

## The opponent's feedback on the dissertation of Pavel Smrž

### *“Obchodní vztahy mezi Hanzou, Livonskem, Velikým Novgorodem a Pskovem od 12. do začátku 16. století”*

*(“The Trade Relations between the Hanseatic League, Livonia, Veliky Novgorod and Pskov from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the Early 16<sup>th</sup> Century”)*

submitted for defense in 2024 at the Faculty of Philosophy of Charles University

#### **I. Brief description of dissertation**

The thesis of Pavel Smrž belongs to the category of studies “on the border of cultures and civilizations”, because the subject of the author’s studies is the diverse relations of the Hanseatic League, Livonia with the trading states of Novgorod, Pskov and other lands of the Rurikids in the 12<sup>th</sup> – early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The author writes about the contacts of two worlds – Latin Western European (mainly German) and Orthodox in Rus’ (in the broadest sense of this term, as the extensive possessions of the Rurikids). The chosen topic for the Czech and, in general, Central European historiography retains considerable relevance. In a view of the reconstruction and reinterpretation of the historical past of Rus’, its individual dynastic components, the contacts of the elites of certain western possessions of the Rurikids (in this case, mainly Novgorod and Pskov) with the neighboring states of the Latin world look quite natural, and conditioned from the geographic and trade points of view. In this context, the “собрание русских земель”, which was resorted to by the grand Princes, sovereigns and tsars of Moscow from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and which the leaders of the current Russian Federation put on the shield of its own foreign policy, serves as additional evidence of the illegality of the “privatization” of the history of Rus’ by modern Russia.

#### **II. Brief overall evaluation of the work**

During the analyzing of the author’s research problem, its relevance, the subject, the purpose and tasks, the chronological and geographical boundaries of the studies – I mean – Pavel Smrž is completely immersed in the topic, understands the importance of using of the historical and historiographical terminology in order to conduct the most objective research. He is well versed in the methodology as well. The various sources and historiography of the topic used by the author are sufficient to achieve the tasks set in the work.

#### **III. Detailed assessment of work and its individual aspects**

In the first chapter “Novgorod, Pskov a Livonsko” (“Novgorod, Pskov and Livonia”), the author outlines the main preconditions for the development of the Baltic lands by the knights of the Livonian Order, the gradual penetration of the Christian influences here at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the construction of the main strongholds, etc. The author rightly foxed the multi-ethnicity of the local residents (mainly within the borders of modern Latvia and Estonia, to a lesser extent – Lithuania, especially after the battle of 1236 near Šiauliai with the knights, s. 44), who were under the tangible influence of the neighboring possessions of the Rurikids. At this stage of the development of the Baltic territories, the Livonian Brothers of the Sword encountered not only the resistance of the local population, but also situationally conflicted with the bishop of Riga or the city magistrate (s. 49). The settlement of disputes often required the participation of a specially sent papal legate, as, for example, in 1225, William of Modena (s. 45). The experience of a clash with a detachments of the Novgorod and Pskov troops in 1242 on Lake Peipsi proved to be painful (s. 47). Therefore, the Baltic sphere and the dimension of the activity of the knights in the first decades of the 13<sup>th</sup> century received relatively clear geographical coordinates. Sometimes the knights were forced to defend the acquired lands from the Lithuanian-Rus’ian invasions, as, for example, in 1261 (s. 48). The situation became more complicated with the gradual entry of 12 Livonian cities into the system of the trade relations of the Hanseatic League, to which Riga entered in 1282 (s. 53). Trying to gain power over it, the Livonian order hindered trade relations with the neighboring lands of the Rurikids to a certain extent. The author quite rightly outlined the stages of development of

Novgorod (s. 54–64) and Pskov (s. 64–67), the gradual transformation of the city system into a republican one.

According to the background of the neighborhood, which gradually took shape territorially, the question arose about the feasibility of concluding of the bilateral agreements, which the author reflected in chapter I. 2. “*Historie uzavírání smluv Velikého Novgorodu a Pskova s Hanzou a řádem německých rytířů v Livonsku do roku 1448*” (“*History of the Treaty of Great Novgorod and Pskov with the Hanseatic League and the Order of the German Knights in Livonia up to 1448*”). As Pavel Smrž rightly reflected, the first of the known treaties of the Livonian Order with the elites of Novgorod dates back to 1191/2 (s. 68) on a similar basis to the agreements of 1259/60 or 1268/9. (s. 69–72) and especially important in 1392, which took place between Novgorod and Hanseatic League (s. 74). The era of wars between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with the Teutonic Order at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries caused not only the weakening of the knights, but also pushed Novgorod and Pskov to conclude the following agreements with their western neighbors (both the Livonian Brothers of the Sword and the Hanseatic cities) in 1417, 1421, 1436, 1450 (s. 75–76). However, the strengthening of the Moscow rulers caused a change in the paradigm of the international relations in mid- and second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, especially with the incorporation of Novgorod after 1471.

In chapter II “*Na hranici dvou světů*” (“*On the border of two worlds*”), the author set the goal to establish of the specific geographical coordinates of the contacts of the German immigrants, knights and merchants, with the neighboring lands of the Rurikids. As the author rightly points out, the borders often crossed, for example, the rivers, as can be seen in the agreement between Novgorod and the Swedes in 1323 (s. 78). Similarly, the boundaries were marked in the case of the relations with the Livonian Brothers of the Sword and the Hanseatic cities, although, as Pavel Smrž points out, these issues were not stipulated in the agreements until the 15<sup>th</sup> century (s. 79–81). The rivers and lakes, demarcating the spheres of influence of the parties, also served as places of the permission or prohibition to fish (as well as cut down the forest, collect hay or firewood, as well as collect forest honey), mentioned in the agreements, for example, in 1323, 1420, 1448, 1474, 1481, 1493 and 1503 (s. 82). However, with the improvement of the demographic situation both in the state of the Livonian Order and in the neighboring lands of Novgorod or Pskov, border conflicts became more frequent.

In paragraph 2 “*Livonsko a jeho obyvatelé z pohledu novgorodských a pskovských letopisů*” (“*Livonia and its inhabitants from the point of view of Novgorodian and Pskovian letopises*”) the author compiled an ethnic and demographic image of the average inhabitant of Livonia. In this case, the evidence of letopises became a tool of a knowledge. The contacts of the princes of Rus’ with the Estians (чудь) are often fixed in the sources: 1034/36, 1116, 1130, 1131, 1133, 1176, 1179, 1190, 1191, 1192, 1223 (s. 84–86). Pavel Smrž notes that despite the residence of a number of the local tribes in Livonia (Estians, Zemgals, Kurs, Latgals, Lets, Levs) and the constant arrival of the foreigners (Poles, Danes, Swedes, Ruthenians, and Germans from the Holy Roman Empire), the letopises named these areas «*немецкая земля*» (s. 86–87).

The third paragraph is about “*The verbal communication in the relations between inhabitants of Novgorod, Pskov and Livonia*” (“*Verbální komunikace ve vztazích obyvatel Novgorodu a Pskova s Livonskem*”). The author means that an important tool of the communication was the involvement of representatives of the local *gentium* in the service of translators, which have been recorded since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, for example, in Riga, sometimes in the service of papal legates (s. 88–89). This was most necessary in the process of the Christianization of the local communities, during the missionary activity. Translators also took part in the concluding of the agreements, as is well known, at least in 1191/2 (s. 90). What is important, as the author established, *Rutheni* studied a foreign language much more often than the Germans. At the same time, the Latin language was not dominant in two-way both oral and written communication (s. 91–92). An exception was the intellectual elites of Pskov. Mostly, as is well known, all agreements were concluded in the Ruthenian language or Low German dialect (s. 93). For the merchants of the Hanseatic cities, the learning the Ruthenian language was mandatory in order to establish closer and more profitable trade contacts.

In the third chapter, “*Obchodní styky*” (“*Business contacts*”), the author tried to demonstrate the system of the bilateral business relations. Pavel Smrž on the basis of the concluded agreements, reflected the logistical capabilities of the German merchants who arrived to the Novgorod land (s. 99) in the first paragraph “*Cestování a jeho úskalí*” (“*Traveling and its difficulties*”). During the 14<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries, following the conclusion of the agreements with the Livonian Order, the Bishop of Tartu, the merchants of the Hanseatic League, or the city of Riga, the concept of *чистъ путь* (i. e., a safe free path) for those who arrived to the Novgorod or Pskov lands was legally established (s. 100). In contrast to the overland and river routes, the movement of the Baltic Sea was more dangerous due to the activities of the pirates and weather conditions. Using the example of several famous people of his time (the Metropolitan Isidore or merchant from Lübeck *Hildebrandt Veckinchusen*) the author demonstrated the dynamics of the movement (s.102–103). The transport logistics of the connections between the possessions of the Rurikids and the neighboring German lands were established even during the functioning of the route “from the Varangians to the Greeks”.

Describing in the second paragraph the circulation of goods, Pavel Smrž emphasizes the absence of any restrictions in the buying and selling operations, regulated, for example, by the agreement of the Livonian Brothers of the Sword with Novgorod in 1421 (s. 109). The list and assortment of the goods was extremely extensive (s. 110), however, the author rightly notes the need of the Rus’ian lands of salt, which was completely lacking and which was imported from the west (s. 113–116). In response, furs of ermine, fox, beaver, marten, sable, otter, wolf, lynx, etc. were exported (s. 110–113). It is interesting that according to a number of the agreements of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1474, 1481, 1493), the Germans could not import beer, mead and “*корчма*” to Pskov and Novgorod (s. 118). This had not only economic, but also political and religious backgrounds. The author proposes an example of the Prince Volodymyr Svyatoslavovych’s choice of a new faith cca 988, where, according to the compilers of “*The Tale of Bygone Years*”, the motivation was the permission to drink an alcohol (s. 126). In everyday life in Rus’, as Pavel Smrž emphasizes, beer and other drinks were commonplace, condemned by the Church and often became the cause of bloody fights with victims, as we can see in Novgorod in 1331 or 1461 (s. 128).

The paragraph 3 “*Hanzovní kontory*” (“*The Hanseatic offices*”) reveals the details of the creation of a network of centers of the union of cities (*aula, curia, hof* or *kontor*), which contributed to more active contacts of the elites of Novgorod, Pskov and Smolensk with the German immigrants in the Baltic. In particular, in Novgorod, this center, specializing in the supply of hides, furs and wax to the Western countries, operated from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was known as the “*Gothic yard*” (with its seal and other symbols). In the reverse direction to the city and the arrived land wine, cloth, salt and luxury items (s. 133). The Hanseatic centers here had a wide autonomy. The situation underwent significant changes with the invasion of Rus’ by the Mongols and the gradual expansion of their influence to the west in the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries (s. 140–141).

The next paragraph “*Hanzovní kupci v Novgorodě a Pskově*” (“*The Hanseatic merchants in Novgorod and Pskov*”) is devoted to the dynamics of the appearance of the German merchants in Novgorod and Pskov, starting from the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The presence of the immigrants was marked by the Latin churches built in Rus’ and Orthodox churches – in the German lands (s. 143). In fact, the church of St. Olaf in Novgorod became the center of formation of the Gothic yard. As the author points out, it is also known about another church – of St. John the Baptist, around which the courtyard of St. Peter was formed (s. 142–143) – one of the largest centers (along with London, Bruges and Bergen) of the Hanseatic League, directly subordinated to Lübeck. Both German courts were located not far from each other, however, as Pavel Smrž points out, by the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the dynamics of the trade relations required the expansion of the storage areas for goods.

In the fifth paragraph “*Novgorodci a Pskované v Livonsku*” (“*The Novgorodians and Pskovians in Livonia*”) the author reflects the activity of the Ruthenian merchants in the Baltic territories controlled by the Germans. The author notes the appearance in Livonia of the merchants from Rus’ in 1209 (s. 151). Between 1262–1352, at least 30 people of the Ruthenian origin lived

here. In particular, in Riga, under the protection of the bishop, the magistrate and the residents of the city, the Ruthenian yard with the church of St. Nicholas functioned (s. 152). The Orthodox churches also existed in Tartu, Reval, Koknese (s. 170). From the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the number of Ruthenian immigrants began to decrease due to the turbulent situation in Livonia, in general. Those who remained in the urban environment gradually assimilated, took the German names and converted. The situation was similar in Estonia (s. 153).

The fourth chapter “*Smlouvy s Hanzou a řádem německých rytířů v Livonsku po anexi Velikého Novgorodu Moskvou*” (“*The treaties with the Hanseatic League and the Oder of the Germanic Knights in Livonia after the annexation of the Great Novgorod by Moscow*”) is dedicated to the details of the bilateral agreements, concluded between 1474–1478 after the incorporation of the Novgorodian lands by the Moskow Duchy. In the first paragraph “*Vstup Moskvy do vztahů mezi Novgorodem a Livonskem v sedmdesátých letech 15. století*” (“*The entry of Moscow into the relations between Novgorod and Livonia in the seventies of the 15<sup>th</sup> century*”) the author describes the influence of the Moscow expansion and the further course of the relations with Livonia. The author rightly notes that from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the elites of Novgorod formally recognized the power of the proteges of the Grand Duke of Vladimir, but gradually became more active in different contacts with the Lithuanian Gediminids (s. 156). Against the background of the strengthening of the Moscow princes during 1462–1505, as well as the permanent Pskov-Novgorod skirmishes, the conflicts with the German neighbors, the rulers of Moscow gradually conquered Novgorod, Tver, Ryazan and Pskov (s. 158). In this situation, both the Hanseatic cities and the Livonian Brothers of the Sword could in no way prevent the further advance of Moscow’s influence to the west (s. 164), even after concluding a number of an important agreements with Pskov and Novgorod in 1474 (s. 167). Moreover, according to the demands for the payment of the so-called “Юрьева дань”, the Baltic territories came to the close attention of the Moscow rulers of the 15<sup>th</sup>–16<sup>th</sup> centuries (s. 171–172).

In the second paragraph “*Novgorod, Pskov a Livonsko po roce 1478*” (“*Novgorod, Pskov and Livonia after 1478*”) Pavel Smrž reflects the current situation in the bilateral relations after the final conquest of Novgorod by Ivan III. The first of the key events of this time was the conclusion of a new agreement in 1481 by the elites of Novgorod with the Livonian Order, according to which Ivan III was the real subject of contractual relations (s. 175–176). In fact, all trade operations of the merchants from the German cities (to which they were encouraged in every way) now came under the control of the government officials of the Moscow ruler. The circumstances of maritime logistics of the Novgorod merchants were conditioned by the agreement of 1487 (s. 181–182). The terms of the further trade and bilateral relations were to be regulated by the agreement of 1493 (s. 185), some provisions of which caused outrage in a number of the Baltic cities of the Hanseatic League, mainly in terms of maintenance and security guarantees for the Orthodox churches and centers of Ruthenian merchants.

The further complication of the relationship of the German residents of Livonia with Ivan III is described in the paragraph entitled “*Uzavření hanzovního dvora v Novgorodě roku 1494*” (“*The closing of the Hanseatic yard in Novgorod in 1494*”). On November 6, 1494, the Moscow ruler ordered to close the courtyard of St. Peter in Novgorod, and to escort the merchants (totally 49 people from 18 cities, of which 17 came from Lübeck and seven from Tartu) with their goods to Moscow (s. 187). As Pavel Smrž noted, this was the third closure of the yard after 1368–1370 and 1443–1445pp. (s. 188). But this time – forever. The reasons for Ivan III’s decision were not only the recently concluded interdynastic agreement of 1493 with the king of Denmark, the tendency to close the Hanseatic yards in other countries, the uncertain situation and even the threat to merchants in Estonia, but also the new policy of the Moscow ruler in the Baltic region (s. 189–193).

The last paragraph is titled “*Novgorodsko-livonské vztahy na pozadí války v letech 1501 až 1503*” (“*Novgorodian-Livonian relationships against the background of the war of 1501 to 1503*”) and refers to the transition of the rulers of Moscow to an open confrontation with the elites of Livonia at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. One of the key reasons for the hostilities was the claims of the Moscow rulers to the so-called “Kyiv heritage”, which were also assumed by the great Lithuanian princes (s. 198). The author notes that Ivan III maximally emphasized the claims to the

Baltic territories during 1462–1503, both in his foreign policy and in his diplomatic activities as well (s. 203). Therefore, in order to secure its borders, the Livonian Order concluded a 10-year anti-Moscow treaty with the Lithuanian Grand Duke Alexander from the Jagiellonian dynasty in 1501 (s. 199). Little bit later three separate agreements were concluded in 1503, two of which were between the Livonian Order and Pskov and Novgorod, and the third one between Pskov and the Bishop of Tartu (s. 201–204). All of them remained in force (with the prolongations in 1509 and 1531) until 1558, until Tsar Ivan IV began a 25-year war for access to the Baltic Sea.

The conclusions to the dissertation are structured and correspond to the declared goals (s. 207–215). The bibliography is represented on the s. 217–240.

#### IV. Defense questions

Among the shortcomings of the author's work are the following:

1. Potentially it would be useful for the dissertation the archival collections of *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz* in Berlin (the collection after 1945 was transported here from Königsberg), and also of Latvian State Historical Archive in Riga, which served as the transit archive for the territories occupied by the Third Reich during the Second World War. It is possible that the material valuable for the dissertation is also stored in the State Archive of Gdańsk (Poland). This city was actively involved in the trade operations of the Hanseatic League. Evidence of the existence of a considerable number of still unpublished sources on the subject of the author's studies is their partial introduction into scientific circulation by the modern Russian scholars, albeit from a somewhat later chronological time (Дипломатическая переписка Ивана Грозного (1533–1584): в 3 т. / под общей редакцией К. Ю. Ерусалимского. Санкт-Петербург : Наука, 2023. Т. 1. Кн. 1 : Священная Римская империя и страны Европы / отв. ред. С. В. Полехов, В. В. Рыбаков, А. В. Толстиков, С. Г. Яковенко. 647 с.).

2. It seems appropriate to us to divide the relations with the elites of Novgorod, Pskov and, in particular, Smolensk (or other cities of Rus') separately into the Livonian Order, and separately – the cities of the Hanseatic League, even the bishops of Riga or Tartu. Because, we are talking about various subjects of the contractual relations and conflict situations, who entered into relations with the neighbors under completely different circumstances. This division is unclear in the dissertation. It seems that the knights and merchant elites of the Hanseatic League – by the Germans origin – were something completely unified in their intentions and interests both in the Baltic and in the neighboring possessions of the Rurikids. After all, how independent were the citizens of Pskov, concluding the bilateral agreements, if, according to the author, they were in the sphere of the influence of Novgorod for a long time. There is no answer to this question either.

3. In our opinion, a separate part of Smrž's work devoted to the prosopography of the participants in the bilateral operations would not be also useful, both from the side of Novgorod and Pskov, and from the side of the German inhabitants of Livonia. Such collective portraits would make it possible to trace certain features and regularities, traditions of the trade relations in the region, it is possible to establish close long-term family ties, which, for example, are clearly recorded in the same active zone of interpenetration of the Galician or, to a lesser extent, the Volhynian lands of the 12<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

4. There are absent in the dissertation of Pavel Smrž the works of Ukrainian (Подольяк Наталія. Могутня Ганза. Комерційний простір, міське життя і дипломатія XII–XVII століть. Наукове видання. Київ : Темпора, 2009. 360 с.) and Belorussian (Подберезкин Филипп. «Юрьевская дань» в русско-ливонских отношениях XIII – середины XVI вв. Минск, 2022) scholars. We're sure, mentioned works would enrich the plot. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that the events in Livonia in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century were known not only in the neighboring lands of Pskov or Novgorod, but also in Volhynia or Galicia, as is clearly evidenced by the Chronicle of the Romanids of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (the so-called *Galician-Volhynian chronicle* or *letopis*), the latest archeographic edition of which is also not seen in the list of the sources used by the author (*Chronica Galiciano-Voliniana* (*Chronica Romanoviciana*), eds. Dariusz Dąbrowski, Adrian Jusupović, In : *Monumenta Poloniae historica*. Kraków–Warszawa: PWN–PAU, 2017, nova series, T. XVI).

5. There are different mistakes in the dissertation, for example, in the names or surnames of the historians. For example, instead of Anna Chroškevič, it should be Anna Choroškevič (s. 34). The author involves the plots that go beyond the chronological framework of the study and are unrepresentative (s. 103–104). There is no text on page 108. The work completely lacks the appendices that would significantly complement the events described in it.

#### **V. Conclusion**

However, regardless of the expressed wishes, the dissertation of Pavel Smrž is a complete finished study, and its author deserves to be awarded by the appropriate scientific degree.

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