

The Crusading Spirit Declines

Enthusiasm for crusading came like a gale at times, then dropped to a quiet breeze almost as quickly. These later crusades often had more of a gangster than a religious motive to them, and none came out as planned.

The Fourth Crusade (1202-1204) was called by Pope Innocent III, but was used by the Venetians, who transported the 12,000 crusaders, to attack Zara (a port belonging to the Christian ruler of Hungary) and Constantinople. The crusaders never went beyond the Byzantine capital, and their behavior everywhere they went was an embarrassment to the Pope. He did what he could to stop them from their cruel deeds, but even the threat of excommunication had no effect.

The Children's Crusade (1212) ended in disaster for those who joined. In Germany and France, children were caught up in the crusading spirit; they believed that in their innocence they could accomplish what the older crusaders could not. Led by a peasant boy named Nicholas and encouraged by their parents and some priests, many children joined the banner. Many died while trying to cross the Alps, and others who managed to get to the ships were taken to North Africa and sold as slaves.

The Fifth Crusade (1217-1221) was fought to conquer Egypt. After the Egyptians lost the Battle of Damietta, they offered to trade Jerusalem for Damietta, but the crusaders rejected the deal. After losing the battle for Cairo, the crusaders were forced to trade their lives for Damietta. There were no battles fought on the Sixth Crusade (1228-1229), but Emperor Frederick II got Jerusalem from the Moslems through diplomatic means. The Seventh Crusade was led by King Louis IX of France. He was captured, and the French nation had to pay a large ransom to get him back. After he returned to France, he attacked Tunis (in North Africa), which began the Eighth Crusade (1270). This effort was also a failure; after he died during the siege, the crusaders returned home. That was the end of the crusades.

Several important changes occurred as the result of the crusades. (1) They were the first united effort of Western Europe. (2) The religious motive was a far more noble cause than the greed, ambition, and revenge that were usual reasons for fighting. (3) They stopped the Moslem expansion that threatened to overwhelm Europe. (4) They increased the power of kings, since many of their more powerful vassals were away. (5) They hastened the rise of cities since the feudal lords needed the cities' help to finance their trips. (6) They improved relations between lords and peasants and tended to unite the society. (7) Europeans became more familiar with geography, not only of the Mediterranean region, but their own countries. (8) Europeans became aware of new products, new methods of farming, and the writings of Greeks and Romans that had been long forgotten in Europe. (9) Europeans discovered that the Moslems were not idolators or barbarians. Their scholarship was superior to that of Europeans, and Europeans became aware of how much they had to learn. (10) On the negative side, the idea that religious wars were pleasing to God caused the bloodshed and persecution of small minority groups in Europe.



Children believed their innocence would bring them victory, but their crusade ended in tragedy.

Name _____

Class _____

CHALLENGES

1. Whom did those on the Fourth Crusade attack?

2. How did the Pope try to stop the crusaders?

3. Why did young people leave home to join the Children's Crusade?

4. What happened to the children?

5. What city was captured by those on the Fifth Crusade?

6. What happened to the city after the Battle of Cairo?

7. Which king started the Seventh Crusade?

8. What happened to him?

9. What city were the crusaders trying to take on the Eighth Crusade?

10. What caused it to end without success?