РАЗДЕЛ IX. ИСТОРИЯ

Mammadova J.V.

The Fourth Crusade, deviated from its goal

*Istanbul University – 1453
(Turkey, Istanbul)*

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Abstract

The article deals with the description of the Fourth Crusade, which stood out for its climactic concept, known in the history of the Crusaders as “The Wars of the Crosses”. The article proposes consideration of some nuances with respect to the reasons for changing of the route of the carriers of the cross, as well as the role of the Doge of Venice in the conquest of the city of Zadar in 1203 and later the city of Constantinople in 1204.

Keywords: Venice, crusaders, Zadar, Constantinople, count, doge, Innocent III.

Introduction

The Fourth Crusade of 1202-1204 years, deviated from its goal, is of particular importance in the history of the Christian world where religious idea prevails over the political idea. The historical stage of the Fourth Crusade happened with the active participation of Pope Innocent III, King of France Philippe, King of Germany Philippe of Swabia, and Counts of Champagne and Flanders. Pope Innocent III, King of France Philippe, King of Germany Philippe of Swabia, Counts of Champagne and Flanders take an active role on the historical stage of the fourth crusade.

In 1198, active preparations for war launched under the leadership of the young and ambitious Pope Innocent III, who longed to possess the sovereignty of not only supreme, but also monarchical power. To achieve his goal, he aimed at the liberation of Jerusalem from ‘the infidels’. However, in 1202, due to the intervention of the Venetians, the course of the war was changed, where the Christian fought against the Christian, whereas the Christian had to fight against the Muslim. Since the crusaders did not have enough money to completely pay for the Venetian ships, Venice demanded cooperation because of the delay in payment, in order to conquer the Christian city of Zadar on the Adriatic coast.

After that, the Venetians invited the French once again to turn off the route against their trading rivals, the Byzantines, under the pretext of restoring the ousted Byzantine emperor Isaac II Angelos and his son. The bearers of the cross agreed to the proposal of the Venetians, against the will of the Pope, in order to receive the monetary reward promised by Alexios IV Angelos, which was never realized. In response to this, the crusaders captured Constantinople and robbed it for three days, destroying the greatest cultural values. In place of the Byzantine Empire, the Latin (Roman) Empire was created, on the throne of which Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders was seated.

Thus, the Venetians successfully and cunningly used the military forces of the crusaders to put into reality their goals. As a result, the Byzantine Empire became a victim, defeated by the French and Venetians, and this led to a socio-political upheaval of the empire.

Fourth Crusade Eve

The new Pope Innocent III, elected in 1198, intended to lead the Crusade and thereby strengthen his papal authority. Finally, on August 15, 1198, Innocent III began to call for war. But unlike previous wars, major chivalry and kings were in no hurry to take part in the fourth crusade. Many were occupied by internal strife, one of which was political instability in England.

The death of King Richard of England in 1199, caused local civil strife for power in the country. It was when Philippe, the king of France for his own benefit, took part in the English chaos [4, p. 167]. In Byzantium, political situation was much more difficult. The representatives of the Angelos dynasty, who headed the empire, were rather weak, which led to the overthrow of the first ruler of this dynasty, Isaac II Angelos, by his brother Alexios III in 1095.

Finally, in 1199, the brother of the Jerusalem king Thibault Champagne, as well as the Earl of Blois and Shart Louis, accepted the cross. Thibault Champagne was chosen as the commander in chief of the campaign, but Count Champagne was not able to take part in the campaign because of his unexpected death. But, despite this, he was able to be useful, bequeathing 50,000 lire to the expenses of the war. [3, p.] The death of the count caused the second meeting of the crusaders in Soissons. The crusader barons elected Boniface of Monferratos based on the order of Philip Augustus [6, p. 91]

Having assumed the post of commander in chief, Markgraf, took into account the wishes of the counts about which Muslim lands they would like to invade [3, p.] The answer he heard was Babylonia or Alexandria, since on these lands they intended to acquire huge booty. Thus, a group of knights was sent to Pisa, Genoa and Venice to conclude an agreement on the rental of ships for the transport of 4000 companies of knights, as well as 100,000 infantry [3, p.]. Having received a refusal from Pisa and Genoa, the crusaders received a positive response from the old Venetian Doge, Enrico Dandolo, who pledged to deliver the French crusaders by sea to the shores of the Holy Land for 85,000 marks of silver. According to the terms offered by Doge, he and his troops were to take part in the fourth crusade, and the acquired booty was to be shared with him. Moreover, the crusaders had to rescue twenty five thousand marks in advance for the construction of the fleet. Having no other choice, the crusaders accepted the conditions set in front of them.

Wars of Crosses

After Easter, a military detachment of crusaders gathered in Venice, from where they went to the island of San Nicolas [3, p.]. Upon learning of the arrival of the crusaders, the Venetians requested the remainder of the money to make ships. The crusaders managed to collect a certain share of the money, since only 12 thousand of the 30 thousand French soldiers who were expecting arrived. They remained in debt for 50,000 marks, which led to the discontent of the Venetians and the Doge [3, p.] The situation, formed on the basis of Venetian tension, forced the crusaders to collect a conditional amount for the second time. However, this time they again were not able to return the full amount, remaining in debt for 36,000 marks. Then the Venetians offered the French, as a fee extension, assistance in attacking the city of Zadar in Dalmatia, which was Venice's main rival on the Adriatic Sea. Debtors had no choice but to accept the offer of the Venetians. Moreover, they intended to acquire loot during the sack of the city, which would help them to repay the debt, as well as make a trip to Egypt. Having learned about the plans of the Venetians, the Pope banned the campaign, threatening with excommunication of them from the Church. Despite the pope's decree, in November 1202, the ships of the combined armies of the Venetians and the French sailed away towards Zadar. Five days later, on November 15, the combined forces attacked Zadar and thoroughly looted it [4, p. 172]. The booty was divided between Enrico and the crusaders.

Following the victory over Zadar, the Venetian Doge invited the crusaders for the second time to deviate from the route towards the capital of the Byzantine Empire, in whose hands was a trump card for an attack on Constantinople to take revenge as a son of the Isaac II Angelos who was deposed from the throne. Meanwhile, Alexios IV, who was in the palace of the Emperor of Germany Philip of Swabia, was in need of military help to take back Constantinople. To attract the crusaders, Alexios IV pledged to them money, people and equipment for an expedition to Egypt, with the condition that they will return the throne to him and to his father [5, p. 39]. Thus, having a plausible pretext as the restoration of the true ruler to the throne, the crusader army

agreed to change the military path towards Constantinople, not paying attention to the pope's ban.

At the end of April, young Alexios arrived to the city of Zadar, where the crusader army was located, and a few days later the fleet set out and by June 24, 1203, the ships of the Venetians and crusaders approached the sides of the Byzantine capital. Despite the resistance of the Byzantine troops, especially the Varangian mercenaries, on July 17, 1203, the pearl of the cities of Byzantium was captured by the Latin troops [7, p. 385]. In the morning, the Byzantines discovered that Emperor Alexios III escaped, devastating the imperial treasury and leaving the city to its fate. Thus, on August 1, 1203, Prince Alexios was proclaimed emperor with his father in Hagia Sophia under the title Alexios IV Angelos [4, p. 173].

In February 1204, a group of crusaders went to the Palace of Blachernae with a demand to keep the promise given by Alexios IV [2, p.107]. However, this conversation was unsuccessful for the Latin crusaders. The question of paying the promised remuneration again hung in the air. After the visit of the emperor, they were attacked by the angry Byzantine people. But that was not all, the Byzantines ousted Alexios IV and his father from the throne, proclaimed a man named Nicholas Kanabos as the new emperor, who, according to sources, did not want to accept the imperial crown [1, p.]. At this time, son-in-law of Alexios III, husband of Evdokia Murtzuphlus took advantage of the chaotic situation and captured the throne, whereas the overthrown Alexios was strangled in prison.

Murtzuphlus maintained a political stance against the Latin troops and aimed to expel the crusaders from the city. To do this, he decided to use the forces of hired troops, and finally, on April 9, Friday morning, a clash took place between the Byzantine and Latin forces [8, p. 500]. The ships of the Venetians could not get closer to the city walls due to the wind. However, as a result of the terrible economic situation of the country, mercenary forces, not receiving money, refused to fight against the Latin troops [9, p. 228].

Thus, the goal of Murzuphlus to expel the combined Venetian and Frankish forces from Constantinople was unsuccessful. On April 13 of the same year, the crusaders managed to break into the city, and Emperor Alexios V Doukas Murzuphlus, as Alexios III Angelios escaped, leaving Constantinople to the arbitrariness of fate. The city was brutally looted by Latin troops for three days. During these three days, residential buildings were burned, defenseless townspeople were brutally murdered, children were sold as slaves, and all the holy values in monasteries and churches were the victims of Latin robbery.

After a tragic defeat for Byzantium, Constantinople fell into the hands of the crusaders, where the Latin (Roman) empire was created, which was able to continue its existence for 57 years (1204-1261).

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