

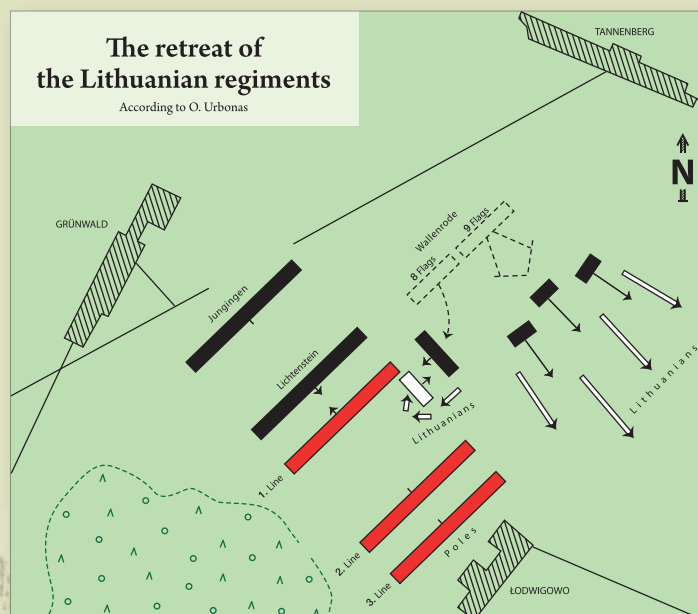
THE LITHUANIANS' RETREAT

To this day there is still no common agreement as to whether the Lithuanians' manoeuvre was planned in advance. A letter discovered by Sven Ekdahl describes this manoeuvre employed by the Lithuanians, and proves that it contributed greatly to the victory on the battlefield at Grünwald. Naturally, this planned Lithuanian manoeuvre had to be known to the leaders of the Polish banners, otherwise the Lithuanians' retreat might have been considered as fleeing the battlefield. If this were the case, the morale of the Polish soldiers would certainly have plummeted. Whatever might have happened, it managed to regroup and return to the battlefield at the right time.

The letter mentioned earlier was addressed to the Grand Master of the German Order. From the style of address "Dear Sir, Master" it can be assumed that the sender was of a similar rank as the Grand Master – most likely a duke or commander. The term "your enemies" used in the text indicates that he is not from the Order's lands himself, as otherwise it would have been "our enemies". The author of the letter must have been someone who was very interested in military techniques, and might have participated in the Battle of Grünwald himself. The letter must have been written not long after the battle, most likely within the first year, when the battle experiences were still fresh.

The retreat of the Lithuanian regiments

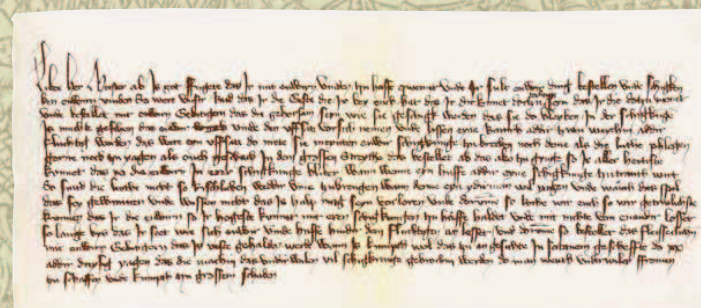
According to O. Urbanas



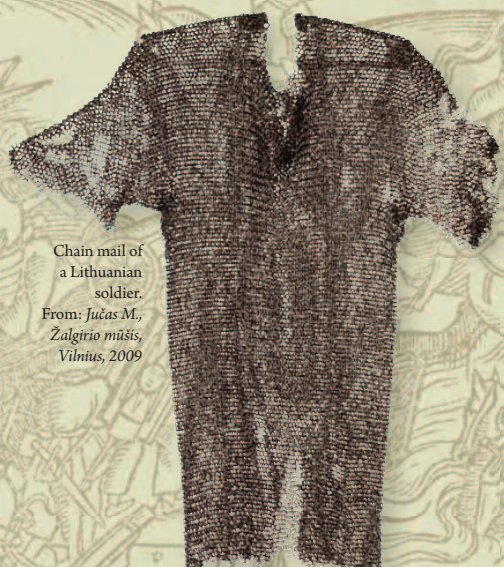
Dear Sir, Master!

If God has decided that you must face your enemies, call together an army, and send it to fight your enemies, then we suggest that those guests that are with you, and about which you know, are indeed suitable to be included in your army. And tell your leaders that they should obey and remain in the positions that they are given orders to stay in. It may happen that your enemies will pretend that one or two banners are retreating, but that is their plan to break your lines; it is human nature to give chase, as occurred in the Great Battle. Thus, give the strictest of orders for them to do as is said: your people must remain in their lines. If the banner or line will understand this idea, soldiers will not fall so quickly. Every man will want to give chase and believe that the battle is already won, but they do not know that then it is already half lost. And that is why we make this recommendation and insist that you must keep your own in their lines and forbid them from giving chase until you see that the enemy's banners are also retreating after lone, running soldiers. Give strict commands to your leaders that they abide by this instruction, as during battles it is often the case that 20 or 30 men are chased, but that this is being done purposefully to disband our lines. Thinking about the benefits ahead, we simply cause ourselves great harm.

Translation from: Jučas M., Žalgirio mūšis [Battle of Grünwald], Vilnius, 1999



An anonymous letter from 1411–1413. From: Ekdahl S., Žalgiris, Vilnius, 1999



Chain mail of a Lithuanian soldier.
From: Jučas M., Žalgirio mūšis, Vilnius, 2009