman Empire. Crusading reinforcements and supplies could travel from the Imperial territory of Hither Pomerania through Pomerelia to Prussia, while Poland's access to the Baltic Sea was blocked. While Poland had mostly been an ally of the knights against the pagan Prussians and Lithuanians, the capture of Pomerelia turned the kingdom into a determined enemy of the Order.^[23]

The capture of Danzig marked a new phase in the history of the Teutonic Knights. The persecution and abolition of the powerful Knights Templar, which began in 1307, worried the Teutonic Knights, but control of Pomerelia allowed them to move their headquarters in 1309 from Venice to Marienburg (Malbork) on the Nogat River, outside the reach of secular powers. The position of Prussian Landmeister was merged with that of the Grand Master. The Pope began investigating misconduct by the knights, but the Order was defended by able jurists. Along with the campaigns against the Lithuanians, the knights faced a vengeful Poland and legal threats from the Papacy.^[24]

The Treaty of Kalisz of 1343 ended open war between the Teutonic Knights and Poland. The Knights relinquished Kuyavia and Dobrzyń Land to Poland, but retained Culmerland and Pomerelia with Danzig.

23.Urban, p. 116

24.Jump up ^ Christiansen, p. 151