As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Mongol attack of 1241 led to Poland being perceived in thirteenth-century Europe as in the front line of Latin Christianity. There is an opinion to be found in the literature to the effect that the frequent accounts of the Poles in a struggle with various pagan peoples were mainly instruments of propaganda, “a formula well known and well liked in the papal curia”. In contrast to scholars who express this view, I am inclined to regard these accounts—both in the case of the earlier attacks by the Prussians and in that of the destructive activities of the Jatvings and Lithuanians, where the papal documents constantly refer to the “wildness of the pagans” and the “persecution of Christian beliefs”, as the reflection of an authentic process of increasing threat from the Balts and the Mongols. The fact is that from the 1240s the Polish and Russian sources tell us of almost annual raids by and fighting with the Baltic pagans. Their increased activity was, as we have noted, put to use even by some of their Christian neighbours who obtained pagan reinforcements in the wars which they conducted among themselves. In Poland this tactic was pursued particularly often by Konrad of Mazovia in his renewed bid for the Cracow throne (1243–47), when he included Jatvings and Lithuanians in his army. This is notable because previously, on at least two occasions, he had himself taken part in crusades against the pagans in Prussia (in 1223 and 1235, and perhaps also in 1234). Another individual who had been on two crusades (in 1223 and 1235), Świętopełk of Pomerania, recruited the aid of pagan warriors, inspiring Prussian attacks on Kuyavia, which was allied to the Teutonic Knights. These practices must have led to much destruction, since the provincial synod meeting in Wrocław in October 1248 decided to devote a separate decree to them, threatening ecclesiastical sanctions on

---

1 Baszkiewicz, Powstanie zjednoczonego państwa, p. 149; Grabski, Polska w opiniach, p. 267.
2 See Białuński, Studia, pp. 87ff.
all who those who attacked the lands of Christians in alliance with pagans, aided the latter in their fights against other Christians, or entered into an alliance with pagans, or even supplied them with weapons.3

This stance on the part of the episcopate, led by Archbishop Pelka, could be evidence that the policy of pacification had continued after the years preceding the crusade to the Dzierzgoń. While in 1232–34 these efforts were based on the idea of participating in Gregory IX’s campaign of crusading against Prussia, by the second half of the 1340s the papal policy on crusades to the eastern frontiers of Latin Christendom was quite clearly prioritising the Mongol question. The danger was raised in the first Council of Lyons, where countries threatened by Mongol attacks were advised to take suitable precautions and in the case of an attack to inform the Apostolic See immediately, and the Pope promised that immediate and effective help would be forthcoming from the entire Christian community.4 That this would be in the form of a crusade was revealed at the beginning of 1247, when at the news that a new Mongol invasion was probable the Pope addressed a letter to Bela IV, on 4 February in which he announced that if the attack took place, he would send forces to relieve Hungary: in continenti omnes crucesignatos in succursu Terre sancte ac Imperii Romaniae, ac alios ubicumque fuerint.5 In the end there was no attack, but the announcement was sent to all crusader forces (including those intended for the Holy Land) that there would be a need for them to defend Christian lands threatened by the Mongols. This clearly demonstrates the priority that was now being given to the Mongol question in papal crusading policy.

This development could not remain without influence on the Baltic crusade movement. It is notable that Innocent IV issued only a few bulls concerning the campaign of 1243–45 in Prussia and Livonia, which fell in the early part of his pontificate, limiting himself to supporting specific initiatives.6 This may have been related not only to the overlap with Louis IX’s crusade of 1248–54 of Louis IX but also to the temporary cool-


4 See Umiński, Niebezpieczeństwo, pp. 20–1; Strzelszyk, “Stolica Apostolska”, pp. 6ff.

5 VMH, 1, 379, pp. 203–4.

6 See PrUB, 1, 1, 255, pp. 195, 275, p. 207.