

Original Article

Deep Analysis of Historical Essence of the Crusades from Historical Materialism

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Received: 07 March 2022

Revised: 26 April 2022

Accepted: 01 May 2022

Published: 21 May 2022

Abstract - The crusades are great historical events in the western historical process. There is different cognition of the historical essence of the crusades. To utilize Marxism historical materialism, i.e., historical cause-effect analysis and quantitative-qualitative analysis, historical materials concerning the first four crusades are collected, read, and verified, which are analyzed and explained from three aspects, i.e., reason, process, and influence to recognize historical essence of the crusades fully. The crusades caused by complicated historical factors had represented the campaign under certain historical conditions. No matter how to recognize the crusades' historical essence, its significance is religious. Piety, passion, and significance cannot be devalued from the contemporary horizon. At present, military conflicts, terrorism, humanitarian disaster, etc., global crises rise after another fall, and dark clouds of Populism hang heavily over Europe under civil conflicts between the East and the West. Studying the crusades has some good references for dealing with these global crises and Populism.

Keywords - The crusades, Historical essence, Reason and Effect analysis, Historical quantitative and Qualitative analysis.

1. Introduction

The crusade is an important historical event in the process of western history. There have always been cognitive differences in the historical nature of the crusade. In China, some internal history books hold the crusade in that the West was greedy for the wealth of the East. In the name of the "Holy War" to recover Jerusalem, the holy land occupied by Muslims, it is an occupation of the land and wealth of the East. In most Western history books, it is believed that the crusade was driven by religious enthusiasm, responding to a request of the Byzantine emperor for aid, conducting a "Holy War" against the "Pagan" of the Muslim world to recover the spiritual and moral holy land of the Christian world. Neither of these views is a scientific and accurate conclusion. Using the causal analysis and quantitative and qualitative methods of Marx's historical materialism, we collect, read and research the relevant historical materials of the first four crusades, analyze and explain the causes, process, and influence, and have a comprehensive understanding of the historical nature of the Crusades. Marxist historical materialism points out that understanding any historical question needs studying the whole process of its cause, progress, and influence and comprehensively revealing its historical nature under certain historical conditions.

2. The Causes of the Crusade

Do Marxist historical materialism points out that the cause and effect are to reveal the things in succession that are

generally linked in the objective world that has restricted each other. The reason refers to the phenomenon that causes a certain phenomenon, and the result refers to the phenomenon caused by the reason. One cause can cause several results, and several causes often cause one result. As for the cause of the crusade, a religious enthusiasm drive theory is popular in the West, and the western monarch and nobles are greedy for the wealth of the East in the domestic research field. The above two points inevitably are caught in an either-or trap, too biased to simplify complex problems. "The causal analysis of Marxism historical research is based on the synergy theory of the interaction of various complex factors in the historical movement. For such a major question of the cause of the crusade, if we do not grasp the interaction of various complex historical factors at that time, but simply from the religious, economic, or political and economic perspectives, we will inevitably be confused." The crusade had both the purpose of a pilgrimage driven by religious passion and the military purpose of liberating the holy land of Jerusalem through an armed pilgrimage. As a religious military organization, the crusaders necessarily had the characteristics of the military interests of plundering land, robbing wealth, acquiring power, and killing. Therefore, we should dialectically view its historical tension with causal analysis at that time, avoiding the trap of ideological trap of understanding the historical nature of the crusade.



First, a pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Jerusalem is a religious tradition formed in the history of Western Europe, and the nature of the Crusades is an armed pilgrimage. Beginning In the 4th century, Emperor Constantine built the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, attracting thousands of believers from different countries in the East. When his mother, Saint Helena, was old, she also went to Jerusalem. And by the end of the 4th century, pilgrims flocking to Jerusalem became a ritual of religious baptism.

Since the seventh century, Islam began to rise, and the emergence of Islam has been an important turning point in human history. Both Christianity and Islam are highly exclusive religions, and the world has entered a history of coexistence-conflict between Christian and Islamic civilizations. Since then, the crusades were inevitable, attributed to the differences between the two civilizations. The Muslim warriors conquered all areas in the Middle East at astonishing speed, the regions from the Pyrenees to India and from Morocco to Central Asia. And the "Holy Land" of Jerusalem was also occupied by Muslims in the seventh century. By the eleventh century, Muslims had had a great influence on the language and culture of these regions. After the rise of Islam, the Muslim invasion did not stop the pilgrims from Europe. The Caliph Harun Rashid, the ruler of the Abbasid Dynasty, also sent Charlemagne the key to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which represented a pilgrimage with free access to the city of God in Jerusalem. It can be seen that the two different civilizations can coexist peacefully and communicate with each other under the conditions of both Christian and Islamic civilizations' power.

In the Middle Ages, with barbarian invasions, frequent wars, social conflicts, people's tough life, and Christianity as a spiritual belief, people increasingly depended on religion as spiritual sustenance. The Roman Catholic Church won against the Holy Roman Emperor in the Investiture Controversy; the Pope and the Church had a strong influence and appealed to people with increasing power. In 1095, Pope Urban held a Council of Clermont, noting that the descendants of Jesus Christ were in disgrace and suffering pain, calling on believers and monarchs to take arms and launch a "Holy War" against the invading Islam to save the Holy Land of Jerusalem, and promoting the Crusades. Religious mania has gathered people of different classes under the Holy Cross for a "Holy War," reflecting pure religious piety and a passion for pilgrimage atonement.

Finally, some speculators are not excluded, who used the crusades to realize their dream of fortune or atone by participating in the Crusades. The Crusades are driven and triggered by religious passion, the liberation of the holy land, and the war declaration on the pagans.

3. The Progress of the Crusades

The first crusade from the beginning, mainly driven by religious enthusiasm, recovered the Holy Land and helped the Byzantine Empire. The Crusader generals and the knights showed chivalry and heroism, and the crusades contended for their power ambitions. Lack of supplies, the crusaders sometimes went looting and pillaging for necessities of life. Once the siege had begun, the crusaders had done a sinful act—despoiling treasures and plundering land. When the crusader march encountered setbacks and failures, secular defection and corruption were also. According to the feudal model of Western Europe, the Crusaders successively established four states in the occupied areas: The County of Edessa, The Principality of Antioch, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and The County of Tripoli, nominally led by the Kingdom of Jerusalem.

The Second Crusade, led mainly by the French and German monarchs, came with dual pilgrimage and military expedition purposes. The failed military expedition failed to recover the Muslim-occupied Edessa. It lacked heroism and chivalry, more sovereign redemption and pilgrimage than the First Crusade. However, it deepened the estrangement and contradictions between the Latin West and the Byzantine Empire, laying a hidden danger for the Crusader capture of Constantinople in 1204.

Most Europeans did not expect the sudden fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The Saladin's capture of the holy city of Jerusalem provoked a strong backlash in Western Europe, and the Third Crusade began in 1189. German Emperor Frederick I responded first, but he failed to reach Palestine. As the Crusaders marched east, he drowned in the river. The British and French monarchs then led the Crusaders. After capturing the city of Acre, King France and King England clashed and quarreled, so Philip II of France returned to Europe. The Third Crusade, which lasted for 14 months, occurred between Saladin and Richard the Lionheart. In the war with Saladin, Richard displayed great heroism and chivalry.

In the early 13th century, The Fourth Crusade began in Western Europe, promoted by Pope Innocent III. The Fourth Crusade 1202 – 1204 was highly controversial about its historical nature in the West and east world, especially because the crusade deviated from the expected route and destroyed Byzantine Empire, which also believed in Christianity. Domestic scholars are critical of this, believing that all strata of Western society coveted the land and wealth of the Byzantine Empire. To defeat their commercial rivals, the Genoese and the Byzantine Empire, the Venetian merchants united the crusaders in the name of religion. They used religion as a political tool to achieve their purposes. "From the course of the Fourth Crusade, the Crusaders had now completely deviated from the original intention of the Crusade, and the need for secular commerce had replaced the

needs of religion as the main force governing the Crusaders.” Therefore, the crusade was also appropriately nicknamed the “merchant invasion.” After the capture of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade, the Crusaders established the Latin Empire, and the Duchy of Athens, Principality of Achaia, and the Kingdom of Thessalonica were its vassal states.

4. The Influence of the Crusades

Under a holy war flag, the Crusades were attributed to the mutual struggle and utilization of the intensified conflict between eastern and western civilizations and the irreconcilable dialogue between religious and secular rights. To safeguard and expand Christian rights and influence, the Pope realized his ambitions, instigated and induced, and even coerced the monarchs, nobles, knights, and believers to participate in the “Holy War.” Monarchs and nobles, to maintain their rule, land, and wealth and transfer the crisis and contradictions of domestic rule, induced various forces that caused social instability, such as bankrupt knights, peasants, and craftsmen, to the East.

Although the crusades had played a significantly destructive role on the economy of the occupied land and destroyed the life and property of the local people, it brought far more peace than the war, which was objectively conducive to the recovery and development of the economy and trade. It promoted the economic and cultural exchanges between the East and the West. The Franks learned the scientific knowledge and living customs of the Arabs, and Arabic literature also influenced the West, with many knight novels about the Crusades appearing in Western Europe. The Muslims had learned some military techniques and siege methods from the West. To consolidate the Crusader states, the Knights of France, Italy, and Germany established Knights Templar, “Knights Hospitaller, and Teutonic Order. Knights’ team was founded to defend the shrine and ensure the safety of Western European pilgrims along the way. The greatest legacy of the Orders is its humanitarian spirit of healing the wounded and rescuing the dying. The Hospitaller has laid the foundation for the development of modern hospitals. The crusades triggered pilgrimage and immigration

fever in Western Europe, and the population of Europe declined sharply, such the first crusade depopulated by a million. Many knights who participated in the Crusades died in the East, promoting stability within Europe, and the war between the feudal princes was suspended. The crusades also impacted the local feudal lords in Western Europe, conducive to strengthening the centralized forces represented by the king. The new monarchies of Europe rose, and nation-states were formed. The crusades declined before the power of the Pope, and the Church began to weaken. The collision of Eastern and Western civilizations has promoted the progress of European thought, science, literature, and art. The Crusaders’ long march promoted navigation and commerce. The Italian Venetians, Genoese, and Pisa gained trade hegemony along the Mediterranean coast. Industry and commerce prospered and became one of the regions where capitalist production relations sprouted in Western Europe. The budding and development of the capitalist relations of production is the fundamental cause of the Renaissance. So the Crusades lifted off the prelude to the European Renaissance, Great Navigation, and geographical discovery.

5. Conclusion

The religious value and significance of the crusades themselves should not be degraded from a contemporary perspective. In the context of the conflict between Eastern and Western civilizations, armed conflicts, terrorism, humanitarian disasters, and other global disasters are rising one after another, and the dark clouds of Populism cover all over Europe. Studying the crusade movement is of good reference for responding to these disasters.

Acknowledgment

I would first like to thank my friend Xin’an Zhao, who provided stimulating discussions and happy distractions to rest my mind outside of my research. I would also like to thank my tutor Jian Zhang, for his valuable guidance throughout my studies. You provided me with the tools to choose the right direction and complete my dissertation. In addition, I would like to thank my parents for their wise counsel and sympathetic ear. You are always there for me.

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