

Chapter 6

A Long Relationship Between a Hero and His Enemies: Master Wolter von Plettenberg and the Russians (c. 1500–c. 1700)

Introduction

An enemy can help to create a hero.¹ Heroes need to be set against an opposition, both internal and external. They need enemies to defeat.² We do not have to look far to find contemporary examples. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine helped create a heroic image of President Volodymyr Zelensky, who before the invasion struggled as a national leader.³ Enemies and the hero who fought them develop a close relationship that can last for centuries. As this chapter will show, they can become interdependent.

A painting portrays a man in a white robe with a black cross kneeling, with his hands in prayer in front of the Virgin Mary with Child Jesus and Angels above (Figure 5).⁴ The figure of the Holy Virgin is crushing a demon under her feet. The figure of the praying man is also crushing someone, most likely a bulky man with a beard, wearing a fur hat and holding a sceptre. The person in prayer is Wolter von Plettenberg (c. 1450–1535), the Master of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order. The Plettenberg family originated from Westphalia and resided in the palace of Nordkirchen, where the painting is from, as of the late 17th century.⁵ The bearded man with a fur hat whom he crushed was a Muscovite ruler. We can assume that the artist wanted to portray the Grand Duke of Moscow Ivan III (r. 1462–1505).

1 I am grateful to Madis Maasing and Anti Selart for their poignant comments on this text.

2 Ulrich Bröckling: Postheroische Helden: ein Zeitbild, Berlin 2020, p. 32.

3 Małgorzata Zachara-Szymańska: The Return of the Hero-Leader? Volodymyr Zelensky's International Image and the Global Response to Russia's Invasion of Ukraine, *Leadership* 19 (2023), No. 3, pp. 196–209.

4 In the painting also the coats of arms of the Teutonic Order and Plettenberg family are represented. Juhan Kreem/Tiina-Mall Kreem: Von Livland über Westfalen nach Bayern und zurück. Die Wege der Porträts Wolter von Plettenberg, in: Roman Czaja/Hubert Houben (eds.): Deutscher Ritterorden aus internationaler Perspektive: Festschrift für Udo Arnold zum 80. Geburtstag, Ilmtal-Weinstraße 2020, p. 154.

5 Friederike Scholten: Gutsbesitzer zwischen Repräsentation und Wirtschaftsführung. Das Gut Nordkirchen in Westfalen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert, in: *Virtus. Journal of Nobility Studies* 24 (2017), p. 106.



Figure 5: The painting of Wolter von Plettenberg and Virgin Mary from Schloß Nordkirchen (Westphalia)

The scene depicted in the painting refers to one of the decisive moments in Livonia's pre-modern history, as well as in Wolter von Plettenberg's life and career. It was the battle at Lake Smolino on 13 September, 1502, during which the Livonian army achieved victory over the Muscovite forces. The painting of Nordkirchen, a votive image (*Votivbild*), was most likely commissioned a century after Master Wolter's death. A similar painting is housed in the palace of Hovestadt in the same region.⁶ The two paintings demonstrate a certain tradition of memory that includes remembering not only the victor, but also his defeated enemies—the Russians.

I would argue that the memory of Wolter von Plettenberg and the Russians as enemies are bound together. Master Wolter was remembered even centuries later in the historiography not as the leader of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order who had the longest tenure, but as a commander whose army defeated Russians (Muscovites) at the Battle of Smolino. The memory of the victory at Smolino against the Russians was one of the constructive elements of Wolter von Plettenberg's long-term remembrance and heroic image. The commemoration of the battle and of Master Wolter began right after the battle with the creation of texts, liturgical commemoration, and visual representations.⁷ The construction of Russians as enemies immediately became part of the narrative too, thanks to a propaganda text: the pamphlet *Eynne schonne hysthorye van vunderlyken geschefthen der heren tho Lyflanth myth den Russen unde Tartaren* (A Fine History About the Wonderful Dealings of the Lords of Livonia with the Russians and Tartars), shortened as *Schonne hysthorie* (composed around 1508).⁸ Through texts and images, the memory of the master and the battle quickly became a cultural memory that influenced the commemoration of the event and the man for centuries, with the Russians

6 Kreem/Kreem: Von Livland über Westfalen nach Bayern und zurück, p. 154.

7 Gustavs Streng: Remembering the Dead: Collective Memory and Commemoration in Late Medieval Livonia, Turnhout 2023, pp. 241–242.

8 The only surviving manuscript is in the collection of Uppsala University Library and was copied around 1550: *Eynne schonne hysthorye van vunderlyken geschefthen der heren tho Lyflanth myth den Russen unde Tartaren*, Uppsala University Library (UUB) H 131. I use here a transcript of the manuscript prepared by Matthias Thumser and Juhan Kreem. The text was published by Carl Schirren (ed.): *Eynne Schonne hysthorie van vunderlyken geschefthen der heren tho lyflanth myth den Russen unde tartaren*, in: Archiv für die Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Curlands 8 (1861), pp. 113–265; Matthias Thumser: Antirussische Propaganda in der *Schönen Historie von wunderbaren Geschäften der Herren zu Livland mit den Russen und Tataren*, in: Matthias Thumser (ed.): *Geschichtsschreibung im mittelalterlichen Livland*, Berlin 2011, pp. 133–153.

always in the background.⁹ For example, when choosing Wolter von Plettenberg's bust in 1842 as one of 150 busts and plaques of prominent ›German speaking‹ (*deutscher Zunge*) personalities in Walhalla, the Germanic Hall of Fame, Bavarian king Ludwig I (1786–1868) was motivated by the Master's victory over the Russians.¹⁰ Many historians have also emphasised the role of this victory in building Wolter von Plettenberg's fame, even though the military significance of the battle has been disputed. Leonid Arbusow Jr. wrote in 1935, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Master Wolter's death: »even today one cannot think otherwise than that the victory of 13 September 1502 was the high point of his career, probably suitable to commemorate him again now.«¹¹ Juhan Kreem adds »[t]he Battle of Smolino was most likely responsible for the remarkable authority of the Livonian Master Wolter von Plettenberg in the next decades, and is certainly the cornerstone of his reputation in the historiography as the ›greatest Master of Livonia.«¹² Alexander Baranov summed up the attitudes towards the Master by stating that, after the victory at Smolino, »Wolter von Plettenberg was praised and glorified as a military genius, an ideal ruler and a true knight«.¹³ Though Wolter von Plettenberg was a leader of the Livonian branch for more than thirty years after the famous battle, this event has remained a touchstone in his commemoration, almost always referenced by those writing about him. The Baltic German historiography of the next centuries saw Wolter von Plet-

9 Jan Assmann: Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination, Cambridge 2011; Klaus Graf: Schlachtdenken im Spätmittelalter. Riten und Medien der Präsentation kollektiver Identität, in: Detlef Altenburg (ed.): Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter: Paderborner Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes, Sigmaringen 1991, pp. 63–70; Klaus Graf: Fürstliche Erinnerungskultur. Eine Skizze zum neuen Modell des Gedenkens in Deutschland im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert, in: Chantal Grell/Werner Paravicini/Jürgen Voss (eds.): Les princes et l'histoire du XIV^e au XVIII^e siècle, Bonn 1998, pp. 1–11; Rory Naismith/Máire Ní Mhaonaigh/Elizabeth Ashman Rowe (eds.): Writing Battles: New Perspectives on Warfare and Memory in Medieval Europe, London 2020.

10 Ludwig I. von Bayern: Walhalla's Genossen geschildert durch König Ludwig den Ersten von Bayern, München 1842, p. 140; Kreem/Kreem: Von Livland über Westfalen nach Bayern und zurück, pp. 156–158.

11 Leonid Arbusow jun.: Wolter von Plettenberg. Zum Gedächtnis an seinen Todestag am 28. Februar 1535, in: Baltische Monatshefte 4 (1935), p. 185.

12 Juhan Kreem: Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals: The Mentality of the Teutonic Order in Livonia at the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century, in: Crusades 12 (2013), p. 242.

13 Alexander Baranov: Contra Multitudinem Ruthenorum Armatorum: The Russian-Livonian Battle of Lake Smolino (1502) Reconsidered, in: Michael Eisenberg/Rabea G. Khamisy/Denys Pringle (eds.): The Art of Siege Warfare and Military Architecture from the Classical World to the Middle Ages, Oxford 2021, p. 228.

tenberg as a saviour of Livonia, and the battle as an event that changed the fate of Livonia.¹⁴

It is obvious that the Battle of Smolino on 13 September, 1502, in which Livonian forces fought against Russians, was the cornerstone of Wolter von Plettenberg's reputation, fame, and heroic figuration. This chapter will try to reveal the role his enemies, Russians, played in the formation and development of his heroic figure between 1502 and the late 17th century, focusing attention on historical narratives written in Livonia and outside of it. What role did the Russians play in the memory of Wolter von Plettenberg? How did the Livonian War (1558-1582) influence the narratives on the victory of 1502? How did the depiction of Russians change in Master Wolter's story during political developments of the 16th and 17th centuries?

Russians as enemies: from the 1490s to 1502

No enemies are eternal, even if they seem to be. When did the Russians appear in Livonia as opponents and enemies? In the late Middle Ages, there were several military conflicts between Livonia and Russian principalities, as well as conflicts between the border regions like the bishopric of Tartu (Dorpat) and Pskov.¹⁵ Russians were depicted by the Teutonic Order as stubborn schismatics during its war with Novgorod (1443-1448).¹⁶ However, Russians were not a primordial threat to Livonia in the late Middle Ages. They became a more explicit threat in the very late 15th century, when, as a result of expansion through the conquest of numerous Russian principalities, most notably Novgorod (1478), Muscovy became a direct neighbour of Livonia. The Teutonic Order in Livonia began to discuss the >Russian threat< in the 1480s, when the Livonian branch unsuccessfully waged war on Pskov

14 Norbert Angermann: Livländisch-russische Beziehungen im Mittelalter, in: Norbert Angermann/Ilgvars Misāns (eds.): Wolter von Plettenberg und das mittelalterliche Livland, Lüneburg 2001, p. 130, p. 141.

15 Anti Selart: Ein westfälisch-russischer Krieg von 1443-1448? Bemerkungen zum Krieg des livländischen Deutschen Ordens Gegen Nowgorod, in: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 61 (2012), pp. 247-262; Alexander Baranov: Zwischen Bündnis und Konfrontation. Der livländische Ordensmeister Bernd von der Borch und der Großfürst Ivan III. von Moskau 1471-1483, in: Stephan Flemmig/Norbert Kersken (eds.): Akteure mittelalterlicher Außenpolitik: das Beispiel Ostmitteleuropas, Marburg 2017, p. 139.

16 Madis Maasing: Livonia and Depiction of Russians at Imperial Diets before the Livonian War, in: Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana 29 (2021), No. 1, p. 40.

(1480–81).¹⁷ An open conflict between Livonia and Muscovy erupted in 1494 when two Russian merchants were sentenced to be burned at the stake for sodomy in Tallinn (Reval), but the Grand Duke of Moscow Ivan III closed the Hanseatic *kontor* in Novgorod in response and took many Hanseatic merchants hostage.¹⁸ It seems that for the Livonians—in particular, for the main political and military power in Livonia, the Teutonic Order and its Master Wolter von Plettenberg—the future war seemed inevitable. In 1501, the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order started a war with the Muscovites that initially consisted of raids in the border regions of the enemy territory.¹⁹ Thus the Livonians initiated the war with Muscovy. The main events took place in 1502, when Livonian forces entered Pskovian lands.

The decisive battle of the campaign took place at Lake Smolino on 13 September 1502. The Livonian forces that combined a few thousand Teutonic Knights, mercenaries, and autochthonous peasants (Latvians and Estonians) faced the Muscovite army and their allies, troops that exceeded the number of their opponents several times over.²⁰ The Livonian forces stood under the command of Master Wolter von Plettenberg, and were joined by the archbishop of Riga, Michael Hildebrand, on the battlefield. The size of the opposing forces is still debated by historians, but there were likely armies of several thousand men on each side.²¹ Contemporaries both in Livonia and outside of it, and future generations, considered this battle to be an important victory

17 Klaus Neitmann: Um die Einheit Livlands. Der Griff des Ordensmeisters Bernd von Borch nach dem Erzstift Riga um 1480, in: Hans Rothe (ed.): Deutsche im Nordosten Europas, Köln 1991, pp. 109–137; Anti Selart: Switching the Tracks. Baltic Crusades against Russia in the Fifteenth Century, in: Norman Housley (ed.): The Crusade in the Fifteenth Century. Converging and Competing Cultures, London 2016, p. 95; Marina Bessudnova: The ›Russian threat‹ in the Livonian Order's Documentation from the 80s and Early 90s of the 15th Century, in: *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 17 (2014), No. 1, pp. 144–156; Marina Bessudnova: Specifika i dinamika razvitiya russko-livonskikh protivorečij v poslednej treti XV veka, Lipeck 2016.

18 Anti Selart: Zur Geschichte der Russen in Livland um die Wende des 15. zum 16. Jahrhundert: Der Vorwand zur Schließung des St. Peter-Hofes in Novgorod im Jahre 1494, in: Norbert Angermann (ed.): Städtisches Leben im Baltikum zur Zeit der Hanse, München 2003, pp. 177–210; Marina Bessudnova: Die Schließung des hansischen Kontors in Novgorod im Jahre 1494 im Kontext der Beziehungen des Großfürsten von Moskau zu Maximilian von Habsburg, in: *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 127 (2009), pp. 69–99; Marina Bessudnova: Rossiiia i Livonia v kontse XV veka. Istoki konflikta, Moscow 2015, pp. 281–310.

19 Madis Maasing: Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians in Late Medieval Livonia, in: Cordelia Heß/Jonathan Adams: Fear and Loathing in the North: Jews and Muslims in Medieval Scandinavia and the Baltic Region, Berlin 2015, p. 366.

20 Baranov: *Contra Multitudinem Ruthenorum Armatorum*, pp. 227–232.

21 *ibid.*, pp. 229–230.

over the Russians. However, the outcome of this battle has been disputed by scholars, because the Livonian forces retreated back to Livonia after Smolino. Some historians claim that both sides suffered heavy losses and that the battle was undecided with no evident victor.²² Juhan Kreem points out that after the battle, Livonian forces retreated back to Livonia.²³ Russian contemporary sources had a different interpretation of the battle, claiming that Russian forces won.²⁴ The war ended in 1503 and a fifty-year peace, that in reality was a series of regularly renewed peace treaties (*Beifrieden*), followed between Livonians and Russians, which lasted until 1558.²⁵ Teodors Zeids has highlighted Wolter von Plettenberg's diplomatic skills that resulted in numerous, consecutive peace treaties between Livonia and Muscovy, ensuring a long period of peace, and argues that these skills should be evaluated higher than his military victories.²⁶ The victory at Smolino, most likely seen by contemporaries as provisional, instigated a propaganda campaign by the Teutonic Order that aimed to vilify Russians and attract support from the European rulers. It was a moment that marked the beginning of Wolter von Plettenberg's long-term relationship with the Russians, which is reflected in numerous texts and images, and which will continue beyond his death; Russians appeared in almost every narrative regarding the Master and his ›spectacular‹ victory.

After Smolino: Creating the Image of Wolter von Plettenberg and Russians

The construction of the Russians as an enemy by the Livonians can be traced back to a specific text that was written shortly after the Battle of Smolino. The pamphlet *Schonne hysthorie*, alongside of the description of Livonia's political history between 1491 and 1507, told an emotional story that constructed stereotypes and vilified the opponents, the Russians.²⁷ It was meant to be a propaganda text, a tool of political communication that intended to attract

22 John Fennell: *Ivan the Great of Moscow*, London 1961, p. 255; Iurij Alekseev: *Pohody Russkih Vojsk Pri Ivane III*, Sankt Peterburg 2007, p. 423.

23 Kreem: *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals*, p. 238.

24 Baranov: *Contra Multitudinem Ruthenorum Armatorum*, p. 230.

25 Ruth Kentmann: *Livland im russisch-litauischen Konflikt. Die Grundlegung seiner Neutralitätspolitik. 1494–1514*, in: *Beiträge zur Kunde Estlands* 14 (1928), pp. 85–159.

26 Teodors Zeids: *Wolter von Plettenberg und seine Stellung in der Geschichte Lettlands*, in: Norbert Angermann/Ilgvars Misāns (eds.): *Wolter von Plettenberg und das mittelalterliche Livland*, Lüneburg 2001, p. 23.

27 About *Schonne hysthorye*, see Thumser: *Antirussische Propaganda*, p. 137; Kreem: *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals*, p. 240.

attention, financial resources, and to portray the ›Russian threat‹ as equal to that of the Turks.²⁸ Even just in the description of the geographical location of Livonia, in the first chapter of the book, the author calls the Livonian neighbours »cruel Russians« (*grusamen Russen*).²⁹ As Madis Maasing has put it, *Schonne hysthorie* »depicted Russians as barbaric, evil, and un-Christian; Grand Duke of Moscow as a tyrant and in a secret pact with Tatars and Turks; while the Livonians were portrayed as steadfast protectors of Christendom«³⁰. The pamphlet is full of offensive descriptions of the Russians and religious and ethnic prejudices. It portrayed not only the Russians collectively as enemies and evildoers, but also framed the Muscovite ruler himself as evil; according to the author, he had »a bloodthirsty pride« (*blothgyrygen ouermuth*).³¹

The pamphlet's main audience was not in Livonia, but in the Empire, more precisely in Northern Germany. Though no printed copy of *Schonne hysthorie* has survived, because of the illustrated cover of the manuscript and the way it was copied in the manuscript around 1550, it is believed that the pamphlet was printed around 1508.³² The text of *Schonne hysthorie* was written in Middle Low German and, as Mathias Thumser claims, it was intended in its printed form for a broad public. In particular, it was intended to educated urban upper classes, who had financial resources.³³ As ›an advertising leaflet‹, that used the tools of manipulative propaganda, it was intended to persuade the public to acquire indulgences, and the money was to be used for arms and mercenaries in the expected next war with the Russians.³⁴ The text warned that Russians pose a threat to all neighbours, meaning that more military conflict would be likely.³⁵ Historians are not certain about the success of the

28 Maasing: Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians in Late Medieval Livonia, p. 347.

29 Eynne schonne hysthorye, UUB H 131, folio 3 verso.

30 Norman Housley: Indulgences for Crusading, 1417–1517, in: Swanson, Robert N. (ed.): Promissory Notes on the Treasury of Merits, Leiden 2006, p. 287; Maasing: Livonia and Depiction of Russians at Imperial Diets before the Livonian War, p. 44.

31 Eynne schonne hysthorye, UUB H 131, folio 13 verso.

32 The dating of the manuscript is based on yet unpublished research of Matthias Thumser, which will be published in his and Juhan Kreem's forthcoming edition of *Schonne hysthorie*. Thumser: Antirussische Propaganda, p. 137; Kreem: Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals, p. 240; Leonid Arbusow jun.: Die Beziehungen des Deutschen Ordens zum Ablasshandel seit dem 15. Jahrhundert, Riga 1909, pp. 50–51; Marshall Poe: A People Born to Slavery: Russia in Early Modern European Ethnography, 1476–1748, Ithaca 2000, p. 19.

33 Thumser: Antirussische Propaganda, p. 139.

34 ibid., p. 139.

35 ibid., p. 141.

indulgence campaign. Friedrich Benninghoven claimed that it did not achieve its main aim of attracting military and financial support from the Empire.³⁶ It seems that it had more propaganda influence than financial, though its long-term impact should not be overestimated.³⁷

Schonne hysthorie was most likely written by the priest of the Teutonic Order, Christian Bomhower (d. 1518).³⁸ Bomhower was a burgher's son from Tallinn. In 1500 he became the secretary of the Livonian Master Wolter von Plettenberg. He later served as a cathedral canon in Tartu, Tallinn and Cologne; he studied in Cologne and earned a doctorate in canon and secular law in Siena.³⁹ Yet the key development in his career that made him into a propagandist and creator of a master narrative on the conflict between the Livonians and Russians was his appointment as a commissioner of indulgences after the Livonian and Russian war in 1503.⁴⁰ He was involved in two indulgence campaigns in the Empire: 1503–1506 and 1507–1510.⁴¹ Under the Master's patronage, Christian Bomhower became a bishop of Tartu in 1514.⁴² In this context, it is evident that Bomhower's text was part of the indulgence campaigns.

In short, the pamphlet had the goal of gathering resources necessary for the war with the Muscovites by vilifying Russians and describing the atrocities committed by them during the war.⁴³ The whole *Schonne hysthorie* emphasised that the enemies of Livonia, the Russians, were schismatics and allies of Tatars, yet in the description of the decisive battle, the religious aspect of the war and the victory against the enemies becomes more evident. *Schonne hysthorie* presented the Battle of Smolino as a decisive moment for Livonia,

36 Friedrich Benninghoven: Russland im Spiegel der livländischen Schonnen Hysthorie von 1508, in: Zeitschrift für Ostforschung 11 (1962), p. 625.

37 Selart: Switching the Tracks, p. 100.

38 Henrike Bolte: Bischofserhebungen und geistliche Landesherrschaften im spätmittelalterlichen Livland: Dorpat–Ösel–Kurland, Berlin 2023, pp. 560–566.

39 Thumser: Antirussische Propaganda, p. 135; Bolte: Bischofserhebungen und geistliche Landesherrschaften im spätmittelalterlichen Livland, p. 562.

40 Housley: Indulgences for Crusading, p. 287.

41 Maasing: Livonia and Depiction of Russians at Imperial Diets before the Livonian War, p. 44; Arbusow jun.: Die Beziehungen des Deutschen Ordens zum Ablasshandel seit dem 15. Jahrhundert, p. 23, p. 29, p. 32, p. 35; Stuart Jenks (ed.): Documents on the Papal Plenary Indulgences 1300–1517, Preached in the Regnum Teutonicum, Leiden 2018, pp. 458–501.

42 Bolte: Bischofserhebungen und geistliche Landesherrschaften im spätmittelalterlichen Livland, p. 560, p. 566.

43 Simon Dreher: Gegen die vermalediden ketzer und affgesneden Ruyssen und ungelovigen Tarteren: Bedrohungskommunikation im Rahmen der livländischen Ablasskampagnen (1503–1510), in: Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung 70 (2021), No. 1, p. 3.



Figure 6: The title page of the *Schonne Hysthorie* manuscript

in which the fate of the region and its Christian population was »hanging by a silk thread« (*wo de guden lande unde chrystene tho Lyflanth do an eynen*

*syden vadem gehangen hebben).*⁴⁴ The victory at Smolino was portrayed as »an obvious miracle« (*eyn schynbarlyck myrakel*) that was delivered by God himself and the Virgin Mary, who was a patroness of Livonia and the Teutonic Order.⁴⁵ However, Master Wolter is not described as a hero in the text and there are no descriptions of any features that would demonstrate his charisma, like a speech before the battle or his looks afterwards.

Schonne hysthorie not only created a textual narrative of the Russians as enemies, but also an image, in the form of a hand-drawn image on the cover. The drawing showed a pope in the centre, a cardinal, two bishops with a clergyman to their right, three Russians in kaftans and long hats to the left of the pope standing with their backs to him, and finally a bearded man with a black cross on his mantle kneeling before the pope (Figure 6). In Cologne, the city in which Bomhower had studied, the book *Errores atrocissimorum Ruthenorum* (1507) was printed with a very similar cover image featuring the same protagonists depicted in the woodcut.⁴⁶ It was a version of Polish scholar and clergyman Johannes Sacranus' (Jan z Oświęcimia, 1443–1527) work *Elucidarius errorum ritus Ruthenici* (written c. 1500).⁴⁷ Bomhower was no stranger to Sacranus' work; this work had had an influence on Bomhower's attitudes towards the Orthodox faith, as he labelled it as a heresy. Bomhower referred to Sacranus' book in his own *Schonne hysthorie*.⁴⁸ Remarkably, the

44 UUB H 131, folio 50 verso; Benninghoven: *Rußland im Spiegel der livländischen Schonnen Hysthorie* von 1508, p. 621.

45 UUB H 131, folio 49 recto; Maasing: *Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians in Late Medieval Livonia*, p. 370; Thumser: *Antirussische Propaganda*, p. 150; Kreem: *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals*, p. 243; on Virgin Mary as a patroness of the Teutonic Order and Livonia, see Udo Arnold: *Maria als Patronin des Deutschen Ordens im Mittelalter*, in: Gerhard Eimer (ed.): *Terra sanctae Mariae: mittelalterliche Bildwerke der Marienverehrung im Deutschordensland Preußen*, Bonn 2009, pp. 29–56; Stefan Samerski: *Zwischen Waffengang und caritas. Der Deutsche Orden und seine Heiligen im Mittelalter und in der Frühneuzeit*, in: Lilija Berežnaja (ed.): *Die Militarisierung der Heiligen in Vormoderne und Moderne*, Berlin 2020, pp. 130–139; Anu Mänd/Anti Selart: *Livonia – a Region without Local Saints?*, in: Nils Holger Petersen (ed.): *Symbolic Identity and the Cultural Memory of Saints*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2018, p. 95, p. 118.

46 *Errores atrocissimorum Ruthenorum*, [Köln] [1507] (USTC no. 748672).

47 Sacranus work was printed at first in Cracow around 1504 and the then, most likely, in Cologne in 1510. Johannes Sacranus: *Elucidarius errorum ritus Ruthenici*, Cracow [1504] (USTC no. 768005); Johannes Sacranus, *Elucidarius errorum ritus Ruthenici*, [S.l. 1510]. About Sacranus and his book, see Ulla Birgegård/Monica Hedlund (eds.): *Bergius, Nicolaus: A Historico-Theological Exercise on the Status of the Muscovite Church and Religion*, Stockholm 2019, p. 47, p. 299.

48 Benninghoven: *Rußland im Spiegel der livländischen Schonnen Hysthorie* von 1508, p. 608; Oleg Kudryavtsev: *Russia in the Mirror of Christian Bomhower's Schonnen Hysthorie*,

same work of Sacranus was printed around 1507 in Cracow, and the title page had almost the same motif—cardinals, the pope, and Russian heretics with long hats, yet the figure of the bearded man with a cross on his coat was missing.⁴⁹ The presence of the bearded man with a cross on his coat signifies that the Cologne print of *Errores atrocissimorum Ruthenorum* (Figure 7) was not a coincidence or re-use of an existing image; rather, it represented a member of the Teutonic Order.⁵⁰ In 1507, when *Errores atrocissimorum Ruthenorum* was printed, Bomhower was in Cologne. It is believed that the publication of *Errores atrocissimorum Ruthenorum* was organised by him.⁵¹ The title page may have been created on his initiative and used for two publications he prepared; it is no doubt that the man depicted in the image is none other than Wolter von Plettenberg. The title page also visually demonstrated the confrontation between the Master and Russians, who stood with their backs to the pope.

Thus there were numerous texts produced or distributed by the Livonian branch that literarily characterised and artistically depicted the Russians as the ›other‹ and adversaries. The victor over the Russians, Wolter von Plettenberg, was added in the images of the titlepages of these aforementioned texts. The appearance of the Russians in these images emphasised their ›otherness‹. They wore tall hats, were dressed in kaftans and had tall weird hats, such that they were depicted as Turks.⁵² *Schonne Hysthorie* quite clearly laid out that like Turks, Russians were heathens, not Christians.

It is not clear how much *Schonne hysthorie* reflected the attitudes towards Russians in Livonia, and whether it was a product of political communication aimed at the audiences in the Empire. In the communication with the Emperor, Wolter von Plettenberg made the rhetorical choice to call Russians schismatics and heretics.⁵³ As Madis Maasing has argued, these descriptions of »the gruesome, schismatic, and even infidel Russians« were well received in

in: *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriiia* 6 (2020), p. 55, p. 57; Larisa Mokroborodova: *Quaestio Nostro Saeculo Inusitata: Russkoe Pravoslavie v Tezisach Johannesa Botvidi* ›Christiane Li Moskovity?‹ (1620), Åbo 2013, p. 80.

49 Johannes Sacranus: *Elucidarium errorum ritus Ruthenici*, Cracow [1507?] www.wbc.poznan.pl/dlibra/publication/310221/edition/254450/content (22.7.2024).

50 Arbusow: *Die Beziehungen des Deutschen Ordens zum Ablasshandel seit dem 15. Jahrhundert*, p. 92.

51 Thumser: *Antirussische Propaganda*, p. 135; Arbusow: *Die Beziehungen des Deutschen Ordens zum Ablasshandel seit dem 15. Jahrhundert*, p. 52.

52 Arbusow: *Die Beziehungen des Deutschen Ordens*, p. 92; Poe: *A People Born to Slavery*, p. 19.

53 Maasing: *Livonia and Depiction of Russians at Imperial Diets before the Livonian War*, p. 44.



Figure 7: The title page of *Errores atrocissimorum Ruthenorum* [Köln 1507]

the Holy German Empire and Roman curia.⁵⁴ Yet, was this narrative only an episode that had no future impact on the discourses on Russians in Livonia and outside of it, or did it have a certain continuity? According to Andreas Kappeler the image of Russia created by Bomhower in the *Schonne hysthorie* did not have a further impact.⁵⁵ More recently, however, Russian historian Oleg Kudryavtsev has argued that other Western and Northern European authors in the 16th century used excerpts and ethnic stereotypes from the *Schonne hysthorie* to portray Russians in a negative light.⁵⁶ One can see themes and tropes of the Russian narrative image that were developed later, during the Livonian War (1558–1582), when considerable resources were invested into the hostile evaluation of Russians.⁵⁷

What scholars have thus far overlooked regarding the perception of Russians as enemies is that they were portrayed as such in the liturgical commemoration of the battle at Smolino. Liturgy reached wide audiences within Livonia, namely all those who attended services on the particular feast day, and provided an opportunity to promote an intended narrative. After the victory, the Livonian Diet (*Landtag*) in Walk in 1504 introduced a new feast, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, which was celebrated on September 14, a day after the actual battle date.⁵⁸ The protocol of the Diet stated that the prelates and the Master had fought »with the real enemy and contestor of the Holy Roman Church and [the Christian] faith, the Grand Duke of Moscow and all Livonians« in the commemoration of the battle should »pray and sing« like during Easter.⁵⁹ The victory at Smolino was an event equal in its importance to the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Moreover, commemorative chapels and chantries were founded by the Teutonic Order's Master and his *Gebietiger* to commemorate the victory.⁶⁰ When a Franciscan friary was founded in Rakvere (Wesenberg) in 1506 with the support of the archbishop of Riga

54 Maasing: Infidel Turks and Schismatic Russians in Late Medieval Livonia, p. 347.

55 Andreas Kappeler: Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des westlichen Russlandbildes, Bern 1972, p. 23.

56 Kudryavtsev: Russia in the Mirror of Christian Bomhower's Schonnen Hysthorie, pp. 61–62.

57 Charles J. Halperin: The Double Standard: Livonian Chronicles and Muscovite Barbarity during the Livonian War (1558–1582), in: *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana* 23 (2018), No. 1, pp. 126–147, p. 126.

58 Leonid Arbusow (ed.): *Akten und Rezesse der livländischen Ständetage (1494–1535)*, Vol. 3, Riga 1909, No. 29, p. 116.

59 »[...] mit dem ernstlichen viande unde anfechter der hillgen Romeschen kercken und gelovens, den grotfursten tor Moscow [...]«: Arbusow jun.: *Rezesse*, 3, No. 29, p. 116; Selart: Switching the Tracks, p. 90.

60 Eynne schonne hysthorye, UUB H 131, folio 49 verso.

and the efforts of the Teutonic Order and the Livonian nobility, the friars declared that it was because of a Livonian victory over »very evil Russians, our enemies«⁶¹. The commemoration of the battle and victory was a new practice in Livonian memory culture, because until 1504 the Church of Riga and the Teutonic Order had conflicting and competing memories of the past that reflected and fuelled conflicts, yet the victory at Smolino offered an opportunity to commemorate a common success.⁶²

The new feast and also the battle are commented on in the Riga breviary that was printed in Paris in 1513.⁶³ The introduction of the new feast in the breviary explains the historical context of the battle and places the archbishop of Riga, Michael Hildebrand (1484–1509), as one of the main actors in the battle, in which a few Livonians with divine virtue defeated the Russians, who had a larger army, in a miraculous and unexpected manner.⁶⁴ Master Wolter's name, in contrast to the archbishop's, is omitted in this short historical description. The breviary also reveals how the commemoration of the victory was communicated to the Livonians. It instructs that during the procession of the Eucharist on the feast, *Te Deum* should be sung with added lines that praise God for liberating Livonians from the »Russian power«; in the original chant sung during the Christmas liturgy included »liberated us from the Satan's power« (*nos liberavit de diabolica potestate*) and it definitely was not a coincidence that Russians in Livonian version had replaced Satan:

*Grates nunc omnes / We are grateful all
Reddamus Domino Deo / We are giving back to Lord our God
Qui sua benignitate / Who in his kindness
Nos liberavit / Liberated us
De Ruthenica potestate / From the Russian power.⁶⁵*

It is not known how long the victory over the Russians was commemorated liturgically, but because of the Reformation's rapid success it was not com-

61 »[...] de affsunderden umylden Russen, unse viande«; Leonid Arbusow sen. (ed.): Liv-, est- und kurländisches Urkundenbuch. Vol. 2, 3, Riga 1914, No. 64.

62 Mihkel Mäesalu: Historical Memory as the Cause of Conflict in Medieval Livonia, in: Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. History 64 (2019), No. 3, pp. 1014–1030; Streng: Remembering the Dead, pp. 241–242.

63 Breviarium Rigensis, Paris 1513; the only surviving copy of the breviary is in the collection of the Library of University of Latvia (Latvijas Universitātes bibliotēka) H 2/6, R 2522; Hermann von Bruiningk: Messe und kanonisches Stundengebet nach dem Brauche der Rigaschen Kirche im späteren Mittelalter, Riga 1904, pp. 226–227.

64 *ibid.*, p. 227.

65 *ibid.*, p. 228.

memorated in the whole province after the late 1520s. Still, it may have left some kind of a long-term impact on the society in Livonia.

Wolter von Plettenberg was not a hero during the beginning of the 16th century. He was portrayed as a successful military leader, but Russians and their threat was both real for the Livonian public and this was emphasized in the commemoration. The Russians in the *Schonne hysthorie* were the blood-thirsty enemies, but their international career as enemies, reaching a wide audience in Europe, had not yet really begun. The Livonians thought that the Russians and their ruler, the Grand Duke of Muscovy, was a dangerous enemy of the Christian faith and the Roman church. Their traits as enemies, evil and dangerous, were already in place, their images—with beards, kaftans and strange high hats, as on the title pages of books most likely commissioned by the Teutonic Order—were drawn and carved in wood. They were portrayed as similar to Turks and Tatars, yet it was several decades later that the vilification of Russians in pamphlets and chronicles began with new vigour.

Before the Apocalypse: Russians in the Background of a Charismatic Ruler and Hero

The miraculous victory at Smolino destined Livonia to enjoy the ›fifty years of peace‹, a cliché that has been used by early modern and modern authors. Wolter von Plettenberg was seen as the architect of this period of peace, which continued after his death in 1535.⁶⁶ Soon after his death, a narrative about Wolter von Plettenberg as a charismatic leader was constructed. However, the depictions of Russians in the texts written by the Livonian authors after Master Wolter’s death, but just before the Livonian war, did not further develop the narrative of ›the gruesome, schismatic, and infidel Russians‹ formed by the *Schonne hysthorie*. Until his final days, Master Wolter remained Catholic and did not follow the example of the Grand Master Albrecht (1490–1568), who secularised Prussia in 1525. The Reformation did transform the Teutonic Order in Livonia, and it became a corporation with many Lutheran members.⁶⁷ Yet, the historiography of the branch continued producing texts about the Order’s past. Thomas Horner’s chronicle *Livoniae Historia*, published

66 Angermann: Livländisch-russische Beziehungen im Mittelalter, p. 141.

67 Juhan Kreem: Der Deutsche Orden und die Reformation in Livland, in: Johannes A. Mol / Klaus Militzer/Helen J. Nicholson (eds.): The military orders and the Reformation: choices, state building, and the weight of tradition, Hilversum 2006, pp. 51–52.

in 1551, follows a certain tradition of the Teutonic Order's historiography by writing the chronicle according to the tenures of the Livonian branch's Masters.⁶⁸ Thomas Horner was active during the 1550s as a secretary of the Teutonic Order's officials in Livonia.⁶⁹ His text praises Wolter von Plettenberg as the Master and leader; Horner writes that no Livonian leader can surpass Master Wolter's wisdom and greatness of deeds.⁷⁰ Horner focused his attention on the heroic stature (*plane heroica*) of Wolter von Plettenberg, his exceptionality and his death in old age, while sitting in his chair (*ad coelestem illam sedem euocatus*).⁷¹ Horner emphasised that Wolter von Plettenberg's portrait in the great hall of Cēsis (Wenden) Castle emphasizes not a military ferocity, but some exceptional humanity. After this, however, Horner lists military victories achieved by Master Wolter, beginning with his success in the war with the city of Riga (1491) and then referring to the wars with Russians and the great victory at Smolino. Although in Horner's narrative, the war with the Muscovites is mentioned, there is no deeper focus on the Russians as enemies and as potential future threat. The Muscovites in Horner's chronicle are not the evil and dangerous schismatics of *Schonne hystorie*.

Johann Renner (c. 1525–c. 1584) also wrote a chronicle on the history of the Livonian branch and its leaders.⁷² However, in contrast to Horner's chronicle, Johann Renner's text was written over a long period of time and was finished after the beginning of the Livonian War (1558) and the branch's dissolution

68 Thomas Horner: *Livoniae historia in compendium ex annalibus contracta ... De sacrificiis et idolatria veterum Livonum & Borussorum libellus* Joannis Menecii, Königsberg 1551.

69 Juhan Kreem: Eine Peripherie mit Zentrumsambitionen? Zum Selbstverständnis des Deutschen Ordens in Livland im 16. Jahrhundert, in: Anti Selart/Matthias Thumser (eds.): *Livland – eine Region am Ende der Welt? Forschungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie im späten Mittelalter = Livonia – a region at the end of the world?*: studies on the relations between centre and periphery in the later Middle Ages, Köln 2017, p. 418.

70 Ex omnibus quotquot in Livonia rerum politi sunt, nemo extitit, uel prudentia, uel magnitudine rerum gestarum, Valthero anteferendus, in: Vol. 2. Sammlung der wichtigsten Chroniken und Geschichtsdenkmale von Liv-, Ehst- u. Kurland; in genauem Wiederabdrucke der besten, bereits gedruckten, aber selten gewordenen Ausgaben, Riga 1853, p. 385.

71 Horner: *Livoniae historia in compendium ex annalibus contracta*; Thomas Horner: *Livoniae Historia in compendium ex annalibus contacta*, in: *Scriptores Rerum Livonicarum*, Vol. 2., Riga 1853, p. 385.

72 Konstantin Höhlbaum (ed.): Renner, Johann: Johann Renner's livländische Historien und die jüngere livländische Reimchronik, Göttingen 1872; Peter Karstedt (ed.): Renner, Johann: *Livländische Historien* 1556–1561, Lübeck 1953; Jerry C. Smith/William Urban (transl.): Johann Renner: *Johannes Renner's Livonian History 1556–1561*, Lewiston 1997; Arved von Taube: »Der Untergang der livländischen Selbständigkeit«: Die livländische Chronistik des 16. Jahrhunderts, in: Georg von Rauch (ed.) *Geschichte der deutschbaltischen Geschichtsschreibung*, Köln 1986, p. 23.

(1562). Johann Renner, like Horner, was a scribe of the Order's officials in Livonia during the 1550s, and had access to the documents and literary tradition of the Order, and was during the 1560s a scribe and chronicler of the city of Bremen.⁷³ The text has two versions: one finished around 1561, and one with later additions to the original chronicle from around 1580.⁷⁴ Renner follows Horner's narrative, but adds some personal details and traits of Wolter von Plettenberg's character.⁷⁵ Renner also unfolds Master Wolter's personal qualities, exalting among them his simplicity and gradual career. According to Renner, his career began with the humble offices of *backmeister*⁷⁶ and *schencke*⁷⁷ and continued with a successive rise to the leader of the branch after serving in numerous roles.⁷⁸ Renner refers to Master Wolter's humbleness and simplicity, stating that he ate simple food: ham, dried meat, herring and stockfish.⁷⁹ As shown in the next subchapter, after the beginning of the Livonian War, Renner added details to his text that emphasized and emotionally involved the conflict with Russians.

The chronicles that were composed in Livonia after Wolter von Plettenberg's death focused more on, in their understanding, the exceptional personality of the Master than his enemies, the Russians. These texts portrayed him as a charismatic leader. The victory at Smolino in these texts was an important, yet not a central, event of Livonian history. Russians were situated in the backdrop, as unimportant; they became evil actors in the narratives on the recent past during the Livonian War.

73 J. G. Kohl: Äußere Lebensumstände Renner's, in: *Mittheilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands* 12 (1880), pp. 138–159; Kreem: Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals, p. 244.

74 Kreem: Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals, p. 244.

75 Höhlbaum: Johann Renner's Livländische Historien, p. 1; Horner: *Livoniae Historia in compendium ex annalibus contacta* (1853), p. 385.

76 Responsible for baking bread in a castle.

77 Responsible for the stocks of drinks in a castle.

78 »[...] also dar sin backmeister, schencke, koekenmeister, ander cumpan, huscumpter, cumpfer etc., beth he tho dem meisterdome quam [...]«. Höhlbaum: Johann Renner's Livländische Historien, p. 131.

79 »[...] sine spise was grave kost, schincken, droge flesch, hering, stockfisch etc. [...]« Ibid.

Wolter von Plettenberg Against the Russians – New Perspectives During the Livonian War (1558–1583)

The construction of Wolter von Plettenberg's heroic image gained new context in the mid-16th century, after the beginning of the Livonian War (1558–1583).⁸⁰ It was a moment when Master Wolter became a hero, a symbol of a different age in which Livonia had been successful against its main enemy, the Russians. The impact of the war on Livonia was dramatic. As a result of it Livonia ceased to exist as a set of ecclesiastical lordships, and the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order was dissolved in 1562. The group that took care of their Master's memory no longer existed and the entity he represented, Livonia, was now conquered and divided by foreign powers. Moreover, the Russians, under the leadership of Ivan IV (the Terrible) (Grand Duke 1533-1547; Tsar 1547- 1484), after a fifty-year period of peace were no longer just rhetorical devices from the Teutonic Order's propaganda texts, but a real, dangerous, devastating, and lethal threat to the Livonians and others. As a conflict the new war differed from the Livonian-Russian war of 1501–1503, though the enemy was the same: the Muscovy.⁸¹

The Livonian War was a European conflict in which the greatest Northern and Eastern European powers were involved: Poland-Lithuania, Sweden, Denmark-Norway, and Muscovy. The Livonian affairs and Livonia's past were thus discussed outside the region. It was a media event. This war and Ivan IV's despotic rule played an important role in demonstrating to the European audiences of numerous printed pamphlets that Muscovy (Russia) lay outside »*orbis christianus*« (the Christian world), and together with Turks was among Christianity's main enemies.⁸² The pamphlets were tools of war propaganda that aimed to create a negative image of Russians and Ivan IV himself.⁸³ Among such prints, possibly the best known is a German pamphlet *Neue Zeytung* (Nuremberg, 1561) that described Russian atrocities committed in Livonia and aimed to provoke instant emotional reactions from its audi-

80 Alexander Filyushkin: Livonian War in the Context of the European Wars of the 16th Century: Conquest, Borders, Geopolitics, in: *Russian History* 43 (2016), No. 1, pp. 1–21.

81 Alexander Filyushkin: How Holy War Became Unholy: The Evolution of the Sacral Treatment of the Livonian War in the Second Half of the 16th Century, in: *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 57 (2023), Nos. 3–4, pp. 319–335.

82 Kappeler: *Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit*, pp. 30–32, p. 242; Ekkehard Klug: Das »asiatische« Russland: über die Entstehung eines europäischen Vorurteils, in: *Historische Zeitschrift* 245 (1987), No. 1, p. 266.

83 Charles J. Halperin: »Scratch a Russian, Find a Turk«, in: *Russian History* 45 (2018), No. 4, pp. 370–71.

ences by depicting slaughtered children with ripped hearts, nailed to trees and mutilated, hanged virgins on the woodcut title page.⁸⁴

Wolter von Plettenberg's rise to international prominence must be seen in the context of the anti-Russian sentiment stirred up by the Livonian War and its representation in the broadly-circulated pamphlets. During this war, Wolter von Plettenberg was no longer promoted by the Teutonic Order's Livonian branch, which had ceased to exist, but by individual authors, who pursued their own aims. Broadly speaking there were two kinds of authors: those who used Master Wolter in their larger confessional and geopolitical arguments, and those who focused only on Livonia. The latter, in the midst of political turmoil, tried to create a clear vision of the former Livonia's past. The war had destroyed Livonia as a political entity and thus Wolter von Plettenberg represented victory and the glorious days of the past, in a time when Livonians just recently had been defeated by Russians. For outsiders, especially Catholic authors, he was a symbol of the defence of the Catholic faith and an example for the devastating effect of the Reformation.

The historical context changed the role of Wolter von Plettenberg as a memory figure. Master Wolter was posthumously involved into confessional conflicts. The Livonian War in the narratives was not just a war between different countries, but also a war fought by Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox.⁸⁵ It was not a holy war in the minds of the politicians, yet the chroniclers on all sides used confessional rhetoric.⁸⁶

In the mid-16th century, the battle and Master Wolter were mentioned by several authors. Balthasar Russow (1536–1600), a Lutheran pastor from Tallinn, Johann Renner, a scribe of the Teutonic Order's Livonian branch, and the first Duke of Courland Salomon Henning, a secretary of the last branch's Master, represented a mix of the Livonian and Teutonic Order's historiography.⁸⁷ A different perspective was shown by Tilman Bredenbach (1526–1587),

84 Sehr gewliche, erschröckliche, vor unerhörte, warhaftige Newe Zeyttung, was für grausame Tyraney der Moscoviter an den Gefangen, hinweggefürten Christen auf Lyfland ... zufüget, Nürnberg 1561; Marshall Poe: *A History of Communications: Media and Society from the Evolution of Speech to the Internet*, Cambridge 2011, p. 130; Cornelia Soldat: *Erschreckende Geschichten in der Darstellung von Moskovitern und Osmanen in den Deutschen Flugschriften des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts*, Lewinston 2014, pp. 137–162.

85 Anti Selart: *Die Reformation in Livland und konfessionelle Aspekte des livländischen Krieges*, in: Ilgvars Misäns/Klaus Neitmann (eds.): *Leonid Arbusow (1882–1951) und die Erforschung des mittelalterlichen Livland*, Köln 2014, pp. 339–358.

86 Filyushkin: *How Holy War Became Unholy*, p. 327.

87 Paul Johansen: *Balthasar Rüssow als Humanist und Geschichtsschreiber*, Heinz von zur Mühlen (ed.), Köln 1996; Halperin: *The Double Standard*, pp. 126–47, p. 129.

a Catholic priest active in Antwerp and Cologne. Bredenbach's book on the Muscovite war against Livonia was published in 1564, in Cologne, Leuven, Antwerp, and elsewhere, and was based on the oral testimonies of the former cathedral canon of Tartu, Philipp Olmen (canon 1551–1558).⁸⁸ Bredenbach's book treats the Livonian War as a religious conflict.⁸⁹ In contrast to Renner and Russow, Bredenbach had not been in Livonia and used only second-hand information.

The first version of Russow's chronicle was published in the later stages of the Livonian War in 1578 in Rostock, and a second version was published after the end of the war in 1584.⁹⁰ It was a Livonian chronicle printed outside Livonia, also because there were no printers in the largest cities of the province yet. Chronicler Russow was not a simple bystander. He himself had experienced two sieges of Tallinn by the forces of Ivan IV in 1570–1571 and 1577 and, as Charles Halperin states, the chronicler's animosity towards Russians can be explained by this.⁹¹ Russow's description of Master Wolter's reign focused on the conflict with Russians, and less on internal policies.⁹² Russow dwells on the Teutonic Order's historiography, even structuring it according to the rulership of the branch's Masters. Thus it is no wonder that he followed a certain tradition. Like Horner, Russow introduces the readers to Master Wolter as an intelligent ruler who won many wars, namely the internal war with Rigans and the war with the Muscovites.⁹³ The miracle narrative of the victory at Smolino, which first appeared in *Schonne hysthorie*, was continued

88 Tilmann Bredenbach: *Belli Livonici quod magnus Maschoviae Dux Anno 1558. contra Li- uones gessit, noua & memorabilis historia, lamentabilem universae Torpatensis prouinciae vastationem & excidium complectens, bona fide per Tilmannum Bredenbachium conscripta*, Köln 1564; Kreem: *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals*, p. 243; Madis Maasing: *Livonian Canons and Challenge of the Reformation*, in: *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University History* 64 (2019), No. 3, p. 1009; Johansen: *Balthasar Russow als Humanist und Geschichtsschreiber*, pp. 77–80.

89 Filyushkin: *How Holy War Became Unholy*, p. 327.

90 Balthasar Russow: *Chronica Der Prouintz Lyfflandt : darinne vormeldet werdt: wo datsü- luige Landt ersten gefunden, unde thom Christendome gebracht ys, Wol de ersten Regen- ten des Landes gewesen sint ...*, Rostock 1578; Balthasar Russow: *Chronica der Provintz Lyfflandt: darinne vermeldet werdt, Wo dath sülvige Landt ersten gefunen unde thom Christendome gebracht ys ...*, Bart 1584; Filyushkin: *How Holy War Became Unholy*, p. 323.

91 Halperin: *The Double Standard*, p. 129.

92 Balthasar Russow: *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt [...] Rostock 1578*; Balthasar Russow: *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt*, in: *Scriptores Rerum Livonicarum*, vol. 2. Riga 1853, pp. 1–158; von Taube: »Der Untergang der livländischen Selbständigkeit«, pp. 30–31.

93 Russow: *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt*, p. 32.

by Russow, who referred to this military success of Livonians as a true miracle of God and »the great victory« (*grote Victoria*).⁹⁴

The Livonian War made the narratives on the victory of 1502 more radical and emotional. Renner and Bredenbach added drama to the story of the Battle of Smolino by adding a detail missing from other accounts of the battle: Wolter von Plettenberg's speech before the battle.⁹⁵ The speech in Bredenbach's version was indeed emotional. The Master in this text emphasised that honour, fame, fatherland, freedom, and religion were in their hands. Bredenbach's Wolter von Plettenberg said that their courage may sink because of the masses of the barbaric enemy, but their deeds in the past that had defended their parents, homeland, house, and household, and the ancestral (Catholic) faith from the arch-enemy of the Catholic religion (Russians) should encourage them in the battle.⁹⁶ The Master said that these past experiences and their courage to defend with a weapon in hand gave him great hope that victory is possible. According to Bredenbach, after the end of this magnificent speech, the battle began and the Master shot steel bullets and cannon balls at the 'Tatars'.

The Battle of Smolino and the conflict of the early 16th century was not the main focus of Bredenbach's book. He was writing about the Livonian War in the 1560s, yet he used this battle to make a further point. The speech is full of pathos and the Russians are portrayed here as a major threat to Livonia and the Catholic faith, hinting at Livonia being a bulwark of Christianity.⁹⁷ In Bredenbach's portrayal, Wolter von Plettenberg was a religious hero, who was fighting for religious causes against the Russians. He was a Catholic fighting with the schismatics (Russians) and non-believers (Tatars). Kreem emphasizes that Bredenbach stressed the role of the Catholic faith in the victory of the Livonian forces in 1502, and blamed falling into the Lutheran heresy for the defeats of the Livonian War in 1558–1561.⁹⁸

To make audiences believe in the grandeur of this victory, details about the numbers of troops and men killed, on both the enemy and the Livonian sides, were important. First, the authors demonstrated that it was David's battle

94 »Diesse Victoria der Lyfflender ys warhaftigen ein wunderwerck unde Mirakel Gades gewesen«, Russow: *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt*, p. 34; Russow: *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt* (1584), p. 24.

95 Kreem: *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals*, pp. 243–244.

96 Bredenbach: *Belli Livonici quod magnus Maschoviae Dux Anno 1558*, p. 42 verso.

97 Paul Srodecki: *Antemurale Christianitatis: zur Genese der Bollwerksrhetorik im östlichen Mitteleuropa an der Schwelle vom Mittelalter zur Frühen Neuzeit*, Husum 2015.

98 Kreem: *Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals*, p. 243.

with Goliath, in which a small Livonian army succeeded against the far larger Muscovite armies. Johannes Löwenklau (Leunclavius, Leuuuenclaius, 1541–1594) reported that there were 13,000 Livonians (7000 »German« knights and 5000 »Curonian« soldiers) on the battlefield; Bredenbach mentioned that these forces of »Germans« and »Curonians« were joined by additional knights from Riga, Tallinn and Tartu, 15,000 men altogether.⁹⁹ The late 16th century authors writing about the battle at Smolino emphasise the number of losses the Russians experienced and thus made Master Wolter's victory seem grander and more spectacular. Bredenbach claimed that Livonians killed 100,000 enemies in the battle, out of the force that consisted of 100,000 Russians and 30,000 Tatars.¹⁰⁰ Salomon Henning's chronicle (1587–1589, published in 1590) stated that during the battle with the »hereditary enemy« (*Erbfeind*), an allusion to Satan (and Turks as well), 40,000 Russians were killed during the battle.¹⁰¹ Löwenklau claimed that during the battle many of Master Wolter's men were wounded, but only one »German« died, yet of 100,000 Russians and Tatars, 80,000 were killed.¹⁰² Johann Renner wrote that the Master and his knights killed some 60,000 Russians that day.¹⁰³ In Russow's version of the Livonian history, the enemy at Smolino was some 90,000 warriors strong. He does not give the number of Russians killed, but claims that the number was high, while focuses the attention of readers on the small losses of the Livonian army: only some knights and 400 mercenaries lost their lives, including several of the mercenaries' leaders.¹⁰⁴

The historical perspective that Russow, Bredenbach, Renner, and Henning had changed their view on the Battle of Smolino and Master Wolter. They wrote or edited their texts during the Livonian War, thus they could compare the successes of Master Wolter and the final defeat of the Livonian branch

⁹⁹ Bredenbach: *Belli Livonici quod magnus Maschoviae Dux Anno 1558*, p. 42 recto; Johannes Leunclavius: *Commentarius de bellis Moscorum adversus finitimos* [...], in: Sigismund Freiherr von Herberstein/Johannes Leunclavius: *Rerum Moscoviticarum commentarii* [...] Basel 1571, p. 207.

¹⁰⁰ Bredenbach: *Belli Livonici quod magnus Maschoviae Dux Anno 1558*, p. 43 verso.

¹⁰¹ »Da weyland Herr Walther von Plettenberg, Deudsches Ordens Meister zu Liefland, löblicher gedecktniß, demselben Erbefeind, inn einer gehaltenen Feldschlacht, Darinnen fast inn die 40000. der Reussen auff der Wahlstat Todt blieben, obgesieget [...]« Salomon Henning: *Salomon Hennings Liffendische churlendische Chronica von 1554 bis 1590*, Riga 1857, p. 21; Salomon Henning: *Salomon Henning's Chronicle of Courland and Livonia*, Jerry Smith/J. Ward Jones/William Urban (transl.), Dubuque 1992; von Taube, »Der Untergang der livländischen Selbständigkeit«, p. 23.

¹⁰² Leunclavius: *Commentarius de bellis Moscorum adversus finitimos* [...], p. 207.

¹⁰³ Renner: *Historien*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁴ Russow: *Chronica der Prouintz Lyfflandt*, p. 34.

in the contemporary conflict. They knew that the Teutonic Order and thus all the other political entities of Livonia lost this long-term conflict with the Russians.

Renner is not, however, directly quoting the Master; he writes that the Master delivered »a short, but serious« speech in which he reminded his men that they should think about the many victories the Germans in Livonia had achieved.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, in Renner's portrayal, the Master motivates his army by pointing to a possible defeat that would have grave consequences (*grote noth*), meaning that they needed to fight chivalrously and in a manly fashion. In the initial version of Renner's text the speech was not present. It has been assumed by scholars that Renner added it later, possibly having been influenced by Bredenbach's work.¹⁰⁶ Juhan Kreem suggests that he may have had sources of his own.¹⁰⁷ However, it seems that Renner may have appropriated a rhetorical approach that seemed to emphasize Wolter von Plettenberg's charismatic personality.

Renner's aim to glorify Wolter von Plettenberg becomes evident in his further description of the battle at Smolino and the Master's actions during it. Renner claimed that the Master was bleeding because of the great heat and intensive fighting, so blood spilt out when he opened the visor of his helm.¹⁰⁸ Renner also stated that because of his deeds, meaning the victory, the Emperor made him a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire (*Reichsfürst*) (1526).¹⁰⁹ It seems that these details of Master Wolter's actions were added by Renner after he compiled the first version of the chronicle.

Another text that can be seen as a contemporary reaction to the Livonian War and focuses on Master Wolter and Russians is Johannes Löwenklau's work *De Moscorum Bellis Adversus Finitimos* (1571). It was printed in a book with Sigmund von Herberstein's (1486–1566) texts on Russia that had images of Muscovite rulers and maps of Muscovy.¹¹⁰ Löwenklau was not from Livonia. He was a scholar of Greek, a professor at Heidelberg and Basel, later known

105 Renner: Historien, p. 134.

106 ibid., p. 134.

107 Kreem: Crusading Traditions and Chivalric Ideals, p. 244.

108 »De meister her Wolter vorfolgede de fiende heftich und was eine wile vorlaren, dat men nicht anders meinde, he were erslagen, averst he quam dar na wedder andraven und schlach sinen helm up, dar fell ein groth stücke gerunnen blodes uth, welchs he van groter hitte und arbeit gebloth hedde.« Renner: Historien, pp. 134–135.

109 »Wolter van Plettenberch wort umb siner groten daden willen van dem Romischen keiser tho einem forsten des rikes up genamen [...]« Renner: Historien, p. 135.

110 Leunclavius: *Commentarius de bellis Moscorum adversus finitimos* [...], pp. 205–217.

for his books on Turkish history, yet he had been to Livonia as a young man, where he had learned about the region.¹¹¹ Löwenklau's view on the war can be seen as a certain mix of knowledge gathered from the literature, most likely including Bredenbach's book, and personal experiences. By focusing on the Livonian War, he also explains the historical context of Livonia's relationships with the Muscovites and, in a detailed manner, describes the Muscovite-Livonian conflict of the early 16th century. Löwenklau introduces Wolter von Plettenberg, referring to him as a man of great soul and wisdom.¹¹² He may have used a Livonian tradition, both oral and historiographical (Renner's and Horner's chronicles as examples), that praises Wolter von Plettenberg's charisma. Löwenklau also gives a lengthy description of the Livonian-Russian war and the Battle of Smolino, and like Bredenbach included a short pre-battle speech by the Master.¹¹³ Like other authors, Löwenklau emphasizes the superiority of the Muscovite forces by stating that they had more than a 100,000 warriors, including some 30,000 Tatars.¹¹⁴ He also mentions the Master's capability to ensure fifty-year peace with the Muscovites that, in Löwenklau's words, represented more of a diplomatic than a military success. Löwenklau brought the story in a broader European context and continued the narrative about the Livonian victory against vicious Muscovites as a miraculous success.

The Livonian War made Livonia and its recent past interesting for authors and readers outside of the province. At the time of the Livonian war in the German speaking part of Europe, the image of Russians as enemies was constructed not only by the historiography, but also by anti-Russian pamphlets that amplified the fear of Russians. In this context, the narrative of the victory at Smolino and the Russian evil gained new attention. These descriptions of the battle were supplemented with more dramatic details by adding an emotional pre-battle speech by the Master and by increasing the numbers of Russian armies and their troops killed. By making an enemy more powerful and more dangerous, the value of victory was also increased.

111 Wilhelm Kühlmann: *Leunclavius, Johannes*, in: Verfasser-Datenbank, Berlin 2015; Alexander Filyushkin: »*De Moscorum Bellis*« *Ioanna Levenklavija*, in: *Trudy istoricheskogo fakul'teta SPbGU* 6 (2011), pp. 270–278; Johansen: *Balthasar Rüssow als Humanist und Geschichtsschreiber*, pp. 80–83.

112 *Leunclavius: Commentarius de bellis Moscorum adversus finitimos* [...], 206.

113 *ibid.*, 206–07.

114 *ibid.*, 207.

New Context, New Russians: Peter the Great and Wolter von Plettenberg as a Global Hero

In his work *An Account of Livonia* (1701), Karl Johann von Blomberg described Wolter von Plettenberg's struggle against the Muscovites by writing: »[...] that there were but three Great Heroes in the World: Alexander [the Great], Julius Caesar and this [Wolter von] Plettenberg [...]«.¹¹⁵ As von Blomberg stated himself, he based his account on the opinion of some French authors whom he had forgotten. Von Blomberg puts Wolter von Plettenberg amongst the ancient heroes who were part of the so-called Nine Worthies, replacing Hector with the Livonian Master. Von Blomberg's book narrates the history of Livonia, especially its involvement in different military conflicts and disputes with foreign powers. The author was a nobleman from Courland, a diplomat in the service of the Duke of Courland. Just before the Great Northern War (1701–1721), Karl von Blomberg went on a diplomatic mission to London and Paris. The aim to reach wide audiences is also demonstrated by the book's French edition, which was printed four years later in Utrecht.¹¹⁶

For von Blomberg the reign of Wolter von Plettenberg and the Livonian Wars with the Muscovites during the 16th century are important topics. Von Blomberg describes the war between the Livonians and the Muscovites (1501–1503) in general, and the Battle of Smolino in detail.¹¹⁷ Von Blomberg calls the battle »Famous Battel«.¹¹⁸ In order to make the statement stronger, von Blomberg added a several-pages-long quote from Bredenbach's work in original Latin with no reference to the author, stating that »for it were injurious to the Author not to reach up to the Energy of his Stile«¹¹⁹.

The topic of the Teutonic Order in Livonia cannot be seen just as a mere historical topic. The Dukes of Courland were descendants of Gotthard Kettler (Master 1558/59–1561, Duke 1561–1587), the last Livonian Master of the Teutonic Order and the first Duke of Courland and Semigallia. Thus, the prominent place of Wolter von Plettenberg in von Blomberg's book can be

115 [Karl Johann von Blomberg]: *An Account of Livonia: With a Relation of the Rise, Progress, and Decay of the Marian Teutonick Order*, London 1701; Reinhard Wittram: Peters des Großen erste Reise in den Westen: Hermann Aubin zum 23. Dezember 1955, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 3 (1955), No. 4, p. 384.

116 [Karl Johann von Blomberg]: *Description de la Livonie: avec une relation de l'origine, du progrès, & de la décadence de l'ordre teutonique ... On y decrit les duchez de Courlande & de Semigalle, & la province de Pilten*, Utrecht 1705.

117 [von Blomberg]: *An Account of Livonia*, pp. 75–84.

118 *ibid.*, p. 75.

119 *ibid.*, p. 78.

seen as a reference to the line of succession. However, there were important contemporary political developments that may have motivated him to refer to the events in early 16th century. In his book, Blomberg refers to the visit from Peter I (the Great) in Mitau (Jelgava) during the Czar's European trip right before the war.¹²⁰ Russia's influence in the former Livonia (Courland, Swedish Livonia, and Polish Livonia) had grown and the following war brought most of the former Livonian territories under the control of the Russian Czar. Russians were a real threat for Courland's independence. Moreover, the book was published shortly after the beginning of the Northern War (1700–1721), when Sweden was also interested in Courland. Von Blomberg's book can be seen as an attempt to attract international attention to the province. An internationally-known hero, even if his fame was exaggerated by the author, would have helped to receive some recognition.

Conclusions

Like many medieval battles, such as the legendary Battle on Ice (1242) in which Alexander Nevsky's forces defeated the Teutonic Knights, the Battle of Smolino was not an event of great military significance. Moreover, it is difficult to see the Battle of Smolino as an undisputed victory of Livonian forces over the Muscovites and their allies, as it was claimed in contemporary texts like *Schonne hystorie*. The victory was presented as a miracle and its commemoration was ensured by foundations and a new liturgical feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on September 14. The Russians, as enemies, were present in the memory culture; they were mentioned in the protocols of the Diet of Walk (1504), which established the new feast, and they were mentioned in the chant to be sung during the feast. The victory over a common enemy was possibly the first event that bound together different Livonian groups, like the Riga church and the Teutonic Order, in its commemoration, bridging conflicts between them about the past throughout the Middle Ages.

The Russians as enemies played an important role in the creation of the memory and the heroic character of Wolter von Plettenberg. His heroic character was constructed gradually. In the first texts about the battle, written during his lifetime, the Master was portrayed as a leader, but after his death, chroniclers portrayed him as a charismatic, heroic figure who had succeeded

120 Witram: Peters des Großen erste Reise in den Westen, p. 384.

in defeating the Russians. In the period between his death and the mid-16th century, he became a key figure in the commemoration of this victory.

However, the Livonian War (1558–1583), in which the Livonians again faced the Muscovites, was an important moment in the development of Master Wolter's heroic narrative. The defeat and subsequent dissolution of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, as well as the Russian atrocities committed in Livonia, added drama to the story. During this war, when the German news pamphlets and authors outside Livonia described the dire conflict in Livonia, the battle at Smolino became a fateful event, a certain turning point. Wolter von Plettenberg's heroic leadership was praised. In late 16th-century descriptions of the battle, the enemy Russian army grew larger, its losses grew more spectacular than before, and Master Wolter became even more heroic in the face of the collapse of Livonia as a political entity.

As Karl von Blomberg's book, published in English and French in London and Utrecht at the beginning of the 18th century, shows, the influence of contemporary politics was essential for this narrative. The diplomat of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia he praised Wolter von Plettenberg as a great European hero, like Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar, and described in detail his victories against the Russians, at a time when the Russian Empire was expanding and the small duchy ruled by the successors of the Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia was caught up in the developing conflict between the regional superpowers Sweden and Russia.

The presence of the »evil and dangerous« Russians in the long-term heroic image of Wolter von Plettenberg was necessary to emphasise the importance and greatness of the man and his victory. They were not just in the background, lying defeated at the Master's feet, or mentioned in the vivid descriptions of the Battle of Smolino, but rather grounds for the importance of remembering Wolter von Plettenberg. The ›Russian threat‹ was a vehicle for identity building in the Baltics, and the Master was a symbol of a rare success in the fight against the feared and dangerous enemy.

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