

Military Orders and Crusader Politics in the second half of the XIIIth century

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The second half of the thirteenth century takes a particular place in the history of the Military Orders. In the quickly disappearing rests of the kingdom of Jerusalem they seem to be playing a preponderant role, being the only standing army of the Latin establishments in the East and at the same time one of the Holy Land's major links with Christian Europe in general and with the papacy in particular. In the territorial framework of the Latin East, their land and city property as well as the castles in their possession, strike a figure of princely richness. At the same time, the three major Orders, St. John, Temple, Teutonic knights are already on the move to the West, though in different degrees. There is a change in their perspective assigning different importance to Europe and to the Outremer, or rather a change in the respective roles within the body of orders. The priories, daughter houses and properties in the West do not justify their existence as reservoirs which feed the Outremer only. The feeling of doom of the Outremer is felt in the ruling circles of the Orders. "If the kingdom is lost" formula appears in contracts and agreements of the Orders, as a condition to fulfil obligations.¹ The ruling bodies of the Orders because of their knowledge of Levantine politics and military potentials were probably more aware of the imminent disaster than any other factor in Christendom. Hence the conscious, mental and material preparations to find a haven or, at least, a temporary shelter in Europe.

It is also in that period that the Military Orders were stamped and labelled with characteristics, which they will carry with them to Europe, one would say into "exile", taking into account their official profession of faith regarding the Holy Land. When the wounded Jean de Villiers, the last Master of the Hospital in the Holy Land, was put, amidst the burning ruins of Acre, into a boat to carry him to Cyprus and the Marshal of the Temple, Peter de Sevrey, was treacherously slain by the Moslems when he negotiated the surrender of the last fortification of Acre, the famous palace of the Templars at the south

1) The possibility of a Moslem conquest of Acre and its later recovery by the Christians appears as a condition of sale of three villages by John of Ibelin, lord of Beirut, to the Teutonic Order in 1261. STREHLKE, *Tabulae Ordinis Theutonici* (Berlin, 1869, reprint with an introduction by H. E. MAYER, Jerusalem, 1975), no. 119, p. 108.

western tip of the city,² Europe was already sizzling with anger, criticism and vituperations against the Military Orders. By then European public opinion was openly hostile to the Military Orders and thus emotionally prepared for the tragedy of James of Molay, and the dissolution of the Order of the Temple. If the other Orders, Hospitallers and Teutonic knights, escaped the same fate, the reasons should be sought for not in any special differences between the Orders, or in any particular sympathy for one or the other, but in the fact, that in actual circumstances any such proceedings as against the Templars were non-feasible. This did not prevent Church Councils and a plethora of authors of the "De recuperatione Terrae Sanctae" treatises to fulminate against the Military Orders for generations.

It is not the purpose of this paper to retrace the story of the Military Orders during the last fifty years of their existence in the Holy Land. This was recently accomplished in several outstanding studies.³ We would rather concentrate on a particular aspect of that history, namely the question what created this hostile public opinion, when did it emerge and how far was it justifiable. Obviously in a short paper, let alone the shortcomings of the writer, it will be impossible to elucidate all the aspects of this very complex problem. The only thing we may hope to do is to point to what seem to be the most salient features of the problem.

A general observation seems to be important in approaching our question: public opinion was rarely, if ever, concerned with one Order only. Criticism went "en gros", though perhaps in different degrees, against all the Military Orders; or to put it differently: it was not a particular vice in the structure of a given Order, nor a specific policy pursued by one of them which gave rise to criticism and engendered bad will. There was something in the Orders in general, which made public opinion, whether ecclesiastical or secular, weary of the institutions. This kind of public opinion is hardly ever created by one single event, nor is it the result of a single shortcoming or failure. Usually it is the outcome of a process which went on in different quarters of articulate public opinion makers for some length of time, made its appearance, in the beginning perhaps even a hesitating one, before it became part and parcel of a generally admitted attitude of society.

The criticism levelled against the Orders can be summarily proposed under two headings: endless quarrels and jealousies, permanent dissensions which sundered the unity and undermined the existence of the Crusader establishments in the Levant; the accumulated riches and wealth of the Orders throughout Christendom, which did not fit the "Idealtypus" of European expectations. The latter implied not so much criticism of wealth as such, criticism which for centuries was aimed at the Papacy and the Curia in general, and

2) Cf. J. PRAWER, *Histoire du royaume latin de Jérusalem II* (Paris, 1975²), pp. 542 ff.

3) J. RILEY-SMITH, *The Knights of St. John in Jerusalem and Cyprus, 1050-1310* (London, 1967); M. L. FAVREAU, *Studien zur Frühgeschichte des Deutschen Orden* (Stuttgart, 1974); M. L. BULST-THIELE, *Sacrae Domus Militiae Templi Hierosolymitani Magistri. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Templerordens 1118/9-1314* (Göttingen, 1974).

against monastic institutions in particular (a very sore spot in institutions whose members took an oath of poverty), as against the fact that the wealth of the Orders was being misused. In our context it was clearly indicated that they did not serve the major and exclusive aim of the Orders, the defense of the Holy Land. "Invidia", "avaritia" and "superbia" belong to the seven deadly sins, fatal to the individual, a fortiori deadly to institutions. These nouns easily crowded under the moralising pens of the critics and reformers of the period.

Can we pinpoint in terms of time when such accusations appeared and took hold of European conscience or at least of those, who in one way or another, shaped European public opinion? Let us begin with a negative statement. Every student of the Crusader states or Crusader society in the thirteenth century, has on one or another occasion recourse to the vituperating thunderings of the fierce bishop of Acre, James of Vitry. His letters and history,⁴ written ca. 1216–1221, give a very picturesque and rather unsavory picture of crusader society. Obviously one does not need subscribing to the preachers's zeal, but one is not entirely free not to consider what he has to say. It is therefore rather surprising that when Crusader secular society, Franks and non-Franks, was most severely censured, when the ecclesiastical and monastic establishments were wholesale reviled, two sections of society escaped this general censure: the Italians and the Military Orders! How strange, if remembered what will be said about both two generations later. True that the ending phrase of the chapter on the Order of St. John has a kind of warning: "In a short time they became so rich that they drew ample revenues from every country in the West, and became possessed of towns and villages, which they domineered over, as though they were lords of the land."⁵ But Hospitallers and Templars send money from overseas to the Holy Land,⁶ and the Teutonic Order even merits the bishop's prayer: "And whereas they have continued even to this day in humble poverty and religious zeal, I pray the Lord may save them from wealth, which makes men proud, greedy and quarrelsome, full of anxiety and the enemies of religion."⁷ These quotations seem to prove the growing affluence of the Military Orders and an inkling of anxiety as to their moral fiber in the future; at the same time the bishop of Acre did not find any basic vices with the Military Orders and his brimstone sermon is levelled against the local Franks (effemination) and the Crusader church (greed). The Military Orders, the Communes and the European Crusaders, whom he could observe during the campaign of Damietta, are rather praised for their behaviour.

4) The letters, following the publication of R. RÖHRICHT, were published again in an excellent critical edition by R. B. C. HUYGENS, *Lettres de Jacques de Vitry* (Leiden, 1960). As to the dates of the seven letters, *ibid*, pp. 52–5. The *Historia Orientalis in Gesta Dei per Francos*, ed. Bongars (Hanover, 1611), pp. 1047–1124. A part was translated into English by E. STEWART in *Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society V* (London, 1896), quoted below as PPTS.

5) JAMES OF VITRY, end of cap. 64; PPTS, V, p. 50.

6) *Ibid*, c. 65, p. 54.

7) *Ibid*, c. 66, p. 56.

Thus the ideas of the bishop of Acre, so closely followed by H. Prutz (but vehemently denounced by R. Grousset), implicitly argued that it was the native element (and this obviously also included the native or Oriental Christians), which represents the weakness of Christendom, whereas the Europeans represent its strength.⁸ Whether right or wrong, the importance of James of Vitry, from our point of view, is in his testimony, that ca. 1220 there was no pronounced animosity against the Military Orders. Obviously this does not mean that the Military Orders were never blamed, whether now or before. Accusations were launched against them as long back as the siege of Damascus during the Second Crusade, at the siege of Ascalon some years later, and at the battle of Nazareth on the eve of the battle of Hittin and in Hittin itself. But some of these accusations were directed against particular commanders like Gerard of Ridefort, others criticised particular events. All in all this was a far cry from a wholesale censure, a sweeping, overall criticism of the Orders. Moreover we miss here an accusation, which later on will become the most pointed item of criticism, the dissensions and rivalries between the Orders.

When did then such criticism arise? The question is not easy to answer, but it seems to us, that the formative period should be assigned to ca. 1239–1240. It is at that time, and during the following generation, that the Military Orders fell into opprobrium, and an image was elaborated (which certainly reflected some reality) of the dissensions, quarrels, even real hatred between the Military Orders, a wrath which will be presented as rocking the kingdom, a major reason for its weakness and finally its fall. With the advantage of 700 years of perspective (and without any axe to grind), we can see today with more clarity how circumstances became rife for these developments. We can also see, with some detachment, how these developments were in a sense inevitable. The elaboration of this image was due to two different and complex sets of causes. One was that of foreign policy, the other of the internal structure of the kingdom.

The Crusade of Frederick II, despite appearances and later rumours, was not the period in which we witness a clash of Military Orders. Although the Teutonic Order, braving the excommunication, and in the face of papal and patriarch's opposition, joined Frederick II on his march to Jerusalem, whereas the Templars and the Hospitallers obediently remained in the rear of the hosts, did not bring about a split between Orders. True that Frederick II had accounts to settle with the Templars in Château Pèlerin and in Acre, accounts which were probably more linked with Sicily than with the Holy Land, but there is nothing here to point to a definite break between the Orders. Yet confused, and certainly unjustified rumours, about attempts on the Emperor's life began to circulate; in a Guelf – Ghibelin split European society, they easily gained circulation. By 1239 Frederick II openly accused the Pope and the Military Orders as working against him.⁹ In a sense this was the result of

8) These were the basic tenets of H. PRUTZ, *Kulturgeschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1883) and R. GROUSSET, *Histoire des Croisades*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1934–6).

9) Letter of Frederick II to the Crusaders assembled in Lyons, July 1239, A. HUILLARD-BREHOLLES, *Hist. Diplomatica Frederici Secundi*, V, pp. 360–2.

the unenviable position of the Military Orders, because whatever their views, they had to navigate precariously between Guelfs and Ghibelins, a situation which had nothing to do with the Holy Land, and was so to say imported by Frederick II into the Latin Levant. At that time the Orders had behind them the Palestinian baronial oligarchy; Thibaut of Champagne, to whom the letter of Frederick II was addressed, was advised by Palestinian magnates to follow the counsels of the Military Orders.¹⁰

Thus a peculiar situation was created on the eve of Thibaut's Crusade: facing the imperial forces in the Holy Land (the 'Longobards'), bound to the Emperor's policy of peace and to his renewed treaty signed with Egypt on the eve of its expiration, was the Palestinian baronage which collaborated with the Military Orders and was supported by the Papacy. It is, we think, in these circumstances that a split took place, between the Military Orders, the Hospitallers opting for an alliance with Egypt, the Templars for that with Damascus and its ever changing Syrian allies. This resulted in the strangest, because contradictory, decision taken by Thibaut of Champagne: on one hand to fortify Ascalon, a move clearly intended against Egypt and at the same time to attack Damascus. It was recently argued that at that point there was no split between the Military Orders, that the decision was that of the local barons.¹¹ This assumption is based on the fact that our chronicles fail to mention the Military Orders during the deliberations. Although this can be argued, we doubt very much if this could correspond to any reality. Ca. 1240 no Crusade and no military enterprise was possible without the Military Orders.

It seems that it was at that point that the accusations against the Military Orders were created. The first signs are clearly to be seen in the poem of Philip of Nanteuil taken prisoner at the battle of Gaza, or rather, as we know today, the battle of Beit Hānūn.¹² In Egyptian captivity after the disastrous chevauchée of Henry of Bar and Hugh of Burgundy, in a mood of utter rejection, Philip wrote:

'If the Hospital and the Temple and the brethren-at-arms had given an example to our people how to fight, our great chevalerie would not be now in prison and the Moslems alive. But they did not do anything of this sort. This was a great and bad deal and likely ('semblant') a treason.'¹³

The accusation was levelled against both Orders, though, if there was any single time in

10) Palestinian barons' advice to Thibaut of Champagne, publ. by MARTÈNE ET DURAND, *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum I* (Paris, 1717), p. 1013.

11) BULST-THIELE, *op. cit.*, p. 199 ff.

12) The place, Beit Hānūn, and the date, 15th of Rabi'a II, A. H. 637 = 1239 is known from the dedication inscription in the Mosque al-Nasser ("Mosque of Victory"), discovered by my colleague Prof. Y. Yadin (at that time Y. Sukenik), "An Ayyubid Inscription from Beit Hānūn", (Heb.) *Bull. of the Archeol. Soc. of Israel (Yediyyot)*, XII (1940), pp. 84 ff.

13) *Contin. de Guillaume de Tyr*, Ms. Rothelin, *Rec. Hist. des Croisades, Hist. Occidentaux II*, pp. 549: "Se l'Ospitaus et li Temples / Et li frere Chevalier / Eüssent donné exemple / A nos genz de chevauchier, / Nostre grant chevalerie / Ne fust or pas en prison, / Ne li Sarrazin en vie; / Mais ainsi nel firent mie, / Dont ce fu grant mesprisons / Et semblant de traïson."

which they were not in the least responsible, it was the debacle of Gaza – the result of a hasty, irresponsible decision of the European barons. Now the victims of that criminal decision, the prisoners in Egyptian gaol looked for a scapegoat and the Military Orders were the easiest target.

It is from this moment on, that the political views of the Orders definitely split: the Hospitallers opted for an alliance with Egypt, the Templars for that of Damascus. This was for the next ten years an extremely consequent policy, and there are very few exceptions to the rule. Several attempts were made to explain this policy. Basically two arguments were argued: Damascus was a traditional ally of the Crusaders' Kingdom and in this sense the Templars pursued the traditional policy of Jerusalem; there were material reasons for the different inclinations of the Orders. Frankly, both interpretations do not seem to be very satisfactory. The Damascus alliance definitely died during the second Crusade and one can hardly call Damascus a 'traditional ally' a hundred years later. As to material reasons, that is assuming gains to the Orders by one or another alliance, the argument does not seem to fare better. Obviously one could point out to possible gains to be had by an alliance with Damascus in Galilee, where the Templars had large domains around Safed, or alternately to gains to be had by an alliance with Egypt in Judaea and on the coast where the Hospitallers had domains around Ascalon and Beit Jibrin. But a closer view proves that this explanation is far from satisfactory. Hospitallers had important domains around Belvoir in Galilee and the Templars had claims to Gaza and Darum on the southern coast. Moreover Damascus promised to the Crusaders in Gallilee . . . what did not belong to it, but to Egypt.¹⁴ We do not find any other satisfactory explanation, but for an assumption that an overall view of the situation was differently evaluated in the respective chapters of the Military Orders.

In 1240 this divergence of opinions created a particular situation. The Hospitallers and their Egyptian alliance were placed in the camp of Frederick II; moreover they found themselves in alliance with the forthcoming Crusade of Richard of Cornwall. On the other hand the local baronage, through the events of the last two generations already in the anti-Imperial camp, took automatically an anti-Egyptian stand, that is it favoured Damascus, and, consequently, found itself in the same camp with the Templars. The hardening of these demarcation lines was decisive for the future, because foreign policy found its counterpart in inner politics. Templars will be identified with the ruling local oligarchy; the Hospitallers rather with what was called by J. Riley-Smith, the 'royalist' camp. This is perhaps too neat a division, but basically it describes quite well the different positions.

Both Orders had to justify their positions, but for the time being there was yet a third element, the Crusaders under Thibaut of Champagne and later on, under Richard of Cornwall, and in the background Frederick II. The ephemeral peace treaties of the Emperor with the papacy were hardly operative, but Frederick II could and did make out a

14) Cf. J. PRAWER, *Histoire* II, p. 265 ff. and compare maps. VII and VIII, *ibid*, p. 207 and 284.

lot in terms of propaganda, as he could point and accuse the papacy that it almost nipped in the bud the French Crusade effort. Richard of Cornwall had all the sympathy of Frederick. It was a Hospitaller who was his adviser, and he was lodged in Acre in the Hospital's palace. His treaty with Egypt could certainly not displease the Emperor.¹⁵

The agreements were signed, but during the last two years, between 1239–1241, there was a polarisation of positions between the Orders, as well as a polarisation of factions inside the country. Acre was destined to become the battle-place of the Orders, before it became that of the Italian communes. The quarters of the Hospitallers and Teutonic knights were besieged by the Templars supported by the local baronage, whereas the Emperor's bailliff Filanghieri tried to get a foothold in Acre with the connivance of the Hospitallers; he failed and returned to Tyre.

The Hospitallers, though not victorious, could point out with satisfaction that the alliance with Egypt was paying off. Not only areas in Galilee but also on the coast came back to the Crusaders. It was a paradox that the Templars gained Saphet . . . due to the Hospitallers.¹⁶ Not less important, and from the point of view of European public opinion far more important, was the fact, that the prisoners of the battle of Gaza were returning from Egyptian captivity. It is in this frame of events that we have to interpret a Crusader inscription discovered in 1962 in Acre. Contrary to the accepted view it is not a simple funeral inscription; it is rather a piece of propaganda used up to the hilt by the Order of St. John. We refer to the inscription which records the death of Peter of Vieillebride, late Master of the Hospital (1240–1242), that is during the years which we try to argue were the decisive period in the creation of the Orders' image. The inscription was in all probability inserted in the wall of a public passage which led out from the Hospitaller building complex. The first part of the inscription does not begin by the usual *Hic iacet* or *Ici gist* formula, but states: 'In the year of the Incarnation of the Lord 1242 died brother Peter de Vetero Brivato, the eighth Master of the Holy House of the Hospital of Jerusalem after the occupation of the Holy Land, on the 18th September. Let his soul rest in peace. Amen'. Then the inscription unexpectedly continues: 'In his time the Count of Montfort as well as other barons of France were liberated from Egyptian captivity, when Richard, Count of Cornwall, erected the castle of Ascalon.'¹⁷ This was a revindication of the Hospitallers' policy of the alliance with Egypt. It was here in a passage to be seen by pilgrims and Crusaders coming from Europe. At the same time (1243), the Master of the competing Templars, Armand of Perigord, who went with an embassy to Egypt, flatly accused the

15) *Ibid*, II, p. 270 ff.

16) *Ibid*, p. 282 ff.

17) The commemorative inscription of Peter of Vieillebride was published by Z. GOLDMAN, "Newly discovered Crusaders inscription in Acre", *Christian News from Israel*, XIII (1962), p. 33 and again by SABINO DE SANDOLI, *Corpus Inscriptionum Crucesignatorum Terrae Sanctae (1099–1291)*, (Jerusalem, 1974), no. 406, pp. 303–305. Vieille Bride was misprinted here as Villebride. The inscription was found in the excavations in the Old City of Acre, in a building known to the Arab

Sultan of Egypt of treachery.¹⁸ The break was complete. A year later, in 1244, the Templars signed a treaty with Damascus, which promised them the cities on the southern coast and the whole of Jerusalem. Actually only in Jerusalem were there any tangible results, the other areas were not in the possession of Damascus to give.

The complex problem of different foreign policies was of short duration and did not last more than fifteen years. The horrible massacres of the forces of the kingdom by the Khwārismiāns, united in a common grave knights of all Orders: 2000 knights and 900 Turcoples and some 10 000 foot in their service were killed in the battle of Gaza.¹⁹ Ten years later the Mameluk revolution in Egypt and their victorious progress in Moslem Syria made the whole problem of foreign policy obsolete. The Mameluk ring was tightening around the kingdom and the Crusade of St. Louis did little to alleviate the situation. But the disappearance of any foreign policy worth its name did not conciliate the Orders. On the contrary. New factors entered the scene and added new elements of their own to the image of the dissenting Orders. These new elements were the Italian communes. Probably more than any other single factor they were responsible for perpetuating the unsavoury image of the Orders.

Obviously the most salient feature of the kingdom after the failure of the Crusade of St. Louis was its shrinking boundaries. Even for times of maximum extension, as in the years following the Crusades of Thibaut of Champagne and Richard of Cornwall, one has to keep in mind that Crusader domination outside the fortified cities on the coast, never

speaking population as “al-bosta”, that is “posta” or post-office. The inscription is extremely huge, 181 cm x 52 cm. There are four and a half lines of text, leaving a 5 cm wide margin at the top and 8 cm at the sides. Words are divided by three vertical points, phrases by an upright or a horizontal leaf. The inscription, in our opinion, was never on an actual tomb. In all probability it was inserted into a wall, as not only the deeply engraved letters of the inscription are perfectly preserved, but even the engraver’s horizontal, very shallow, guiding lines are very well preserved. The inscription was never finished. The last line hardly covers more than two thirds of the space, leaving 62 cm empty; there is no sign to end the phrase like in line three. But above all, six horizontal guiding lines, which were to serve for three additional lines of inscription are clearly visible, but not inscribed. For some reason the Order’s authorities decided to interrupt the work, leaving us with a mystery of the unfinished inscription. The text of the inscription is as follows:

1. † ANNO AB INCARNACIONE DOMINI MCCXL OBBIT FRATER PETRVS DEI VETERI BRIVATO
2. OCTAVVS MAGISTER SANCTE DOMVS HOSPITALIS IERSALEM POST OCCVPATIONEM SAN
3. CTE TERRE XV K[ALEND]IS OCTOBRIS CVIVS A[N][M]A REQVIESCAT IN PACE AMEN CVIVS TEMPORE COMES
4. MONTISFORTIS ET ALII BARONES FRANCIE A CAPTIVITATE BABILLONIE LIBERATI FVERVNT DVM RICH
5. ARDVS COMES CORNVBIE CASTRVM ERIGERET ASCALONE

18) Cf. J. PRAWER, *Histoire* II, pp. 306 ff.

19) Cf. R. RÖHRICHT, *Gesch. des Königreichs Jerusalem* (Innsbruck, 1898), p. 865 with indication of sources.

exceeded the radius of rule they could actually exercise from their castles. As these castles were no more on the fringes of the desert in Transjordan, but dangerously near the coast, the territory of the rump kingdom was less than a fifth of that of the twelfth century. Thus inner fortresses, observation or policing points became now the outposts of the kingdom.

In these shrank areas, the most striking phenomenon is the almost total disappearance of landed revenues of the crusader nobility. The nobles, literally, could not live any more off their Palestinian revenues, unless they were lucky to possess revenues from the cities on the coast.

This was, to put it bluntly, a financial bankruptcy of the Crusader nobility. The process began earlier, at the end of the Third Crusade, whose tangible, meagre results failed to recreate the territorial basis of their existence. The alternatives were limited. Whoever could, used his revenues from Cyprus; others sold out what remained, and first went the places which were more a liability than an asset. The late G. Bayer calculated that whereas one finds kings and barons alienating 317 properties and buying 215, the Military Orders bought 215!²⁰ A closer analysis would certainly yield more nuanced results, but as a whole the picture is correct and illuminating. These data were put in a particular relief by Riley-Smith who calculated that the Hospitallers alone at one time or another possessed 56 fortresses and ca. 1244 – not less than 29 fortresses were in their hands.²¹ Slowly, even places like Mt. Thabor and Nazareth, Sidon and Arsuf were sold out to the Orders. By 1260 when the Mongol invasion threatened the kingdom it was decided to fortify 7 Templar, 2 Hospitaller, 2 Teutonic fortresses, whereas the cities of Acre and Tyre had to be fortified by the common expenses of the Franks. Little else was left.

The results were twofold. On the one hand a tremendous burden in terms of finance and manpower imposed on the Orders. It was not their greed which pushed them to acquire properties and territories. The insistence and pressure of the papacy and the dangers which menaced the Holy Land were the major factors to pursue such 'non-practical' policy. On the other hand this brought the Military Orders to an extraordinary position in the kingdom. The financial burden was certainly not carried by the houses in the Levant, it was covered by their European possessions and by the papacy. It is at this point that greed and rapacity became the salient features added to the image of the Military Orders. Matthew Paris, the most striking chronicler of the mid-thirteenth century, always touchy, to say the least, about the taxing of the church, will furiously state: 'The Military Orders receive so much revenue from Christendom and swallow it for the defense of the Holy Land, as if they plunged it into an abyssmal chasm.'²² Follows the famous statement

20) G. BAYER, "Die Verschiebungen der Grundbesitzverhältnisse in Palästina während der Kreuzfahrzeit", *Palästina-Jahrbuch XXXII* (1936), pp. 101–110.

21) RILEY-SMITH, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 ff and 136 ff.

22) MATTHEUS PARISIENSIS, *Chronica maiora* (Rolls Series 57), ed. E. LUARD, III, 178: *qui a tota Christianitate tot proventus recipiunt (Hospitallers and Templars) et ad solummodo Terram Sanctam defendendam inglutiant et quasi in voraginem baratri demergunt.*

about the 19 000 manors of the Hospital and 9000 manors of the Temple. Whether or not there was greed, two things can be definitely stated. The Orders were far from being popular with the Church (though not with the papacy), and through it with the ecclesiastical chroniclers, the main public opinion makers of the period. On the other hand reading the Orders' correspondence from the Levant one cannot escape the impression, that financially they were in greatest plight. Whatever their European behaviour, their needs in Syria and Palestine were very real indeed. We strongly believe that the repeated complaints of the Masters or other officers in the Levant of lack of funds and their insistence that money should be sent from abroad, reflected the real situation. What therefore looked as greed or rapacity from a purely European perspective, was in all probability wholly or partially justified seen from that of the Christian Levant. In the last quarter of the century there was no other force left in the kingdom, but that of the Military Orders (later strengthened by French contingents of the Capetians or Angevins) and this standing army had to be supported from the Orders' properties in Europe.

The military frame influenced directly the position of the Military Orders in the kingdom. We doubt if one can detect here any political program or machination of gaining power, a willed attempt to become what Riley-Smith succinctly called the 'Governors of Latin Syria'.²³ It was a 'de facto' situation which brought the Military Orders out of their usual role of neutral mediators among the factions of Outremer, into the position not only of partisans but domineering factors of Latin Syria. The whole political structure was disintegrating. The only forces which could have had any influence or even a simple say in the kingdom's affairs were old and new corporative bodies. Military Orders, the Italian, Provençal and Spanish communes, the *frairies* or *fraternitates* were now the component parts of the new body politic.²⁴ None obviously had the might of the Military Orders. The latter did not have any particular program to rule the kingdom, yet they participated in its government. Since the middle of the century the *Haute Cour* isn't any more the traditional *Curia regis* of the former period. Non-feudal elements, like burgesses, fraternities, Communes and Military Orders are constantly present. A 'Ständestaat' was in the making and a nebula of parliament was emerging. This was symptomatic for the new situation.

The Military Orders found themselves now in the center of power. Not only as advisers in campaigns, as they were since the middle of the twelfth century, but as a component element of the new polity. In 1255 they ratify together with the barons agreements with Egypt²⁵ and in the generation to follow the Moslem adversary will expect their signatures on truces and peace treaties. A situation 'de facto' was recognized as a situation 'de iure' by friend and foe alike. It is in these circumstances that the Military Orders were sucked into the whirlpool of Acre's politics. The politics of a kingdom were now played on the battlements of Acre and Tyre.

23) RILEY-SMITH, *op. cit.*, pp. 145 ff.

24) Cf. J. PRAWER, *Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem* (London, 1972), pp. 115 ff (and bibl.).

25) PRAWER, *Histoire II*, p. 356.

It is not our aim to tell the story of the fratricidal war, which, although it started earlier, during the Crusade of St. Louis, raged since 1256 in Acre.²⁶ One has the impression that the break between the Orders in foreign policy found now an outlet in joining the opposing camps in Acre. What might be called the barons' party, a Gueff party, represented by the Italians, cooperated with the rulers of Antioch, the local 'fraternities' and a part of the burgesses, and found its main support in the alliance of Venice, Pisa and in the Templars. This was opposed by what one could call a Ghibelin party lead by Genoa, Philip of Tyre, the Genoese Embriaci of Gibelet, the smaller Communes of Ancona and of the Catalans, the fraternities of the native population, to which adhered the Hospital. This or very similar configuration of alliances will last for a whole generation, bringing about radical changes in the position of the Italian communes, like the expulsion of the Genoese from Acre and of the Venetians from Tyre. Was there anything compelling for the disunion of the Orders? This is a difficult question to answer, unless we simply assume that the two great Orders almost automatically took opposing sides. The strife of the Italian communes, though more bloody in the kingdom than elsewhere, did not originate in the Holy Land and the local colonies would not have gained the support of their mother cities without major Italian interests being at stake. It were the battles of international commercial rivalries and the wars of the Italian mainland which were fought in Acre. But it is hardly possible to argue, as it was by H. Prutz, that paralleling the Italian communes the attitudes of the Military Orders in the Holy Land also often reflected their European problems.²⁷ This might have been true on occasion, but certainly not always. We would say on the whole, that the Templars took a far more partisan stand than the Hospitallers, one of the reasons being probably their involvement in Cyprus, which made them oppose the Lusignan dynasty's claim to the Holy Land. This is an impression one gets from the Crusader chronicles, though they never say it explicitly. At the same time there is little doubt that the Military Orders served, more often than not, a place of refuge for the contesting parties and played a major role in trying to mediate, but not always successfully.

On the whole then it seems, that the balance was not against the Military Orders, and yet they were the chief target of public attacks. Little doubt that the Italian communes hastened the inevitable end of Outremer more than the Military Orders. Why then this coalition against the Military Orders? It will be difficult to point out one single element as a decisive factor. It seems to me, that since Frederick II almost every Crusade, none of whom could boast real achievements, made the Military Orders the scapegoat of its failure. They were accused as a group, hardly ever one Order only. By the middle of the thirteenth century a French troubadour Jaquemars Gelée sang the satiric story of the hermit fox whose fame reached the Orders and both wanted him for their Master. The fox solved the

26) *Ibid*, pp. 359 ff.

27) H. PRUTZ, *Die geistlichen Ritterorden* (Berlin, 1908), *passim*; *Idem*, *Kulturgeschichte d. Kreuzzüge*, p. 254 ff.

problem by combining their costumes and thus became Master of both.²⁸ For the average European there was little to make a distinction between the Orders. They represented an establishment linked with a losing cause. Rutebeuf's dialogue between a Crusader and non-Crusader, to give one example from among many, is symptomatic of the general reluctance to participate in a Crusade.²⁹ In the second half of the thirteenth century the Crusades were neither popular nor attractive, but the existence of the Crusader kingdom, which, despite the loss of Jerusalem, Nazareth and Bethlehem, was still the guardian of the Holy Places in addition to being an outpost of Christendom against Islam, had a kind of mortgage on the conscience of Europe. One way to dispose of it was to blame a specific factor for the failure. The Military Orders were almost tailored to measure for this role.

I believe it was their hatred in Europe more than any judgment of merit in the Levant, which was the main cause of their image. Excluding the Iberian peninsula where the battles of the reconquista gave them a justified local *raison d'être*, the Military Orders appeared everywhere else, as extremely rich corporations, exempted from civil duties and, what was more, exempted from taxes and the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities. Since the times of Alexander III and Innocent III this was a common ground of complaints of the ecclesiastical hierarchy all over Europe.³⁰ Yet the complaints were kept in check as long as the argument or slogan of the defense of the Holy Land could silence antagonistic voices. But after the middle of the thirteenth century such arguments, in the name of the crumbling Latin establishments in the East, were losing their footing in reality. On the contrary, the losses in the Levant were now an argument against the Orders; the failure of the kingdom was their failure. If we remember that the opinion-makers, to use a modern expression, of the period came from the same milieu which had vested interests in attacking the Orders, namely the secular and regular clergy, there is little wonder that the image of the Orders was easily tarnished. At the same time, we should not forget, the Military Orders were also becoming more and more anachronistic in the realms of the strong monarchies. They were international, they depended on the Papacy, they were closed corporations with little say of the lay rulers in their government. Once, already in the thirteenth century, they even denounced papal intervention in their internal government.³¹ Their existence was out of tune with the current trend of evolution. A church inside the church and a state inside a state, they were not cherished either by the former or by the latter.

And yet at the Second Council of Lyons (1274) it was not the demand to abolish them, which was voiced, there was a demand for their union or merger, apparently to prevent dissension and assure cooperation. Actually the reason must have been somewhere else.

28) Quoted by PRUTZ, *op. cit.*, p. 254 and 548.

29) "La Disputation du Croisé et du Decroisé", *Onze poèmes de Rutebeuf concernant la Croisade*, ed. J. BASTINS et E. FARAL (Paris, 1946), pp. 86-94.

30) H. PRUTZ, *Die geistlichen Ritterorden*, 142 ff., 195 ff. Cf. PRAWER, *Latin Kingdom*, 257 ff.

31) POTTHAST, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 10537.

Because, when one looked around, there was nobody, literally no other factor in the whole of Christendom, which made the Holy Land its primary goal of existence. In later plans, already after the fall of the kingdom, when Europe still toyed with the idea of a reconquista, it will be suggested to assign to each of the Orders a different territory for conquest (Armenia, North Africa),³² or to make the future king of Jerusalem the Master of a United Order.³³ The Orders, in the planners' eyes, were the only answer to the reconquista and to the maintenance of the conquest of the Holy Land.

When the calamity descended on Acre, two of the Orders, moving to Rhodes and Prussia respectively, revindicated one of the original, though completely changed idea of the war against the Infidels. There was a *raison d'être* for their existence, and the Teutonic knights will call the pagan Prussians *Turci* and *Sarraceni*. It was the Templars, especially those of France, who could not justify their existence. They paid the price for all the Orders.

32) This was e. g. the advice given by Raymond Lull, *Tractatus de modo convertendi infideles seu Lo Passatge*, written 1292. The Templars will attack Barbary in North Africa, the Hospitallers – Turkey, and the Teutonic Order – Asia Minor with the aid of Armenia. R. LUGRANYES DE FRANCH, *Raymond Lulle Docteur des Missions* (1954), p. 133.

33) So e. g. Charles of Anjou in his "Conseil" written ca. 1292–4. Cf. "Le Conseil du roi Charles", ed. G. J. BRATIANU, *Rev. du Sud-est européen*, XIX 2 (1942), pp. 356–7.