CHAPTER FOUR

PAPAL POLICY ON THE BALTIC CRUSADES DURING THE PONTIFICATES OF GREGORY IX (1227–41) AND INNOCENT IV (1243–54)

In the 1230s the dynamics of the Baltic campaigns changed, as the Teutonic Order arrived on the scene. The decade also saw the Danes regaining influence in Estonia and the papacy becoming more closely involved in the region. These changes in the group of key actors who drove forward the conquest and conversion of the peoples of the eastern and central part of the Baltic region were to have significant effects on the future of the region, as the campaigns intensified and expanded their geographical scope in the following decades.

But first the mission in Livonia went through a period of turmoil as relations between the curia and the Christian powers engaged in Livonia broke down. It began with the death of Bishop Albert of Riga in January 1229. A dispute arose over the election of his successor, and the parties appealed to the curia. Eventually the Cistercian Baldwin of Alna was dispatched to Riga to settle the matter.\(^1\) He proved to be a poor choice. He adjudicated over the episcopal election in favour of Nicholas, a Premonstratensian canon from Magdeburg, but soon became embroiled in disputes with the Sword-Brothers, Bishop Nicholas and the citizens of Riga. The contested issue was the control over the conquered lands, including the northern Estonian provinces which in the 1220s had been transferred to Legate William and then left with the various Christian powers of Livonia.\(^2\) Baldwin demanded that the lands be transferred to his hands, but the Christian

\(^1\) Gregory IX had first commissioned his legate to Germany, Cardinal Otto of St Nicholas, to decide the matter. He, in turn, asked Baldwin, one of his aides, to settle the issue (letter of 4 April 1230: Les Registres de Grégoire IX, ed. L. Auvray [Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, Ser. 2], 4 vols (Paris, 1890–1955), no. 437).

\(^2\) See Chapter Three, p. 135.
powers refused to cooperate, and Baldwin was forced to flee Livonia. He was eventually deposed by Pope Gregory IX in 1234 and replaced with William of Modena. Baldwin then filed a series of complaints against the bishop of Riga and his allies. His accusations were heard at a large conference at Viterbo in the spring of 1236 to which representatives of all the parties in Livonia had been summoned. Most of Baldwin’s allegations appear to have been dismissed by the papal auditor and the pope, but the conference decided that the northern Estonian provinces, held at the time by the Sword-Brothers, should be returned to the Danish king.

Before this papal verdict could be implemented, the political situation in Livonia changed. At the Battle of Saule in September 1236 the Sword-Brothers suffered a devastating defeat by an army of Lithuanians and Sengallians, and in May 1237 their Order was incorporated into the Teutonic Order. The Sword-Brothers brought not only their territories, but also their territorial claims and disputes, into this union. The conflict with the Danish king over the northern Estonian lands was finally settled in the Treaty of Stensby of June 1238 in which the Teutonic Order promised to hand over the provinces. The Danish king thereby once again had a foothold in the eastern Baltic region. The parties even agreed to cooperate

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4 Letter of 21 February 1234: DD, vol. 1.6, no. 176.

