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TRACING THE EARLY DIFFUSION OF REFORMATION IDEAS IN REVAL (TALLINN)

EXCERPTS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Abstract

Among the variety of media, which were used to distribute Reformation ideas, this article focuses on the letters, excerpts, and transcripts preserved in the Tallinn City Archives. These documents are evidence of the early reception of Reformation ideas in Reval (Est. Tallinn). Not denying the importance of printed works and preaching, which undoubtedly reached a wider audience, transcripts and excerpts from the town chancery show the reception of new ideas in the very vicinity of the town's decision-makers. Two pieces made by the town scribe Marcus Tirbach are presented in more detail. One of them is an excerpt from Luther's pamphlet *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, which Tirbach probably made for his private use. The other text, the Middle Low German translation of the *Twelve Articles* of the German Peasants' War, was intended for dissemination, even when we do not know if this was either for agitation or just for the distribution of interesting news. It can be demonstrated, however, how both texts had relevance in the political developments in Livonia in the early 1520s. Luther's ideas on the role of secular and ecclesiastical power resonated in Livonia, where the towns and nobility faced the political ambitions of the prince-bishops. The *Twelve Articles* could have also found some traction among more radical preachers, as we have evidence of social unrest among the commoners during these years.

Keywords: Reformation, Luther, Livonia, news, pamphlets, town scribes, German Peasants' War

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INTRODUCTION: COMMUNICATION, CLERKS, AND ARCHIVES

Tracking down the progress of an idea in one particular historical context is both easy and difficult. One can spot direct evidence, such as letters and books, which proves the presence of ideas, but how these ideas were perceived, accepted, rejected, modified, and internalised, and in what combination with other circumstances they initiated actions, is often very complex and can remain elusive. The study of the Reformation as a process of implementing certain ideas shares these general difficulties. Nonetheless, the particularities of the communication process of the Reformation have been under scrutiny for some time¹, also with regard to the Baltic Sea region².

Print has been traditionally seen as the most prominent medium in communicating Reformation ideas³. Printed matters feature very early in the Livonian Reformation. On the insistence of the Riga town council, Luther addressed Livonian Christians with a printed missive as early as 1523⁴; the next year, the leading figure of the Reformation in Riga, Andreas Knopken, published in Wittenberg his commentary on the *Epistle to the Romans*⁵. In November 1525, a barrel containing Lutheran prints bound for Riga was confiscated in Lübeck; among these were also *missae* in the Latvian and Estonian languages⁶. The other side was not idle either: a Franciscan friar from Riga, Antonius Bomhower, attempted to smuggle letters and books in a barrel from

¹ Bernd MOELLER, *Die frühe Reformation als Kommunikationsprozeß*, [in:] idem, *Luther-Rezeption. Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze zur Reformationsgeschichte*, Göttingen 2001, pp. 73–90.

² Esther-Beate KÖRBER, *Die Reformation im Ostseeraum als Kommunikations- und Verkehrsereignis*, Nordost-Archiv. Zeitschrift für Regionalgeschichte. N.F., Bd. 13: 2004, pp. 15–44. See also eadem, *Öffentlichkeiten der Frühen Neuzeit. Teilnehmer, Formen, Institutionen und Entscheidungen öffentlicher Kommunikation im Herzogtum Preußen 1525 bis 1618* (Beiträge zur Kommunikationsgeschichte, Bd. 7), Berlin 1998.

³ Andrew PETTEGREE, *Brand Luther: 1517, Printing, and the Making of the Reformation*, New York 2015, pp. 143–163, 267–275.

⁴ D. Martin Luthers *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (hereinafter cited as WA), Bd. 12, Weimar 1891, pp. 143–150 (supposedly written in August 1523); Ralph RUTHENBERG, *Die Beziehungen Luthers und der anderen Wittenberger Reformatoren zu Livland*, [in:] *Baltische Kirchengeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Missionierung und der Reformation, der evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirchen und des Volkskirchentums in den baltischen Landen*, hrsg. v. Reinhard WITTRAM, Göttingen 1956, pp. 59–61.

⁵ Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts (hereinafter cited as VD16), K 1477.

⁶ For further discussion of the incident, see Jüri KIVIMÄE, *Über den estnischen Druck anno 1525*, [in:] *Eesti vanimad raamatud Tallinnas / Die ältesten Estnischen Bücher in Tallinn (Reval)*, hrsg. v. Lea KÕIV, Mare LUUK, Larissa PETINA, Tiit REIMO, Urve SILDRE, Tallinn 2000, pp. 36–61.

Lübeck via Reval to Livonia in the spring of 1524⁷, and the Dominicans of Reval purchased the latest controversial literature against Luther just before the dissolution of their convent in early 1525⁸. The books were hunted for. The Reval town council, in July 1526, had in its custody some printed works of Luther, which had belonged to the servants at the Teutonic Order's castle in Reval⁹. How much the medium of illustrated broadsheets was consumed in Livonia is unknown, but at least some reception might be assumed.

However great the importance of print in making the Reformation was, the majority of people heard the new ideas through word of mouth¹⁰. Central to the spoken communication was, of course, preaching. There is, however, an issue here; very little is known about the contents of the sermons in Livonia during the Reformation period. Silvester Tegetmeyer noted in his diary only the verses of the Bible, upon which his sermons were based¹¹, and some hints on the actual preaching may be gained from the printed works by Andreas Knopken and Melchior Hoffmann¹². For grasping the ideas expressed by the new preachers, fragmentary biographies of these men can be of use. But whereas in certain cases turning points in their biographies can be highlighted, for example, Knopken's stay with Bugenhagen in Treptow an der Rega (Pol. Trzebiatów) and Tegetmeyer's stay in Wittenberg during Luther's absence, for many preachers, we barely know their names.

Among the recent discoveries among the Livonian preachers is Johannes Block (d. 1545) from Stolp (Pol. Słupsk), a reformer and pastor of Barth in

⁷ Leonid ARBUSOW, *Die Aktion der Rigischen Franziskaner gegen das Vordringen des Lutherums und ihre Folgen*, Sitzungsberichte der Gesellschaft für Geschichte und Altertumskunde zu Riga, 1913, pp. 55–58.

⁸ Kaspar KOLK, *Eesti kloostrite raamatud enne ja pärast reformatsiooni*, [in:] *Reformatsioon. Tõlked ja tõlgendused*, koost. Piret LOTMAN (Raamat ja Aeg, vol. 5; Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu Toimetised, vol. 16), Tallinn 2019, p. 108. The book was *Maellus Ioannis Fabri in haeresiam Lutheranum*, printed in Cologne in 1524.

⁹ Tallinna Linnaarhiiv (hereinafter cited as TLA), f. 230, n. 1, s. Bt 1, fol. 80r (12 July 1526). The list of items that Councillor Victor von der Lippe handed over to the servants of the castle commander (*Hauskomtur*), Jurgen van Lindberg and Hinrich Hillegaunt: 'Item in eynem wethscher etlike geprente schrifte doctoris Martini Lutters myt somige andere schriften'.

¹⁰ Robert W. SCRIBNER, *Oral Culture and the Diffusion of Reformation Ideas*, [in:] idem, *Popular Culture and Popular Movements in Reformation Germany*, London 1987, pp. 49–69.

¹¹ *Sylvester Tegetmeier's Tagebuch*, hrsg. v. Friedrich BIENEMANN, Mittheilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Est- und Kurlands, Bd. 10: 1889, pp. 502–505.

¹² Ferdinand HOERSCHELMANN, *Andreas Knopken, der Reformator Rigas. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte Livlands*, Leipzig 1896; Otto POHRT, *Reformationsgeschichte Livlands. Ein Überblick* (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, Jg. 46, H. 2, Nr. 145), Leipzig 1928, pp. 114–125; Klaus DEPPERMAN, *Melchior Hoffman. Soziale Unruhen und apokalyptische Visionen im Zeitalter der Reformation*, Göttingen 1979, pp. 58–70.

Pomerania, whose early career evolved in Dorpat (Est. Tartu) in Livonia from 1514 to 1528¹³. Based on his well-preserved library and the marks in the books he acquired, his intellectual development from a humanistic improver of the Church to a Lutheran preacher during his Dorpat years can be traced. Although he eventually did not find a proper place in Dorpat, his book collection shows how he had prompt access to the most current literature there, including the works of Erasmus and Luther. On a much smaller scale, the study of manuscript notes in four printed books which belonged to one of the Revalian reformers, Zacharias Hase, has also provided new insight into his intellectual background as a late medieval and early Lutheran preacher¹⁴. Particularly, the case of Block (and perhaps Hase) shows that the spread of Reformation ideas was not necessarily imported by new preachers but could rest on the support of local converts, too.

Besides preaching, other acoustic acts have left marks in Livonian sources¹⁵. Rigan reformers Andreas Knopken and Burchard Waldis composed songs to be later included in the first hymn book of Riga, printed in Rostock in 1530¹⁶. The performative Reformation was represented in Livonia by Burkhard Waldis, who wrote the first Lutheran *Fastnachtspiel*, *A Parable of the Prodigal Son*, which was performed in Riga in 1527 to transmit the new concept of justification¹⁷.

A major challenge in the diffusion of new ideas in Livonia was the multilingualism of the region. The *lingua franca* of Hanseatic towns was Middle Low German, which could also have been an obstacle in the reception of Luther's works, as an effort put into early translations of his texts from High German to

¹³ Jürgen GEISS-WUNDERLICH, *Pommern, Livland, Finnland – und zurück. Der Wanderprediger und Reformator Johannes Block im Spiegel seiner Büchersammlung*, [in:] *Johannes Block. Der pommersche Reformator und seine Bibliothek*, hrsg. v. idem, Volker GUMMELT (Herbergen der Christenheit, Sonderband 22), Leipzig 2018, pp. 125–178. For his stay in Dorpat, see *ibid.*, pp. 133–157.

¹⁴ Tiina KALA, *Mõnda reformatsioonimuutuste eeldustest Tallinnas: jutlustajad, ametnikud ja raamatud*, [in:] *Reformatsioon. Tõlked ja tõlgendused*, koost. Piret LOTMAN (Raamat ja Aeg, vol. 5; Eesti Rahvusraamatukogu Toimetised, vol. 16), Tallinn 2019, pp. 64–68.

¹⁵ Jan-Friedrich MISSFELDER, *Akustische Reformation. Lübeck 1529*, *Historische Anthropologie*, Jg. 20: 2012, H. 1, pp. 108–121.

¹⁶ Lutz MACKENSEN, *Baltische Texte der Frühzeit* (Abhandlungen der Herder-Gesellschaft und des Herder-Instituts zu Riga, Bd. 5, Nr. 8), Riga 1936, pp. 28–55; Leonid ARBUSOW, *Die Einführung der Reformation in Liv-, Est- und Kurland* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte, Bd. 3), Leipzig 1921, pp. 628–631.

¹⁷ Cora DIETL, *Zwischen Theologie, Laienunterweisung und Polemik. Die „Parabell vam verlorn Szohn“ des Burkard Waldis im Kontext der Reformation in Riga*, [in:] *Deutsch als Wissenschaftssprache im Ostseeraum – Geschichte und Gegenwart*, hrsg. v. Michael PRINZ, Jarmo KORHONEN (Finnische Beiträge zur Germanistik, vol. 27), Frankfurt am Main–Berlin–Bern–Bruxelles–New York–Oxford–Wien 2011, pp. 203–216.

Middle Low German shows. But as the number of such translations remained modest¹⁸, this must not have been a major problem¹⁹. A much greater divide in Livonia was between the German and other local vernaculars, or rather the majority languages: Latvian and Estonian (in their various dialects), and to some extent the Liv language. Preaching in these languages was already taking place in the Middle Ages, and Estonian linguists have discussed the development of a standard language, including the systematics of central Christian terms, during the Catholic period²⁰. For the new immigrant preachers, the lack of local language skills must have been a very serious obstacle and gave an advantage to those (possibly conservative) who had been living longer in Livonia. Nevertheless, Reformation preaching in non-German vernaculars was taken up rapidly: in Riga, Nicolaus Ramm is recorded as a Latvian language preacher in 1527 (but he was active in the town even earlier)²¹. In Reval, the instruction in Estonian was foreseen in the very first drafts and decisions of the reformed church organisation in the spring of 1525²². Subsequently, much care was taken in developing Latvian and Estonian literary languages²³. Especially the people living in the region for a longer time, who converted to Lutheranism, must have played an important role among the native-language preachers.

¹⁸ Bernd MOELLER, *Luther in Europa. Die Übersetzungen seiner Schriften in nichtdeutsche Sprachen 1520–1546*, [in:] idem, *Luther-Rezeption. Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze zur Reformationsgeschichte*, Göttingen 2001, p. 43. Among 3,998 editions of Luther's works from this timespan, 2,990 are written in High German and only 174 in Low German.

¹⁹ On the use of French books in the dialect context, see Natalie ZEMON DAVIS, *Printing and the People*, [in:] eadem, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, Cambridge 1987, pp. 201–202.

²⁰ Kristiina ROSS, *Spuren einer mittelalterlichen estnischen Gemeinschaftssprache in frühprotestantischen Schriftzeugnissen*, [in:] *Estnisches Mittelalter. Sprache – Gesellschaft – Kirche*, hrsg. v. Kadri-Rutt HAHN, Matthias THUMSER, Eberhard WINKLER (Schriften der Baltischen Historischen Kommission, Bd. 20), Münster 2015, pp. 41–53.

²¹ *Die evangelischen Prediger Livlands bis 1918*, hrsg. v. Martin OTTOW, Wilhelm LENZ, Köln–Wien 1977, p. 384; L. ARBUSOW, *Die Einführung der Reformation*, p. 292.

²² Friedrich BIENEMANN, *Aus Livlands Luthertagen*, Reval 1883, pp. 74–75. Thereafter also in *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 5: *Livland, Estland, Kurland, Mecklenburg, Freie Reichsstadt Lübeck mit Landgebiet und Gemeinschaftsamt Bergedorf, das Herzogthum Lauenburg mit dem Lande Hadeln, Hamburg mit Landgebiet*, hrsg. v. Emil SEHLING, Leipzig 1913, pp. 40–41.

²³ *Common Roots of the Latvian and Estonian Literary Languages*, ed. Kristiina ROSS, Pēteris VANAGS, Frankfurt am Main–Berlin–Bern–Bruxelles–New York–Oxford–Wien 2008; Raimo RAAG, *Die Literatur der Esten im Zeichen von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung*, [in:] *Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Livland, Estland, Ösel, Ingermanland, Kurland und Lettgallen. Stadt, Land und Konfession 1500–1721*, Tl. 1, hrsg. v. Matthias ASCHE, Werner BUCHHOLZ, Anton SCHINDLING (Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, Bd. 69), Münster 2009, pp. 217–261; Pēteris VANAGS, *Die Literatur der Letten im Zeichen von Reformation und Konfessionalisierung*, [in:] *ibid.*, pp. 263–305.

Among the personnel who enhanced the diffusion of Reformation ideas, not only preachers but also clerks must have played a decisive role²⁴. In the eastern Baltic, where the educated class was not very numerous and concentrated, these men often significantly contributed to promoting Reformation ideas among the local decision-makers. The most prominent example being Johann Lohmüller, a scribe and syndic of Riga²⁵. Although for Reval there is no comparable evidence, Marcus Tirbach can be singled out. He served the town as a scribe at least since February 1520, wrote down most of the Reformation regulations introduced by the town council, and may have had an influence on the formulation used²⁶.

This cluster of influencers brings us to the material, which will be the main focus of this article: handwritten documents preserved in the city archives. This is not to undermine the paramount importance of the printing press for the Reformation, but to draw attention to other forms of written knowledge production and transfer. As the first printing house in Livonia was opened only in 1588 in Riga, the region had to rely on the production of foreign printing presses and local dissemination of written material was mainly done manually. Though the transcripts and drafts preserved in the collections of the town council do not have the same publicity as prints sold on the market, they indicate the movement of the new ideas among the decision-makers.

Documents produced by the day-to-day administration of a town council, as a rule, do not reflect on either abstract ideas or distant events of their time. But among the administrative material, occasionally appear items which have a wider horizon. In the archives of the Reval town council, now preserved in the Tallinn City Archives, there is a folder of documents entitled 'Reformation in Germany', the contents of which are described in detail in the first printed catalogue of 1896²⁷. In printed reports of the archives, it can be traced how this folder took shape between 1886 and 1896. Although organising materials on churches is mentioned earlier, the subdivision 'Church history' first appeared in 1886. Year by year, different materials were found and added. For example, the famous *Twelve Articles* of the German Peasants' War, which was used

²⁴ T. KALA, *Mõnda reformatsioonimuutuste eeldustest*, pp. 58–60.

²⁵ Ulrich MÜLLER, *Johann Lohmüller und seine livländische Chronik „Warhaftig Histori“*. *Biographie des Autors, Interpretation und Edition des Werkes* (Schriften der Baltischen Historischen Kommission, Bd. 10), Lüneburg 2001; Klaus NEITMANN, *Johann Lohmüllers evangelische Geschichte Livlands. Überlieferung – Quellen – Darstellungsweise – Intention*, [in:] *Geschichtsschreibung im mittelalterlichen Livland*, hrsg. v. Matthias THUMSER (Schriften der Baltischen Historischen Kommission, Bd. 18), Berlin 2011, pp. 155–200.

²⁶ T. KALA, *Mõnda reformatsioonimuutuste eeldustest*, p. 60.

²⁷ *Katalog des Revaler Stadtarchivs*, hrsg. v. Gotthard VON HANSEN, Reval 1896, p. 142 (Bq 1 I: '1521–1570 Reformation in Deutschland').

by a scholar in 1830²⁸ and published in 1877²⁹, were added to this particular folder only in 1889³⁰. The described folder is thus a collection of documents separated from their original context on the principle of pertinence, put together by modern archivists, which sets limits to its interpretation as an entity.

There remains a legitimate question: how to contextualise these loose pieces picked up out of the papers preserved in the town archives? Scholarship with a focus on local events has shown marginal interest towards these pieces of information on the general history of the Reformation. Indeed, it is difficult to find connecting points between news and novel literature arriving from Germany and local events. But there is no doubt that these papers are evidence of cultural transfer³¹ which took place in a reformational 'public sphere'³². One possible way to treat these items from the Reval town chancery is to use them as sources for the history of reading³³, which takes into account, besides the text itself, possible audiences and their interactions³⁴. Fitting these texts into the political and religious developments of their time would eventually add more nuances to the intellectual trends of early sixteenth-century Reval.

THE AVAILABILITY AND EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION IN REVAL

On 31 May 1521, a Reval-born student of both laws at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder, Nicolaus Horensze, wrote to the Reval town council that the laymen and clerics were having a big quarrel, the laymen stoned the clerics to death, and the Franconian nobility had sided with Luther³⁵. Besides this

²⁸ Cristian REIN, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Reformation in Reval und Estland*, Reval 1830, p. 21, footnote 30.

²⁹ Konstantin HÖHLBAUM, *Die zwölf Artikel der Bauern von 1525 niederdeutsch*, *Forschungen zur Deutschen Geschichte*, Bd. 17: 1877, pp. 345–351.

³⁰ *Отчет об управлении городом Ревелем за 1889 год* [Otchet ob upravlenii gorodom Revelem za 1889 god], Reval 1890, p. 62.

³¹ Otfried CZAİKA, *Die Ausbreitung der Reformation im Ostseeraum ca. 1500–1700 als Kulturtransfer*, [in:] *Migration und Kulturtransfer im Ostseeraum während der Frühen Neuzeit*, hrsg. v. idem, Heinrich HOLZE (Acta Bibliothecae Regiae Stockholmiensis, Bd. 80), Stockholm 2012, pp. 76–100.

³² Rainer WOHLFEIL, „Reformatorische Öffentlichkeit“, [in:] *Literatur und Laienbildung im Spätmittelalter und in der Reformationszeit. Symposium Wolfenbüttel 1981*, hrsg. v. Ludger GRENZMANN, Karl STACKMANN (Germanistische Symposien-Berichtsbände, Bd. 5), Stuttgart 1984, pp. 41–52.

³³ Robert DARNTON, *History of Reading*, [in:] *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter BURKE, Cambridge 1991, pp. 140–167.

³⁴ N. ZEMON DAVIS, op.cit., p. 192.

³⁵ TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 1: 'Es ist inn dessen lande grus zwitracht zuisschen denn leyenn vnd geistigen, de leigenn steinigen vnd slaenn zu tode die gaistlicheit. Der frencks adel hot doctorem Martinn Luther zu sich genaumen im werk zu vorsehtenn'.

bit of information, Horensze mediated also other news: Emperor Charles V had prohibited the Landsknechts from leaving Germany, the margrave of Brandenburg returned in eight days with 400 horses from the court, during Easter there was a heavy rain which destroyed houses in Vienna, and five miles from Augsburg miraculous signs were seen in the sky. Horensze connected this news with the widespread prognostication that in the year 1524 there would be a deluge³⁶. Although we do not know exactly when this letter arrived in Reval (an average letter took about one and a half months to reach Reval from Lübeck in the second half of the fifteenth century³⁷), it circumscribes the 'news bulletin', which Revalians were consuming, and where Luther, who was already a famous man by that time³⁸, was included among other important topics. The significance of handwritten news is easily noticeable, but it remains difficult to assess its overall amount and impact, because these news pieces are scattered in different sections of the Tallinn City Archives³⁹.

The folder 'Reformation in Germany' offers random samples of information, arriving in Reval during these years. There is a fragment of the Edict of Worms of 1521⁴⁰ and a list of ordinances of the Nuremberg town council of 1528⁴¹. Although the latter comprises only town bylaws which aimed at balancing the religious situation in the imperial city, in the Reval transcript,

³⁶ Heike TALKENBERGER, *Sintflut. Prophetie und Zeitgeschehen in Texten und Holzschnitten astrologischer Flugschriften 1488–1528* (Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur, Bd. 26), Tübingen 1990, pp. 182–277; Gustav HELLMANN, *Aus der Blütezeit der Astrometeorologie. J. Stöfflers Prognose für das Jahr 1524*, Beiträge zur Geschichte der Meteorologie, 1914, Nr. 1, pp. 1–102.

³⁷ Madlena MAHLING, *Raum und Zeit im Briefverkehr der livländischen Hansestädte mit Lübeck (1450–1500)*, [in:] *Livland – eine Region am Ende der Welt? Forschungen zum Verhältnis zwischen Zentrum und Peripherie im späten Mittelalter / Livonia – a Region at the End of the World? Studies on the Relations between Centre and Periphery in the Later Middle Ages*, hrsg. v. Anti SELART, Matthias THUMSER (Quellen und Studien zur baltischen Geschichte, Bd. 27), Köln–Weimar–Wien 2017, pp. 103–105.

³⁸ Bernd MOELLER, *Das Berühmtwerden Luthers*, [in:] idem, *Luther-Rezeption. Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze zur Reformationsgeschichte*, Göttingen 2001, pp. 15–41.

³⁹ See also Juhan KREEM, „Es soll auch wahr sein, das Kapitän Drake aus India gekommen ist“. *Zwei Briefzeitungen aus dem Revaler Stadtarchiv – mit einem Quellenanhang*, [in:] *Von Hamburg nach Java. Studien zur mittelalterlichen, neuen und digitalen Geschichte. Festschrift zu Ehren von Jürgen Sarnowsky*, hrsg. v. Jochen BURGTORF, Christian HOFFARTH, Sebastian KUBON (Nova Mediaevalia, vol. 18), Göttingen 2020, pp. 553–563.

⁴⁰ TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 2–5. It is a four-leaf quire in octavo containing the middle portion of the imperial mandate. Judging from the extent of the preserved text, it most likely lacks two leaves at the beginning and two at the end.

⁴¹ TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 24: 'Nige tydinghe vann norenberch innt jar 28 geordinert dorch den erbarenn Rath'. At the end (fol. 24v), there is a signature: 'Dith mandath is tho Norenberch ghegeuen vnd is warafftich'.

it is framed as news. Important negotiations over the compromise on religion at the Imperial Diet of Regensburg in 1541 are represented by two descriptive fragments, one of them dated in Greifswald⁴². The letter from Greifswald is not the only example of Reval receiving the information through a third party. In the summer of 1540, Albert, Duke of Prussia, forwarded to Reval⁴³ a pamphlet written by John Frederick, Elector of Saxony, and Philipp, Duke of Hesse, against Henry the Younger, Duke of Brunswick, printed in Marburg in 1539⁴⁴, along with the accompanying printed circular letter of the elector of Saxony⁴⁵. Revalians, in other words, remained informed about the discussions and conflicts in Germany, and when the Schmalkaldic War started in 1546, the leaders of the Protestant League, the elector of Saxony and the duke of Hesse, wrote directly to Reval for financial support⁴⁶, but the town declined politely⁴⁷. Active, fast, and detailed communication between Livonia and the Holy Roman Empire is also evident later in the case of the discussions over the Augsburg Interim of 1548⁴⁸. There is no reason to believe that this was different during the early years of the Reformation.

TO THE CHRISTIAN NOBILITY OF THE GERMAN NATION

In the archival folder described above, there is a unique source about the reception of the new ideas in Reval in the early 1520s. It is a quire, which is entitled by its composer: *Excerpts from a Booklet to the German Nobility about the Improvement of the Christian Condition by Doctor Martin Luther*⁴⁹. It contains notes taken from Luther's pamphlet *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, which Luther wrote in the summer of 1520 and which was first printed in August in Wittenberg by Melchior Lotter. Its first print run was a remarkable 4,000 copies, and it was reprinted 14 times, not only in Wittenberg,

⁴² TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 32r–v, 34r–35v.

⁴³ Duke Albert of Prussia to Reval, Königsberg, 9 July 1540, TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 31. Received in Reval on 31 September 1540.

⁴⁴ VD16, S 1091. The pamphlet itself is not preserved in the Tallinn collections.

⁴⁵ Elector John Frederick of Saxony to Reval, Torgau, 5 June 1540, TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 47. Received in Reval on 31 September 1540. It is a printed letter where only the addressee (*Rehfelth*) and date are inserted by hand.

⁴⁶ Elector John Frederick of Saxony and Duke Philipp of Hesse to Reval, 19 December 1546, TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 36–41. Received in Reval on 21 February 1547.

⁴⁷ *Regesten aus zwei Missivbüchern des XVI. Jahrhunderts im Revaler Stadt-Archiv*, bearb. v. Gotthard von Hansen, Reval 1895, Nr. II-151.

⁴⁸ Juhan KREEM, *Das Augsburger Interim in Livland. Evangelische und Altgläubige in den baltischen Landen in der Mitte des 16. Jh.*, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, Jg. 134: 2014, pp. 121–141.

⁴⁹ TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 6–11: 'Excerpta aus den Buchlein an den Duthschen Adel von des Christlicken stand besserung van doctor Marten Lutther gemacht'. Size: 30 x 21.5 cm.

but also in Leipzig, Augsburg, Basel, Strasbourg, and Munich⁵⁰. A Middle Low German edition appeared in the same year in Halberstadt by Lorenz Stuchs⁵¹.

According to the handwriting, the Reval excerpt can be attributed to the town scribe Marcus Tirbach. It was most likely intended for private use of the scribe, above all because the text is linguistically inconsistent. Some of the points made by Luther are rendered in longer direct quotes, while others are represented only by key phrases. Most of the text is a mixture of High and Middle Low German, but the writer lapses into Latin from time to time, using Latin phrases or even longer paragraphs. As Luther's *To the Christian Nobility* was not translated into Latin, lapses into Latin must have been the result of active cogitation of an educated reader. Tirbach was well educated; he had started his studies in Wittenberg in 1514 and was granted his bachelor's degree the next year⁵². In other words, he could have attended the lectures of Luther. He was back in Livonia in 1517 at the latest and did not witness the famous conflict over the indulgencies, but it is likely that he still maintained some contacts with his old *alma mater*, which allowed him to stay informed about the latest discussions on church reform.

Some specific quotes on the criticism of the veneration of the pope in the Reval excerpt indicate that Tirbach was using the second Wittenberg edition, expanded by Luther himself⁵³. Tirbach became somewhat weary towards the end and started to render Luther's points only in very short phrases. The very end of Luther's work, points 23–27, which the future church council, according to Luther, should discuss, are missing altogether in the excerpt. There are three blank pages in the quire, so the work of Tirbach remained unfinished for some reason. It is not explicit when the Reval excerpt was written. The quire contains at its end a fragment of the minutes of the town council from 1 February 1521. How it relates to the excerpt is not evident. The handwriting certainly belongs to the 1520s.

To the German Nobility is one of the most successful pieces of polemical journalism Luther ever wrote. It was composed in the summer of 1520 under enormous pressure when Luther was waiting for the final decision of his case from Rome, anticipating a negative outcome. Together with *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* and *On the Freedom of a Christian*, it forms the triad

⁵⁰ Thomas KAUFMANN, *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation von des christlichen Standes Besserung* (Kommentare zu Schriften Luthers, Bd. 3), Tübingen 2014, p. 33.

⁵¹ VD16, L 3764.

⁵² Leonid ARBUSOW, *Livlands Geistlichkeit vom Ende des 12. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert*, Jahrbuch für Genealogie, Heraldik und Sphragistik, 1901, pp. 125–126; idem, *Livlands Geistlichkeit vom Ende des 12. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert. Dritter Nachtrag*, Jahrbuch für Genealogie, Heraldik und Sphragistik, 1911/1912, p. 215.

⁵³ TLA, f. 230, n. 1, s. Bq 1 I, fol. 9r; T. KAUFMANN, *An den christlichen Adel*, pp. 260–264.

of reformational writings that made Luther's break with the Church final, even when his readers might not have yet perceived it in that way. Until the imperial interdict was imposed on Luther in 1521, it was still legal to read his works. However widespread the pamphlet to the nobility was, it was received very intensely, in a very short timeframe⁵⁴. The rapid developments just buried it under new issues, and it was not included in the first collected works of Luther⁵⁵. The political context changed, and called for new, specialised formulations of reform plans, making this hasty compendium obsolete. With some caution, this might be used as an argument for the early dating of the Reval excerpt.

Because of the enormous popularity of Luther's pamphlet to the nobility, it is hardly surprising to find evidence of its reception in Reval. Probably because of its commonplaceness, the Reval excerpt escaped the attention of Leonid Arbusow, who was otherwise very thorough in collecting sources on the Livonian Reformation⁵⁶. The question remains, how could the reception of the pamphlet to the nobility be fitted into the Livonian Reformation history, and what can it reveal about its specific problems and developments?

To start with more general aspects, *To the German Nobility* stands out as the most political among the mentioned reform writings of 1520. Because of its nationalist traits and references to specifically German conditions, its dissemination in other parts of Europe was hampered. To encounter it in Livonia underscores once again the cultural and political affinity of the region with Germany. In drafting a comprehensive programme of church reform and calling for secular power to implement it, Luther addressed the same issues, which were topical in Livonia, where ecclesiastical authorities exercised considerable secular power, similar to the prince-bishops in Germany. The limitation of this power was actively discussed in Livonia in the early 1520s.

'Causa doctoris Martini Luther' was on the agenda of the Livonian bishops for the first time at their meeting in Ronneburg (Lat. Rauna), on 28 July 1521, when it was decided that the papal bull on his condemnation should be made public⁵⁷. In June 1522, during the Livonian Diet in Wolmar (Lat. Valmiera), the towns and noble corporations refused to accept the publication

⁵⁴ T. KAUFMANN, *An den christlichen Adel*, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Bernd MOELLER, *Klerus und Antiklerikalismus in Luthers Schrift „An den Christlicher Adel deutscher Nation“ von 1520*, [in:] idem, *Luther-Rezeption. Kirchenhistorische Aufsätze zur Reformationsgeschichte*, Göttingen 2001, p. 109.

⁵⁶ L. ARBUSOW, *Die Einführung der Reformation*, pp. 628–629. When discussing Andreas Knopken, Arbusow refers to Luther's *Reformschriften* of 1520, but not explicitly to the *Adels-schrift*, see *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁵⁷ *Akten und Rezesse der livländischen Ständetage*, Bd. 3, bearb. v. Leonid ARBUSOW (hereinafter cited as AR III), Riga 1910, Nr. 115, § 13; Nr. 116, § 13. The publisher supposes that the *Exsurge Domine*, 15 June 1520, is meant, although technically *Decet Romanum Pontificem*, 3 January 1521, could also have reached Livonia by that time.

of the excommunication bull imposed on Luther 'because this country has been conquered not by ban but by the secular sword, it will therefore not be ruled or held by bans'⁵⁸. The estates had formulated a similar position already in 1516, when they protested against the use of excommunication in secular matters by the bishops⁵⁹. Considering this point of disagreement, it is evident that every discussion on the limits of clerical power found receptive ears in Livonia because the problems were already there. When, for example, Luther criticises in the pamphlet to the nobility the interventions of episcopal officials in secular court cases⁶⁰, this must have resonated in Reval in 1521, when the former town scribe Otto Manow, now a canon and official of the bishop of Reval, caused tensions between the town and the bishop because of his intrusion in the town's jurisdiction⁶¹.

Luther's pamphlet addressed to the German nobility and the *Reichsritterschaft* proved to be an important vehicle of the Reformation. The Reval excerpt belongs to the urban context, but nobility played an important part in the early years of the Reformation in Livonia as well. The apex of their support for the new preachers was reached at the meeting of the estates in July 1524 in Reval, where, on the proposal of the representatives of the town of Riga, the noble corporations led by Jürgen von Ungern joined in supporting the preaching of the pure Word of God and the Gospels⁶². About the same time, the vassals of Ösel (Est. Saaremaa) and Wiek (Est. Läänemaa) had a seal carved with the letters 'DWGBE', which stands for a quote from Isaiah 40:8, 'the word of our God will stand forever' ('das Wort [unseres] Gottes bleibt ewiglich'). The first preserved example of this new seal dates to February 1525, but it was most likely used in July 1524, when the bishop complained that the vassals were using a novel seal⁶³. This slogan had a long career in the symbolism of the evangelical movement: Frederick the Wise (1463–1525), Elector of Saxony and Luther's principal protector, took a Latin version of this quote from the Bible ('verbum Domini manet in aeternum') as a personal motto on his medallion

⁵⁸ AR III, Nr. 136, § 35: 'nachdeme disse lande nicht mit deme banne sunder deme wartliken swerde irovert und gewonnen, willen och derhalven mit dem banne nicht regeret nach upgehouden werden.' See also L. ARBUSOW, *Die Einführung der Reformation*, p. 222.

⁵⁹ AR III, Nr. 66, § 41, 52: 'geistlicke swerde des bannes'.

⁶⁰ T. KAUFMANN, *An den christlichen Adel*, pp. 225–228.

⁶¹ L. ARBUSOW, *Die Einführung der Reformation*, pp. 200–202.

⁶² AR III, Nr. 150, § 14; Nr. 151, § 8.

⁶³ *Est- und Livländische Brieflade*, Bd. 4: *Siegel und Münzen der weltlichen und geistlichen Gebietiger über Liv-, Est- und Curland bis zum Jahre 1561 nebst Siegeln einheimischer Geschlechter*, hrsg. v. Johannes SACHSSENDAHL, Reval 1887, p. 81, Table 17; Astaf VON TRANSEHE, *Bericht*, 5. Nov. 1902, *Jahrbuch für Genealogie, Heraldik und Sphragistik*, 1902, pp. 226–229; AR III, Nr. 157: 'unwoenligen sigil'.

as early as 1522⁶⁴. It was also repeatedly used during the German Peasants' War, when it was put on the flag and seal⁶⁵. Later, it became the slogan of the Schmalkaldic League and, after the defeat of the League by imperial forces in 1547, it was used by the Lutheran town of Magdeburg as a motto of continued resistance⁶⁶. Osilian knights seem to have adopted the slogan relatively early. As speculation, it should be added that Tirbach might have acted as a middleman, because before moving to Reval in early 1520, he had served as a secretary of the bishop of Ösel-Wiek, most certainly maintaining contacts with the local nobility.

Luther's attack against the secular power of the pope in the pamphlet addressed to the nobility⁶⁷ must have also affected the perception of the secular power of bishops. In Livonia, the issue was raised most prominently during the diet in June 1525, where the towns led by Riga aimed to elevate the Master of the Teutonic Order to the overlordship of Livonia, thereby abolishing the secular power of the bishops. In the same context, Riga town scribe Johann Lohmüller compiled a tract on the topic⁶⁸. Lohmüller's arguments in denying any secular power of the bishops are thoroughly Lutheran; there is, however, no direct indication confirming the use of Luther's pamphlet to the nobility in his text. The outcome of the diet was a disappointment for the towns, because it froze all the conflicts until the council convened by the emperor and the estates decided on disputed matters⁶⁹. Faith put into the universal church council is one of the key ideas in Luther's pamphlet to the nobility⁷⁰. It is possible that this also resonated in the decision made by the Livonian Diet, especially when we consider that the Livonians were placing trust in the imperial council, ignoring papal ambition to be the single organiser of such councils.

⁶⁴ Frederick J. STOPP, "Verbum domini manet in aeternum": *The Dissemination of a Reformation Slogan, 1522–1904*, [in:] *Essays in German Language, Culture and Society: Festschrift for Roy Pascal*, ed. Siegbert S. PRAWER, R. Hinton THOMAS, Leonard FORSTER (Essays in German Literature, vol. 2; Institute of Germanic Studies. Publications, vol. 12), London 1969, pp. 123–135.

⁶⁵ Lyndal ROPER, *Summer of Fire and Blood: The German Peasants' War*, London 2025, pp. 277 (for the flag), 140 (for the seal).

⁶⁶ Bernd THIER, *Nur ein Gesinnungsabzeichen der frühen Protestanten aus dem 16. Jahrhundert? Zu den verschiedenen Interpretationsebenen eines ungewöhnlichen Fundobjekts aus Hamm in Westfalen*, *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Archäologie des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, Bd. 31: 2018, pp. 103–114.

⁶⁷ T. KAUFMANN, *An den christlichen Adel*, pp. 243–254.

⁶⁸ Hans QUEDNAU, *Johannes Lohmüller, Stadtsyndikus von Riga, ein Träger deutscher Reformation in Nordosteuropa. Mit einer Auswahl aus seinen Schriften*, *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, Jg. 36: 1939, pp. 57–67.

⁶⁹ AR III, Nr. 207, § 34 (3): 'Item keyn upror, nygerunge efte vorandering yn dyssen landen wyeder tho geshehende vor den negestkomstigen concilio zo van keyserlicker majestat und den gemeynen des Romschen rikes geholden wert'.

⁷⁰ T. KAUFMANN, *An den christlichen Adel*, pp. 18–19.

THE TWELVE ARTICLES

In the collection of the Reval town council, the *Twelve Articles* of the German Peasants' War of 1525 in Middle Low German can be found⁷¹. It is a clean copy in *octavo*, almost as if it tried to emulate the printed *Flugschriften* of the time. The quire has ten leaves, the text of the articles is written on eight inside leaves, whereas two leaves, which now form the cover, contain on the penultimate page yet another unfinished transcript of the introduction to the articles. We may assume, then, that there was an intention to make another copy of the articles in the same *octavo* format by the same scribe. The hand involved in the whole enterprise again belongs to Marcus Tirbach.

The *Twelve Articles* were originally completed in Memmingen and first appeared in print in Augsburg in the first half of March 1525⁷². During the same year, the text went through two dozen editions, bringing the assessed number of copies up to 25,000⁷³. It was the most successful print product of its time⁷⁴. The *Twelve Articles* were grounded on the new understanding of the Gospel, divine justice and Christian brotherhood⁷⁵, and summarised the social demands of the insurgent commoners⁷⁶. Among a large variety of demands, the *Twelve Articles* were the most widespread. In the area of revolt, the *Articles* acquired even a symbolic meaning, as oaths were sworn upon them⁷⁷. But the *Articles* were certainly disseminated and discussed not only in the context of the actual revolt, but also elsewhere. They served as the basis for the discussions on the Imperial Diet in Speyer in 1526, although they are not explicitly mentioned in its documentation⁷⁸. Furthermore, transcripts of the commoners' demands were made to inform authorities in other places⁷⁹. There even

⁷¹ TLA, f. 230, n. 1, Bq 1 I, fol. 14–23. Size: 21.5 x 14.5 cm. Published in K. HÖHLBAUM, op.cit., pp. 345–351. On the verso, there is a later inscription reading: 'Der auffrürischen baurn articul de anno 1525'.

⁷² *Zwölf Artikel der Bauern*, hrsg. v. Alfred GÖTZE, Historische Vierteljahrschrift, Jg. 5: 1902, pp. 1–33.

⁷³ Peter BLICKLE, *Die Revolution von 1525*, München–Wien 1983, p. 24.

⁷⁴ Thomas KAUFMANN, *Der Bauernkrieg. Ein Medienereignis*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2024, pp. 146–159.

⁷⁵ L. ROPER, op.cit., pp. 117–120. See also Heiko OBERMAN, *The Gospel and Social Unrest: 450 Years after the So-Called "German Peasant's War of 1525"*, Harvard Theological Review, vol. 69: 1976, pp. 103–129.

⁷⁶ P. BLICKLE, op.cit., pp. 32–89.

⁷⁷ Günter VOGLER, *Der revolutionäre Gehalt und die räumliche Verbreitung der oberschwäbischen Zwölf Artikel*, [in:] *Revolte und Revolution in Europa*, hrsg. v. Peter BLICKLE (Historische Zeitschrift. N.F., Beih. 4), München 1975, p. 229; L. ROPER, op.cit., pp. 120–121.

⁷⁸ P. BLICKLE, op.cit., p. 247.

⁷⁹ G. VOGLER, op.cit., p. 226.

exists a 24-point list of grievances that was compiled to inform Henry VIII of England of the developments in Germany⁸⁰.

How could the *Twelve Articles* relate to the events in Livonia, since there was no general insurrection, although some radical tendencies of the Reformation were noticeable there⁸¹? There was a brief wave of iconoclastic outbreaks in Livonian towns⁸². One of the later founders of the Anabaptist movement, Melchior Hoffmann, preached in Dorpat and is closely associated with unrest in the town in early 1525⁸³. Hoffmann achieved attestation of his teaching through Luther himself during his Wittenberg visit in the summer of 1525⁸⁴, but he seems to have been pushed aside upon his return to Livonia. In general, the stability of municipal governments persisted through the Reformation in Livonia, in contrast to many other places, where the old councils were overthrown.

Previous scholarship has been divided on the issue of the purpose of the Reval copy of the *Twelve Articles*. When the first reference to it was made in 1830, it was regarded as an original piece compiled by the peasants in Estonia⁸⁵. The first publisher of the text, Konstantin Höhlbaum, identified it as a translation of the famous *Twelve Articles* and denied any connection it might have had with Livonian Reformation history⁸⁶. Later research has accepted Höhlbaum's identification of the text but still cautiously attributed some local relevance to the *Articles*⁸⁷. It is true that in its present form, the Reval transcript of the

⁸⁰ Albert E. J. HOLLAEENDER, "Articles of Almany": An English Version of German Peasants Gravamina 1525, [in:] *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, ed. J. Conway DAVIES, London 1957, pp. 164–177.

⁸¹ For the concept itself, see Anselm SCHUBERT, „Radikale Reformation“. Versuch über eine historiographische Kategorie, [in:] *Reformation und Reformationen. Kontinuitäten, Identitäten, Narrative / Reformation and Reformations: Continuities, Identities and Narratives*, hrsg. v. Kaspar von GREYERZ, Anselm SCHUBERT (Schriften des Vereins für Reformationsgeschichte, Nr. 221), Heidelberg 2022, p. 154: 'Es mag "die" Radikale Reformation nicht gegeben haben, aber es gab etwas, dass unseren jeweiligen Vorstellungen von Radikalität mehr entspricht als anderes'.

⁸² Sergiusz MICHALSKI, „Hölzer wurden zu Menschen“. Die Reformatorische Bilderstürme in den baltischen Landen zwischen 1524 und 1526, [in:] *Die baltischen Lande im Zeitalter der Reformation und Konfessionalisierung. Livland, Estland, Ösel, Ingermanland, Kurland und Lettgallen. Stadt, Land und Konfession 1500–1721*, Tl. 4, hrsg. v. Matthias ASCHE, Werner BUCHHOLZ, Anton SCHINDLING (Katholisches Leben und Kirchenreform im Zeitalter der Glaubensspaltung, Bd. 72), Münster 2012, pp. 147–162; Tiina KALA, *Tumedad jõud ja evangeeliumi valgus. Liivimaa pildirüüste allikad ja tõlgendused*, Tuna, 2024, no. 3, pp. 17–42, 157.

⁸³ K. DEPPERMAN, op.cit., pp. 45–50.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 55–56. The joint missive of Luther, Bugenhagen, and Hoffmann to the Livonians was printed in Wittenberg. See the critical edition in WA, Bd. 18, Weimar 1908, pp. 417–430.

⁸⁵ C. REIN, op.cit., p. 21, footnote 30; Wilhelm BRACHMANN, *Die Reformation in Livland. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Livlands sowohl, als Reformation*, Mittheilungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte Liv-, Ehst- und Kurlands, Bd. 5: 1850, p. 65.

⁸⁶ K. HÖHLBAUM, op.cit., p. 345.

⁸⁷ F. BIENEMANN, op.cit., p. 55; L. ARBUSOW, *Die Einführung der Reformation*, pp. 810, 833.

Twelve Articles does not serve well for the agitation among the non-German peasantry in Livonia. Indeed, distributing either handwritten or printed texts among illiterate peasants would not have made sense anywhere in Europe⁸⁸. But the attempt to make multiple copies of the *Twelve Articles* in Reval hints at the wish to share it, whatever the motives might have been.

There is sufficient contemporary evidence from Livonia that some preachers delivered the Gospel in a way that could initiate social unrest. The Master of the Teutonic Order in Livonia, Wolter von Plettenberg, complained in the spring of 1524 that some of the preachers were teaching 'that the peasants do not have to be obedient to their superiors'⁸⁹. During the same summer, he had heard similar reports from the *Vogt* of Wesenberg (Est. Rakvere)⁹⁰. The nobility brought up these accusations at the Livonian Diet in July 1525, whereby, besides the preachers, the travelling merchants in the countryside were marked as disseminators of these ideas⁹¹. According to the diary of Sylvester Tegetmeyer during this diet, representatives of the nobility from Harrien (Est. Harjumaa) and Wierland (Est. Virumaa) threatened him with a knife and fist because his preaching was going to leave them without the land and people⁹². A couple of years later, the nobility complained that the peasants were learning about the new teaching from their merchant partners in the towns⁹³. It is of course difficult to infer from these accusations the content of the doctrine, disseminated among the peasants, and the emphasis on disobedience does not have bearing on the *Twelve Articles*, but it can be well imagined that the arrival of the *Articles*, sometime in the summer of 1525 at the earliest, might have supported radical preaching in the already existing milieu of social unrest.

In the Baltic Reformation historiography, the question of why there was no peasants' war in Livonia has been actively pondered. Baltic German research

⁸⁸ N. ZEMON DAVIS, op.cit., pp. 208–209.

⁸⁹ For von Plettenberg's letter to Reval of 8 March 1524, see Gotthard VON HANSEN, *Aus baltischer Vergangenheit. Miscellaneen aus dem Revaler Stadtarchiv*, Reval 1894, pp. 123–125, here p. 123: 'dat die bwren erer Herschafft underdenick tho wesende nich plichtig vnd schuldch sein sollen'.

⁹⁰ Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Livonica I: 6, fol. 25v–26v, Burtnek, 21 June 1524.

⁹¹ AR III, Nr. 207, § 53: 'So denn de hern und adel klagen, dat summighe prediger de buren uprusten der herschop nicht horszam tho synde'; § 54: 'Item dem copman, szo yn den landen reysze, ock tho vorbeden, de kercken ungeblotet tho laten und up de herschop nicht tho vorforn, und de bure nicht tegen de herschop uptorusten'.

⁹² Sylvester Tegetmeyer's *Tagebuch*, p. 505: 'de eine wysede my dat mest, de ander de fuest, unde spreken: Du vorreder, du betreger, du wult uns drade umme landt unde lude bringen'.

⁹³ AR III, Nr. 242, § 8 (1527): 'und leren en den nyggen geloven, de buren eren hern nicht horszam szin dorven; se maken enne wisz, sze woll szo gud szin als ere heren und geven en vlesch up fridage und szust ander dage tho etten'.

had interpreted it as the better lot of the peasants, when compared to those in Germany⁹⁴. Vilho Niitemaa, denying this, tried to explain the peacefulness of peasants in Livonia with religious indifference and the national divide between the townspeople and peasants, making the agitation by the burghers among the rural folk ineffective. In other words, the peasants were not 'enlightened' (*aufgeklärt*) enough to rebel⁹⁵. Herbert Ligi argued along the same lines⁹⁶. Especially in Marxist historiography, the question of the absence of a Livonian peasants' war has been important⁹⁷, because in this paradigm, the Reformation as an 'early bourgeois revolution' must have had its culmination with a peasants' war.

One must bear in mind that although the participants of the German Peasants' War imbibed reformational ideas, the Reformation itself did not necessarily cause peasant uprisings everywhere it arrived⁹⁸. Social protest can quickly amalgamate evangelical ideas, but for the development of a mass protest movement, additional preconditions are needed, such as the density of land use and fragility of power, just to name a few. The short-lived peasant rising in Samland and Natangen in eastern Prussia in the autumn of 1525, where, during the same spring, a new duchy was established, and the new duke had not yet arrived, is a good example of the latter⁹⁹. The Prussian uprising has been included in the narratives of the German Peasants' War, although there is no direct connection between the movements in southern Germany and Prussia¹⁰⁰. There is also no direct indication of the reception of the *Twelve Articles*

⁹⁴ Hermann VON ENGELHARDT, *Beitrag zur Entstehung der Gutsherrschaft in Livland während der Ordenszeit* (PhD diss., Universität Leipzig), Leipzig 1897, pp. 77, 113–114; Heinrich BOSSE, *Der livländische Bauer am Ausgang der Ordenszeit (bis 1561)*, *Mitteilungen aus der livländischen Geschichte*, Bd. 24: 1933, p. 455.

⁹⁵ Vilho NIITEMAA, *Die undeutsche Frage in der Politik der livländischen Städte im Mittelalter* (Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian toimituksia. Sarja B, vol. 64), Helsinki 1949, pp. 249–256, especially p. 255.

⁹⁶ Herbert LIGI, *Eesti talurahva olukord ja klassivõitlus Liivi sõja ajal 1558–1561*, Tallinn 1961, pp. 276–279; idem, *Klassivõitlus*, [in:] *Eesti talurahva ajalugu*, kd. 1, toim. Juhan KAHK, Enn TARVEL, Tallinn 1992, pp. 259–260.

⁹⁷ Joachim KUHLES, *Die Reformation in Livland – religiöse, politische und ökonomische Wirkungen* (Hamburger Beiträge zur Geschichte des östlichen Europa, Bd. 16), Hamburg 2007, pp. 206–216.

⁹⁸ Luise SCHORN-SCHÜTTE, *Die Reformation. Vorgeschichte – Verlauf – Wirkung*, München 2006, pp. 56–57.

⁹⁹ Heide WUNDER, *Zur Mentalität aufständischer Bauern. Möglichkeiten der Zusammenarbeit von Geschichtswissenschaft und Anthropologie, dargestellt am Beispiel des Samländischen Bauernaufstandes von 1525*, [in:] *Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg 1524–1526*, hrsg. v. Hans-Ulrich WEHLER (Geschichte und Gesellschaft, Sonderheft 1), Göttingen 1975, pp. 9–37.

¹⁰⁰ Günther FRANZ, *Der Deutsche Bauernkrieg*, Darmstadt 1975, pp. 276–279; L. ROPER, op.cit., p. 350.

in Prussia¹⁰¹. Nevertheless, for Günther Franz in his classic treatment of the German Peasants' War, the transcript in Reval appears as evidence of how unrest spread in the eastern Baltic countries from Prussia to Livonia¹⁰². It must be left open to interpretation whether these events were part of a single, overarching process at all.

Obviously, there was a circulation of radical, potentially dangerous ideas. However, the Reval text remains a unique sample among the versions of the *Twelve Articles*¹⁰³. There appear to be no known contemporary prints of the *Articles* in Middle Low German. Thus, how, by whom, and for what purpose the translation was made remains unclear. In any case, the Reval copy of the *Articles* served as a piece of 'hot' news to be distributed. Its potential use as an agitation material was, at best, short-lived.

CONCLUSIONS

A variety of evidence on the diffusion of Reformation ideas is preserved in the archives of the Reval town council. It appears that, besides prints, manual multiplication, done either by direct copying or in excerpts, must have played a role in the reception and distribution of those ideas. Although the evidence remains fragmentary, as likely only a fraction of the written news arriving in Reval has come down to us, it still reveals that Revalians quickly became aware of the newest developments and discussions.

Under these circumstances, it is to be expected that we find traces of two of the most widespread contemporary prints in Reval, that is, Luther's address *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* and the *Twelve Articles* of the German Peasants' War. The prints themselves have been lost, but we have evidence on how the town scribe Marcus Tirbach was treating them. In the case of the pamphlet to the nobility, he made excerpts of the text for his own use. After an intense study of the text, he could have used these ideas in a variety of political discussions of his time. He also attempted to duplicate the *Twelve Articles*, copied clean, possibly also translated into the local language of the Livonian towns, Middle Low German. Both instances are examples of exposing oneself to new ideas, and, in the case of the pamphlet to the nobility, presumably absorbing them. It is evident that both writings had some local relevance. The pamphlet to the nobility addressed issues which were topical in Livonia,

¹⁰¹ Henryk ZINS, *Aspects of the Peasant Rising in East Prussia in 1525*, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 38: 1959, no. 90, pp. 178–187.

¹⁰² G. FRANZ, *op.cit.*, p. 277.

¹⁰³ Karl LEHNERT, *Studien zur Geschichte der zwölf Artikel vom Jahre 1525* (PhD diss., Universität Halle-Wittenberg), Halle 1894, pp. 80, 93, where the Middle Low German text is rendered from the edition by Höhlbaum.

that is, the role of ecclesiastical power, and the *Twelve Articles* could have been used to stir up social unrest by radical preachers. Even though the application of these two writings in Livonia remains largely speculative, there is no doubt that the Reval town council was well informed about the latest religious disputes of the period.

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