
Deutschritter: Teutonic Knight (Part 1)

*We fight for the honour of the most glorious Virgin,
the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ,
for the honour and defence of the Holy Church
and for all the Christian faith
and for the expulsion of the enemies of the Cross*

-- Teutonic initiation vow

*Gott mit uns!
"God is with us"*

A supplement for Church Knight: The Cainite Crusade

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Prelude: Stranger in a Strange Land

A kaleidoscope of dazzling greens threatened to hypnotise brother Jeskin von Tuchlin as he rode his warhorse hard through the primeval forest, ducking the ghostly fronds reaching out to pull him from the saddle. The eerie glow of filtered summer sunlight had turned the sacred white of the Teutonic Order mantle he wore to a pagan green -- almost as though the spirit of the forest itself was seeking to smother his faith.

The horse snorted, twisting its head to contest Jeskin's reins as he forced it to jump a fallen log. The fiercely sweating beast still shook from the horror they had stumbled upon almost 15 minutes earlier.

For ten minutes he had done little more than cling to the horse's neck as it stampeded through the undergrowth, bit between its teeth. It took long minutes before the warhorse responded to Jeskin's rein commands. Now, the animal tottered unsteadily to a halt on its weakened limbs. The exertion of its sprint having drained all reserves of energy. Jeskin slid of the stallion's back. His kit roll had long since been claimed by the forest's clutching branches.

Brother Jeskin was relatively new to the Order, having taken his vows in the Teutonic capital of Marienberg only two years ago. It was troubled times within the Order. Only three years earlier the Templars had been convicted of heresy by the Inquisition. Now, this fanatical body had attempted to press charges against the Teutones in their own homeland! Fighting pagans on the eastern frontier had seemed a more comfortable option.

He had been so wrong.

Looking around him, Jeskin realised he had no idea where he was. The forest's speckled glow was consistent: the canopy too thick to give any indication of the sun's position. Lifting a chain-mailed coif over his head, Brother Jeskin prepared himself as best he could for the inevitable assault that would come from the trees.

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Having become separated from his patrol when his horse had snared its tackle in a tree, Brother Jeskin had attempted to find his way out of the pagan infested forest by following a stream. He had lead his horse by hand all night to reduce his profile and, hopefully, noise. It was a futile attempt - his woodcraft was limited, to say the least.

Shortly before dawn, the stallion had become fretful: shying away from the downstream direction it was being led. Certain he was nearing the forest's boundary, the Teutonic Knight pressed on -- soothing the distressed beast with kind words and gentle strokes.

He had stumbled into the clearing without warning. Before him was a shocking sight. One of the stolen cattle his patrol had been searching for lay thrashing weakly on its side as its lifeblood drained away. The heiffer's throat had been neatly cut, with its legs tied so it could not twist off an ancient, rune engraved alter. The blood trickled slowly down the sides of the alter to four bowl-shaped protrusions. The hideously deformed creatures that crouched, lapping up the blood from these containers were unlike anything Jeskin had seen in his worst nightmares. The demon facing Jeskin from the opposite side of the alter stood silently - blood red eyes glowing fiercely. The other three hesitated, looking around before following suit. The stallion reared violently, thrashing its forelegs in the air and almost throwing Jeskin from his feet. The shocked Brother managed to throw himself on the panicking animal's back as it twisted away from the horrific scene.

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Brother Jeskin stumbled through the waist-high water of a stream, waving his sword before him for balance. The glittering green shadows had taken on an ominous dark tone, and Jeskin knew sunset was imminent. He had been pursued for most of the day by the strangely tattooed men of the forest, catching brief glimpses of them between the trees as he fled on foot. The stallion was long dead. Exhausted, it had not seen the dead branch among the ferns that had torn out its stomach.

Jeskin had been thrown from the horse, but had fortunately landed in a thick tuft of moss. He had used his sword to dispatch the pitifully screaming animal -- sobbing words of thanks for its swift escape.

Now Jeskin was alone.

The watchers had arrived shortly after the warhorse's death, and had remained ever since. The knight had heard how the accursed vampires could hold the souls of mortals in their grasp. These pagans were obviously damned! As the green light receded, Jeskin knew his time had come. Tonight, he would fight -- and die -- in the name of his Order, the Teutonic Knights. Straightening the now tattered mantle on his shoulders, Jeskin placed his back against the eroded banks of the stream - both hands clasping the sword which rested with its point among the pebbles. Bowing his head, Jeskin prayed for the strength necessary to sell his life dearly to the devils that controlled the night.

Book One: Knights of the Cross

Introduction

"The brothers of a military order have been assigned the task of defending the church of Christ with the material sword, especially against those who are not Christians, namely the Saracens in Syria, the Moors in Spain and the pagans in Prussia, Livonia and Cumania, but also at the command of their superior against schismatics in Greece and against heretics wherever they exist in the universal church. . . "

-- James de Vittry

Never has humanity's struggle to assert self-control over its destiny been as clearly defined as the Teutonic Knight's struggle to establish their own Christian empire: an empire free from the depredations of corruption. For more than 300 years this dream was carved out on the battlefields of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Russia. The white surcoats of the Knights of the Cross were bright examples of what could be achieved through faith and determination. No other religious Order -- be it Militant, Monastic or the Inquisition -- achieved as much as the Deutschritter. Their oligarchic empire was a massive incorporation, run by a "board of directors" (Grosscomtur) with its statutes and laws upheld by knights of justice, honour and service.

The Teutonic Knights, at the height of their strength, were more than just a thorn in the side of Europe's "forces of darkness". They were a scythe that reaped a rich crop of Kindred and Lycanthrope heads. It used centuries of dominance to establish a deep understanding of its opponents. But these men are more than humans with useful information: they are warriors of God wielding the powers of Heaven, here, on Earth.

Theme

The theme of Deutschritter is one of "the cleaner". The Knights of the Cross are dedicated to the eradication of all vampires and lupines from God's earth. It is an on-going Crusade that has become all the more desperate in recent centuries after the supernaturals almost gained the upper-hand. The Teutonic State was destroyed and the Order itself almost vanquished.

It is not a lonely struggle: the Templars and Hospitallers share this quest. But none have their goal as clearly in focus as the Teutones. The Hospitallers appear easily distracted by "side issues" and humanitarian concerns. The Templars can be accused of paranoia and uncertainty -- suspecting every shadow, investigating every lead in painful detail: and then failing to act. Some factions of the Inquisition share the Teutone's urgency in eradicating the foes of the Church -- though their complete disregard for innocent life makes them almost as bad as the forces they are supposed to oppose. The Teutones, like all warrior-monks, are removed from the society they are vowed to protect. Their very knowledge of the dark-side of the world is dangerous. Mixing with family and old friends serves only to expose them to danger. Every knight is hunted: just as they are themselves hunters.

It is a long war, this struggle.

Centuries are but battles, millennia but a campaign in an eternal war. Now, the tide of blood is turning once again. The Teutones are experiencing a resurgence. Almost destroyed during the 1920s, the Order's numbers are growing. The faithful of Eastern Europe and the theological outcasts of the rest of the world are flocking to its ranks.

The time of reckoning is at hand.

When it comes, the Teutones will be ready.

Mood

The mood of Deutschritter is one almost of an underground resistance. The Order is seeking the liberation of humanity from oppressive supernatural overlords -- just as the French resistance fought against the Nazi's during World War II. It is an apt analogy: One has the muscle, the numbers and the overwhelming strength of fear on its side. The other relies upon determination, belief, ingenuity and even desperation against overwhelming odds.

It is a violent battle. All opposition must be dealt with quickly and efficiently. Delay only serves to strengthen the opponent. Every opportunity must be seized, every method exploited. But the Knights of the Cross are shackled in a way their enemy is not. They must follow their Christian creed and the governance of their Rule. The fight against the Dark is also a battle of morals. The knights must resist the temptation to adopt the brutal but effective methods of their enemy, lest the knights themselves become what they most despise.

What are the Teutonic Knights?

The Teutonic Order was founded in 1190 in Palestine during the Third Crusade and the siege of Acre. Named "The Order of the Teutonic Hospitalier Brothers of the Holy Virgin in Jerusalem," it was established by the burghers of Bremen and Lubeck for the care of wounded and sick pilgrims. It was transformed only eight years later into a knightly Order modelled on the older Orders of St. John and Knights Templar. The Teutonic Order, formed almost a century after the Hospitallers and 60 years after the Templars, can attribute its success to the strong sense of nationality among the German speaking peoples. Its very name reflected this nationalism: Deutschritter (German Knights). The Teutones' major efforts were spent extending Germanic control along the pagan Baltic coast, though it was awarded the status of an International Order because of its activities and property ownership in the Holy Land. The Teutones were periodically subject to charges of cruelty and witchcraft during the early 1300s Inquisition -- a time which saw the fall of the Templars. But the Teutone's primary theatre of operations (Prussia and the Baltic Coast) placed them safely beyond the reach of any authority wanting to act against them.

The life of a Teutonic Knight was not an easy one. The 14th century was a series of continuous battles against the Lithuanians -- up to 80 expeditions in all with up to seven in one year. The Order reached its peak of power and reputation during this period -- budding some of the era's best military minds.

After more than 200 years of expansion, the tide of history turned against the Knights of the Cross. A defeat at the hands of the Poles and Lithuanians at the Battle of Tannenberg in 1410 represented the beginning of the end. In 1466 the Order was forced to cede West Prussia and Pomerelia to Poland and moved their headquarters to Konigsberg. In 1525 the Grand Master converted to Lutheranism.

The Teutonic image was hijacked by the Nazi party in World War II. The Order's Slavic Crusade was held up as an example of German superiority and used as an excuse for another attack on Russia. Many members of the SS styled themselves as knights of the Militant Order.

After being stripped of its Militant Chivalric status in the 1920s the Teutonic Order has emerged once again from the turmoil of eastern Europe as a vital and growing organisation committed to the eradication of all ungodly creatures. The character of the Order is changing from an institution of the German nobility to that of a contemporary fighting force with a young and culturally diverse makeup. Considered the most radical of the three Militant Orders, its large Lutheran contingent is becoming displaced by Eastern Orthodox and congregations popular among contemporary Christian youth.

Historical Character

Right from the very beginning the Teutonic Knights was a German Order. Established by German merchants to look after German pilgrims, the original hospital was staffed by German nurses under a German hierarchy. Once it evolved into a Militant organisation it took on German knights and fighting men. For a time its scope grew, taking on an international flavour because of its European estates and the diverse range of pilgrims to the Holy Lands.

While it is not unusual to hear of a French or Italian brother during the 12th century, these knights were most certainly in the minority. But in Eastern Europe the Order's primary goal was to eradicate the pagans on the German frontier, replacing them with German settlers. Once this empire was established, the Order became a rest home and proving ground for the German nobility. By the 15th century, foreigners were being expelled simply because of their nationality. The Germanic peoples have always been proud of their culture and heritage -- from the time when Caesar attempted to conquer their lands to the present where their engineers and manufacturing firms dominate world industry. This pride is invested in the nation's nobility and is the reason for the creation of the Teutonic Knights in the first place. German knights did not rest comfortably with the French and English dominated Hospitaller and Templar Orders.

For much of the Order's early history the other Militant Orders scarcely recognised their existence. They were considered insignificant as they held only those few castles they had been able to purchase in and around Acre. A great deal of tension existed between the Teutones and Templars. This was largely based on the fact that the Teutones adopted a white habit -- a Templar "trademark." Relations between the Teutones and Hospitallers were more cordial, based on their common provision of medical services to pilgrims. Even though the Teutone's successes in the Baltics finally earned official recognition from the other Orders, it was always "looked down upon" throughout its history -- causing much resentment.

However, at the height of their Empire the Teutonic Knights were the police, magistrates, governors and administrators of a large and independent nation. They carried themselves with justifiable pride, administering God's law upon pagan and subject alike. But they were also a worldly Order -- having been exposed to a strong pagan religion that had the strength to stand and fight against Christianity.

Modern Character

The turmoil the Teutonic Order underwent during the early and mid 20th century eventually proved to be the crucible that gave rise to great faith and renewed purpose. The Order's traditions and Rule had been maintained by a small group of German nobility -- both Catholics and Lutherans.

With the imposition of the Iron Curtain after World War II, the German Order re-established itself in occupied Europe to protect faithful Germanic speaking peoples from the persecution of the Soviets. But this role soon grew. Eastern Orthodox and other Christian congregations begged for support -- contributing recruits and material to make the underground Order strong.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union the Order arose from the ashes of Eastern Europe like a phoenix -- riding the flames of renewed religious freedom. In many ways the new Order is unrecognisable to that which virtually disappeared only decades earlier. It is not staunchly Catholic or Lutheran. Instead, its attitudes tend to be more contemporary and less traditional in form. This is largely due to the large number of young Eastern European recruits who are determined to enjoy their new-found access to modern Western culture.

This open-minded and modern attitude has also proved popular among the congregations of more modern Western Christian congregations -- causing an influx of members from all over the world. This "carefree" non-traditional character has drawn particular ire from the Hospitallers who staunchly believe the old ways should be followed. The Templars look upon the Order with some amusement, considering them idealistic "innocents."

Book Two: Rise and Fall

The Cleansing Crusade

"When war is waged against evil or demons by spiritual strength, I would not say that this is extraordinary, although praiseworthy, since the world is seen to be full of monks. But when a monk is powerfully girded with both swords and marked out nobly by the belt of each, who would not think this worthy of all admiration, though it is certainly unusual?"

-- St Bernard de Clairvaux, De Laude Novae Militia.

1199: Creation of the Order

Founded as a nursing order with little else other than a tent made of sailcloth on the beach of Acre as a headquarters, the Teutonic Knight's destiny was not to be the Holy Land. Instead, it was to be the Pagan Baltic. Using the title of St Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem as an allusion to the Germanic hospital in Jerusalem that had been lost to Saladin three years earlier, the nurses were given land in Acre by German merchant princes to continue their work, and were given resources to recruit a small police force of about a dozen knights.

Acre itself was besieged in the 1190s for eight months. During this time, the hospital had formed itself into a permanent institution. By 1196, the Teutonic nurses had several hospitals spread throughout Christian lands and was granted recognition as an independent Order.

The early chronicle of the Teutonic Order, Die Statuten des Deutschen Ordens, described the formation of the Order:

"To many of the German princes it seemed useful and noble to bestow on the hospital the Rule of the Templars. For this purpose the German prelates, princes and nobles assembled in the house of the Templars in Acre and invited to such a salutary gathering some of the available prelates and barons of the Holy land. One and all decided unanimously that the hospital should follow in regard to the poor and the sick the Rule of the Hospital of St. John in Jerusalem as it had done until now; whereas in regard to clergy, knights and other brothers, it should follow henceforth the Rule of the Templars. After this decision was taken the prelates and the masters of the Templars presented the new house with the Rule of the Temple and then they elected there a brother of the house. Henry surnamed Walpoto, as master. The master of the Temple handed to him the written Rule of the Knights of the Temple which henceforth had to be followed."

By 1199, Pope Innocent had granted the Order official recognition. The Order stagnated at first and could not summon more than ten knights with their retinues. There were probably no more than 20 knight-brothers until after 1210, when the Order recorded 12 houses in Palestine, Greece, Italy and Germany. By 1230 the Order was capable of fielding about 600 military brethren in the Holy Land, but this was to be its limit. The other Militant Orders were too well established, and the Teutonic Knights had to buy their land and castles -- instead of receiving bequeaths like the Templars and Hospitallers.

Its true position in the world was recognised by its fourth Grand Master, Herman von Salza, a native of Thuringia. He realised that a German order could not accomplish much in Palestine, which was within the sphere of influence of the Mediterranean nations. It could, however, find more rewarding opportunities in regions closer to Germany.

1215: Emergence

What was essentially a small band of policemen supporting an overworked first-aid post grew into an international militant order because it was able to capture the imagination of a few key political figures. The first of these was Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI who won for the fledgling Order a charter of

incorporation from Pope Innocent III and permission to adopt the Rule of the Temple. But Henry's death in 1197 stopped the early expansion of the Order in its tracks.

When Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II "took the cross" (crusader vows) in 1215, he obtained further privileges for the Order and promoted its master Hermann von Salza to Prince of the Empire. The Teutonic Knights formed the guard of honour when Frederick II was crowned King of Jerusalem.

Donations of land were made in Italy, Greece, Germany and Palestine -- 18 such landholdings being placed under their control between 1190 and 1210, with 61 handed over between 1211 and 1230.

By the end of this period the Teutonic Order was a thriving miniature of the Templars and Hospitallers. But the Knights Hospitaller and Templars only recognised the Teutonic Order as an equal in 1258. Palestine was not the Teutonic Knight's only battlefield against the Muslims. They also possessed vast tracts of lands in Armenia and this remained a powerful provinces until the late 14th century.

1212: First Contact

King Andrew of Hungary called upon the new Order's assistance when his lands became the subject of marauding attacks from barbaric bands of Kumans. These tribes were ravaging Transylvania, looting and killing indiscriminantly. King Andrew offered estates in the district of Burzenland in return for the Order's help. Faced with such a profitable offer, the Teutonic Knights financed their own "crusade" against the Kumans.

The Knights of St. John sent representatives to the Teutonic Knights -- warning them of the rare but extremely powerful demons known as vampires roaming pagan lands. But the Knights of the Cross ignored these claims and accused the Hospitallers of spreading fairy tales.

It was not until The Knights of the Cross encountered the Kumans that they came to believe their may be some truth in these stories. Small bands of Kumans were able to resist far beyond expectation, demonstrating amazing speed and agility. Rumours spread throughout the ranks of knights of supernatural happenings. Knights were being defeated on the field by unarmored opponents. Hill forts were being successfully defended by mere women . . .

One such hill fort held out despite the knights advances around it. Fearing the women and children it contained to be the demons the Hospitallers had referred to, the Teutonic Grand Master called for support. A small band of the Knights of St. John arrived claiming to be specially trained in combating such demons. The Teutonic Knights gathered their forces and assaulted the hill fort -- with the Hospitallers in the van. But the specific prayers the Knights of St. John claimed to have been so successful in the Holy Land had no effect. The inhabitants fought long and hard, in no way weakened by the Hospitaller's presence. The Teutonic Knights prevailed after a long and bloody battle through strength of arms only.

By 1212 the province had been pacified and the Order began bringing in German colonists to its Burzenland estates. King Andrew became alarmed at the prospect of such a powerful and independent neighbour and ordered their eviction. The Order was not powerful enough to fight against the Hungarian King and were forced to withdraw. But the campaign had one positive outcome: the Teutones realised there were barbarian lands in need of Crusade upon the borders of their own nations.

1228: The Conquest of Prussia

Crusader activity in the Baltic and Polish states had begun before the Teutonic Knights emerged as a force in the region. These "fringe" lands had long been a source of concern for Christian missionaries who were constantly frustrated in their attempts to convert the local citizenry. Major setbacks included the almost unbearable "reversion" of many of the converted, including some missionaries themselves!

The Teutonic Knights first established themselves in a castle at Vogelsang on the Elbe in 1228. In 1230 a small force of 20 knights and 200 sergeants under the command of Frater Hermann Balke began to "pacify" the Kulm province. The crusade was vicious and merciless. Battles were fought in the impenetrable wilderness of the Baltic Coast, among the sand dunes, lakes, rivers, bogs and dark forests. This gloomy and mysterious world was full of danger: heathen tribes conducted regular ambushes and prisoners were subjected to tortuous pagan rites. The Teutonic Knights systematically reduced all organised resistance, building fortresses and burning every village that opposed them. Every man, woman and child who would not accept Christianity was exterminated. Women and children were not treated mercifully as they had proven to be as skilled in arms as the menfolk.

The few "learned" supernaturals of the region had been desperately seeking ways of keeping the cancerous growth of Christianity out of their lands. Though largely dominated by Garou and Gangrel, the tribal Polish and Baltic States had been living in a comfortable balance for centuries. The shady figures behind this structure did not want any change.

One ambitious plan was to appear to be doing the job of "cleaning up" the pagans themselves. This was achieved through manipulating a few key public figures. Conrad of Masovia had built a small castle for some knights on the west bank of the Vistula in which they placed a modest garrison. In 1228 attempts were made to organise a local Polish knightly order for defence against the growing ambition of the Prussians -- including the Teutonic Knights. It was called 'the Dorbrzyn Brothers' and was under the auspices of the abbey of Szepatow (near Wloclawek) and led by Bishop Christian. This new order was granted the lands between the Vistula and the rivers Skrwa and Drweca. The Knights received from Conrad estates at Chelmno, but only as a vassal of the prince. The order started "operations" by moving down the Vistula in a carefully orchestrated parody of crusading action. They crossed it in the following year and built a small fort which had a guardhouse in the branches of a giant oak tree.

One of the first victims was a man by the name of Pipin, who owned the small castle of Piegza. The armed monks captured him and accused him for reverting to paganism after having been baptised earlier. They cut open his abdomen, nailed one end of his entrails to a tree and chased him around it until his intestines were wrapped round the trunk. But the integrity of the Dorbrzyn knights and the fractured governments of the region had long been suspect to the Teutonic Knights. In 1234 Bishop Christian was captured by the Prussians. The Knights used the opportunity to release the Bishop from the hold ungodly demons had established upon his reasoning. Greatful for their service, the Bishop submitted to the Pope a document by which Conrad of Masovia was supposed to have granted the Teutones in perpetuity the region of Chelmno and all of Prussia. The Pope declared that region 'the property of Saint Peter' and granted it to the Knights. A few years later he recognised Prussia as his fief, thus giving legal standing to the State of the Teutonic Knights.

1239: Northern Crusade

Ordensmarshall Hermann Balke was ordered to gather a band of 60 knights and expand the foothold of Christianity already established by the Sword Brothers further up the Baltic coast in Livonia. Using the Order's navy, the knights soon advanced into Estonia. Here they found a third force of supernatural opponents. Seemingly at home in the cold, icy elements that restricted the knights campaigning activities, no prayers that had been developed for the vampires or shapechangers appeared to have effect. What these new opponents were has not been established. They would fight with devastating effect, though, as the peoples of the land became Christianised, they appeared to weaken and leave.

1240: Empire

The Order encouraged many German peasants and traders to establish settlements under the knight's jurisdiction and protection as it gradually cleared the Baltic coast forests of pagans. These settlements proved successful though the relationship between the populace and their governing warrior-monks proved

as erratic as that of any government. However, the arrangement survived three hundred years and the Empire thrived under the Teutones.

Teutonic Post: The size of the Teutonic Knight's bureaucracy spawned the creation of a uniquely effective and fast postal system. It allowed officers to conduct their business in far regions without being physically present. Records show the precise movements of couriers -- the Teutones were keen clock watchers. Postal codes were invented and often letters would travel the length of the State within two days.

Hospital Function: The task of running the Teutonic Order's parishes and hospitals was left to the priest-brothers, half-brothers and sisters of the Order. These classes did not have to engage in combat, though they were entitled to receive the protection and benefits of being members of the Order. By about 1400 the Teutones owned about 60 hospitals and leper houses where brother-priests and half-brothers attended to -- not treated -- the sick and infirm. This meant providing alms, asylum and masses instead of medicine. Doctors from the general community came and left as they wished.

Structure Of The Empire: As the Teutonic empire grew it was divided into three main provinces: The German lands (mainly the south and south-western areas including Alsace and Burgundy); the Prussian Lands (newly conquered territory governed from Marienburg); and the northern province of Livonia. Each province was governed by a Landmeister (Preceptor), while the Hochmeister (Grand Master) ruled from headquarters in the Holy Land. The provinces were themselves divided into commandery houses (komturies), each with 12 brother knights commanded by a komtur (commander). Smaller estates were governed by Vogts (caretakers). Both had had magisterial powers over the general populace.

1242: Uprising

The early successes of the Teutonic Knights in subjugating the pagan east was a cause for great concern among both Garou and vampiric circles. In what must have been one of the first instances of lycanthrope and Kindred cooperation, a council of elders was established to expand upon the subversive resistance begun in 1228. It was a unity brought about by necessity. For centuries Kindred and Lupines had walked among their peoples as gods -- venerated and all powerful. The affairs of Europe were of little concern -- as were clan or tribal politics. Each had been a law unto itself. In an unprecedented act, a few key Gangrel combined with far-sighted leaders of the tribes Black Furies and Children of Gaia. They became known as the War Council. The success of this unity is largely attributed to a pair of refugees of clan Gangrel in France. Driven out in the early 13th century by the Templars, the couple had retreated to the Polish states to find peace and solace from over-zealous Christian monks and agitated clan elders. With their peace being disturbed for a second time, the pair worked hard to organise a subtle but strong resistance. It was not to be so. The constant need for compromise between the factions of the War Council often produced disastrous results.

The first of the Polish princes to fall under the sway of the War Council was Swietopelk of Gdansk in 1242. The Knights wanted to take from him both banks of the Nogat branch of the River Vistula -- a region of strong association with pagan lore. Swietopelk closed the Vistula to the Teutones and attacked them, calling for a revolution in Prussia which soon broke out. The War Council had been stirring the pot of discontent among the not-so willing converts for years and called upon generations of loyalty enforced through local traditions. But the influence of the War Council was not as great as it had expected. Decades of laxity had weakened the ancient bonds the supernaturals had held over the peasants of their lands. The religion of their enemies was strong while their own strength was on the wane.

More and more natives were submitting to the new religion. Many, as subjects of the Order, fought in the bitter war against tribes who had previously been friendly rivals. The uprising was initially successful in pushing the Teutonic Knights back over land that had taken 12 years to gain, as well as causing the loss of several smaller castles. It took another seven years for the Order to recapture these lands. But the Council had been in too much haste. It had not garnered enough support from surrounding tribes and nations. Swietopelk had against him the Teutonic Order, Conrad of Masovia, Boleslaw the Pious (prince of

Wielkopolska), two of his own brothers and the Pope who had proclaimed a crusade against Prussia. In the end it became a war of attrition that Swietopelk could not win. A peace treaty was signed in 1248 and Swietopelk had to yield the territories on the banks of the Vistula.

1242: Alexander Nevsky

By 1242, the shadowy forces behind lands north of Lithuania had also organised an effective resistance. The Livonian brethren made the mistake of attempting to enlarge their realm by moving into districts claimed by another Christian nation -- the Russians of the Eastern Church. An expeditionary force of knights crossed the River Narva and headed towards Novgorod. It was met by a Russian army led by Prince Alexander Nevsky. Engaged on the frozen lake Peipus, the weight of the fully armed heavy cavalry of the Teutonic Knights proved too much for the ice which broke under their hooves. Many knights drowned while many more fell to the hands of the lighter Russian cavalry.

1260: Unified Empire

The push by the Livonian and Prussian brethren to conquer the coastal lands dividing them proved successful in 1260. The entire region of Samland had fallen to their organised advances. This had taken a grand crusade called throughout Europe in 1253 and resulted in the founding of Königsberg. But in this same year native tribesmen scored a series of successes. Many knights died defending Durben from revolt, prompting many Lithuanians to revoke their alliance with the weakened Order. The Prussian tribes rebelled again and more than 20 years worth of crusades was unravelled overnight.

The War Council was elated: here was proof that their combined strength was unbeatable. But it was a victory that would ensure their defeat. The Gangrel and Lupine tribes began to squabble once again, reducing the War Council to a forum of abuse, insults and agitation. It was only the vows put in place upon the establishment of the council that prevented bloodshed among its ministers.

Only massive assistance from outside the Order was able to reverse this disturbing setback. The Church issued 22 bulls (notices) calling for a crusade against the Prussians between 1261 and 1264. These pleas saved the Order through the (free) vigor and religious zeal of crusading conscripts and knights seeking adventure in far-off places. The Order's strength regrew and by 1272 it was once again able to advance. By the late 1270s the Order boasted 2000 military brethren in a well-disciplined and provisioned force. By 1290 the rebellion had been crushed. The War Council, humbled by defeat, once again put aside their differences and sought a new answer to the advancing Knights of the Cross.

1291: Fall of the Holy Land

The Teutonic Knights' main stronghold in the Holy Land, Starkenberg (Montfort), had fallen in 1271 to a seemingly unstoppable tide of muslim invaders. By 1291, Acre -- the last bastion of Christianity on the Holy Land -- was itself besieged and captured. The surviving contingent of 15 Teutonic Knights was all but destroyed -- fighting to the last man with suicidal abandon. Only Hochmeister Konrad von Feuchtwangen survived the ordeal having been ordered by a Chapter held prior to the siege to escape by ship to Venice if the city fell.

As the sole surviving officer of the Order, von Feuchtwangen established himself immediately in Venice. New senior staff were elected among the Order's Baltic provinces and sent to Venice to form a new council. With the enemies of the Orders exploiting their weakness to the full, the Teutonic Knights managed to avoid similar allegations to those levelled against the Templars by ignoring them and concentrating their efforts in their own Prussian lands. In September 1309 Hochmeister Siegfried von Feuchtwangen abandoned hope of reclaiming the Holy Land and moved his headquarters to Marienburg castle: the chief fortification in Poland.

The Knights of the Cross had work to do.

1308: The Massacre of Gdansk

In 1304 the War Council pooled their strength for another push toward expelling the disorganised Teutonic Knights. The Council saw it as a time of opportunity: news had reached them of a plot by the vampiric elders of France against the Knights Templar. An attack upon the Teutones at this time would exploit the fact its compatriot Militant Orders would not be able to assist. The War Council arranged an intrigue. Wladyslaw Lokietek of the noble family of Piasts was recalled from exile with a desire to restore the Polish monarchy -- to reunite the fragments of the state dissolved by the death of its last king in 1138.

The Teutonic hierarchy had been distracted by the startling news from Paris. That a Pope could be so easily manipulated by King Philip IV shocked and frightened the Order. It worked desperately hard to fend off similar accusations aimed against itself.

The puppet Wladyslaw was recognised in 1306 as heir to the lost throne while the Order's back was turned. His popularity among the peasants saw him quickly depose the hierarchy of Pomerania, establishing a power-base for his triumphant reunification of Poland. For the sake of the strength of a united nation, the Lupines allowed Great Poland to fall to him in 1314 and in 1320 he was crowned king in Cracow.

The conflicts of Poland drew little attention from the Teutonic Knights who left the issue to sort itself out: confident of the strength of the German rulers and settlers who were now well established. In 1308 Pomerania's former rulers appealed to the neighbouring German margraves of Brandenburg for aid against King Wladyslaw who had deposed them. The troops of Margrave Waldemar invaded Pomerania and occupied it all -- except for the Gangrel fortress of Gdansk which was defended by "Judge" Bogusz. Flushed with success, another German army from Brandenburg army was sent against Wladyslaw's only ally in the north, Boguslaw I, prince of Szcecin and a leader of the Children of Gaia. They attacked his duchy and burnt down the city of Kamien. Boguslaw IV was thus neutralised and the Margrave Waldemar continued his futile assault against Gdansk.

The War Council was shocked: they had no idea that their intrigue for power would unleash a rampaging army of land-hungry Prussian nobles. What made it worse was the Teutones had not even been harmed. Now several jewels of their empire lay exposed to destruction. Some even suspected it to be a clear act of aggression instigated by the German Ventrue. Confused and in disarray, the fractured Council abandoned King Wladyslaw who suddenly found himself lacking the "inspiration" that had come to him so easily before.

Judge Bogusz stubbornly defended besieged Gdansk but his position was hopeless. The King, in his confusion, advised him to call on the help of the Teutonic Knights as a last resort. The abbot of the Dominicans of Gdansk endorsed that advice and Bogusz, with no other alternative in sight, appealed to the Grand Master Herman von Ploetzke. The fortified castle of Gdansk was situated in the fork of the Radun and Motlawa branches of the Vistula delta. The 'relief force' led by the komtur (governor) of Chelmno, Gunter von Scharzburg, advanced from the sea, across the coastal wetlands. The Brandenburg forces retreated to the west, holding only Slawno and Slupsk.

The Teutonic Knights arrived at Gdansk thinking they would find a Christian city in need of protection. Instead, they found a pagan outpost at the height of its corrupt power. The Knights first secured their hold on a portion of the castle and then displaced the Poles from the rest. Delaying action in the form of demands for "payment" allowed the knights to discover the extent of occult influence on the people. Komtur Scharzburg, appalled by what he saw, decided not to wait for orders from Marienburg. On November 14th, 1308, the komtur ordered an attack on the city, slaughtering its civilian inhabitants and burning their houses. The abbot of Oliwa, who tried to comfort the dying, was permitted to hear confessions only 'when conditions allowed it.'

Aftermath: The War Council eventually regained control of itself after a few "compulsory" retirements of members. A new approach was obviously needed. Observing the success of the legal war waged against the Templars by their cousins in France, the Council determined similar tactics needed to be used against the Teutonic Knights. The events of November 14th, 1308 were later the subject of protracted litigation in papal courts. The Poles charged the Knights with the murder of ten thousand people. The Knights denied the charge, claiming that they only executed sixteen criminals handed over to them by the burghers and then left peacefully, while the citizens of Gdansk set their own houses on fire and moved elsewhere of their own volition. The legal bickering had no end.

In 1309 the Knights took Tczew and expelled its residents. They besieged Swiec which resisted firmly. A Polish relief force was repulsed as was another rescue attempt by the princes of Masovia. The Knights of the Cross finally secured the city by subterfuge when a man hired by them surreptitiously cut the ropes of the crossbows and catapults. Bogumil, the commander of the defence, held to the last even though the pious friars threatened him with hanging if he did not surrender. Finally he was overcome by superior forces. But things did not all go the Teutonic Knights' way: On January 20th, 1320, Wladyslaw Lokietek married Jadwiga, a Christian princess of Wielkopolska, and were crowned king and queen in the Cracow cathedral on Wawel hill.

The War Council plot to form a unified and strong opponent to the Teutones had succeeded by default. Encouraged, the Council set about re-establishing their intrigue with a ready ear to the long-term plans of the exiled Gangrel among them. In April of 1320, an ecclesiastical court in Inowroclaw took under advisement Poland's lawsuit for the return of Pomerania by the Knights of the Cross. The court, appointed by the pope, heard twenty-five witnesses. In the final stage of the proceedings it was presided over by Archbishop Janislaw. The verdict, given in February of 1321, ordered the Knights of the Cross to return Pomerania to Poland and to pay damages of thirty thousand thalers. The Order ignored the verdict. But the War Council had success in its grasp. New schemes were put into place along with a seemingly never ending series of skirmishes along the Lithuanian borders.

1310: Northern Difficulties

After decades of relative peace, the northern Livonian states once again stirred with the rumblings of revolution. A new sense of nationality was inspired by a leader called Gedymin who revived the rule of the Lithuanian kings. Being the last heathens in the region -- as well as having expansionist plans -- the Livonian lands became the renewed focus of the Deutschritter's attention. In the first 25 years of the 14th century the Teutonic Knights launched more than 80 expeditions against the Lithuanians -- sometimes conducting as many as eight campaigns in one year. The battles were fought in terrain of swamp, dense forest, sand dunes, rivers, lakes, snow and ice. The knights were often unable to fight as cavalry because of the terrain and the lessons learnt at the hand of Alexander Nevsky. The knights marched on foot through the gloomy forests using boats and rafts to carry them across lakes and misty swamps. It was the toughest fighting the knights had ever experienced. Much of their advantage had been lost with their mounted cavalry. But still they persisted. Many of the finest knights of the age rode with the Teutonic Knights: Jean Boucicaut, Henry Bolingbroke (later Henry IV of England), King Louis of Hungary and King John of Bohemia.

1380: A New Threat

The War Council, effectively defeated on the field, turned in desperation to those responsible for the destruction of the Templars 60 years earlier. The Hospitallers had been unable to greatly curtail the rise of supernaturals within the nobles of Europe largely because of the strengthening vampiric organisation known as the Camarilla and its policy of "masquerade."

Rising determination among the Kindred to suppress and avoid the Inquisition spilled over into opposing the Militant Orders. Strategically placed vampires within national governments began to exploit jealous

attitudes toward the Teutonic Knights among the Catholic monarchies of Europe. Poland and Hungary joined forces in political arenas to curtail the powers of the Order. Their senior churchmen whispered "poison" in to the ears of the Cardinals and the Pope, as well as diplomats engaged in intrigues with Lithuania. All had little apparent effect and the Teutonic Hochmiesters paid little attention to its "Christian allies."

But the Camarilla had plotted well. Each intrigue edged toward a final combined goal. Then, in 1380, the Camarilla's machinations were complete. The Grand Duke of Lithuania married the queen regent of Poland. In one stroke, Poland had achieved what 75 years of campaigning by the Teutonic Knights had not. The terms of the marriage settlement included acceptance by the Lithuanian nation of Christianity as its religion. The War Council was outraged. They had no idea that blunting the Teutonic Knights sword would involve their own capitulation to Christianity. But the various tribes were greatly weakened from their centuries of fighting. The act was ungraciously acknowledged as a means to an end. Now, the War Council set about the struggle to retain its influence as missionaries began to wander the lands of Livonia freely.

1525: Prussian Province Downfall

The War Council had become increasingly redundant as the Camarilla took control. But the facade of the combined Lupine/Kindred organisation was maintained to keep the tribes on-side. A highlight of the Camarilla's ambitious scheme was victory by the Poles and Lithuanians at the Battle of Tannenberg in 1410 where the vastly outnumbered Teutonic knights were massacred in the wooded, rolling hills of Grunwald.

All of the enemies of the Order combined to fight in the campaign: Jagiello (Ladislos II) of Lithuania mobilised an army of 10,000 men conscripted from among the Poles, Lithuanians, Russians, Bohemians (under their ruler Ziska), Hungarians, Tartars and Cossacks. The Hochmeister had decided not to wait for reinforcements from the Livonian province and attempted to engage the enemy immediately. But the wooded terrain prevented the Deutschritter from its one chance to defeat the massive army: a mounted charge of its knights. The Teutones fought well, collapsing the Lithuanian wing. But Russian cavalry and the Polish reserve simply overwhelmed the knights. The Hochmeister and the other leading officers of the Order were surrounded and killed.

The remainder struggled bitterly to escape, leaving 200 knights dead on the field. Many more were captured, tortured and then beheaded. The Knights of the Cross were never to recover fully from the disaster. The Camarilla and War Council exerted its control over the Wyladsaw dynasty again in the 1450s and exploited unrest among a gentry unable to rid themselves of the strict and fair rulings of the Teutonic Order's magistrates. In 1466 the Teutones were forced to cede West Prussia and Pomerelia to Poland. The Order's greatest humiliation occurred when they had to sell their seat of government -- Marienburg Castle -- to raise funds to pay disgruntled Polish mercenaries.

But the Teutonic Knights grimly held on. It took another 100 years and the spread of the Reformation to completely destroy their empire. Though their State was fractured, the concept of crusader outmoded and the code of chivalry considered an anachronism, the Order held on. But another crushing victory was handed to the Camarilla in 1525 when Grand Master Albert of Brandenburg signed the Treaty of Cracow, converted to Lutheranism and made East Prussia a duchy. This effectively put an end to the Polish province.

1559: Livonian Province Downfall

The Order's Livonian province remained able to field an army of 2000 men after the Tannenberg disaster. But its strength was undermined by a War Council instigated uprising of the Estonian peasantry as an invading Russian army approached. In 1542, at Weissenstein, the 2000 brethren and mercenaries managed

to defeat the Russian army of 30,000 men. But the victory concealed the Order's weakness. The Ordensland was falling apart. The Swedes occupied northern Estonia: the Danes seized the offshore islands and the Landmeister was forced to cede all of the Order's remaining land in Poland. The Landmeister of Livonia remained independent until 1559 when the Camarilla used a sledge hammer to crack the Teutonic Knight walnut. Ivan the Terrible was sent to invade the weakened province with an army of 130,000 men. Eventually, the Landmeister, based in Riga, gave up his vows and became a secular duke.

German Province Survival

As the Ordensland crumbled, the Teutonic Knights grimly held on in Germany and Austria under a new master now called the Hochund-Deutschmeister. The Order remained active, frantically seeking supernaturals now protected by the veil of the Masquerade.

In 1683 the Order once again served its original purpose, contributing a regiment toward the defence of Vienna against the Ottoman expansion. The success of this regiment, which served as the mainstay in the defence, spurred the Order on in the European fight against the invading Turks. The Teutonic Knight's last significant battle was at Zenta in 1697 when a Turkish invasion of Hungary was annihilated.

The German and Austrian branches of the Order gradually contracted as the purpose for their existence vanished. The Hoch-und-Deutschmeister regiment eventually degraded to little more than a unit for pretentious noble families. After 1697 the Order was limited to a group of 20 German Army officers -- their sovereignty gradually being diminished. The Order's remaining lands were secularised by 1805.

Officers of note to emerge from these ranks included Archduke Karl, Napoleon's greatest adversary; Count Maximilian von Merveldt, a renowned officer of the Napoleonic Wars; and Master Archduke Eugen who fought with distinction at Caporetto in 1917. The 20 officers and the regiment fought in both World Wars for the German side -- an act that greatly weakened its international standing. However, the knights eventually played a central role in the resistance against Hitler.

Insert: Pagan Rites

Nothing the Teutonic Knights had experienced in Outremer (the Holy Land) prepared them for what they would encounter in north-eastern Europe. The Balts worshiped idols in sacred groves and fields, attributing divine powers to the entire creature-world -- including their own domestic animals. They practiced human sacrifice by burning or beheading and buried animals alive at funerals. Dead warriors were cremated astride their horses while widows were often made to hang themselves. The stockades of towns and temples were adorned with the skulls of animals to ward off the evil eye, their grim shrines served by wholly-dedicated priests and soothsayers. The old, the sick and the lame were invariably executed. Drunkenness from mead and fermented mares' milk was an important passtime, and tribesmen often drank the living blood of their horses veins to "capture their swift spirit."

The first two knights sent to establish a foothold fortress on the borders of civilisation were soon cut down by the pagans. But a year later, in 1230, Landpfleger Hermann Balke with 20 Knights and 200 sergeants attacked the offending fortress-temple, hanging the pagan chief from his own sacred oak tree. Those who did not embrace Christianity were killed. The Prussian's treatment of captives did not endear them to the Teutonic Knights. It was considered a usual practice for Prussian tribesmen to "roast" a captured knight alive in his armour, like chestnuts, before the shrine of their local god. The official History of the Teutonic Knights tells the story of two knights. One was placed in a cleft tree-trunk held apart by ropes which were

then released, crushing the wretched brother. The tree was then set alight. The other knight was lashed to his horse and both were then hauled to the top of an oak tree and a major bonfire started below.

No quarter was given.

No quarter was returned.

Insert: Knight-Monk Vs Pagan Warrior

Many original exploratory raids by the Teutonic Knights into the Pagan Baltic lands, like one in 1237, were disasters. In the worst instance, Wolquin Schenk and 50 bretheren were "cut down like women amid the marshes." But the knights learnt quickly how to best exploit their strong points, and avoid exposing their weaknesses.

The disorganised Prussian tribes at first scorned the small bands of Teutones raiding their outer villages, but soon came to dread them. White robed horsemen attacked them even in the snow, their great cloaks serving for camouflage as they rode over frozen rivers or charged out of blizzards. The knights quickly adopted and modified the guerrilla tactics of their foes, sending raiding parties deep into the sacred forests.

The tribesmen who also fought on horseback, but with short-sword and battleaxe instead of longsword and lance, found the strange white knight's charges unstoppable. Instead, the pagans retreated into their simple timber forts which were often quickly reduced by ballistae, their defenders picked-off by crossbows. The wilderness of Lithuania was even harsher: primeval forest, heath and scrubland with innumerable lakes and marshes. The knights adapted by using barges that could carry up to 500 troops. Otherwise, the woodcraft-trained Teutones would raid through the dense woods and fens. Knights carried their armor on pack-horses, putting it on only when preparing for an attack -- even when under the threat of ambush. Many knights got lost under the pine trees which hid the sun and stars, dying of starvation or accident. Some bretheren succumbed to "cafard" or forest madness. It was a strange war -- like most religious conflicts. Some Lithuanians chose death over defeat: burning all their goods in a great funeral pyre, killing their women and children before beheading each other. In one recorded case, an old priestess decapitated more than 100 warriors with an axe before splitting her own head as the knights broke through the final inner stockade.

Deutschritter: Teutonic Knight (Part 2)

A supplement for Church Knight: The Cainite Crusade

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Book Three: Peoples of the North

Pagan Profile

"The Lithuanians are stalwart men, strong warriors and fers. The glebe of the cuntrey . . . bereth wel corne and fuyte and is ful of mores and marys in many places, with ful many woodes, ryvers and waters and wylde beestes and tame; and is strengthede with doodes, mores and marys, and hath litel other strength but woodes, mores and marys. Therefore unneth that londe maye be assailed in sumer, but on wynter, when waters and ryvers ben yfrore"

-- Bartholomew, English crusader of the 1230s.

Communities

The peasants of the southern and eastern Baltic Coasts lived in small rural communities raising grain crops of barley, flax and wheat, oats and rye, keeping cattle, swine, poultry and ponies. A village's resources were shared and all had collective responsibility for maintenance and animal husbandry. Others were "fringemen" who lived off the forests, coasts and mountains by fishing, trapping, hunting, bee-keeping and mining. Finally there were the burghers -- artisans, tradesmen and innkeepers who settled in larger towns and ports.

The peoples of these lands were considered "fair," being tall and healthy -- though "somewhat uncouth and boozy" as contemporary commentators put it. They had their hair cropped and had a characteristic shriek and jeer when preparing to fight. While it sounds like an idyllic atmosphere the villagers were living close to starvation. They suffered from common menaces: bad weather, too many children, greedy landlords and a lack of freedom. Slavery and service bonds were rife. Further inland there were communities of free peasants who both ploughed for themselves and carried their own swords and spears for defence.

Christianity had not touched these people. They were still dominated by fighters brought up to kill or be killed, whether they lived as princes, landowners or swordsmen. Between the fighting classes and the rest was a barrier of breeding and attitude reinforced by tradition and law. They were experienced cavalymen, wheeling and charging unexpectedly on small horses the size of modern ponies. While not heavily armoured, they relied on speed and surprise rather than sword or spear play in close combat. Raiding, ambushing and pillaging was their forte. Sustained battle was not. The soldiers of the warbands were clothed in linen or wool, protected by shields and helmets. The leaders wore more elaborate equipment -- though offering only the same degree of protection. The wealth of a dead man was competed for by horse races -- the winner taking a specific prize.

Rulers

The society of the Baltic peoples was intensely militarised. It had evolved through the centuries between the hammer of the Germanic tribes and the anvil of the Vikings. For long periods these communities had to pay tribute to Danish kings and German lords. The communities were often clustered around prosperous "magnates" who lived in forest strongholds with their retainers or communities of warriors and burghers. These earth-walled, stockaded and moated forts were usually controlled by a "governor" or voivot. Each was the heart of a small territory, encompassing several rural communities.

By the eleventh century a line of these communities lurked crab-like a few miles up every estuary from Denmark to the Vistula. The strongest of these had at their highest point a barracks, fort and residence (collectively called a grod or palatium), usually reinforced with a moat, earth wall and wooden towers. Below it was the urbs (town), originally intended as a refuge for civilians from the district in time of trouble. Later, these spaces became crammed with the artisans and merchants -- except for one or more patches of holy ground which held small timber temples. Outside this stockade were further groups of dwellings, each dedicated to fishermen, small traders, peasants and maybe a market. None of these towns were built directly on the coast. They were always on inlets, rivers and lagoons -- on top of cliffs or behind dense stands of ancient trees.

Military service was extracted from the warrior classes and taxes of material were taken from the peasants. The voivot provided hospitality to the district's prince (known as a knes) when he came on visits -- often involving prolonged feasting and shows of force. The prince (knes) was always a great landowner in the countryside, the lord of the largest retinue of mounted warriors in the region. He received taxes and commanded abject reverence with kneeling acclamation and foot-kissing. His blood was sacrosanct and was often inherited from long dynasties. His rule was mostly in name and by his presence. Each town had its own assembly which settled its own affairs. Comprised of magistrates, these leaders often led warbands to raid other tribes. But the common factor between coast and country, freemen and fringemen, swordsman and serfs, was an allegiance or respect to the mystical class of judges, warriors and bards which roamed their lands. These strange people were the stuff of legends -- possessing great strength and speed. While each community was essentially self governing all decisions were deferred when one of the "great ones" or "heroes" arrived.

Religion

The Wends considered their whole country to be studded with holy places -- groves, oaks, springs and rocks -- where the peasants made offerings and held rites. They saw the world as peopled by large pantheon of gods -- subordinate to a divine patriarchal spirit in the sky. These shrines managed to co-exist for centuries alongside Christian churches -- a scandal for conscientious clerics but too deep rooted to eradicate completely.

The Wendish priesthood was able to exert great influence over their people, intensifying the worship of their gods by constructing images, cult objects and temples. Master cults were developed in the cities where special skills in augury and rituals made priests the leaders of their community. The priests became rich with luxurious temples dedicated to their gods. Out in the woods they lived more spartan and holy lives. One priest is reported to have lived solely off the fruit of a single sacred nut tree.

The arrival of Christianity drew a mixed response. Some princes received it readily while others opposed it violently. No city abandoned its gods easily -- whether the prince willed it or not. Some considered Christianity to represent the gods of the Germans -- an old foe for centuries. Others saw advantage in allying with the powerful new men moving into their districts.

The East Baltic tribes also followed cults of holy places, plants and animals. The cult of the dead (veles) and the cult of gods were the essential guarantees of health, security, success and identity to every family and village. Wise men and women who understood the rites were treated with the utmost respect. Priests and priestesses wandered the lands or devoted their lives to the tending of the sacred groves and holy places.

Festivals of fertility and funerals often involved sacrifices of horses and humans. These were considered the high-points of the religious year. Alone among the ancient religions of Europe, the Baltic religions would provide a strong and direct opposition to the challenge of medieval Catholicism. The religion was a wealthy mix of ancient Celtic lore and gods, Nordic and Germanic deities and goddesses drawn from vastly ancient Indian subcontinent origins. Women held a particular reverence among the priesthood and were given varying degrees of freedom in the villages.

As the terrain became colder and more marginalised to the north, society became less feudal and more religious. Above Estonia the word of the old men was law and the Shamans consulted with the spirits of the forests, seeking permission to forage for food. Sacrifice was the only assured means of obtaining health and success.

Demographics

Lower Baltic

The peoples of the Baltic coast and Poland were collectively known to the Germans as the Wends. However, as the Teutonic Knights moved to conquer these lands, the complexity of the pagan society emerged. The Slavonic tribes occupied the coastlands and hinterland from the bay of Kiel to the Vistula, including the islands of Fhmarn, Poel, Rugen, Usedom and Wollin. They were divided into a number of nations.

The Wagrians were settled on the Danish frontiers to the Trave and the Abotrites lived between the Trave to the Warnow. These two kindred peoples were loosely united with the Polabians of the Elbe basin under one dominant dynasty.

An unamalgamated group of tribes occupied the area from the Warnow to the Rugen, round the Oder mouths and up the Peene. These were given the collective name of the Liutuzians or Wilzians -- "terrible" or "wolf" people. The northernmost group of tribes were the Rugians or Rani, on the coast about the river Rugen.

The Pomeranians -- "dwellers on the shore" -- dwelled between the Oder to the Vistula, sharing the lands with Cassubian "shaggy-coat men" tribes.

The following is a catalogue of the most important Wendish cities, organised into the tribes which managed them. While they were not cities by the standards of the Germans or Europeans, they stood out from among the thinly settled Baltic region as they held a special influence on the communities in and around them.

Wagarians: Coastal district tribe which had several key towns, among them Stargard (Oldenberg to the Germans) which had been the beachhead from which a Saxon bishop had attempted to convert the community in the 10th century. The people had rejected his faith and the church was a ruin.

Abotrites: The great city of this clan was Mecklenburg (Veligrad), five miles upstream from Wismar Bay. This position dominated a wide network of lakes and rivulets. On the next inlet to the east was a community that would grow into the future city of Rostock -- then only a temple, anchorage and a merchant settlement seven miles upriver.

Rugians: lived among marshy and forested domains with few communities larger than villages and forts. But their island stronghold of Rugen held two remarkable townships: Arkona on the north-eastern tip and Karenz (now called Garz) on the lake's edge on the southern point of the island. Arkona stood upon cliffs on the sea's edge which were too steep for any raid. It needed no citadel due to the shape of the headland

upon which it stood. The headland was cut off from the rest of the island by an earth and timber wall which rose about 100 feet. A curved sector of housing was held within this wall, then an open space. At the point of the headland was a temple of the four-headed god Svantovit -- a centre of pilgrimage and public worship. The harvest festival brought representatives from all over the Rugian nation, sacrificing cattle and responding to the high priest's calls for war or peace. The high priest had his own warband of 300 warriors and personal estates. Arkona was as close to a national capital that the region had: here Rugian warriors met in council and took orders from the high-priest and his miraculous horse upon which no man was allowed to ride. Karenz, in the south, was defended by lake, river and marshland, reinforced by a conventional ring-wall. It was developing from a refuge fort into a prosperous settlement by 1168. It was full of tightly packed housing, with three small spaces left clear for the temples on the higher portion of the town.

Polabians: The lake settlement of Ratzeburg was their chief city, connected to the Baltic sea by a tributary of the River Trave. This town -- no more than a fort, an anchorage and some huts -- was later to become the city of Lubeck.

Liutizians: this tribe which settled along the river Peene had several well-protected towns. The most important was the furthest upriver: Demmin (the smoke place). This was where three rivers met, a key stronghold of whoever conquered the region. It was a cult centre of the Redarri, the home of the god Radigost. The city consisted of a large citadel, earthen and timber walls and a prominent temple.

Pommeraneans: Szczecin (pronounced Shchetsin) was the "mother of the cities of the Pommeraneans." Its walls enclosed three temple-crowned hills and had a reputation for impregnability. It held a community of 900 families. The voivot of this city had a household of 500 family, servants and warriors. He had a fleet of six ships which frequently plied the rivers between the sister towns of Wolgast (Vologost), Usedom (Uznam), Lebbin (Liubin), Wollin (Wolin) and Cammin (Kamien). These towns lay on the reedy channels branching from between the Peene and Oder rivers and the Gulf of Stettin. All were defensible places with markets and forts, trading with others and defending themselves with fleets and armies.

Kolberg (Kolobrzeg) was a town of a particularly important status as it contained a salt works. The prince (knes) of the Pommeraneans held residence in Belgard (Bialogard). To the south of this city the lands were mostly empty, with a single track leading to the port of Danzig (Gdanzk) which consisted mostly of a grod and urb.

Eastern Baltic

East of the Vistula was a dense deciduous forest which stretched most of the way from the Baltic to the to the west Russian uplands. It was difficult terrain, often impassable. Layers of dead wood, luxuriant undergrowth, lakes, bogs and hills confined human settlement to the coastal strip and the valleys of the Vistula, Niemen and Dvina. Among the oaks, ash, elms, linden trees and maples that hemmed in the cleared grounds of the communities lived the aurochs, the bison, the bear and the elk. Reaching 400 miles north/south and 300 miles east/west, it was inhabited by a small group of people known in modern times as the Balts. They were of Indo-European origin.

These "nations" were associations of smaller tribes, unified under an effective political system of blood relationship. Each tribe was capable of mobilising a warband (karya to the Prussians, karias to the Lithuanians) and had an assembly called a wayde. Each tribe was responsible for its own forts and maintaining its own folklore.

These tribes never acted as one nation before the 12th century. While groups of one or two would fight together, the nation of Prussia for example never fought as one until the Crusades. What gave these "nations" their identity were their common language, the districts in which they lived and common religious cults.

The peasants of these nations were mostly occupied with clearing away the restricting forests by burn-beating and tree-cutting. They harvested with the sickle and the scythe, raised cattle and horses, grew flax and wove linen. They cropped wheat and sometimes barley and oats. Much food was gathered from the forests and coast. Honey, wax and furs were sought in the forests, while amber -- petrified tree-sap from ancient forests -- was washed up on the coast. Amber was a precious substance, coveted by artisans and princes.

North of the Dvina pine became the predominant tree, supplanting the oak and the elm. The land was very moist, with Estonia being noted for its bogs and rocky coasts. East of Lake Chud (Peipus Peipsi) lay a great coniferous forest, drained by wide rivers and threaded by a complicated pattern of bogs, lakes and streams. North of Estonia the land became less habitable. Many Estonian and Finnish tribes came and went -- the true natives living hand-to-mouth, struggling against land too cold to till and forests only sparsely populated by elk.

Prussians: These people lived between the Lower Vistula, the Narew, the Niemen and the Baltic coast. Among its tribes were the Galindians, Sudovians, Pomesanians, Pogesanians. A church was established in the land of the Prussians in 997, though St Adalbert of Prague was martyred.

Lithuanians: A people that lived north and east of the Niemen, within the watershed of its tributaries the Nivezis and the Viliya. Some of the tribe names were Zemaiciai, Aukstaiciai.

Latvian States: This loose association of tribes consisted of the Lettgallians north of the lower River Dvina and the Semigallians and Selonians (also called Letts) who lived to the south. Towns protected by large earthworks were established at Lielupe, Tervette, Daugmale and Jersika.

Curonians: Called Kurir by the Scandinavians, these people lived on the peninsula between the Baltic and the Gulf of Riga. One of their chief settlements was at Impiltis, where the defensive earthworks enclosed an area of 12.5 acres. Another large city was Apuole.

Fennic: A group of tribes to the far north-east of the Baltic Sea. Included the tribes called the Ves, Eastern Chud, Pechera, Perm, Cheremis, Merya, Mordva and others. All lived on the tributaries of the Novgorod, along with the Vods, Estonians and Karelians in the west. These peoples worshiped the trees, ancestors and an army of spirits which peopled the woods. Their only government was the wise-man of each extended family and the shamans which held the gates of the invisible world.

Overcoming the Pagans

The Teutonic Knights had the advantage of several innovations over the pagan tribes. They utilised the German merchant classes which had been trading with the tribes for almost a century. These merchants introduced the Teutones to the great-ship or "cog" as it was known. This type of ship could carry 237 tons as opposed to the tribal long-boats that could only carry 20. A cog could carry 500 passengers or a town's supplies for a whole winter. It was the perfect transport for reinforcements and the "castles" on its bow and stern were more than a match for any pirates. With this sort of mobile warehouse supported by smaller craft, the Teutones were able to move deep into the pagan lands -- following the rivers and waterways during summer and marching over the ice during winter.

Another advantage and innovation was the stone tower. The Teutonic Knights learned the art of stone masonry in Palestine. While stone was hard to come by, the knights initially had to make do with wooden blockhouses ringed by palisades. As the Teutones became more established in an area, resources were put into finding stone or manufacturing bricks to build towers of a strength previously unseen in the Baltic lands. The importance of these structures was vital: they were able to keep small garrisons alive when they would otherwise have been overwhelmed. They were also virtually impervious to their pagan enemy's favourite weapon -- fire.

One of the most important advantages was artillery -- particularly the crossbow. It was not a knightly instrument and it was not the Teutones that used it. But the Germanic settlers used the weapon to great effect. Its accuracy and penetrating power shortened the odds in the battle between many and few. Larger ballista or catapults and mounted on towers became weapons that could fell large sections of a warbands in a single round.

The advantage of heavy cavalry was rarely realised in the Baltic lands. The numerous bogs, springs, streams, forests and sand-dunes made charges impossible to mount. Heavy armour slowed knights down, making them more vulnerable to the ambush -- a favourite form of attack among the tribes. But it was the Teutone's staying power that surprised the tribes -- never before had an invader resolutely held onto land through cold winters and survived.

Supernaturals

North-Eastern Europe

Black Furies: The only all female tribe, the black furies could be seen as feminist fatales. Being female does not mean this tribe is ladylike. In fact, it is much the opposite -- being one of the major proponents of violence against the Order. This tribe is particularly attached to nature and untouched wilderness, emerging to strike at those who threaten their sacred groves. They gather in these groves for their religious moots, using the enchanting setting of dark glades with pools shining silver under the moonlight to inspire the words of their priest-leaders. Often a "sacred hunt" is launched at such a gathering.

Children of Gaia: These are the peaceful of the Lycanthropes. The others see them as tree hugging peacenicks. It was the Children of Gaia's support for less violent means to turning the Teutonic Crusade that helped tip the scale of the Wolf Council to intrigue. But like all lycanthropes, they can be demonic fighters when pushed too far. More modern offspring of this tribe are becoming increasingly radical, more and more prepared to fight rather than out-wit their opponents. They also gather in sacred groves, often focusing on a single sacred tree. Their worship varies from quiet contemplation to frantic orgies.

Gangrel: This nomadic tribe appears to have had a long association with the Baltic wilderness, drawn by its isolation and natural beauty. Ties between the Gangrel and the Shapechangers are much more cordial than that of other vampiric clans -- explaining much about their presence in this were-creature dominated land. Throughout history the Gangrel have been relatively well informed as to the happenings of the world, with news of far-off places often being brought by their friends and associates among the Gypsies.

Ventru: The growth of Germany as an Imperial and an Industrial power saw the arrival of clan Ventru in the region. This scheming clan has long sought to exert its dominance over the region -- a mission which at times matched that of the Teutonic Knights. Their power has been increasing recently, with the unification of the two Germany's and the loosening grip of Russia upon the Baltic and Polish states. Always city dwellers, they are rarely found outside the safe confines of concrete and glass.

Tzimisce: The Baltic states have long been the "heartland" of clan Tzimisce. Maintaining its strongholds against all comers -- including the Roman Empire -- this fearsome clan has been in the forefront of the struggle against the Teutonic Knights. Their altered ghouls serve as the vanguard of many an uprising -- either as horribly deformed creatures or as fearsome examples of the best pagan hero-warriors. Tzimisce has puppet leaders in Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Wallachia, Bavaria, Austria, Serbia and Kievan Russia. They are particularly strong in Lithuania where they maintain the worship of the old Slavic gods. The clan has also had some success in infiltrating the Russian Orthodox church. But their power is waning. Many of their subjects actually welcome the advance of the Teutonic Knights, and the war with the Tremere is absorbing more and more resources.

The Holy Land

Silent Striders: Driven out of Egypt by vampires long ago, the Silent Striders wander all about the world - though they often gravitate to the lands surrounding their ancient home. They lead a nomadic existence, at home in the forest or city. More often than not they can be found among the ranks of the gypsies, circus troops or even merchant groups. Despite this, they are a well-informed tribe and always seem to know what's happening. As a nomadic tribe they have few set meeting places and only gather rarely.

Star Gazers: Enraptured by Eastern Mysticism and the occult, this tribe holds the Middle East as the heart of its activities. Generally treated with disdain as "wise-guys" by shapechanger society. They wander most of the world, helping to protect lands sacred to the lycanthrope. Members of this tribe rarely gather together. When they do, it appears more to be a friendly exchange of news and information.

Setite: Though the Teutonic Knights never made it into Egypt, roving bands of these vampires (often associated with invading armies) frequently made their way into the Holy Land. Their support has dwindled with the death of their ancient religions, but their corrupting influence does much to destabilise many governments and organisations. It was this clan's spread through Europe that helped prompt the excesses of the Inquisition. Now, Setites manipulate society through the depravity of the drug trade instead of their pagan religion. With the lifting of the military state that was the USSR, members of this clan are already moving in to establish their "dominion" over the Baltic states.

Assamite: Doubly the enemy of the Teutonic Knights because of its Vampiric and Saracen background, the Assamites are among the most fearful of foes. Their perfection of the art of assassination has caused the loss of several key Teutonic personnel over the centuries and in recent times. It is also rumoured that the clan is not popular among Vampiric organisations, with allegations that several later Crusades were sparked simply to cover a blood-hunt against the Assamites. However, this clan unknowingly helps the Militant Order's cause. Assassins single-mindedly hunt down other vampires as tools of political intrigue.

Insert: The Passing of a People

During the late 14th century under Hochmeister Luther, a talented musician, the castle of Marienburg became a centre for the performing arts. The surrounding districts had long since been tamed and Christianity was well and truly established. There were frequent song-contests and concerts in the castle's great halls, attracting the best performers from all over Europe. One one occasion it is recorded that a pathetic old man -- a figure from the past -- walked up to the step and requested admittance to the competition. The Prussian harpist proceeded to sing, in his almost forgotten tongue, some of the great ballads of his now dead people. Jeering, the knights awarded the "rediculous ghost" of a dead pagan society a sack of rotten walnuts before ordering him back to the forests and his sacred oak trees.

Not all knights missed the significance of this act. It was a brave defiance of the all-conquering Christian culture. It was also a requiem to the harper's dead tribe. But it was to be 600 years before the lessons of this occurrence was to be learned by the Order as a whole -- and even then only after it was rubbed in its nose. The very aristocratic pride in which the Order vested so much importance was wrong. The Nazi embodiment of Teutonic beliefs and attitudes through the Waffen SS brought this message home. Arrogance, blind obedience, excessive pride and inflated self-importance had diverted the Teutonic Knights hand from doing good to doing harm. Pride and prejudice have no place within the Christian ethos of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Book Four: Inside the Order

Initiation to the Order

"I, Cuno von Hattenstein, do profess and promise chastity, renunciation of property, and obedience, to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to you, Brother Anno, Master of the Teutonic Order, and to your successors, according to the Rules and Institutions of the Order, and I will be obedient to you, and to your successors, even unto death."

-- The Northern Crusades, by Eric Christiansen.

Novices

Many Teutonic brothers came from the lower echelons of nobility. They would enter the Order to free themselves from economic dependence to secular lords and to enjoy the status and power associated with joining a religious corporation governing a large territorial State. While the Grand Chapter did their utmost to maintain the nobility of the Order, Provincial Commanders were not adverse to recruiting from among the peasant and merchant classes. Able bodied townfolk and "generous" businessmen found their way into the brotherhood despite many "crackdowns" over the centuries.

A postulant was normally received into the Order in one of the houses in the twelve bailiwicks in the Empire. While the Grand Master and General Chapter reserved the right to receive postulants, this was usually carried out by the Provincial Commanders. The social and moral status of the postulant were exhaustively examined. A postulant had to submit a letter from a patron who would vouch for his ancestry and moral worth. Postulants also had to bring three horses, armour, weaponry and the fare for their trip to Prussia. Candidates of illegitimate birth could only be accepted into the Order through direct intervention from the Grand Master.

The Modern Novitiate

Modern Novices of any Militant Order are not untrained and inexperienced acolytes. In many ways they parallel the role of Sergeant many centuries ago: they are active warriors of lower status -- be it birth (historically) or personal commitment. A novitiate is still part of the process of becoming a knight: at least five years must be spent in the training halls and support units, gaining the necessary experience and maturity to become a fully fledged knight.

Novices are still required to take the vow of Obedience though those of Poverty and Chastity are not required. Many novices have attained Faith and training above that required to become a knight -- though choose to remain a novice because of a wife or business responsibilities. Rank within a novitiate is not by title. It is by seniority. A novice of one year is at the bottom of the ladder (5th class). A novice in his fifth year (1st class) is close to being a knight. Any holding status of more than 5 years, and is not a knight, is called a Sergeant (without the knight prefix).

Investiture

Once a postulant has presented all his credentials to a Commander, his background has been fully investigated and a sponsor knight found, a simple ceremony is conducted at the next convenient Chapter meeting. This Chapter must be presided over by a Landkomtur (Preceptor) who will conduct the brief ceremony. Upon investiture, postulants are required by the Rule to answer a barrage of questions: Do you belong to another Order? Are you married? Have you any hidden physical infirmity? Are you in Debt? Are you a serf? After the five negatives, the postulant had to give five positives. Are you prepared to fight in Palestine? Or elsewhere? To care for the sick? To practice any craft you know as ordered? To obey the Rule? They were then expected to say:

"I, (postulant's name), do profess and promise chastity, renunciation of property, and obedience, to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and to you, Brother (Grand Master) and your successors, according to the Rule and Institutions of the Order, and I will be obedient to you, and to your successors, even unto death."

The Teutonic Rule

"The German princes and magnates were in full agreement that the aforesaid house should have the regulations of the Hospital of St. John concerning the sick and the poor, as in the past, but for the rest should have the Rule of the Militia of the Temple with regards to clerics, knights and other brothers."

-- Narracio de primordiis ordinis Teutonici, 1198

A Teutonic Knight dedicated himself to a monastic way of life that revolved around the three fundamental vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. These vows, and the tenets of the Teutonic Rule, were designed to suppress individuality and promote a collective lifestyle. The Rule stated: "brethren should be humbly obedient and should in all things break their own wills." The Rule of the Teutonic Knights was approved by Cardinal William of Sabina before 1245.

Also governing the life of a knight was the *Consuetudines maires* (constitutional rules) which was inspired by the Rules of the Templars and Hospitallers (one stipulating the monastic life expected of a brother-knight, emphasising the tenets of chastity, obedience and poverty, while the other bound a knight to a life of service and charity), the Dominican Order and the Order of the Holy Spirit. Further ordinances were added by Grand Masters, such that the entire collection formed a large book -- copies of which had to be kept in every commandery, read out in full three times a year and in sections on every Sunday.

A full calendar of religious observances were insisted upon. A knight was expected to recite the offices (specified prayers) throughout the day, both inside the convent and on active duty. The first mass was conducted just before dawn while on campaign because the days were short in northern winters and the knights needed to be on the move at dawn to make the most of the light. The hallowing of the sacrament was timed to coincide with the first emerging rays of the sun. On campaign the master's or the marshal's tent became the army's church. A portable field-altar was its centrepiece. Teutones had to receive the holy sacrament (communion) seven times a year: a process which involved a fast -- unlike the Templars.

Military and monastic discipline went together. Knights were expected to perform their duties and were allowed few privileges. Their equipment and armour were uniform and each man was issued with a pair of shirts, a pair of breeches, two pairs of boots, one surcoat, one sleeping bag, one blanket and one knife. He was allowed to wear fur, because of the cold temperatures, but it could only be goatskin or sheepskin. He could be assigned two or four mounts but they belonged to the convent. A knight had to sleep in his clothes and boots and had to remain silent at meals and while in the dormitory, on the march or in the latrine. He could not display his own coat of arms -- the Teutonic cross being good enough for all. He was not allowed to joust or join in on the hunt, though he could kill wolves and bears with the stipulated assistance of hounds. He was allowed to wear a beard though his hair must be kept short.

The whole objective of the Rule was military efficiency. Mobilisation, parades, route-marches, pitching camp, guard-duty and conduct in the field were all regulated by an undeviating routine and carried out in silence. But there were some benefits in being a Teutone. While a knight could not own his own horse or sword, he was allowed to trade for the profit of his house and commandery -- a provision that helped the establishment of the empire.

Components of the Rule

The Rule of the Templars is outlined in detail in *Militiae Christi* and is a good example of all the various Rules. The following is a sample of what was expected of a Teutonic Knight.

- The brethren had to dress in a uniform way -- white clothing marked with black crosses.
- Nothing could be "too long, short, tight or wide."
- Shoes had to be plain with buckles.
- Hair and beards had to be worn so that "the wearer should be immediately recognisable as a brother of the Order."
- Meals were to be eaten noiselessly.
- Sleeping quarters were general dormitories.
- Knights had to sleep in their undergarments.
- No trappings of class or status were to be worn.
- Saddles and shields were not to be painted in markings other than those belonging to the Order.
- Tournaments, weddings, christenings and birthdays were to be avoided.
- Kissing was prohibited -- including close relatives "less it lead to unchastity."
- Privacy was not allowed and personal letters had to be scrutinised by a superior.

A particularly severe form of punishment for breaching the Rule was the Iarbusse: a year's hard labour, eating meals off the floor without cutlery, dietary restrictions, removal of the cross from the habit and corporal punishment on Sundays.

Teutonic Structure

"When war is waged against evil or demons by spiritual strength, I would not say that this is extraordinary, although praiseworthy, since the world is seen to be full of monks. But when a monk is powerfully girded with both swords and marked out nobly by the belt of each, who would not think this worthy of admiration, even though it is certainly unusual?"

-- St Bernard de Clairvaux, De Laude Novae Militia

General Chapter

The highest position among the Teutonic Knights was that of Grand Master. He was elected upon the summoning of the General Chapter of the Order which represented all Teutonic Provinces. Before a Grand Master's death he was required to appoint a Deputy to oversee the gathering of officers from Germany, Prussia, Livonia, Austria, Rumania and the Holy Land. This General Chapter elected a foreman (*commendator electionis*) who then nominated a second member of the Electoral Chapter. Then, in a system based closely upon that of the Templars, these two Knights chose a third member. These three selected a fourth . . . and so on until the 13 representatives had been chosen. The Teutonic Rule stipulated there must be at least eight knight-brothers, one priest-brother and four sergeants. They were not allowed to be from the same province or of the same family. A simple majority determined the election. If one of the Electoral Chapter was nominated as Grand Master he was asked to withdraw so that his character could be freely discussed. If he remained in contention his position was taken by another brother. Upon the election of the new Grand Master, the successful knight was escorted to the altar by the Deputy Master and invested with a ring and circular seal depicting the Virgin Mary enthroned and holding the Christ-child and sceptre.

Grand Master (Hochmeister)

The Teutonic Rule contained only general statements about the Grand Master's role: "he should punish the disobedient and show concern for the sick." This was a deliberate lack of definition. As the Teutonic Order was, essentially, a corporation, the Grand Master was required to consult the General Chapter in all important matters -- such as buying and selling property. In lesser decisions he only had to consult

members of the Chapter. In practice it proved impractical to summon a General Chapter except to discuss crucial matters such as law making, senior appointments or changes in international affairs. The corporate nature of the Order constantly placed checks and balances against the Grand Master's powers. The Grand Master lived in one of the most magnificent buildings in Europe -- Marienburg Castle -- the headquarters of the Order from 1309. Great emphasis was placed on the Grand Master's generosity and records exist for hundreds of marks being distributed to the poor and needy every time he took an excursion.

Governing Council (Gebistigerrat)

Day-to-day government of the Order was through a council of five officers collectively known as the Grossgebietiger who formed part of a Chapter known as the Gebistigerrat. They comprised: The Grosskomtur (Seneshenal), Marshal, Oberste Trapier (Master Draper), Oberste Spittler (Hospitaller) and Tressler (Treasurer). The Provincial Commanders could also attend or serve on this council to representing their provinces when needed. This council was the governing body of the Order, making most of the decisions and setting most policies.

The Grosskomtur (Great Commander) was given his own suite of offices in Marienburg Castle equal in opulence and size to the Grand Master. As second in command of the Order, his role was often that of foreign minister. He also acted on the Grand Master's behalf during his absence and led the Marienburg Commandery continents during war.

Before the fall of the Holy Land, the Marshal (Ordensmarschall) had sole responsibility for military operations against the Infidel. Later, as Marienberg eventually receded into the safe heart of the Teutonic State, the Marshal was generally assigned the task of military overseer of the frontier provinces.

The position of Oberste Spittler (Hospitaller) was initially quite important as the Order maintained a hospital in Acre. Later, the title became honourific as the Order conducted few nursing missions in Europe. The same applies to the position of Oberste Trapier (Draper). While there was a centralised system for the distribution of clothing and equipment in Palestine, this responsibility was later taken over by Provincial Commanders. The role became that of an advisor and ranking officer.

The Tressler administered the revenues contributed by the provinces and at times conducted audits on those provinces suspected of holding back their contributions. He managed the expenses for the Grand Master's court and official activities as well as major expenditures such as fortifications.

Knight Organisation

The positions of Grossschaffer in Marienburg and Königsberg were essentially trade ministers overseeing exports and imports. Both had large personal staffs and had to report to the Tressler. Most trade was conducted in grain, furs, amber and copper.

Provincial Commanders (Landkomtur) were responsible for law and order within their designated areas. Under them were the Hauskomtur (Preceptor). Each Hauskomtur was responsible for a Komtur (chapter) of 12 knights and their associated sergeants. Civilians could approach the Commander to act as judge for murder and other major cases. Individual knights were allowed to administer justice on minor matters -- so long as they submitted a full report to their House Commander afterwards. Teutonic Knights acted as a police force in the traditional meaning of the word -- deterring criminals, serving summonses and conducting arrests. Beneath the House Commanders were Vogts, associate-members of the Order who acted as caretakers of a farm or an estate. Commanders led the knights from their Chapter during battle and were responsible for the security of their estates. Internal matters were conducted at the discretion of the Provincial Commander, with assistance available from senior officers if the need arose.

The Teutonic Insignia and Habit

Uniform: The white habit of the Teutones was very similar to that of the Templars (much to the latter's disgust). This right was granted them by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. Their black cross (sometimes superimposed with a yellow highlight) was similar in shape to that of the Cross of Jerusalem (four T's radiating from a centre-point). In the late-13th century they were also granted the right to place the German Royal Eagle at the heart of the cross -- though this practice has since been discontinued to recognise the new diversity of the Order's members. Teutone sergeants (equivalent to modern novices) wore a Tau cross (looking like a single capital T). Later, the cross took on more gentle curves -- eventually evolving into the distinctive Iron Cross that featured prominently in World War I and World War II insignia.

Standard: In the early days of the Order the Teutones battle standard was simply a black cross on a white field. But, as they successfully established a principality in the Baltic States, the cross was dressed up. By 1330 the Order had adopted the yellow cross of Jerusalem bordered in black for their standard, with the German royal eagle at its heart. This was placed on a white field. Shields mostly held a simple black cross on white though officers would adorn it with yellow inside the black cross and the Imperial eagle at the junction.

The Modern Order

"The Church and God have, unfortunately, little to do with vampirism in truth, excepting perhaps that some prayers might help the dead from returning and suitable formulas are recited at the funeral to help the soul find solace. There is no more effective method to ban vampirism than killing."

-- Vampire, a Complete Guide to the Undead, Manuela Dunn Mascetti, 1991

Only a few isolated outposts of the Teutonic Order survived the collapse of their once great empire. A chapter in Vienna and the Bailiwick of Utrecht in Amsterdam remain mainly through concentrating on the roles of nursing and charity work. Other chapters were forced to operate "underground" -- first to avoid the Reformationists and then to hide from the Communists. Ironically, it was the supernatural forces behind the emergence of Stalinist Russia that finally saw the destruction of the Wolf Council. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gangrel, Children of Gaia and Black Furies have returned to fill the vacuum left by their vanished oppressors. Now, it appears it is their turn to be dispossessed.

The Order reached its low-point in 1923 when its Grand Master resigned after the fall of the Austrian Empire -- the last bastion of support for the dwindling Order. The next blow came in 1929 when Pope Pius XI ratified a new constitution -- stripping the Order of its Chivalric status. The surviving chapterhouses -- including the Sisters of the German Hospital of St. Mary in Jerusalem -- reverted to a normal monastic order under the control of Sacred Congregation for the Religious in Rome. Only a few ranks referred to the Order's Militant past.

The new Brotherhood of the German Hospital in Jerusalem suffered badly under the Third Reich -- the persecution of the Teutonic Order coinciding with the glorification of the ancient Knights of Prussia which was used as a propaganda tool shortly before Hitler came to power. The Nazis established an order of Merit called the "Teutonic Order" which still causes detrimental associations even today. A new mythology involving the old Order was fabricated, claiming the "glorious" knights to be the forerunners of the Third Reich. Even after the war, once the Order had its lands restored by a new Austrian government, the effects of Nazi propaganda still hinder the Teutones charitable work -- despite the fact it was among the first religious organisations suppressed by Hitler.

But the Teutonic Order was deeply shocked by the reflection held up to its face in the form of the Waffen SS. The SS were a band of devoted "knights," fighting furiously to perpetuate what they believed. Many older knights recognised this as the fatal flaw within the Order itself -- arrogant pride and uncompromising belief in itself. Since then the most senior of the Order's knights have striven for greater humility -- and their on-going reforms reflect this.

The Teutonic Order was able to save much face in Eastern Europe through the hardships and deprivations imposed by Communist Russia. Remnants and descendants of the Order established a secret Christian network to avoid the suppressions and discrimination of Stalinist USSR. Though limited in numbers, the Order also continued its work of harassing known supernaturals.

The monastic German Brothers managed to grow after the war in parish work, hospitals, old-people's homes, schools and training colleges. The organisation remains as a public front to the Order -- comprising 30 Clerical and 10 lay Brothers, 500 religious Sisters and 350 Familiars -- 12 of which are ranked as Knights of Honour.

The new Knights of the Cross emerged from this cauldron of fire during the early 1990s as a well forged alloy. The tearing down of the Berlin Wall marked the return to freedom for the knights and the Christian community, but the tyranny of Communism had served only to strengthen the faith of many and break down the barriers between Catholic and Reformationist. The make-up of the modern Order reflects this. Many of its knights were Lutherans, others were Russian Orthodox. The new knighthood represents the full spectrum of Christian denominations. Once again recognised by the Papacy and international community, the Teutonic Knights are gaining public support through charitable works mainly focussed on reuniting east and west Germany. Much is also being done in Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia where many now view the Teutonic knights as being a firm but fair portion of their history. This work includes using influence among major German corporations to set up manufacturing and distribution facilities in these areas, the building of hospitals and community facilities, repairing public utilities -- and the more covert "cleansing" of supernatural influences.

Although the Teutonic Knights were not present at the Malta Synod of the mid 1980s, the re-established and strengthened Templar and Hospitallers were surprisingly willing to welcome them back into the fold of Militant Orders. Still subject to the status of "junior" order, the Teutones are proving their maturity in charitable and cleansing work.

Russia has become a major concern to the Teutonic Knights. Something "big" is happening there. A purge on the scale of the Inquisition is happening among the supernaturals of Russia -- but the Inquisition claims to know nothing about it. Several knights have discovered a vampire's lair, only to find someone had beaten them to it. Werewolf caerns have been left untended and the nodes of mages are left unexploited. Several knights sent deep into Russia in search of clues to this mystery have simply vanished. One thing is certain: "The enemy of mine enemy is no friend of mine."

Reform

"Kings, emperors and nobles used to rule the world, today I see sovereignty held by the clergy by means of robbery, treachery, hypocrisy, violence and preaching. . . They are anxious to make the world theirs. . . "
-- Pierre Cardenal of Le Puy, 1229

The single greatest contributor toward the demise of the Teutonic Knights was the break-up of the Catholic Church. The reformation sparked by the teachings of Martin Luther had a profound effect on German society, eventually spreading like wildfire throughout Europe. Many knights, disillusioned with the corruption of the established church, gave up their oaths and became Lutheran. Even high-ranking officers announced their dissent and left their posts. Combined with the increasing "christianisation" of the

surrounding nations to which the Teutones had been opposed to so long, the Order lost its sense of purpose and the all-important concept of religious unity. With the re-establishment of the Order in the 1990s, the Gebistigerrat (governing council) has attempted to remove this source of dissent. Instead, they hope theological diversity can be turned into a strength.

The senior knights have taken a valiant stand, declaring that all Christians are equal. Faith is what is important. The "fiddly bits" can be worried about later. This stance has not gone down well with the "old guard" Teutones. Especially in light of the more specific reforms that have followed -- such as allowing women to hold militant and priest status. The outcome has not yet become what the Gebistigerrat had hoped. The Order is becoming factionalised, with interest groups forming around conflicting ideals and interpretations. Only the Hochmeister's strength of character has prevented this from developing into a schism far worse than that experienced several centuries ago. In time the Hochmeister hopes these factions will learn to tolerate and accommodate each other in a spirit of compromise. This, he believes, is the only way the Order -- and the Church at large -- has any chance of surviving through the next millennia.

The Reformed Rule

The vow of Chastity is no longer applied to Novices. Married novices are allowed entrance to the Order and their families receive similar support to that of military personnel all around the world. The goal is to become more attractive to the diverse Christian reformationist churches that have appeared all around the world. However, Knights are still expected to make this sacrifice to disencumber their devotion to God's will.

Poverty is also no longer enforced among Novices. The rank, instead of relating to experience, has taken on an association with a degree of commitment to the Order. Again, knights are required to take this extra step toward total commitment.

Obedience is the one element of the Rule that has in no way been diminished. In fact, it is only through the Rule that the above reforms will have any chance of being accepted by the rank and file.

New Purpose

The goal of the Teutonic Order is no longer to carve out an Empire based on strict Christian principles. Instead, it is one of contributing military expertise toward combating mankind's greatest threat -- the corrupting influence of supernatural beings. The Order's commitment to its craft is absolute. The Church exists to teach and console an ignorant and increasingly frightened populace. The Sword exists to cut-down any powerful pagan heretic that gets in the Cloth's way. The Teutones know that they are that sword. Across the factions is one powerful common driving force: eradication of the enemy. This strength of purpose often embodies itself in almost single-minded behaviour. Scheming Templars and soft-hearted Hospitallers are often shocked by the resolution shown by Teutones in their hatred of all things evil. Great resources are poured into finding new and effective weaponry against the variety of foes the Church Knights face. The Teutones are not jealous of these advances and willingly share them with their comrades in arms.

Women in the Order

The Historical Order

Throughout its history the Order has adopted the approach espoused by the Catholic Church: that women have rights to property, freedom and expression -- but are to be excluded from fighting and positions of power within the Church itself. Women were allowed to worship in the same devoted manner as men -- with convents being among the oldest institutions dedicated to living in the name of Christ. But nuns were to be segregated from monks and men as much as possible: thus the high walls surrounding most convents. Few women ever held positions of power higher than abbotess -- administrating the affairs of other women. Life was not so strict in secular medieval society, with queens and princesses often holding considerable power -- and even the crown -- within their countries. As a monastic organisation, the Teutonic Knights were no different. Women were allowed to be members of the Order, as nursing nuns and as supportive affiliates. But none held positions of power or combat, and all were rigorously kept away from the brother-knights. This situation remained static since the Order was formed in the 12th Century. Only in the past decade has the winds of change been felt.

The Modern Order

The Teutonic Order's Gebistigerrat (governing council) has in recent years taken several brave moves in the field of women's rights and privileges. Like many reformationist churches, the Teutone hierarchy has begun to question the old traditions regarding women and the modern relevance of the often-quoted passages in the Bible. The Gebistigerrat has ruled that women are equal to men in God's eyes -- and have allowed them to become priests and knights in God's service. The result was essentially shock. All protests were heard, and dismissed, through the appeals council. Now the way is legally open for a woman to even hold the post of Hochmeister. But the response has been slow. There is no glass ceiling in the Order. Things are not yet that good.

Instead, many groups -- particularly among the old German nobility and Catholic members -- firmly believe that women are unsuited, both physically and morally, to God's work. These knights comply with the letter of the Gebistigerrat rulings, but not the spirit. Some nuns have applied for, and been granted, militant status. Surprisingly, numerous new female recruits have been gained through the more lenient congregations associated with the Order. These women often have a purpose: they have experienced Corruption's influence on this world and want to contribute toward a better future. Not even the most hard-line anti-assimilation Teutones can criticise the devotion and commitment demonstrated by these recruits. Careful training programs are even reducing physical strength differences, and in the firing ranges their averages are no different to that of male novices.

But prejudice blinds even the best minds.

Most female knights know they have to perform twice as well to be considered half as effective as their male counterparts. But it is a challenge that has daunted few, to this point. The Order places great faith in any novice or knights commitment to their vows and allows men and women to work side-by-side. But the female knights are billeted separately from the males, though they are given similar spartan conditions. Few women have risen to high positions of rank at this point. The most senior is an ex-nun who holds the rank of Hauskomtur (Captain) -- representing female considerations on general councils and chapter meetings. Several other women have recently completed their command courses, technically allowing them to be given the rank of Captain. Their promotion is currently dependent upon gaining sufficient active service experience -- something many commanders are unwilling to commit the women to.

Marienburg Castle

"(It had) arms and provisions to maintain a garrison of a thousand persons for ten years, of ten thousand for one year."

-- Sire de Lannoy, 14th Century

This was the most elaborate of the Teutonic Knight's strongholds which ranged from timber blockhouses, fortified towers to full castles. Marienburg served as a palace, a monastery, a parliament-house, a government office, an arsenal and a holy city. This all-purpose structure was an elaboration of a design and purpose found all over Prussia and Livonia on a much smaller scale -- generally a tower and a fortified quadrangle. Marienburg castle was originally constructed in 1276 under Grand Master Winrich von Kniprode as frontier fortress. As the empire grew, its central position increased its strategic importance. By 1309 it became the headquarters of the Teutones.

Marienburg was intended to stun the senses and awe the mind. Four convents of knights and priest-brothers sang continual masses in each of the four chapels, while the grand master conducted the duties of prince of an empire and the grand-commander and treasurer conducted the business of the Order in their own suites. The inner citadel (the Mittel) and the Chapter house (Hochschloss) covered five acres of land by 1400, and at either end lay an outer castle and a sizeable town.

From the outside the people saw only the plainest brick structures -- smooth cliffs of brick, soaring up from the leveled terraces to the battlements. Towers surrounded the gateways, defying entry. Fortified latrines (dankers) projected from the top of the walls. The immense vaulted chambers of the major buildings suggested rooms fit for giants, and the complexity of the roofline suggested a city built on a hill. While the Teutones used architecture to intimidate, they used interior design to please themselves and their guests. Elaborate painting, carving and tile-work were added to the rooms, while renovations often involved the addition of carved panels, images, friezes and ornamented column capitals. But the artwork was honest and earthy, with little of the fanciful filigree found in the castles of France and Italy. It was a pious reflection of glory and power -- defensible but homely and approachable. The centrepiece of this decoration was an eight-foot tall outdoor mosaic on the apse (arched recess) of the Hochschloss chapel, watching over the countryside. This was destroyed by bombs in 1945.

Restored to the height of its grandeur during the 19th century, Allied bombing reduced it to ruins in the last year of World War II as it had been used by the German Army as a command post.

A massive sell-off of castles after the collapse of the Iron Curtain saw the Polish Government return the partially repaired castle to the Teutones as a means of restoring and maintaining the historic site.

As the Teutonic Knights influence over a region grew, so did their forts. The need to preserve their wealth and authority led to much rebuilding -- diversifying the parts by raising towers and roofs, duplicating quadrangles and adding fine residences. The forts along the frontier were much simpler in plan: brick keeps in Prussia and stone towers in Livonia. The square keep, or Stock, contained the bare essentials of militaristic and monastic life: a chapel, a refectory (Remter), a dormitory and the commander's chamber. The central quadrangle was a fortified yard containing a kitchen, workshop, stables, and sometimes a parish church. Brick and stone craftsmanship was a major advantage for the Teutonic Knights: the pagans of the forests were used to earthen mounds, timber stockades and the protection of waterways. The knight's forts were impervious to their major assault tactic: fire. The stone and brick walls of a commandery was often what kept its knights alive until relief arrived.

Middle Castle

Then, as now, this portion of the castle was the administrative heart of the Order. Apart from containing the offices of many minor administrative posts, this imposing edifice also contains the Great Refectory (eating hall), Grand Master's chambers, and guest rooms.

Masters Chambers: This large suite occupies several floors above the Summer Refectory, and spills over into part of the nearby Chapter House. The private chambers are large and well equipped, and suitably decorated for the private entertainment of a visiting Papal legate or government official. The suite includes a private library, study, sitting room, a personal kitchenette, and conference room. A doorway leads into a nearby structure which is part of the Chapter House, opposite the halls of the Tressler and Great

Commander. This is a long hall divided into various offices and apartments for the Master's personal assistants and secretaries.

Great Refectory and Summer Refectory: These are the communal dining rooms for the warrior-monks. The Great Refectory is where all gather and eat, while the Summer Refectory is reserved as a formal dining room for entertainment of guests.

Infirmary: This huge vaulted hall -- once where nursing brothers tended to the sick, is now a modern hospital with three complete surgical theatres and a burns unit. Upper floors are recovery wards, and the Infirmary tower contains the doctors offices.

Guest Rooms: While Marienburg Castle once served as a virtual hotel for visiting nobles and knights; this is no longer the case. Instead, these extensive suites have been turned into a large and modern library. Computerised systems keep track of the movement and availability of books, as well as the humidity and temperature of areas containing the oldest works. The Teutonic Knights contain the largest known library relating to Lycanthrope Lore anywhere in the world.

The Reliquary: The Reliquary contains many precious objects brought back from the Holy Lands during the Crusades, and numerous items drawn from the Order's long history. The most precious artifact is a lock of hair said to belong to Mary -- Christ's mother. Pagan artifacts are also kept here on display, along with weapons and armour.

Chapter House (Hochschloss)

Chapter Hall: At the centre of this towering brick structure is a tall enclosed atrium. This is the meeting chamber of the knights -- used for local Chapter affairs and Grand Chapter meetings. Grand Masters have been elected here for centuries.

Priests tower: This is where the priests assigned to the Order reside and study. It includes the local parish priest for the town below.

Tressler & Commander Offices: This large hall is even larger than that devoted to the Grand Master. Here work the staff of the Treasurer and Grand Commander of the Order. Each end of the hall contains residential apartments for these officers, who are rarely far removed from their staff.

Church: This long room is astoundingly tall -- held up by huge sweeping arches that impose a feeling of smallness upon those below. Knights and novices, even now, constantly sing from the choirs -- the sound of their worship echoing through the halls.

Dormitories: This series of plain open rooms provide sleeping accommodation for knights and novices. Alongside is a hall with several stories of classrooms above it, devoted to the training and indoctrination of novices of the Order.

Garderober Tower: This is, in essence, the "war room" of the Order. Behind its thick stone walls is a high tech communications and operations centre which enables senior officers to obtain immediate "big pictures" from large multi-functional screens of where the Order's knights are dispersed, down to relayed individual telemetry information from a specific raid. Much of the world's media is monitored here, and the movements of suspects tracked around the globe. All computer systems here are completely self contained, unattached to the outside world in any way.

Courtyard Baily

This large courtyard has been extensively built up over the centuries as the major service centre for both the castle itself and the surrounding district. A self-contained defensive enclosure; it is one of many walled "islands" that make up Marienburg.

Foundry: This is now the armoury of the Order, holding a wide variety of personal heavy weapons, assault rifles, grenades, explosives, ammunition etc. There is enough equipment in and underneath this structure to frighten the Polish government.

Brewery, Bakery and Maltings: These are service rooms for the storage and preparation of food, linen and equipment.

Octagonal Tower: This is a jail devised to the best of the Order's ability to hold any supernatural which may be captured. It is air-tight with recirculating, oxygen recharged, atmosphere. There are no reflective surfaces and is surrounded by a strong containment ward. It has held several captured Lycanthropes in the past, and has yet to be subject to a successful escape attempt.

Saddlery: Converted into a modern garage.

St Lawrence Tower: This is the site of the Teutonic Order's forensic and general research facilities. A medical lab, biological sciences lab and forensic analysis wing are seeking new understanding of supernatural abilities and traits in order to devise new ways to oppose them.

Lower Castle

This is the outlying ring of defensive revertsments and walls surrounding the older and more developed Middle Castle and Courtyard Bailey. Much of the Lower Castle enclosures consist of open parks, gardens and lakes. It can only be entered through St Nicholas' Gate, the Town Gate and The New Gate. Only two gates lead to the inner defensive works -- both of them to the Courtyard Bailey. A drawbridge and tower guard the only entrance to the Middle Castle.

The Long Granary: Originally a sprawling series of interlocking warehouses, this structure has been extensively upgraded in recent times into a false streetscape representing different style residences, offices and workshops. Similar in concept to the "killing house" of SAS training programmes, the Cleansing Row is a complete streetscape full of booby traps, targets and scoring equipment. The interior of many buildings are advanced projection theatres -- displaying realistic images of various types of known supernatural creatures under various conditions. Others use surprisingly realistic robotics to emulate attackers with skills such as celerity etc. The overall effect is to be as realistic as possible in a training environment, while ensuring the safety of all participants. At worst, novices and knights would come out of a training run with a few bruises from tennis-ball guns. Training tasks include: entry, scaling, surveillance, hostage rescue, sniping and building assault.

Order Personalities

*Rejoice, brave warrior,
if you live and conquer in the Lord
but rejoice still more and give thanks
if you die and go to join the Lord.
This life can be fruitful and victory is glorious
yet a holy death for righteousness is worth more.*

*Certainly "blessed are they who die in the Lord"
but how much more so are those who die for Him?*
-- St Bernard of Clairvaux

The following is a brief introduction to the Order's current senior officers and most noted personalities.

Conrad Kitzinger (Hochmeister)

Conrad Kitzinger was born in Germany of Polish Parents in 1930. He was only nine when his parents were taken by the Gestapo. Fostered to a "good" Aryan family for Nazification, his first experience with the supernatural was when he secretly observed a "manipulation" of his Waffen-SS foster father. After the war he joined a seminary, and rapidly proved his knowledge and faith. Sent to Rome on a scholarship, he excelled in philosophy and theology and was highly praised for his intellect and dedication. After a long career in the Vatican where he served as an theological advisor and as a lecturer. His non-militant background was considered an advantage when nominated for the Grand Mastership. Since taking the helm at the reconstitution of the Teutonic Order in 1991, Kitzinger has been a powerful advocate for the Order among Europe's established clergy of all denominations, as well as a successful diplomat. He has also proven able to mediate between the humanist and traditionalist factions within his own Order. Whatever his personal preferences and biases may be, Kitzinger has demonstrated a remarkable ability to distance himself from the emotion of a situation and strip it down to basic issues. His logical and comprehensive arguments brook little criticism.

Dieter von Hechler (Grosskomtur)

Hechler was 12 when Russian troops marched into Konigzburg. He had loved the stories his grandfather told him -- stories of a time when white-clad knights ruled all the land about him. Dieter's family had once been noble: the castle of his forefathers still stood on the coast of the Baltic. These stories filled the young Dieter with pride and eager anticipation for the advancing German armies. Reality struck home hard. His father was one of those executed in retaliation for the Hitler bomb plot. The initial relief of Russian occupation soon turned to terror as socialism was imposed. Hechler was "rescued" from "relocation" by some friends of his now dead grandfather. These defenders of the Christian community had especially wanted to protect the grandson of their ex-Hochmeister. They called themselves the Teutonic Knights. Dieter joined the underground Order young. To Dieter faith is something to be treasured, something personal. A gift, not a right. For most of his life worship was a personal affair, carried out in secret among small gatherings. As such, the trappings and traditional baggage religion has gathered over the centuries has little meaning to him. This viewpoint has caused Hechler become the closest thing the Order's younger "humanist" faction has as to an advocate among the Gebistigerrat.

Albrecht von Schwarzburg (Ordensmarschall)

Albrecht von Schwarzburg was born into Allied occupied Germany shortly after World War II. His noble parents benefited from Germany's reconstruction process -- investing heavily in new industrial and commercial ventures. Serving in the German police force for his entire career, Schwarzburg ended up commanding the anti-terrorist group GSG-9 before retiring to take up the reins as the Teutonic Knight's Knight Marshal. His experience in counter-terrorist tactics and training has had a heavy influence on both the Order's procedures and policies. Schwarzburg is a traditionalist -- believing strongly that the Order exists for German Catholic men of noble extraction. He is concerned about the Order's current direction and is vying for the next Grand Mastership.

Deutschritter: Teutonic Knight (Part 3)

A supplement for Church Knight: The Cainite Crusade

Written and compiled by Jamie Seidel (omicron@adelaide.dialix.oz.au)

Special Supplement: The Hitler Bomb Plot

*Near the Rhine from the Norican mountains will be born a great man of the people, come too late.
He will fight in Poland and Hungary,
and they will never know what became of him.*

*Beasts wild with hunger will cross the rivers,
the greater part of the battlefield will be against Hitler.
He will drag the leader in a cage of iron,
when the child of Germany observes no law.*

-- Nostradamus, Quatrain 58 and 24, Century II

False Prophet

How could a cultured people -- a people who gave the world Goethe and Beethoven, Bach and Heine -- follow so perverse a prophet and plunge headlong into a demonic orgy of destruction?

Through their mystic attractions of the occult.

Germany of the 1930s had become a perfect breeding ground for dissent, national pride and heretical belief. World War I, the Great Depression, its status as the "outcast" of Europe and a sense of lost greatness combined to make ordinary Germans feel hard done by. Nazism cleverly crossed all these concerns. It had a political element, economic element -- and a mystic attraction that activated religious impulses from the German people, uniting hearts and minds under a common goal. It was the occult element of Nazism that inspired the hysterical fanaticism, the demonic energy and ferocity that outshone other totalitarian governments in Italy and Spain.

This did not accidentally "happen." It was a carefully contrived and meticulously orchestrated plan -- enacted by Adolf Hitler with the aid of Heinrich Himmler, Rudolf Hess and other committed Nazi party members. The Nazi party embodied many of religion's most ancient and successful techniques -- elaborate ceremonies, chanting, rhythmic repetition, incantatory speeches, colour, contrast and light. The Nuremberg rallies were cunningly stage-managed theatre -- full of colours, uniforms, flags, spotlights, night and precise timing. People intoxicated themselves, chanting themselves into a state of rapture with the mantra "Sig Heil!". Impose upon this Hitler's venomous energy, a rhythmic pulse as hypnotic as a drumbeat. With the pressure of thousands of people packed together in a confined area, each and every one of them were open to the wildest and most outrageous suggestions.

It was not long before the people elevated their "Führer" to an occult status: here was their messiah, sent to bring their once-great nation out of the wilderness.

An associate of the Teutonic Knights, Herman Rauschning, was one of the Nazi party's first supporters. But Rauschning saw the world through open eyes, and rapidly recognised what Hitler was up to. By 1935 he was severely alarmed by the power this little man wielded. Fleeing to the United States, he published two books before the outbreak of World War II recounting his conversations with Hitler. In them he related how Hitler was fully aware of the techniques necessary to fire up a crowd with religious fervor. He revealed how Hitler was deliberately putting himself in a messianic position to exploit the devotion and fervour often associated with religion.

This effort to warn the world fell on deaf ears.

The New Germanic Order

"Their hierarchical organisation and the initiation through symbolic rites, that is to say without bothering the brains but by working on the imagination through magic and the symbols of a cult -- all this is the dangerous element and the element I have taken over. Don't you see that our party must be of this character? . . . An Order, that is what it has to be -- and Order, the hierarchical Order of a secular priesthood."

-- Adolf Hitler, Mien Kampf

The new Germanic religion became based on sacred blood -- German blood. This was expressed through the belief in the purity of the Aryan bloodline and the "worship" of the first Nazi flag -- Blutfahne -- stained with the blood of the first Nazi martyrs. Part of the creed of the Nazi party reads: "To German Faith the blood is holy, in the course of the centuries, to creative sacred of inherited blood gives itself the form of the race." Christian festivals such as those of Easter and Christmas were rejected and given other meaning -- often similar to the old Sol Invictus sun cult. This new philosophy was particularly strong among the SS boys' training camps.

The SS

Hitler saw the SS as a reconstituted Deutschnitter -- a modern equivalent of the white-mantled knights with black crosses who, seven hundred years before, had spearheaded an earlier Germanic "drive into the East". The pre-war SS was strictly recruited, organised and ritualised in order to establish this parallel. The elaborate and mystical induction ceremony was obviously reminiscent of the Teutones chivalric investiture. Candidates had to show a pure Aryan family tree dating back at least 250 years for general recruits, 300 years for officers. Each candidate had to undergo a religious-style novitiate before he was accepted into the Order. Much of the SS insignia and runic inscriptions were based on masonic and Teutone patterns. SS itself was meant to be based on the Sig rune, the rune of power used to denote the lightning-bolt of the storm gods. Apart from genocidal racist behaviour, the SS's ritual so included conceiving children on the gravestones of prominent historical figures, marriages which were little more than Aryan orgies, and other mystical ceremonies. These were supposed to ensure the spirit of significant people of Germany's past would be reborn into the new Reich.

Himmler instigated an Order of the Round Table with 12 knight officers -- SS Obergruppenfuhrer (lieutenant generals). This group of quasi-mystical "knights" was deliberately reminiscent of the 12 Apostles with Jesus at their head. Its headquarters was in Wewelsburg, near Paderborn, in West Germany. Although never completed, this town (centred on a modern castle) was supposed to become the SS capital.

The town and castle's architecture was based on the numbers 3 and 12, the significance of which is not known. Its street plan was an unusual two-thirds circle, with a "spear-shaped" main road and central castle complex piercing to its centre. Himmler often spoke of Sacred Geometry, "earth magic" -- and there is no

doubt these philosophies were applied to Wewelsburg's design. Symbolism was crucial: around the castle, and centred on a secret crypt, the planned town and streetscape was to radiate outward in meticulously plotted concentric circles. At the centre of this geometric arrangement was the bastion or castle. In the centre of this castle was a large half-globe shaped crypt, with 13 suites branching from it. Here were the quarters of the "Round Table," the globe-room being the "centre of the universe" where they would meet in conference. At its precise centre was an eternal flame, reached by three steps, and about the room's walls were 12 columns -- all with lost significance.

The project was never completed.

Assassination Attempt*

"The assassination must be attempted, at any cost. Even should that fail, the attempt to seize power in the capital must be undertaken. We must prove to the world and to future generations that the men of the German resistance movement dared to take the decisive step to hazard their lives upon it. Compared with this, nothing else matters."

-- Henning von Tresckow, June 10, 1944

* Adapted from *The World At War*, volume 12

The Setting

By 1944 the scattered groups of anti-Nazi's within Hitler's Germany had lost hope in their efforts to bring about the Fuhrer's downfall. The last hope of the resistance lay within the Wehrmacht: German army officers with noble family backgrounds and ideals of freedom and democracy. Though the Teutonic Order had all but been shattered in the 16th century, strong traditions remained within the German aristocracy -- Particularly those that lived on the borders of Poland and the Danzig corridor.

The Teutonic Knights still existed as a small group of 24 knights and sergeants who met secretly to conduct their traditional services and ceremonies. These knights, and their families, held strong military positions within the German Army. Proud and protective of their heritage, these officers grew concerned with the Waffen SS' claim to be the successor of the ancient Militant Order's. During the 1930s, the SS stylised itself as the new *Deutschritter* -- twisting perceptions of the Teutonic Knights achievements into propaganda. However, the Teutonic families supported Hitler's quest to restore the northern provinces of Poland to the Germanic empire -- these lands had previously been their own. Danzig and Konigzberg were two major cities that owed their foundation to the Order.

Hitler's ambitions soon proved to be more than recovering lost Germanic lands. The tactics used to bring Czechoslovakia and Austria under the Third Reich's yoke were brutal. The Fuhrer's dictatorial traits were coming to the fore. His unhealthy obsession with the occult also became a cause for concern. The Fuhrer was quite open about finding "any means" to help establish his 1000 year Reich. The Order tried in vain to keep his SS and special agents from seeking out supernaturals. Some suspect he had actually already found them.

The army officers who planned the so-called "General's Plot" of July 1944 counted members of the Teutonic Knights among their ranks. Others had Teutonic family backgrounds. This common history, and the common-held beliefs related to the Order, drew the Generals together in one last bid to free Germany from tyranny. The Teutonic nursing orders in Amsterdam and Vienna (both subject to the Third Reich) contributed their support -- mostly in intelligence gathering and financial aid.

Hitler proved hard to get.

Not only did he drive around in armoured cars; he became increasingly difficult to locate and made fewer and fewer public appearances. He spent much of his time in his Chancellery in Berlin or in his Berchtesgaden mountain retreat. His war headquarters was constantly changing, but always encircled by camps of SS or loyal army troops. In 1944 his headquarters were at the Wolfsschanze "Wolf's Lair," deep in the forests of Rastenburg, East Prussia. The men and women in daily contact with the Fuhrer were all unhesitatingly loyal. All had to be weaponless in his presence.

The Plotters

Many thousands of German citizens opposed Hitler -- facing torture, imprisonment and death. They were members of the churches, trade union movements and surviving opposition political parties. Resistance was almost entirely a matter of individual protests at terrible personal cost -- organised militant resistance was simply impossible within the Fatherland. The decision to assassinate Hitler was not a light one. All recruits to the armed forces had to swear an oath of personal allegiance to the "Leader." This oath was a serious matter and made it difficult for many dissatisfied -- but honourable -- officers to take the final step.

The following were the principal men behind the bomb plot. Each one was a devout Christian (both Catholic and Protestant). While most of this small group knew each other or had close mutual friends who kept the grapevine going, they tended to operate in semi-independent groups or individually.

Ludwig Beck

A former general, nominated to be Head of State on Hitler's downfall. Age 64. In 1938 Beck had tried to force the High Command to arrest Hitler on counts of treason. He was a "great gentleman" of refined nature, a military historian and scholar whom everyone respected. He was in a poor state of health when the time of the bomb plot came, but his association gave the conspirators a good reputation. Few people -- even among the knights -- knew that he was the Teutonic Knight's Ordensmarschall.

Wilhelm Canaris

An admiral but now head of Military Intelligence (Abwehr) and a secret supporter of the conspiracy. Aged 57.

Hans Oster

Major General and deputy to Canaris. An active organiser of the plot. Age 49.

Helmuth Count von Moltke

Legal advisor to Canaris and the leader of the so called "Kreisau circle" which advocated a non-violent overthrow of Hitler. Aged 37. Only Moltke, an aristocrat (of Teutonic background) and land owner of idealistic views, kept himself aloof from any violence. He, and most of his friends, expressed their opposition in solely moral terms. But when they were caught up in the arrests after the coup attempt, they faced their trials with dignity and courage.

Heinrich von Stulpnagel

General and Military Governor of France. Leader of the *coup d'etat* in Paris. Aged 58. A man of distinction and sensitivity, but also capable of great resolution.

Carl Gordeler

Former mayor of Leipzig and Price Control Commissioner in Hitler's government. Aged 60. Gordeler, a tough man of tireless energy, expressed his mind in a ceaseless round of secret meetings and memoranda. He was a prominent civilian, and made himself the conspirators "travelling advocate." His conversations became more and more indiscreet and open association with him became dangerous. The Gestapo most certainly had him under surveillance.

Friedrich Olbricht

Colonel General, head of the Supply Section of the Reserve Army and principal administrator of the attempt. Aged 58.

Henning von Tresckow

Major General and Chief-of-Staff for the Central Army Group on the Eastern Front. Aged 43. Tresckow was a knight-captain of the Teutonic Knights.

Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg

Colonel and Chief-of-Staff, Reserve Army. This is who took the bomb to Rastenburg on July 20. Aged 37. A brilliant, handsome and carefree man full of quick, nervous energy and with a mischievous sense of humour. He was a Catholic of excellent family and a knight lieutenant in the Hospitaller Order. He was highly educated and a fluent speaker of English. By training he was a career officer, and had served in the Polish campaign, Western European and African fronts. He never concealed his contempt for Hitler, constantly embarrassing his fellow officers. In April 1943, he received serious injuries from a strafing aircraft. He lost his right hand and forearm and all but three fingers on his left hand. His right eye was shot away and his left eye damaged. He is reported to have told his wife as he lay recuperating in hospital : "I feel I must do something now to save Germany. We General Staff officers must all accept our share of responsibility." After the failure of the bomb plot, Hitler ordered the revenge killing of a further 12 knights from the Hospitaller Bailiwick of Brandenburg.

The SS and Gestapo

The Gestapo were well aware that a state of conspiracy against the regime was likely to exist. They therefore kept continuous watch upon suspects of every kind. But this did not mean that all those under suspicion were arrested. The Gestapo's attitude towards German conspirators was to leave them at large where they may expose further members of their plot. Action was only taken once the conspirators actually came up with a workable plan.

Heinrich Himmler, head of the Waffen SS, took a central role in uncovering the bomb plot. While personally concerned about Hitler's deteriorating mental and physical health, Himmler remained fanatically loyal. He was generally considered second in succession to the Fuhrer. Civilian conspirators Johannes Popitz and Carl Langbehn had appealed to Himmler to take action to save Germany from impending defeat and the lunacy of Hitler's command. They were arrested for their efforts.

Conspiracy

The core of the actual plot to bomb Hitler was within the Abwehr -- Admiral Canaris' department. But by the time of the coup many conspirators had been arrested -- including key civilian members needed to ensure its success. These included Dohnanyi (legal mind behind the coup), famous pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Catholic lawyer Joseph Muller (who had been trying to get the Vatican to negotiate peace between the allies and Germany). Major General Oster was kept inactive by surveillance.

Even Gordeler, tireless in his efforts, was becoming a danger to the plot through growing Gestapo suspicions about his activities. Canaris's Abwehr department was broken up by Heinrich Himmler in February 1944, its operations integrated into the SS intelligence service. This action was taken to destroy what had become a hotbed for dissent against the Fuhrer -- without having to make mass arrests. The plot appeared to be failing. Bonhoeffer, Dohnanyi and Muller were arrested in April 1943. Johannes Popitz and Carl Langbehn (a civilian who worked for Himmler) was arrested in September, Moltke in January 1944. Himmler, in a conversation with Canaris, mentioned that Beck and Gordeler were being watched by the Gestapo. With all civilians out of the picture, the job was left on the shoulders of the army.

Unsuccessful Attempts

On March 13, 1943, Baron Henning von Tresckow, a staff officer serving on the Eastern Front and Dr Fabian von Schlabrendorff, a recruited lawyer, determined to take matters into their own hands. Their commanding general Kluge, sympathetic to the resistance, refused Treschow's urges to arrest Hitler at an upcoming inspection. Gordeler also approached the general (a testimony to this civilian's ability to move about freely), also to no effect. Tresckow, acting in communication with Beck in Berlin, sent a delayed action bomb disguised as a package containing brandy bottles to a friend at Hitler's Rastenburg headquarters. Schlabrendorf armed the fuse just before giving the bomb to one of Hitler's aides as he boarded the Fuhrer's plane for the flight back to East Prussia. The bomb failed to explode. Schlabrendorff had to fly to Rastenburg in a frantic (but successful) attempt to intercept the package before it was opened.

Later, two young soldiers volunteered to sacrifice their lives in a bomb attempt. The opportunity presented itself in a personal demonstration to the Fuhrer of a newly designed great coat for use on the Eastern Front. The Abwehr supplied the explosives, taken from captured British stocks. The demonstration was delayed, then cancelled. The conspirators then realised the only way to ensure success was to personally detonate a bomb in Hitler's presence -- at a staff meeting.

Code name Valkyrie

Stauffenberg took over responsibility for the attempt at this stage. He was the kind of man who would undertake such a mission with no more than a laugh, yet with careful calculation of movements. He had succeeded in his determination to overcome his disabilities -- even to the extent of being able to knot a bow tie with only three fingers.

Once released from hospital, he was appointed (by the conspirators) as Chief of Staff to Olbricht, Head of Supply Section of the Reserve Army. This was based in the War Office in Berlin.

Stauffenberg was promoted again in June 1944 to the office of full Colonel and appointed as Reserve Army's Chief of Staff. It was now necessary for him to attend staff conferences at Hitler's Headquarters.

He met him on June 7, 1944 -- the day after D-Day. He looked the Fuhrer in the eye -- and discovered he did not fear him.

D-Day had come too early. The chance to administer a political coup had been shattered. But Tresckow sent him a message from the eastern front to continue with the plot. In coordination with Beck in Berlin and with Stieff and Fellgiebel -- the Army Chief of Signals at Rastenburg, Stauffenberg took action. Stauffenberg's injuries drew sympathy and respect among the Fuhrer's staff and bodyguards and his high True Faith protected him from vampiric analysis of his intentions. No one ever checked him for arms -- he was considered above suspicion because of the sacrifices he had already made.

An attempt on July 15 was aborted because Goering and Himmler were not present. Facing exposure of the mission, the decision was made to set off the device at the next staff meeting -- one o'clock, July 20 -- regardless of Goering's and Himmler's presence. Stauffenberg joked with his secretary about the strange package in his briefcase. On his way home on the eve of the attack, he asked his staff driver to stop at a Catholic church in Dahlem so he could go in and pray. The staff meeting was re-scheduled to 12.30pm as Mussolini was expected to visit that afternoon. The conference was to take place in a long wooden hut -- temporary accommodation while work was taken place within the complex. Setting the detonator as he walked toward the hall, Stauffenberg followed Keitel into the room where Hitler was already receiving a staff report. He realised that the blast would not kill Hitler if placed too far away -- the windows and doors were open because of a hot day. Goering and Himmler were not there. The briefcase was slipped to the floor alongside Hitler -- with Stauffenberg murmuring an apology about having to take a phone call from Berlin and leaving the room. He walked to his staff car and was opening the door as the blast went off. The car was able to get past the two check-points only through Stauffenberg's ability to bluff an emergency mission and his previous reputation. At the scene of the explosion, men were injured and dazed. Four men were dead -- but Hitler was not among them. He had been protected by the thick oak table as he leant forward to examine a chart. An officer had moved the bomb aside, out of Hitler's foot reach as a courtesy. This officer saved the Fuhrer's life -- but not his own.

Aftermath

In the chaos that followed, the conspirators attempted their political coup.

It failed.

Hitler -- was still alive.

Stauffenberg, Olbricht, Haften (Stauffenberg's driver) and Mertz von Quirnheim (the officer responsible for the conspiracy's communications) were sentenced to immediate death by shooting before a firing squad. Carl Gordeler was executed in February 1945. Pastor Dietrich Bonhoffer was executed in April 1945. Ulrich von Halssell was executed in February 1945. General Beck committed suicide on July 20, 1944. Major General von Tresckow committed suicide on July 21, 1944. Admiral Canaris, executed April 1945. Count Helmuth von Moltke, executed January 1945. Retaliations for the bombing was widespread. Among the victims were 12 Knights Hospitaller of the German Langue and many members of their family. Many known members of the Deutschritter were either executed, imprisoned or closely watched.

Insert: Who was Responsible?

The pressing question to come out of World War II was: who caused it, and why? The Teutonic Order has given the mission to find out these details the highest priority. These shadowy puppetmasters have struck once. They will undoubtedly strike again. Many supernatural and pagan organisations have claimed

affiliation with the Nazi party and its key leaders -- mostly through embracing people such as Heinrich Himmler and Joseph Goebbels after they had established their power. But none claim responsibility for originating the concept.

The Tremere associated with the Sabbat claim Himmler to be one of their own. The Camarilla's Malkavians claim Goering. A smattering of other, less significant, names have appeared among the ranks of many Clans. All of these claims have been rigorously investigated during the past 50 years -- with little success. Most mysterious is the nature, and identity, of those pulling Adolf Hitler's strings. However, the plot may not be as simple as it appears on the surface. The murky tangle of powerplays between the Camarilla, the Sabbat, Shapechanger interests and associations of Mages hints heavily toward another explanation: perhaps they are themselves dancing to someone else's tune.

Knights investigating the forces behind the Nazi party are no longer concentrating on vampires, ghouls or were creatures. Instead, they are attempting to trace the subtle threads that may point to Demonic influences. Demonic activity would go a long way to explain how so many people could be affected in such a way for so long. Mere vampiric disciplines such as Presence and Dominate cannot accommodate the "hijacking" of an entire nation's spirit. The Darkness is still there: and it is growing.

Insert: An Order's Shame

"The service of Germany appears to us to be genuine and sincere service of God; the banner of the Third Reich appears to us to be His banner; and the Fuhrer of the people is the saviour whom He sent to rescue us"

-- Hitler Youth Leader

"The fuhrer is not only a secular Kaiser, who carries out in the state the task of government; he is at the same time the Messiah who is able to announce a millennial kingdom."

-- Swiss Evangelical Press Service

"The totalitarian National Socialist Weltanschauung is a pagan faith that cannot but regard Christianity as alien and antagonistic."

-- Catholic Press, 1939

The creation of a tyrannical secret society of thugs in the image of the Deutschritter -- the SS -- was the source of great shame to the Order after the war. The pride in which the SS presented themselves as superior beings, granted the Divine right to do as they please was held up to the Teutonic Order as a mirror: there were few crimes the Waffen-SS had committed that the Teutones had not. The Teutones remembered their heavy-handed tactics of the Baltic Crusade: slaughtering whole villages because they refused to convert instantly to Christianity, destroying cultures merely because they were different -- not because they were evil. The Order had served the purposes of land-hungry German nobles and not the higher purpose of their Lord.

The scattered remnants of the once-great Deutschritter gathered in secret a few years after the war, collectively agreeing that the Order's downfall had been its own pride and arrogance. If the Order was to rise again, these sins had to be stamped out. Just before the gathering had finished, the then Hochmeister Karl Weber paused and asked the assembled knights if they could hear an old man singing in a strange tongue . . .

Insert: the Nazi Legacy

The voice of Adolf Hitler has carried its message of hate and depravity over the intervening decades, casting its corruptive influence over successive generations of youth. Many groups of anarchists, racists and reactionaries have rallied to the Nazi banner as a means of expressing their hate. In recent years, Germany has seen a resurgence of popularity of National Socialism among its youth -- extending as far as thinly disguised Nazi's being elected into parliament. Murders of foreigners -- especially African and Asia-Minor peoples -- is a frequent occurrence. German special forces and special investigative teams appear on the surface to be attempting to stamp out this behaviour. But this often appears merely to be assisting one group to gain ascendancy over another. The integrity of many public officials is increasingly suspect. More and more are associating themselves with the angry youth on the streets. Reunification of East and West Germany has not been as smooth as initially promised. The Eastern provinces have yet to see great benefit from the West's much touted rich industries. As unemployment rises and the Government finds itself increasingly hard pressed to fund public welfare and housing, more and more people are looking back upon the unity Germany once had under Hitler. This is an ideal setting for rival supernatural groups to exert their control. The Ventrue are hard pressed to maintain their sense of law and order. Anarch groups -- Brujah and even the Sabbat -- are making great inroads into areas once thought to be impenetrable Camarilla strongholds.

Book Six: Monastic War Machine

So they are seen to be a strange and bewildering breed, meeker than lambs, fiercer than lions. I do not know whether to call them monks or knights because though both names are correct one lacks a monk's gentleness and the other a knight's pugnacity.

-- St Bernard of Clairvaux, De Laude Novae Militiae

In many ways the Teutonic Knights are considered the "shock troops" of the Militant Orders. East Germany, Poland, Austria and the Latvian States were all subject to compulsory conscription during the years of Soviet rule. Almost all males underwent compulsory military training and a high percentage went on to serve second terms if they displayed signs of being mildly competent. As a result most of the members of the Order drawn from these East European States are already militarily competent. They have had, in effect, a head start in their training. Much of the Order's combat doctrine is drawn from GSG-9 and Spetnaz procedures as a number of their best knights served in the universally feared units before passing their training on to their brother monks.

The Teutones often supply the firepower in combined operations between the Orders. Not only in the form of warrior-monks, but also in the form of equipment. The Order holds a substantial stake in Heckler & Koch, one of the world's finest firearm engineering firms. It also obtained a controlling interest in a German facility that developed individually moulded body armour for specialist police.

The stereotype of trigger-happy gunheads is an unfortunate one. Like any other Order, the Teutonic Order is a balanced institution comprising investigation, research and support arms. It just happens to be very good at "cleansing" operations.

Counter Terrorism

The world is not a peaceful place. International police reports indicate there are at least 1200 active terrorist organisations around the world. Some groups struggle for political power: others attest to more ideological goals such as the destruction of capitalism or eliminating the "great Satan" -- otherwise known as the United States. Whatever their stated purpose, there is almost always one or more of the Kindred or Garou behind such a group -- manipulating them to their own purposes. These terrorist organisations come in all shapes and sizes: some are small "green" extremist squads seeking the elimination of capitalist

industrialist pigs. Others are international organisations on the scale of Islamic Jihad, seeking to impose upon an unwilling world the strictures of their religion. This diversity makes them particularly difficult to penetrate. Unravelling the many layers of command and control to expose the Kindred influence behind them is a time and resource consuming task. Generally, this is a task mostly undertaken by Templars and Hospitallers. The Teutonic Knights consider themselves the ones who go in and clean the mess up once it has been uncovered. Unfortunately for the Orders, matters are rarely this simple. The Militant Organisations, irrespective of religious backgrounds, need to cooperate with each other -- sharing intelligence, expertise and technology. This is being achieved.

Urban Combat

The vast majority of modern Militant Order combat is in an urban environment. Vampires prefer towns and cities because they provide a ready supply of blood and the size of such places help conceal their activities. These same conditions make it very difficult for the Militant Orders to conduct cleansing operations. Innocent civilians almost always stand in the way of a "clean" raid. Prolific gunfire will cause casualties among people simply "passing by" -- even at ranges of more than a kilometre! The only way to counter-act this is through well-disciplined knights engaging in well-planned actions with as many contingencies allowed for as possible. Any raid must, by definition, be short, sharp and effective. At the first sign of major trouble, the team will usually pull out in order to avoid complications.

Fighting in Built-up Areas

One 12-man chapter of Knights of the Teutonic Order is on constant stand-by in Marienburg Castle, ready to respond instantly to incidents anywhere in the world. But this team is only considered to be a backup: the knights on the scene are expected to handle most situations themselves. Successful cleansing operations are quick, violent and devastating. With the highly trained knights at Marienburg at a local commander's disposal after only the briefest of delays, even the hardest of supernatural "nests" can be breached. Numerous drills ensure all specialist equipment and weapons of all knights are always prepared and ready to use.

Assessment and Analysis

Once a supernatural has been exposed, a combat team will be deployed to the scene as quickly as possible. The combat team commander will conduct an immediate assessment of the situation in conjunction with the investigative team responsible for the discovery. A command "cell" is usually established within a kilometre of the scene: often in a hotel room or even a large van. The commander of the combat team controls the forces on the ground though the Order's Marshal and the local Preceptory must make the final decision upon whether to "engage" the creature or not. Such approval is not always possible. In these situations, discretion is left to the scene commander. There are many considerations that need to be taken into account, not least among them the chance of "collateral damage." If the investigative team believes the creature to be a sufficiently strong lead to more senior members of its kind, the operation will also be called off. An extensive checklist has been compiled that commanders must go through before deciding upon action. It includes how many innocent people are in the vicinity and in close contact with the creature; what type of creature is involved and how many; what sort of building is it; what style of air-conditioning does it have. . . All this information is necessary for an accurate assessment of the chances of success and what forces will be needed to conduct the operation.

The Assault Plan

Once the necessary approval has been gained, the commander must set about planning the actions of his knights. The investigative team at this point takes on the role of intelligence analysts, gathering and processing information for the commander. Detailed intelligence is assessed to reveal the options open to the pagan creatures within the building. This will often include photos taken by the investigative team and detailed descriptions, right down to the style of clothing they are currently wearing. Psychological profiles are distributed and analysed as are physiological details and speculative supernatural attributes. Simple information like this can reduce a knight's response times by vital fractions of a second. Details of the weapons likely to be encountered are distributed among the combat team and analysis of the haven's defenses -- often involving poison gases, grenades or demolition charges -- is of great importance.

During all this time the scene will be under surveillance from several sniping positions. The observations of these knights are a vital component of the commanders available intelligence pool. All is collated by the investigative team into an overall picture of the situation. Investigative team knights will attempt to get close to the target and make first-hand observations of the likely entry points and the position of any sentries. Eavesdropping equipment (possibly previously deployed by the investigative team) and equipment such as infrared and image intensifying scopes can be used to clarify the picture of the immediate situation -- such as where the targets are at any particular moment. Computerised models of the scene will be drawn, if possible, to "test" any assault plan for omissions and errors. These models are also used to show members of the combat team what to expect once inside the building -- giving them a degree of much needed familiarity. Local novices are also likely to be called in and given the task of surveying and staking-out the surrounding streets to catch or trail any suspicious escapees.

When the commander is ready, he will notify the Knight Marshal of the preparations to move against the targets. A second approval is needed before the assault is actually launched. The commander will give the order to attack once the combined forces of the investigative and combat team knights are in position.

Storming a Building

The most common techniques for entering a building involves grappling hooks or ropes to enter higher windows. Drain pipes, ledges and fire-escapes are also convenient means of access to the roof. Attacking from a "high" position is a well established advantage in combat -- allowing grenades and explosives to be easily tossed down to clear lower rooms. With this method, a building can be cleared room by room, from the top down. However, this can often be too slow, noisy and dangerous. In a penetration of a vampire's haven, the bulk of the work needs to be done quickly, quietly and without the vampire's knowledge. Sewers, air-conditioning ducts, service shafts, neighbouring rooftops -- all are convenient highways for an approach. Blowing a hole in a wall may seem less subtle but it achieves the main goal: quick access to the main or desired location. Once the dust has cleared, it's generally too late for the vampire to react.

The good thing about combat in urban environments is that it is relatively easy to approach the site covertly. Combat teams can move through the sewers -- though this can be as dangerous as attacking the building itself -- and streets into positions close-by but still out of sight. High-tension wires can be slung between the rooftops of buildings allowing knights to cross over to the top of the target site. Knights can abseil off the tops of these buildings, smashing through windows to gain entry to the target areas. Doors can be taken down by a minimum of three men: one with a personal battering ram, another protecting him with a shield and the third armed and ready. Another more dramatic means of entry is blowing a hole through walls. A distraction will be organised if possible to draw the target's attention away from the immediate vicinity of the initial break-in. This may involve a false attack, a staged car accident, a small fire etc.

Entry techniques are many and varied, depending specifically upon the location involved. Doors can be blown in through the use of small lumps of plastic explosives known as frame charges. At other times, shotguns using powdered shot can blast out door hinges or locks. Windows can be blown out in similar ways. Demolition charges are rarely used because of the injuries they are likely to cause to nearby people. But when they are used, it often involves carefully judged portions of plastic explosives placed against

walls. More covert means of entry can also be used, such as taking out the screws from doors and windows so they can be simply pushed in. Moments before the knights burst into a building, stun grenades are tossed in to disorient any opposition. These grenades are used frequently. While upsetting, they do little harm to unfortunate bystanders. Tear gas and other non-lethal grenades will also be used, depending on likely opposition.

The knights, dressed in their black fire-resistant suits, balaclavas, body armour and combined respirator/helmet/communications systems, storm into the building protected by the pre-arranged confusion. Their first objective is to reach the target as quickly as possible so as to limit the chances of hostage taking and escape. Knights will usually work in pairs when clearing a building, each pair assigned a specific area to cover and clear. The knights enter a room simultaneously and should identify and neutralise any hostiles within two seconds. When the threat has been removed the senior knight will radio that the room is clear -- their progress recorded on the commanders computerised representation of the building.

Fighting in built-up area (FIBA) doctrine involves throwing grenades into rooms before spraying them with submachine gun fire. However, this is not appropriate in areas with many innocent civilians nearby. Instead, a knight's reflexes are carefully trained to identify threats and supernaturals and his weapons skills highly trained so that he/she can instantly pump the target full of bullets. Room clearing requirements should be achieved in under four seconds. Once all opposition has been suppressed, a methodical sweep of the building is conducted to ensure no supernaturals are missed.

Blocking Escape Routes

Teutonic doctrine calls for all supernaturals to be shot unless they surrender unconditionally. First and foremost upon a knight's mind must be minimisation of risk: if in doubt shoot it out is an unofficial motto of most combat teams. When a commander believes the building is clear, he/she will move in with the command team to help clear out any bodies or other useful evidence. Any knights with medical training that can be spared are assigned to finding and assisting any civilians.

Knights are in great danger as long as they remain at the scene of the ordeal. Delayed action explosives, fires and the local authorities are all likely to complicate matters. In this confusion it is possible for a supernatural may try to escape by hiding among innocent civilians attempting to escape the scene. At this point the snipers, who have been watching the building and responding to requested fire-support from the attacking knights, take over. All people leaving the building in the open are scrutinised through their scopes and special training. Any "leakers" will be tackled by back-up forces if available, trailed by supporting novices, or assigned to combat team knights still in the building. If necessary, the sniper will attempt to "slow down" the supernatural with a few well-aimed shots. The final act of the commander is to declare all knights and targets accounted for.

Arms and Equipment

"There are secular soldiers and there are soldiers of Christ; but secular soldiers bear feeble and perilous arms, while those of the soldiers of Christ are most powerful and excellent."

-- Smaragdus, abbot of Saint-Mihiel, 890s

Keeping one step ahead of supernatural tactics and techniques is a constant struggle. Knights must be armed and equipped with the best that is available. This can include assault ladders, harnesses, rope, specialised explosives and ammunition, refined firesuits and armour, reliable weapons and effective technology. To maintain this high standard of technical ability, the Teutonic Knights have become closely associated with several leading German companies.

At the top of the list is small arms manufacturer Heckler & Koch. Long recognised as one of the world's best handgun and submachinegun manufacturers, the influence of the Teutonic Order ensures weapons suited to the rigors of their specialised form of combat are produced. Also under the influence of the Teutones is the firm Armorfit which produces the worlds lightest but strongest body-armour. The radical process of producing this armour involves making a plastic mould of an individual knight, from which articulated armour plates are then pressed. This allows the armour to fit comfortably on the body, reducing its effects on movement and profile.

More detailed descriptions of the companies and their products follow:

Heckler & Koch

While not owned by the Teutonic Knights, several senior executives and engineers are either associates or Novices within the Order. When funding for a particular development project falls in doubt, the Deutschritter has been known to contribute towards the cost if the weapon is considered useful. Several plants are scattered about Germany, though its main offices and plant are at Oberndorf.

Special Operations Handgun Program

In August 1991, Heckler & Koch, Inc. and Colt's Manufacturing Company were awarded contracts with the US Special Operations Command for the development of an Offensive Handgun Weapon System (OHWS). USSOCOM directs the activities of some of America's most elite military units, including the Navy SEALs, Air Force Special Operations Wing, and the Army Green Berets, Rangers, and Special Operations Aviation. The "OHWS" consists of three components: a .45 caliber pistol, a laser aiming module (LAM), and a sound and flash suppressor. Testing was completed in March 1993 and two companies submitted final technical and cost proposals. In January 1994, the HK system was selected and a contract was awarded.

Heckler & Koch GmbH developed the pistol and suppressor components and Insight Technology, Inc. (ITI) of Londonberry, NH developed the laser module, a combination flashlight and visible and invisible laser sight. Heckler & Koch continued the development of the pistol and Knight's Armament Company of Vero Beach, Florida, a world leader in suppressor technology, joined the project to design and develop the suppressor component. In November 1994, 30 pre-production pistols and suppressors were delivered to the US Navy for final developmental and operational testing. At the same time several examples were handed over the the Teutonic Knights. Testing was complete in April 1995 and a production contract was exercised in July 1995. The Special Operations Forces (SOF) Offensive Handgun (as it is now termed) will meet some of the most stringent operational requirements ever demanded of a combat handgun -- with Olympic match grade accuracy (2.5 inch maximum extreme spread in a 5-round shot group at 25 meters) in all operational environments and endurance and reliability providing a service life of over 30,000 rounds of +P ammunition. Beginning around August 1996, the SOF pistol will be made available for civilian and law enforcement purchase. This will include the threaded barrel, but will not include the laser sighting system or suppressor. Prices are projected to be around \$US2000 for civilians and \$US1600 for law enforcement.

Specifications

Caliber	.45 ACP
Action type	linkless
Weight	2.30 lbs
Length	9.6 inches
Length (w/suppressor)	16.65 inches
Width	1.50 inches

Trigger pull (D/A) ~4.50 lbs
Trigger pull (S/A) ~11 lbs

Heckler & Koch MP5 Variants

The Heckler and Koch MP5 Submachine gun is a lightweight, air-cooled, magazine-fed, delayed blowback operated, select-fire weapon that can be shouldered or hand fired. The H&K MP5 submachine gun is chambered for various pistol cartridges to include 9x19mm Luger, .40 S&W, and 10mm Auto. It fires from a closed-bolt position in semi-automatic, 2 or 3-round burst, and sustained fire modes. The weapon utilises the unique H&K roller-locked bolt system used commonly throughout the H&K family of small arms. The unique features of the H&K MP5 submachine gun include a free floating cold hammer-forged barrel, stamped sheet steel receiver, fluted chamber, straight-line stock and a pistol grip with an ambidextrous safety/selector lever. The modular design of the weapon consists of six assembly groups, not including the carry sling. This design provides an unmatched degree of flexibility as these groups can be manipulated to create various styles of weapons for numerous operational requirements -- thus the high number of variant designations. This design also allows assemblies to be repaired separately from the weapon which can be fitted with a new component and immediately returned to service. The bare metal surfaces of the MP5 are phosphated and coated with a black lacquer paint. This dry lacquer coating is applied with a magnetic charge and then baked onto the metal in an oven. The resulting finish is highly resistant to salt water corrosion and surface wear. The H&K MP5 was first produced in the mid 1960s as the HK54. H&K's internal Protocol Department established the acronym for its first 9mm submachine gun based on the following code:

First Character Type of Weapon

1	Box-fed light machine gun
2	Belt-fed machine gun
3	Select-fire assault rifle
4	Paramilitary rifle (German)
5	Submachine gun
6	Grenade launcher, complete
7	Grenade launcher, add-on
8	(not used)
9	Semi-automatic rifle

Second Character Caliber

1	7.62 x 51 mm
2	7.62 x 39 mm
3	5.56 x 45 mm
4	9 x 19 mm
5	(not used)
6	4.6 x 36 mm
7	(not used)
8	(not used)
9	40 mm

The H&K HK54 received its current acronym "MP5" when it was officially adopted by the West German government for use by its Police and Border Guard as the "Machine Pistol 5", or MP5. The first MP5s were imported into the U.S. in the very early 1970s. All 23 or more of the officially recognised variants of

the MP5 submachine gun have been imported into the U.S. The MP5 is used in the U.S. exclusively for law enforcement and military sale.

The standard 4x24 Heckler & Koch detachable scope fits the MP5 including the MP5/10 as do the company's "1003 Aiming Projector" which creates a narrow beam of intense light along the line of fire from the gun. The 55-watt Halogen lamp is energised by a 12-volt battery coupled to a button, permitting locating and identifying targets; the manufacturer claims that an experienced shooter using the spot for aiming can hit targets of about four inches in diameter at distances of 75 meters. The bright light can also be employed to dazzle targets by switching the light on for a short period during which several single shots or bursts are fired. The light is then switched off briefly, after which the procedure is repeated, the dazzling effect giving advantage to the user.

In the early 1990s, Heckler & Koch introduced a small laser sight for its MP5s. Designated the "HK 100 Laser Aimer," this sight mounts in the front of the charging lever tube, just below the front sight. A momentary switch is placed on the handguard, permitting switching the laser on briefly to acquire a target. For those using night vision goggles, the company's "INKAS" infrared laser sight might also be employed on the MP5. Adapter mounts to place military night vision scopes are also available for use with the MP5 submachine guns.

Type:	MP5K	MP5SD
Calibre:	9mm	9mm
Weight:	2kg	2.9kg
Length:	325mm	550mm
Range:	200m	200m
Rate of Fire:	900rpm -- 375m/s	800rpm -- 285m/s
Feed:	15 or 30 round	15 or 30 round

Heckler & Koch MP5/10

In 1991, Heckler & Koch introduced MP5A4 and MP5A5 submachine guns chambered for the 10mm Auto cartridge. Designated the MP5/10, this gun is nearly identical to the other MP5 variants of Heckler & Kochs submachine guns except for its chambering and a very slight increase in weight. Nevertheless the gun is readily recognisable by its straight, transparent 30-round plastic magazine. One other departure from the standard MP5 design is a bolt catch located on the left side of the receiver above and to the front of the selector.

The MP5/10 is normally seen with the H&K "4-Position Group" with single, semiauto, three-round burst, and auto positions. Like many other burst mechanisms, the three-round burst in the 4-Position Group sometimes fires only one or two shots if the trigger is pulled and quickly released before the cycle is completed. Unlike many other modern submachine guns that operate with blow-back action and fire from an open bolt, the MP5/10 fires from a closed bolt in the same manner that its G3 rifle counterpart does. The bolt also uses the locking rollers of the rifle for delayed blow-back, permitting a much lighter rifle. Firing from a closed bolt does increase the chance of cookoffs during long strings of automatic fire; but many special force units prefer the MP5 because of the inherent accuracy firing from a closed bolt offers. This greater accuracy is possible due to less movement of the firearm. When the first shot is fired, only the hammer travels forward when the trigger is pulled, rather than a heavy bolt slamming forward as is the case with guns firing from an open bolt. The delayed recoil roller blocks incorporated into the MP5/10 does away with the need for a heavy bolt as well as a gas system. This arrangement also permits guns to have their barrels cut down to extremely short lengths while still operating reliably. Because the roller system doesn't turn or otherwise loosen the cartridge before it is extracted (unlike most gas-operated firearms), fluted cuts run inside of the barrel's chamber. During the moment of firing, a small amount of gas travels alongside the cartridge thereby "floating" it on a cushion of hot vapour for easy extraction. The

MP5/10 also has the newer-styled handguard which is smooth and tapers to the front of the gun rather than the older, non-tapering handguard.

Heckler & Koch 53

This gun is classified as a light machinegun even though it fires the more lethal 5.56mm round -- effectively making it a sub-assault rifle. Based on the MP5 in almost every way, the gun is larger and heavier than its 9mm cousin.

Calibre: 5.56mm
Weight: 3.05kg
Length: 563mm (butt retracted)
Range: 250m
Rate of Fire: 700rpm -- 750m/sec
Feed: 25 round box magazine

Heckler and Koch's Sniper and Target Rifles

The task of a military sniper is to combat and neutralise highly important specific pinpoint targets. Sniping, however, does no longer mean sniping merely at picked out living targets. The sniper's task includes more and more the combating of very important technical facilities such as generators, radar directing centres, radio direction-finding stations, electronic installations and other similar objects. Such technical facilities are rated more and more important under tactical aspects. The sniper being in action depends completely on himself, and therefore he must be flexible in any situation. So he needs a special weapon which has a high accuracy and does not affect his mobility (a weapon as light as possible.) The military sniper needs a semi-automatic rifle of high fire power which enables the user to defend himself if he has been located by enemy shooters. These and some other perceptions and experience gained from the development and production of the PSG1 high performance marksman's rifle served as the basis for the development of the MSG3 and the MSG90 military sniper rifles.

MSG 90

- Caliber: 7.62mm x 51
- Semi-automatic rifle for single fire
- Recoil-operated delayed blowback bolt system, firing from closed bolt position
- Cold-forged, quenched and tempered barrel, 600mm long
- Standard trigger with a constant trigger pull, approx 15 N
- Vertically adjustable trigger shoe for widening the trigger
- Butt stock with lengthwise adjustable butt cap and vertically adjustable cheek-piece
- Telescopic sight mount for different types of daylight and night sight featuring STANAG fitting dimensions
- 5-round or 20-round magazines at option
- Handguard with T-way for fixing a firing sling or mounting the bipod G3 SG/1
- Caliber: 7.62mm x 51
- Trigger pull with set trigger varies between 12N and 15N
- Set trigger operation doesn't affect trigger functions, including sustained fire
- Special aiming system with ranging reticle to ascertain distance when knowing target size

HK 33 SG/1

- Caliber: 5.56mm x 45

PSG 1

- Caliber: 7.62mm x 51

The PSG-1 high precision marksman's rifle is developed specifically for police and military sniping -- unlike most other adaptations. The PSG-1 disproved the impressively widespread prejudice according to which an optimal firing accuracy can only be achieved with single loaders. The PSG-1 fires exactly those dispersion diameters which are warranted in the acceptance specifications of highly reputed ammunition manufacturers. Hence this is a weapon which equals at least with the accuracy of single loaders, and also features the advantages of a self-loading firearm.

Heckler & Koch G11 Assault Rifle

This remarkable weapon was developed during the late 1980s as the new standard-issue assault rifle for the West German Army. However, the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union brought new demands upon the unified German Army: a new surplus of assault weapons (brought about by left-over Russian stock in the East German divisions) and a desperate need for funds elsewhere saw the G11 project cancelled. However, several hundred examples of the gun were covertly produced for use by the Teutonic Knights. The main drawback of the weapon is actually its greatest asset: caseless ammunition. This ammunition, where the propellant acts as the binder for the bullet and primer, is produced nowhere else other than in the Teutones own armouries at Marienburg Castle. Thus, the ammunition a knight takes with him will be the only ammunition he will be able to use. But the remarkable abilities of this gun are currently believed to outweigh this disadvantage. The gun has a maximum firing rate of 2000rpm, with a three round controlled burst leaving the gun so fast that the last round has left the barrel before the recoil jolts the firer. This produces an unprecedented high accuracy rate -- the same for a 3 round burst as if it was a single shot. When full-automatic mode is selected, the gun spits out its rounds at a of 600rpm. Eliminating the casing about the ammunition eliminates the need for a weighty extraction and ejection system, as well as the reduced weight of ammunition itself. The firing mechanism is centred around a cylindrical breech block that rotates to align the round with the barrel. The cross-section allows the rounds to be closely packed with no wasted space into the 50 round in-line magazine, set along the top of the gun in line with the barrel. A grip is positioned under the barrel for a bayonet and a multi-mode scope and nightsight is fitted as standard.

Type: G11
Calibre: 4.7mm
Magazine: 50 round
Weight: 4.2kg
Length: 75cm
Rate: 3 round burst, 40rpm, 200rpm, 600rpm

Heckler & Koch G3

This rifle has been standard issue within the German army for the past 30 years largely because of its reliability in bad conditions.

Calibre: 7.62
Weight: 4.4kg
Length: 102cm
Range: 400m -- 800m/sec
Rate of fire: 500/600rpm

Feed: 20 round

Heckler & Koch G8

This rifle has been given a three-round burst ability as well as a semi-automatic mode. It can fire from either a belt or magazine feed and has a telescopic sight as standard. The rifle was designed for counter-insurgency work.

Calibre: 7.62
Weight: 8.15kg
Length: 103cm
Range: 800m -- 800m/sec
Rate of fire: 800rpm
Feed: 20 round, 50 round, belt

Heckler & Koch G41

This gun is a version of the G3 that fires a 5.56mm shell -- a lighter and more lethal round. It has low noise, is reliable in all conditions and can be fitted with various butts.

Calibre: 7.62
Weight: 8.15kg
Length: 103cm
Range: 800m / 800m/sec
Rate of fire: 800rpm
Feed: 20 round, 50 round, belt

H&K CAWS

This weapon is more than simply a shotgun. It is a Close Assault Weapon System -- a designation ideal for Church Knight operations in close and built-up areas. Looking similar in arrangement to the G11, the CAWS is equally as advanced as its assault-rifle cousin. It's bullpup layout gives it a short, maneuverable size while providing decent barrel length for high-velocity shells. The weapon's firing system has been designed to be dirt-resistant, increasing its reliability tenfold. The 10-round magazine is behind the pistol grip, and a selector switch for single, three round and full automatic is within reach of the firing hand's thumb. The gun is semi-automatic in its primary configuration, though full-automatic is available. A specialised 12 gauge brass shell has been developed for the gun, allowing greater range and velocity (150m for buckshot). It also fires solid shot and freely available ammunition.

Armorfit

This company was originally established by the German Government to produce body armour for the nation's police force and counter terrorism unit. Privatised late in the 1980s, key personnel hold allegiance with the Teutonic order and ensure a ready supply of high quality material. Some technology has even been transferred to Marienburg castle which will begin production of Bodymould armour within the next two years.

Armourshield GPV25

This armoured vest was built manufactured under license from Armourshield by Armorfit is currently the most wide-spread armour in use within the Militant Orders. However, Bodymould is becoming increasingly common among the Teutonic Knights as more vats and moulds are produced. The GPV25 provides multiple layers of protection. It is 18mm thick in total. A strong ballistic cloth provides wrap-around protection and ease of fitting through velcro straps. Shaped plates lie underneath, providing protection from both high velocity shells and blunt trauma. While armour may stop a bullet, it can still cause a deep depression in the armour and therefore transfer a large amount of shock into the body. Thus the need for rigid plates: these disperse the shock over a wider area -- reducing injury considerably. The hard armour plates are made of ceramic -- effective against most high velocity rounds, but heavy. Some of the plates can weigh up to 4kg each. Newer plates of ceramic with a laminate covering and rubberised foam backing weigh 3kg each. These can also defeat high velocity rounds. The vest also has high underarm covers to provide protection while the wearer is shooting back.

Headgear

Flash hoods -- commonly worn by knights -- offer protection from heat, dust and smoke, but are useless against bullets and fragments. Bullet stopping headgear is therefore essential. But normal helmets are not suitable -- they are too large and cumbersome. New helmets were designed specifically for counter terrorism and hostage rescue operations. These were made of plastic and could be worn by a user also using a gas mask and personal communications equipment. The AC100/1 is made of layers of ballistic resistant composite materials, protecting the wearer from small arms ammunition. An integral high impact trauma absorber is built into the helmet's inner lining to dissipate the energy of any blow. Wearers are not likely to be rendered unconscious.

BattleArmour

While Bodymould armour is a highly effective and concealable form of protection, and Armourshield offers strong protection and portability, the Teutones also make use of a bulkier armoured suit. Called BattleArmour, this highly effective armour covers virtually the whole body with a series of interlocking, rigid, composite material plates held together with fire and ballistic resistant cloth. It offers much greater protection than the other available forms of armour, though it is extremely difficult to conceal during transport and impossible to do so while wearing. Very similar in concept to full plate metal armour of old, it is almost as difficult to wear. While it conforms with body shape and movement to a much greater degree, both the armour slabs and heavy ballistic cloth weigh down a knight considerably. But in certain combat situations -- usually against Lycanthropes in remote and wild terrain -- this bulky armour is a virtual necessity.

Personal Sensors and Telemetry Relay

Knights have built into the shoulder-plates of their body armour a data collection and relay unit. In its most basic form it produces irregular burst-transmissions of the Knight's key physical signs and precise location determined by a built-in GPS sensor. When combined with a personal sensor head unit, with miniature video-camera's and microphones, all visual and sound data is relayed to a microwave receiver unit up to 4km away if in a normal building. The sensor unit's monocle can provide heads-up displays of superimposed Infra Red, Ultra Violet and Low-light imaging. Conformal battery packs allows operation of a combined Telemetry and Sensor system for two hours. The basic Telemetry unit can operate for up to 48 hours. This device aids the hunters by letting them make Alertness rolls as if they had one dot of Auspex, as well as Heightened Senses.

Weapon Accessories

Standard Torch: A simple, heavy duty flashlight is a highly effective means of illuminating dark areas quickly and efficiently. While carrying a torch in one hand reduces the effectiveness of aiming and firing a weapon -- especially larger weapons -- integrating the two is an effective alternative. This can be achieved by bracing the torch via a sight mount on top of the gun. Though reliable and simple, these torches are bulky and heavy -- unsettling delicately balanced weapons.

High-Intensity Lights: Modern versions of the flashlight are much more effective. The Sure-Fire tactical lights produced by Laser Products are a variety of small, powerful torches designed to fit under the barrel of various types of weapon. More powerful than conventional torches, they can be fitted to shotguns, handguns, submachineguns and rifles. They have a lithium battery providing an advertised life of up to five hours, but under real conditions this tends to be only three hours. These high-intensity lights have very flat and unobtrusive wiring that can stick to the stock or structure of a gun, leading to a switch on or near the stock or trigger.

Mounted Laser Sights: The red-dot aiming system is a very popular means of getting an indication of where a bullet will end its flight. The laser does not illuminate the target, merely mark it. Such systems help greatly for rapid-response firing, or shooting accurately from the hip -- a great boon for close-environment combat. The LEI-100 is one of the most powerful red-dot systems available, and is often mounted on the MP5. It has a range of 600m. The projector is large, but its aluminium construction makes it light. A smaller red-dot system is the EPC. It can be fitted to almost any weapon because of their small size (similar to that of a .357 magnum cartridge). It is usually positioned under the barrel. It has a range of about 80m. Such laser aiming modules (LAMs) are now commercially available, with many large pistol owners opting to buy them because of their affordability and effectiveness. The down-side of these sights is that they can also be visible to the target, allowing them to react. New modules on the market contain both a high intensity light and a laser-dot aimer.

Infrared Sights: These sights work from radiation in the infrared wavelength. A common misconception is that a target has to be exuding heat itself. While this does apply, another powerful source of infrared radiation can "illuminate" an area -- such as a fire or infrared spotlight. The latest thermal imaging sights are generally passive (without an infrared illuminator), but their ability to discern differences in infrared radiation is much greater. These sights tend to be bulky and used only on sniper rifles, and occasionally assault rifles.

Image Intensifying Sights: These sights are much more complicated than simple "magnifiers" of available light. In fact, many need virtually no light at all to be effective. Their technical complexity makes them both very expensive, and of questionable reliability. The Orion 80 passive sight can be fitted to the MP5, providing a 4x magnification.

Specialised Ammunition

Arcane: This is a solid copper bullet with a pointed cone. It is usually paired with a high-velocity charge to make it more effective in pistols and revolvers. It can penetrate significant armor without deformation of the bullet itself. This actually reduces the amount of damage it inflicts on the target.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm -2 -3

KTW: This brand of bullet has one purpose only: armor penetration. It is a lump of brass coated in a green colored teflon aerodynamic skin. This ammunition is not greatly effective against modern body armor.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm -1 -2

THV: This is an expensive shaped composite bullet providing both high armor penetration and greater soft tissue damage. It is very rare, requiring high tech construction equipment, and carefully issued.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm +3 -3

9mm Action Safety Bullet: This is a bullet with a hole in its core filled with a plastic plug. This plug prevents jams, but is "blown" out of the bullet, allowing the mushroom effect.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm +2 +2

The following bullets have a high failure rate if used in rugged conditions, have travelled a lot or been bashed about. Very high failure rate if home-made.

Hydra-Shok: Lead bullet with a recess in its centre to allow the shell to flatten when it strikes an object. This mushrooming effect produces a hydraulic compression "shockwave" of body fluids from the point of impact to damage surrounding tissue.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm +1 +2

HSA: This is an open-nosed bullet with fletchettes contained within. They stay together in flight, breaking open only on impact.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm +3 +1

Glaser Safety Slug: This is a bullet that has a thin aerodynamic jacket, looking much like a normal bullet head. It is filled with a moderately compressed birdshot. This compression and the jacket allow the bullet to penetrate light armor or material before breaking up on impact with soft tissue. The slugs fragment outward, transferring Hydrostatic shock into the target.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm +2 -1

CBX: Especially designed for hostage rescue, these bullets are intended to do the maximum possible damage through their flat-faced projectile.

Calibre Dam Armor Range

9mm +3 +3

WoD Weapon Statistics

Weapon	Dif	Cal	Dam	Rn	Rt	Cp	Con	3/F	Cs	Notes
Pistols										
H&K P7M10	7	.40	5	20	3	10	P	1160		
H&K P7M13	7	9mm	4	20	4	13	P	1220		
H&K USP	7	9mm	4	25	4	15	J	950		
H&K SOHP	6	.45	5	25	4	15	J	3	1600	LAM & suppressor

Submachineguns

H&K MP-5	7	9mm	4	40	2130	T	3/F	750	
H&K MP-5 K	6	9mm	4	25	2330	T	3/F	2500	
H&K MP-5 SD	7	9mm	4	30	2030	N	3/F	3800	Built-in silencer
H&K MP2000	7	9mm	4	40	2130/60	T	3/F	4000	Optional suppressor
H&K MP-5 / 40	7	.40	5	40	1930	T	3/F	1200	
H&K MP-5 / 10	7	10mm	5	40	1830	T	3/F	1200	
H&K MP53	7	5.56	7	60	1725	T	3/F	2900	L/FAM module

Rifles

H&H .600 Nitro	8	.600	9	275	1 2	N		800	
H&K 33 SG/1	7	5.56	7	300	1025	N	F	3000	Full-automatic
H&K G3 SG/1	7	7.62	8	300	1020	N	F	3000	Full-automatic
H&K MSG90	7	7.62	8	800	6 20	N		5000	Semi-automatic
H&K PSG1	7	7.62	8	1000	4 20	N		5000	Self-loading

Assault Rifles

H&K G3	8	7.62	8	300	1020	N	F	1120	
H&K G8	8	7.62	8	600	2030	N	3/F	1800	
H&K G11*	6	4.7mm	6	300	2050	T	3/F	4400	3rnd as 1 shot
H&K G41	7	5.56	7	200	2030	N	3/F	2100	

Shotguns

H&K CAWS	7	12ga	8*	60*	7 10	T	F	820	*Various ammo
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Heavy Weapons

H&K 21	6	7.62	8	350	2350	N	F	3500	
H&K 23	6	5.56	7	300	2550	N	F	3500	

Deutschritter: Teutonic Knight (Part 4)

A supplement for Church Knight: The Cainite Crusade

Written and compiled by Jamie Seidel (omicron@adelaide.dialix.oz.au)

Book Seven: The Teutonic Character

Character Considerations

"It is their duty to obey their lords, not to covet booty, not to spare their own lives in protecting those of their lords, to fight to death for the welfare of their State, to make war on schismatic and heretics, to defend the poor, widows and orphans, not to violate their sworn fidelity and in no way to forswear their lords."

-- Gregorian theorist, Bonizo of Sutri

Stereotype

Historical: The Crusades against the East European pagans earned the Teutonic Knights a ferocious reputation. But it is debatable whether this reputation is deserved. They fought in difficult circumstances: swamps, forests, snow -- all impediments to their traditional mounted cavalry charge. Fighting was often in close contact between heavily armed and armoured knights and the nimble but viscous pagan tribespeople. The Teutones were often far from home, in mystical surrounds, and in constant fear of ambush. The nearest parallel to this is the pressure put upon allied soldiers in Vietnam during the 1960s and 70s. But the Teutones proved to be more determined, more in focus with their purpose: carving out themselves and empire and converting the heathens. The knights were almost in constant combat, as a brief study of their history reveals. They could not help but to have fighting skills of the highest standard.

This close contact with the enemy caused the Teutones to become greatly interested in the quality and efficiency of their weapons and training. This carried over into the present. The Teutones are renowned for their broad range of modern weaponry -- and their willingness to use it. Likewise, their training procedures are renowned for their difficulty and intensity.

But the Teutones spared enough energy to create an efficient empire. The knights acted as a police force and judiciary, maintaining peace and order within their subjugated lands. Their empire became prosperous under their strict but efficient rule, with innovations such as possibly the world's first overnight postal system.

Teutonic Knights eventually became almost exclusively of Germanic background. But this was not always so. During the first century of its existence, it was a German sponsored international order with members from Italy, France and Spain. With the fall of the Holy Land and the new focus upon the Prussian and Livonian coast, the Teutonic rule came to reflect Germanic expansion.

Modern: In modern times the source of The Order's members are much more diverse. Russian Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist and Catholic denominations are considered equal within the Order's ranks. Causing much contention to some members is the equal status of women. The Order, based on its experience

fighting pagan women of the Baltic tribes, has an official policy of integration and non-discrimination towards women. However, their numbers are still few -- even fewer making it to the ranks of fully qualified knights. Their attitude towards worship is equally open minded -- making the Order highly attractive to younger Christians who prefer a more "pop" viewpoint of their religion. However, the traditions of the Order are deep in-grained. The knights are still more than willing to "take the fight" to the enemy. They give no quarter as they expect none themselves. Vampires, shapechangers, witches and mages are the devil's corruption of Creation. It is up to the Knights to lance these boils -- painful though it may be.

Character Class

Associate

Among the Teutones associates usually belong to the ranks of investigative police, local priests and engineers within various important firms. These members provide the knights with information and equipment to carry out their necessary work. Attributes 6/4/3, Abilities 11/7/4, Backgrounds 5, Freebie 21, Virtues 7.

Novice Associates that demonstrate a high degree of competence and devotion toward ridding the world of the supernatural are invited into the Order. Those with military or special police backgrounds are most welcome, as are members of the ancient families that have long been associated with the Knights of the Cross.

Attributes 6/4/3, Abilities 13/9/7, Background 6, Faith 1*, Freebie 24, Virtues 7.

Knight

Only those demonstrating the greatest faith and combat competence are accepted into the ranks of combatant knights. There are numerous ranks of non-militant "knights," but these are often only honorary in nature. True knights know the worthlessness of the trappings and vestments of their status: instead, represents a high responsibility and commitment to God's work.

Attributes 7/5/4, Abilities 19/15/11, Background 7, Faith 5*, Freebie 27, Virtues 9.

Training

To gain competency, a Knight must be trained in either a Major Knowledge/Skill to the level of five dots, or trained in two Minor Special Skills to a level of four each. All Knights must also be fluent in Latin. Reading the book *Monastic War Machine* will give you an idea of the kinds of training knights undergo.

Insert: Faith Versus the Werewolf

Faith -- in the context of a Christian Knight -- is an opponent to all things "demonic." In the eyes of the faithful, there is little real difference between a vampire, lycanthrope, witch or demon -- all are Satan's minions in one form or another. Similarly, the power of Faith is equally applied among all supernaturals (where possible). But different supernaturals have different and specific abilities. The effect of Faith on these needs to be expanded upon. Faith's universal effect of repelling "evil" applies to werewolves like any other. Each turn in the presence of an opposing Faith will require a Willpower roll and the expenditure of a Willpower point. But Faith also affects the workings of other were-creature related abilities.

God Vs Gaia: True Faith and the shapechanger's Gaia ratings are very similar in concept. Both are a measure of how close the character is to their God. However, the two are not terribly compatible. Some GM's may chose to use Faith and Gaia as direct opposites: as though the two characters both had True Faith, or both had Gaia ratings. But the comparative costs per point, the comparative powers and their comparative uses do not match well. This one simply has to be up to the GM at the time . . .

Rage: The presence of Faith has a notable influence upon a Lycanthrope's Rage. As outlined in the Holy Powers section, the number of successes of a Faith-roll against the creature's Rage rating as the Difficult will add to the were-creatures Difficulty to Rage. Faith versus Rage Rating as Difficulty along with the spending of a willpower point can calm a frenzied werecreature.

Umbra: Creatures attempting to step into/out of the Umbra while on Holy Ground will find their Difficulties increased by one point for every two levels of Faith the location has. If in the presence of Church Knights, the additional difficulty is one point for every four points of Faith present. If attempting to approach old Holy Ground through the Umbra, the location will appear as a fortress of the Faith -- barred against all things "evil."

Gifts and Prayers

The new knighthood fought two manifestations at once: the Satan in themselves, represented by the imperfections in their bodies and minds, which were repressed by vows of chastity, poverty and obedience; and the outward Satan, manifested in the troops of Islam whom they encountered in battle.

-- The Northern Crusades, Eric Christiansen

Gifts

** **Brightness (4)**

The knight's golden aura is caused to "flare up", blinding the opponent's visual and supernatural perceptions. The target may yet flinch, shutting its eyes or senses -- but it depends upon its reaction time. Roll Manipulation + Faith, Diff. 6. If successful, target creature becomes blind for a turn. Each success = 1 turn opponent is blind. The target may resist through Wits + Dodge, with successes cancelling out those of the knight.

** **Inhibit Shift (3)**

By Simon Miles

The difficulty of a were-creature's ability to shape shift (Stamina + Primal Urge, difficulty usually 6) is increased by the intrusion of the Knight's faith. This inhibition remains until the subject successfully makes a transformation. Rage can still be spent to transform instantly, but at 1point extra cost.

*** **The Beast's Touch (2)**

This Gift allows a knight to sense shapechangers in their "natural" form, and potentially what that creature can turn into. The Gift requires physical contact (flesh to flesh). The knight rolls Perception + Animal Ken (difficulty 8). The knight feels as if he is touching the "natural form" on one success. On three or more successes the knight will feel as though he is touching the "creature form".

*** **Hounding: (5)**

By John Snead and Sarah Link

If you are following a target (which can be either an individual or an object and) can make a Perception+ Alertness roll with a difficulty level equal to 8 each success allows you know in what direction the target is, an (very) roughly how far away for 6 hours, even if you cannot perceive the target at the time. Once this ability has worn off to use it again you must again have the target in sight. This ability only works on beings who are human, part human (like Garou), or once were human (like Vampires).

***** Spiritual Anchor (see text)**

By Simon Miles

This gift can prevent a spirit from leaving the knight's presence. A garou's passage through the Gauntlet (stepping sideways), a mage's use of correspondence and/ or spirit travel is obstructed. This Gift will only work if the knight has a Faith equal to, or greater than, the Sphere/Gift/Discipline etc used in the transportation. The system uses the number of successes (or half the spirit power points) used by the opponent in its attempt to "step sideways" as a necessary number of Grace points to be spent to halt the action. The Gift interrupts the attempt to "shift" once. A second attempt one turn later must be opposed again.

****** Berserk (3)**

By Simon Miles

This Gift allows a knight to enter a "berserk" state in which pain is ignored and all physical attributes are raised by one (even to levels beyond 5). This state, however, can only be gained in a situation that requires direct intervention to protect defenceless innocents. For example, it will allow a knight to ignore his wounds and leap out to grab a child from in front of an escaping Porsche, but won't help him in an attempt to shoot an opponent before it attacks another knight. Due to the strain it places on the body, this Gift causes one level of aggravated damage at the end of the Berserker empowerment. The Berserker "rage" occurs upon a Faith roll (difficulty 8 or storytellers discretion, for a duration equal to the number of successes)

****** Stunning Touch: (7)**

You are taught special pressure points and methods of non-lethal combat. If you can either strike a hand to hand blow which does damage before soak is rolled, or touch your target on the skin, you may make a Perception+ Medicine roll vs their Stamina+Dodge. One or two successes when touching a limb will paralyse the limb you touch for the rest of the scene; three or more successes touching the target anywhere allows you to totally paralyse your target for the entire scene. Using this ability costs one Willpower point.

Prayers

******* Scope (5)**

The simplest of powers, it is also one of the more useful. The ability allows Teutones to pick out fine details from a distance and account for certain interference in their vision. It can effect the to-hit die roll, depending on the Storyteller's discretion.

System: Perception + Scan against a difficulty level chosen by the Storyteller.

- 1 success: Target is magnified by a factor of two. In no other way, however, is it modified.
- 2 successes: Target is magnified by a factor of five and your visual acuity accounts for minor bad weather conditions (light fog or snow), allowing for a clearer picture.
- 3 successes: Target is magnified by a factor of no greater than ten (player's choice) and your visual acuity accounts for major bad weather conditions such as heavy fog or blizzard-like conditions.

4 Target is magnified by a factor of no greater than twenty (player's choice), visual acuity successes: accounts for major bad weather conditions, and basic audio input is attained.

Five or greater successes have no further effects.

***** **God's Strength (5)**

This blessing has only been granted to the Teutonic Order. It allows superior strength and physical coordination. It allows knights to oppose supernaturals in physical combat on equal terms. Strength and ability in weight lifting, running, jumping and force are enhanced. A knight's rating in God's Strength provides automatic successes on nearly any Strength Roll. In melee and brawling combat, the automatic successes count on the damage roll. The Prayers lasts for the scene, or 15 minutes.

1 Rip a silk shirt	40lbs
2 Winch a Crossbow	100lbs
3 Bend a Longsword	250lbs
4 Throw a barrel of wine	400lbs
5 Break down a stout oak door	650lbs
6 Rip chainmail	800lbs
7 Bend a 1inch thick metal bar	900lbs
8 Throw a riding horse	1000lbs
9 Punch through a metal plate	1200lbs
10 Lift an iron portcullis	1500lbs
11 Throw a war-horse	2000lbs
12 Break a small tree	3000lbs
13 Throw a stone sarcophagus lid	4000lbs
14 Punch through a stone wall	5000lbs
15 Throw a catapult	6000lbs

***** **Resume Breed Form (Grace equal to subjects primal urge)**

By Simon Miles.

This prayer asks God to revert the creature facing a knight to its original breed form. While not necessarily always a benefit, it has the advantage of surprising the opponent and imposing useful limitations under certain circumstances. The prayer works through rolling Manipulation + Occult. This is resisted by the shapechanger's Stamina + Primal Urge.

***** **Intimidation (5)**

The Teutone spends a Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Intimidation, difficulty of the target's Willpower. From then on the individual Teutone is a source of fear toward the target, with a difficulty number equal to the number of successes rolled plus four. The target must make Courage rolls as usual to avoid frenzy -- both in the first instance and at immediately following encounters. The effects last one scene, though a high number of successes may cause a permanent derangement.

***** **Curse of Uriel (8)**

The Teutone touches a target vampire and spends eight Grace and one Willpower point. One success is required as a minimum to activate the power. A simple contest results: the Teutone's Faith versus the target's Humanity. If the knight succeeds, the Beast takes control of the target. Subsequently, the target will go completely insane and attempt to destroy and diablerize any nearby Kindred for a duration of one

minute per success rolled by the knight. Failing that, any living thing (other than the source of the curse) will do. After the frenzy ends, the target loses one Humanity point automatically (if applicable) and must roll Conscience (difficulty 7) to avoid losing another. A botch indicates a derangement. Any "collateral" damage is the responsibility of the knight.

******* Scent of the Pack (see text)**

By Simon Miles

The knight who uses this prayer will be perceived as a desired (and stated) supernatural creature. For the duration, the knight will seem to be like the particular creature of his choice to all forms of investigation. He gains no powers, vulnerabilities or instincts. The effect is on the opponent's perception -- not reality. Roll Subterfuge + Faith to determine how many hours the effect will last. The number of hours duration is equal to the amount of Grace expended.

******* Cleanse Corruption (5)**

This prayer has the effect of removing the very stuff that puts the "super" into supernatural. The Teutone must make a successful attack roll to touch the target. If he misses, the Grace is expended fruitlessly. Upon physical contact, the knight rolls Manipulation + Occult, difficulty of the target's Fortitude (a zero or one Fortitude indicates Man + Occ automatic successes, i.e. no need to roll). The number of successes is the number of Blood or Gnosis Points destroyed. If used on a ghoul, this power makes him/her mortal again (possibly killing him/her as a result of aging).

******* Heroic Action: (15)**

This ability allows you to raise any relevant attribute to superhuman levels (equivalent to an attribute of 8 as defined in A World of Darkness: Mummy, pages 27-29) for the purpose of accomplishing a specific extended action. Examples of actions are: "rescue the people from this burning building," "destroy the opponent I am now fighting," "convince this crowd to take action (whatever action you persuade them to take)," "find any computer record of this woman". You can perform no other action until your Heroic Action is complete (if forced to interrupt a Heroic Action, the attribute enhancement does not apply to the performance of any other actions). This ability can only be used when the desired action can be attempted immediately. To perform a Heroic Action, you must spend all Will power points but one. The enhancement lasts as long as is necessary to complete the action, but for no longer than one scene. When the action is complete, you must roll your one remaining Will power die against a difficulty level of 8 to remain conscious.

Rituals

Sight Through All (22 Faith present, 16 Grace spent)

With this ability the Ritual leader can see through into the Umbra: either the Near Umbra, or into the Shadowlands. Each knight spends four Grace Points and the leader a point of Willpower before rolling Perception+Occult, difficulty seven. Failure throws the leader back, causing two points of unsoakable damage, while botching traps the leader between the world and the Umbra until someone or something pulls her out. The leader can see what passes in the Umbra or the Shadowlands, observe what spirits or Wraiths do at a particular site, or watch over a certain area. The leader can be seen by occupants of the Umbra or Shadowlands: the point that the watcher looks through is noticeably different to the surrounding area, and curious -- or unfriendly Umbral dwellers may be drawn to the site, and even try to break through...