

# RICHARD I AND THE SCIENCE OF WAR IN THE MIDDLE AGES<sup>1</sup>

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So far as most historians are concerned there was no such thing as a science of war in the Middle Ages.<sup>2</sup> This is a profoundly mistaken view, but for the purposes of this paper I propose to concentrate on one aspect of war only — strategy, the planning and conduct of campaigns, and in particular in the 12th and 13th centuries, though I shall try to draw out some of the wider implications for other periods.<sup>3</sup> My chief reason for this choice is the fact that strategy still remains the most neglected area of medieval military history. It is true that the days when a book on the history of war turned out to be little more than a history of battles are almost gone. Modern scholars have tended to investigate subjects like military obligation, organization, recruitment, pay, armament and the ethos of war — all of them important subjects. As a result most recent historians have been so busy getting their armies into the field that they have left themselves little room in which to consider what they did once they were there. Thus in a recent admirable survey of the whole subject Philippe Contamine devotes only nine out of four hundred pages of printed text to strategy — rather less, for example, than he gives to the subject of courage. Even so Contamine's conclusion is worth emphasising — that medieval generals were 'capables de concevoir et d'exécuter une "grande stratégie"'<sup>4</sup> — and much of what follows will be an elaboration of some of the points which

1 I am grateful to John Prestwich for his kindness in reading a draft of this essay. Needless to say he did not at the time know where I intended to publish it. Had he done so he might have been less helpful than usual. I first gave some shape to these ideas in a lecture delivered to an audience at the Tower of London in March 1980, so for the invitation and the original stimulus I owe a debt of thanks to Peter Hammond and his colleagues at the Tower.

2 See, for example, the powerfully expressed conclusion to Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au Moyen Age*, Paris 1946, ii, 449. My choice of the term 'the science of war' is, of course, intended to provoke scepticism. But notice Jean de Bueil's opinion: 'Car je puis dire . . . que la conduite de la guerre est artificieuse et subtile; par quoy s'i convient gouverner par art et par science' and his description of La Hire as 'ung bon docteur en ceste science', Jean de Bueil, *Le Jouvencel* ed. C. Favre and L. Lecestre, Paris 1887—9, i 15, ii 246. Also the phrase in *scientia et virtute bellandi* in the early 13th century *Genealogia comitum Flandrensium* MGH ix 333.

3 I shall deal with the purely military conduct of campaigns, not with 'grand strategy' in the sense of political and diplomatic alliance-building, nor with information-gathering (spying) — though both of these were, of course, parts of the normal preliminaries of war.

4 Philippe Contamine, *La Guerre au Moyen Age*, Paris 1980, 365—78, 406—18. Most of Contamine's examples are drawn from the 14th and 15th centuries whereas I shall be chiefly concerned with an earlier period. The chapter on strategy in J.F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages*, Amsterdam 1977, 249—300, consists largely of a summary of a dozen or so late 13th and early 14th century projects, most of them schemes for a new crusade. Thus he deals mainly with 'grand designs' while I shall restrict myself to a discussion of the practice of war — though see Verbruggen 283—4, 288.

he makes.

As will become apparent it could equally well be said that I am doing no more than transferring to a wider stage many of the insights contained in R.C. Smail's *Crusading Warfare*.<sup>5</sup> Yet although this book was published as long ago as 1956 few historians, not even military historians, can be said to have come to terms with his findings. For example, in one recent, and rightly much praised book, John Keegan doubts whether 'generalship' and 'planning' are concepts which can usefully be applied to medieval warfare.<sup>6</sup> In the opinion of the Chichele Professor of the History of War it was in the sixteenth century that 'cautious professional competence took the place of the quest for glory in the planning and conduct of campaigns.'<sup>7</sup> Thus it is hardly surprising that if we turn to current encyclopaedias we find the view that 'strategy was notably absent' from medieval warfare and it was in 1453 (!) that 'a new military age dawned'.<sup>8</sup> If such opinions still hold the field then the fault is undoubtedly ours; as medieval historians we have clearly failed to puncture some of the more widely held misconceptions about the Middle Ages.

My own strategy will be twofold. First, to take Richard I's military career as a model of medieval generalship.<sup>9</sup> Second, to use vernacular sources wherever possible, in the belief that the vernacular brings us closer than Latin to the thoughts and actions of soldiers. In particular I have relied heavily on three chronicles: *L'Estoire de la Guerre Sainte* by Ambrose; Joinville's *Life of St Louis*; and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*. Two of the three deal primarily with warfare in the Middle East and this is no accident. We know much more about crusading warfare than we do about contemporary warfare in the West and where we have more evidence it is easier to work out the logic behind military operations. Thus Richard's reputation as a general rests very largely on his conduct of the war against Saladin but in fact, of course, he fought many more campaigns than this. When he went on crusade he had eighteen years of warfare behind him. So far as we know his earliest firsthand experience of war came in 1173 when he was fifteen years old. In the summer of that year he joined in the great revolt against his father Henry II, and took part in an attack on eastern Normandy — an attack which was launched by Count Philip of Flanders.<sup>10</sup> Since Count Philip was well-known as one of the shrewdest soldiers of the day, it seems likely that Richard began his apprenticeship under a good master.<sup>11</sup> After 1173 Richard went to war in 1174, 1175, 1176, 1177, etc. etc. In

5 R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare 1097—1193*, Cambridge 1956.

6 John Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, Harmondsworth 1978, 336.

7 Michael Howard, *War in European History*, Oxford 1977, p. 27. In part these views rest on the assumption that medieval armies were 'mere crowds', Keegan 175—6 and compare Howard, 56: 'Feudal men-at-arms were totally, gloriously indisciplined.' But on the importance of discipline in the face of the enemy see Smail 124—30 and Verbruggen 76—94.

8 *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn., Chicago 1974, vol. 19, 558—9, 576—7; *Encyclopaedia Americana*, New York 1977, vol. 25, 772—3. A remarkably similar view was expressed by Geoffrey Parker in his chapter 'Warfare' in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. XIII, *Companion Volume* ed. P. Burke, Cambridge 1979.

9 Richard's reputation for political negligence has never prevented military historians from recognising his competence in their field, e.g. Smail 203, Verbruggen 210—12. For a fine recent assessment of Richard's grasp of strategy see J.O. Prestwich, 'Richard Coeur de Lion: *Rex Bellicosus*', *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei. Problemi attuali di scienza e di cultura* 253, 1981, 3—15.

10 Roger of Howden, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* ed. W. Stubbs, RS 1867, i 49.

11 'Felipe de Flandres, li proz/Qui par son sens sormontot toz/Cels qui estoient a son tens'

the year 1180 we know nothing of Richard's movements, so we simply cannot say whether he went to war or not, but apart from this one gap, we know that he was on campaign in every year between 1173 and his crusade. He then missed a year when he was sitting in prison in Germany, but as soon as he was released he threw himself into the compelling military task of throwing Philip Augustus out of those lands which he had grabbed while Richard was in prison. So between 1173 and his death in 1199 Richard had something like 25 years at war and in these circumstances it is obviously misleading to concentrate on just one small part of his military career to the exclusion of the rest. Indeed if we can believe Ambroise one reason for Richard's successes in the Mediterranean, in Sicily, in Cyprus and in Palestine, was that his followers were full of confidence, conscious that they were men of 'tried renown' who knew more of the art of war than did many of their enemies.<sup>12</sup>

How then should we analyse these 25 years of campaigning? Much of it, of course, consists of laying siege to one or more strongpoints.<sup>13</sup> To this subject I shall return, but for the moment I want to look at warfare in the field. In his chapter on 'The Latin Field Army in Action' R.C. Smail divided armies' activities into three categories. (1) Campaigns without battle. (2) Fighting on the march. (3) Pitched battles.<sup>14</sup> If we accept these categories, as I think we should, and ask how many pitched battles Richard fought, then the answer is only two or three. It is arguable whether or not the famous action at Arsuf on 7 September 1191 should be counted as a battle. It was, in Smail's terms, simply a particularly heavy attack on an army on the march. The charge of the crusader knights forced Saladin to break off the engagement, but two days later he was once again harassing the march just as he had done throughout the fortnight since the army left Acre.<sup>15</sup> However since it seems that the bulk of the forces on both sides became involved in the fighting at Arsuf, I am prepared to count it as a battle. It is equally arguable whether or not the action outside Jaffa on 5 August 1192 should be termed a pitched battle. Richard drew up his troops in so solid a defensive formation that the Muslims never closed with them. Spearmen and crossbowmen, working together like the pikemen and musketeers of a later age, presented so formidable an array that Saladin's cavalry always veered away at the last moment. Eventually Richard himself went over to the attack but it looks as though Saladin's troops were thoroughly demoralized and in no mood to fight — so much so that the day was famous chiefly for Richard's individual prowess and a chivalrous gesture on the part

*Histoire de Guillaume le Maréchal*, 3 vols., ed. P. Meyer (Paris, 1891—1901) i, 11. 2715—7, cf. 11. 3065—6. See also the description of him as 'Felipe le Pugnaire' and 'le noble guerreur' in ed. R.C. Johnston, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, Oxford 1981, 11. 28, 438 ff.

<sup>12</sup> 'Mais nos savions plus de guere' Ambroise, *L'Estoire de la Guerre Sainte* ed. G. Paris, Paris 1897, 1. 1512. I shall usually quote from the splendidly doggerel translation of M.J. Hubert and J. La Monte, *The Crusade of Richard Lionheart*, New York 1941.

<sup>13</sup> As did both Richard's first campaign — the siege of Drincourt 1173, Howden, *Gesta*, i 49 — and his last. The campaign of 1199 involved the siege not just of Chalus-Chabrol but also of Nontron, Montagut and probably eleven other places in the Limousin, including Limoges itself. See John Gillingham, 'The Unromantic Death of Richard I' *Speculum* liv, 1979, 18—41, especially 29—31. Richard's first known independent action was an attempt on La Rochelle in 1174; see John Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, London 1978, 67—8. His troops on crusade were characterised by Ambroise as men 'Qui mainte vile aveient prise' Ambroise 1. 742.

<sup>14</sup> Smail 138—203.

<sup>15</sup> Ambroise 11. 6915—6922; Smail 162-5.

of Saladin.<sup>16</sup> Obviously the line of demarcation between a pitched battle and other forms of combat is not always a clear one, but for the purposes of this paper, in order not to make things too easy for myself, I am also prepared to count Jaffa as a battle.

Yet although there may be some degree of uncertainty about the number of Richard's battles on crusade, what is certain is that he did not adopt a battle-seeking strategy. Not once did he go after Saladin's army and try to destroy it. This is not because the 'hot-headed Westerner' once out East became infected by the ultra-cautious strategy of the Franks of Outremer.<sup>17</sup> In all the wars which Richard fought in the West, he fought only one battle and this came fairly early in his military career in May 1176, when he defeated a force of Brabançons employed by a coalition of rebels from the Angoumois and Limousin.<sup>18</sup> Moreover if we compare Richard with his contemporaries then it is clear that there was nothing unusual about this apparent reluctance to fight battles. Henry II, for example, in his whole life never fought a single battle — though Jordan Fantosme described him as 'the greatest conqueror since Charlemagne'.<sup>19</sup> Philip Augustus fought only one — Bouvines in 1214 — and although that battle brought the victory which crowned his career, we should note that he had been trying to avoid battle and fought only when it became unavoidable.<sup>20</sup> These kings were successful rulers who regularly mustered troops and led them to war — but they did not fight battles. It was not just timid commanders like Philip Augustus who avoided battle. Even a man like Richard I who at times in skirmishes and on reconnaissance patrols seems to have been recklessly brave, did not seek battle. In this sense Richard's military career was an unremarkable one but it is surely worth noting that the most famous soldier of the day shared to the full the reluctance of less distinguished commanders.<sup>21</sup>

Battles then were rare events. This is an observation which has become a commonplace.<sup>22</sup> Yet historians seem to have been content to stop there. Very rarely have they gone on to ask what it was that armies were doing when they were not fighting battles. Thus books on the art of war in the middle ages still tend to focus on battles, and not on the army's typical activities; they concentrate on the exceptional rather than the routine, indeed they fail to make clear just what the routine was.<sup>23</sup> And it is with this neglected side of warfare, the

16 Ambroise II. 11455—11652. The most recent account of these events from Saladin's point of view certainly makes it appear that no battle took place, M.C. Lyons and D.E.P. Jackson, *Saladin: The Politics of the Holy War*, Cambridge 1982, 358.

17 So lucidly demonstrated by Smail, 138—40.

18 Howden, *Gesta* i 120. And see below n. 25. His famous encounters with Philip Augustus, at Fréteval 4 July 1194 and near Gisors 28 September 1198, were pursuits not battles, since on both occasions Philip ran for cover and made no effort to fight.

19 Fantosme II. 111—13.

20 Georges Duby, *Le Dimanche de Bouvines*, Paris 1973, 156.

21 Compare Fulk Rechin's summary account of the military career of his turbulent grandfather Fulk Nerra. In over fifty years as count of Anjou (987—1040) Fulk, described as a man of *probitas magna et admirabilis* fought just two pitched battles: *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise* ed. L. Halphen and R. Poupardin, Paris 1913, 233—4.

22 See, for example, Duby, 142 f; Verbruggen, 288; J.H. Beeler, *Warfare in Feudal Europe 780—1200*, Ithaca 1971, 45, 57, 116. H. Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte* Part 3, 2nd edn. Berlin 1923, 344—5.

23 One of the few authors to devote much attention to an army's 'typical activities' is H.J.

planning of a routine campaign, that I shall be concerned.

Most campaigns did not end in battle largely because both commanders were reluctant to risk battle. This was in accord with the advice given in what is perhaps the best book ever written on medieval warfare — and one read by many medieval commanders: the *De Re Militari* by Vegetius. This late Roman handbook on war remained popular throughout the middle ages and was frequently translated into the vernacular.<sup>24</sup> Vegetius' advice on giving battle was quite simple: Don't. Well, you might occasionally, if you heavily outnumbered your enemy, if their morale was poor, their supplies short, if they were tired and poorly led, then in these circumstances you might, but otherwise, no. Normally battle was the last resort. 'Every plan therefore is to be considered, every expedient tried and every method taken before matters are brought to this last extremity'.<sup>25</sup> Some rulers indeed took this advice so much to heart that they actually issued formal prohibitions, ordering their commanders not to engage in battle: Charles V after Poitiers, Louis XI after Monthléry, Charles VII during the greater part of his reign.<sup>26</sup> Why this hostility to battle both in the commonplace theory of Vegetius and in the normal practice of medieval generals? What were the potential advantages and disadvantages of battle?

If the aim of war was either to win or hold territory and this meant taking or keeping strongpoints — castles and fortified towns — then victory in battle might, in some circumstances, bring a decisive advantage.<sup>27</sup> It did, for example for Saladin in 1187 and probably would have done even if he had not captured Guy of Lusignan at the Battle of Hattin. Crucial here was the kingdom of Jerusalem's desperate shortage of garrison troops. In these circumstances a battle-seeking strategy made sense — and in these circumstances ravaging could be used in order to provoke or tempt the defender to battle.<sup>28</sup> It made sense, for example, for William of Normandy in 1066 since, given both the

Hewitt, *The Black Prince's expedition of 1355—1357*, Manchester 1958, 46—75; H.J. Hewitt, *The Organization of War under Edward III*, Manchester 1966, 99—118. See also Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades: The Baltic and the Catholic Frontier 1100—1525*, London 1980, 160—69. 24 Walter Goffart, 'The date and purpose of Vegetius' *De Re Militari*, *Traditio* 33, 1977, 65—100; Alexander Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1978, 127—30; Diane Bornstein, 'Military Strategy in Malory and Vegetius' *De Re Militari*, *Comparative Literature Studies* 9, 1972, 123—129.

25 Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, ed. C. Lang, Leipzig 1885, 86—9 and, in particular p. 86 'Ideo omnia ante cogitanda sunt, ante temptanda, ante facienda sunt, quam ad ultimum veniatur abruptum.' It seems likely that Richard indeed held all the advantages when he fought his 1176 battle against the Brabançons. According to Howden 'magnum exercitum congregavit de Pictavia, et magna militum multitudo de circumjacentibus regionibus ad eum confluebat, propter ipsius stipendia quae illis dabantur. Et cum omnes essent congregati, promovit exercitum suum . . .', Howden, *Gesta* i 120. The contrast between medieval and modern attitudes to battle can be overdrawn. As Delbrück noted — though with some reluctance — 'Auch ein moderner Feldherr schlägt in der Regel nicht, ohne dass er auf den Sieg rechnet,' Delbrück, vol. 3, 345. It may well be the case that much of Vegetius' strategic advice consisted of no more than 'eternal common-sense principles' (Smail, 15 n.l.); but platitudes have their uses.

26 Contamine 379.

27 As was pointed out by the author of the *Chronica de gestis consulum Andegavorum*, a work closely linked with the Angevin court of the mid 12th century, Halphen and Poupardin 55—6.

28 R.C. Smail, 'The Predicaments of Guy of Lusignan 1183—1187', in *Outremer — Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem. Presented to Joshua Prawer*, Jerusalem 1982, 159—176. cf. Guillaume de Poitiers, *Histoire de Guillaume le Conquerant* ed. Raymond Foreville, Paris 1952, 180.

volatile nature of Northern French politics and the massive preparations which the 1066 expedition had required, it was highly improbable that he would ever again have so large an army at his disposal.<sup>29</sup> Guy of Lusignan, of course, was also faced by the dangerous temptation of having an exceptionally large army under his command and, in the end, he chose a battle-risking strategy.<sup>30</sup> (On the other hand it seems unlikely that this was Harold Godwinson's predicament in October 1066).

But the fact that some victories in battle brought decisive gains — and these, of course, are the famous battles — should not lead us into assuming that most victories did. If we take the example of Richard's three victories in battle then one was decisive but two were not. His defeat of the *routiers* in 1176 facilitated the rapid capture of all the major rebel strongholds, including both Limoges and Angoulême.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand neither Arsuf (1191) nor Jaffa (1192) resulted in a significant shift of the strategic balance in his favour. From the attacker's point of view if the defender's strongpoints were still able to offer prolonged resistance, allowing the defender time to re-organise and raise fresh troops, then victory in battle would have achieved little. From the defender's point of view if he could force the enemy to withdraw without battle then he would have achieved his aim with relatively little risk. Battle was a desperately chancy business. A few minutes of confusion or panic and the patient work of months or years might be undone. Moreover although comparatively few knights were actually killed in battle, the king or prince who committed his cause to battle was also putting himself in jeopardy since it was always clear that the surest way to win a battle was to kill or capture the opposing commander.<sup>32</sup> As Smail pointed out in the course of a superb analysis of the defensive strategy of the Franks of Outremer, in a well-managed campaign 'the rewards of victory could be won by other means which did not involve the penalties of defeat.'<sup>33</sup>

What then were these 'other means'? What, in other words, were Richard's twenty five years of campaigning all about? I begin with some advice on how to make war, advice attributed to Count Philip of Flanders, and recorded in Jordan Fantosme's metrical *Chronicle*. In the course of a 'reasoned speech' the count envisages William, King of the Scots invading Northumbria as an ally of Louis VII of France.

Let him aid you in war, swiftly and without delay  
 Destroy your foes and lay waste their country  
 By fire and burning let all be set alight  
 That nothing be left for them, either in wood or meadow  
 Of which in the morning they could have a meal.

29 R. Allen Brown, *The Normans and the Norman Conquest*, London 1969, 145—52.

30 On Guy's motives see Smail, 'The Predicaments' and Hans Eberhard Mayer, 'Henry II of England and the Holy Land' *EHR* xcvi, 1982, 721—39.

31 Howden, *Gesta* i 120—1.

32 On the eve of Agincourt 'eighteen esquires of the French army . . . bound themselves by oath that . . . they would with their united strength force themselves sufficiently near to the king of England to strike the crown from off his head, or that they would all die, which they did', Harris Nicholas, *The History of the Battle of Agincourt*, London 1833, 250.

33 Smail, *Crusading Warfare* 139. Cf. Vegetius, 91—2: 'Illa enim ante temptanda sunt, quae si male cesserint, minus noceant, si bene, plurimum prosint.'

*Then* with his *united* force let him besiege their castles.

.....  
 Thus should war be begun: such is my advice.

First lay waste the land.<sup>34</sup>

The aim, in other words, is to capture your opponents' strongpoints, but the first stage is to ravage the countryside in order to deprive them of supplies — 'so that nothing is left for them . . . of which they could have a meal'. *Then* besiege their castles. This was in fact the strategy adopted by King William during his invasion of the north in 1173. Eventually an English army moved up to confront him; William made a brave speech about standing and fighting, about never yielding a single foot of the land which rightfully belonged to him — all the proper sentiments — but in fact he withdrew. He left Northumbria, however, in ruin, devastated in extreme famine. As the poet said —

King William knows well how to fight his foe  
 How to grieve and damage them.<sup>35</sup>

If one looks at Richard's campaigns in Europe, whether against rebels in Aquitaine or against King Philip of France, this, it is soon clear, is the pattern to which they conform — a pattern of ravaging and besieging.<sup>36</sup>

In 12th and 13th century sources ravaging is frequently referred to but infrequently described. One source, however, the *Chanson des Lorrains* contains an unusually detailed description of an army advancing through enemy territory which is well worth quoting.

The march begins. Out in front are the scouts and incendiaries. After them come the foragers whose job it is to collect the spoils and carry them in the great baggage train. Soon all is in tumult. The peasants, having just come out to the fields, turn back, uttering loud cries. The shepherds gather their flocks and drive them towards the neighbouring woods in the hope of saving them. The incendiaries set the villages on fire and the foragers visit and sack them. The terrified inhabitants are either burned or led away with their hands tied to be held for ransom. Everywhere bells ring the alarm; a surge of fear sweeps over the countryside. Wherever you look you can see helmets glinting in the sun, pennons waving in the breeze, the whole plain covered with horsemen. Money, cattle, mules and sheep are all seized. The smoke billows and spreads, flames crackle. Peasants and shepherds scatter in all directions.<sup>37</sup>

34 Fantosme 11. 439—50 (my italics). With minor alterations I preferred to retain the familiar lines of Howlett's translation, *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, vol. 3, RS 1886, 241—3. The sequence of first ravaging then besieging is well brought out in the 'Plantagenet' account (see n. 27) of Geoffrey Martel's attack on Tours, Halphen and Poupardin 55—6.

35 Fantosme 11. 657—8.

36 See, for example, the importance of devastation as a preliminary to the most famous of Richard's early deeds, the capture of Taillebourg in 1179, Ralph Diceto, *Opera Historica* ed. W. Stubbs, RS 1876, i 431—2. Time and again Geoffrey of Vigeois, a chronicler who had the misfortune to live in a war zone, emphasises the ravaging of the Limousin carried out by Richard, his subordinates and his enemies, especially in the years 1182—84, *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France* 18, Paris 1879, 212—23.

37 Quoted in Achille Luchaire, *Social France at the time of Philip Augustus* trans. E.B. Krehbiel, London 1912, 261.

It is clear that there was nothing unusual about this. This is how Charlemagne operated: we might think of Einhard's description of Avar territory turned into desert by Charlemagne's armies and of the huge waggon loads of plunder.<sup>38</sup> This is how Edward III, the Black Prince, and Henry V operated: remember Henry V's dictum: war without fire is like sausages without mustard.<sup>39</sup> This indeed is the essence of war as perceived by Vegetius: 'the main and principal point in war is to secure plenty of provisions for oneself and to destroy the enemy by famine. Famine is more terrible than the sword.'<sup>40</sup> The point about ravaging was that it simultaneously achieved both these ends. Moreover as an efficient method of waging war it made sense not only from the point of view of the overall campaign strategy of the army commander; it made sense also from the point of view of the individual soldier who was fighting for private profit, for plunder.

In the face of this threat to his territory what strategy could the defender adopt? His main object would be to deprive the attacker of supplies either by preventing him from ravaging (or 'foraging' as it is frequently and euphemistically termed) or — in cases where the attacker was chiefly relying on his supply lines — by cutting those supply lines. In the first instance the defender's usual strategy was to assemble an army and move it up to confront the invader. If he approached too close then he might find himself compelled to fight a battle in unfavourable circumstances — as happened to Harold in October 1066 — but it was not necessary to come as close as this in order to achieve his aim. The mere presence of an opposing army somewhere in the vicinity was normally enough to force the invader to keep his own army together and thus prevent him from ravaging and plundering — since these were operations which involved the dispersal of troops over a wide area. As Count Philip advised, after the devastation 'Then with his *united* force let him besiege their castles.' The ravaging, in other words, was done by scattered forces.

Obviously any defender who could catch an invader while his troops were dispersed had won a great advantage.<sup>41</sup> Reconnaissance was vital for both sides. In 1173 King William was informed of the English advance and withdrew; in 1174 he was attacked at Alnwick while his troops were scattered and he himself was captured. Jordan Fantosme reports a discussion between the English commanders as they advanced towards Alnwick.

Said Ranulf de Glanville: Let us act wisely.

Let us send a scout to estimate their numbers.<sup>42</sup>

38 Éginhard, *Vie de Charlemagne* ed. and trans. L. Halphen, 3rd edn. Paris 1947, pp. 38—40.

39 The culinary opinion attributed to Henry V by Juvenal des Ursins, *Histoire de Charles VI* in ed. J.A. Buchon, *Choix des Chroniques*, Paris 1875, p. 565. 'il respondit que ce n'estoit que usance de guerre, et que guerre sans feu ne valoit rien, non plus que andouilles sans moustarde.'

40 'Saepius enim penuria quam pugna consumit exercitum et ferro saevior fames est . . . In omni expeditione unum est et maximum telum, ut tibi sufficiat victus, hostes frangat inopia.' Vegetius, 69.

41 See, for example, *Gesta Henrici Quinti* ed. and trans. F. Taylor and J.S. Roskell, Oxford 1975, 22. Vegetius pointed out that in these circumstances an able commander had an ideal opportunity to 'blood' his less experienced troops, Vegetius, 91.

42 Fantosme 11. 1738—9



They do this and on learning that most of the Scots were away plundering the countryside, they rode through the night and took William by surprise while he was guarded only by a small force. Normally, of course, commanders were not as careless as William had been, but it is clear from this example that the defender only had to keep his own army in being in order to achieve his objective of stopping the enemy from ravaging. From the point of view of the invading troops once they could no longer go out plundering, soldiering lost its appeal and they just wanted to go home. Unquestionably there were men who enjoyed going to war, but there were very few, if any, who enjoyed the imminent prospect of a pitched battle.

In the case where an invader was relying more on supply lines than ravaging then the defender's obvious course was to try to cut those lines. The most dramatic example of the successful use of this strategy is undoubtedly the Egyptian campaign of 1249—50. After the crusaders had captured Damietta (summer 1249) Louis IX held a council meeting:

The king summoned all the barons of the army to decide in what direction he should go, whether to Alexandria or to Cairo. The good Comte Pierre Bretagne, as well as the majority of the barons, agreed in advising him to go and besiege Alexandria, because that city had a good harbour, where the ships bringing food for the army could land their supplies. But the Comte d'Artois was of a contrary opinion, maintaining that he would never agree to their going anywhere except to Cairo, because it was the chief city in the kingdom of Egypt, and if you wished to kill the serpent, you must first of all crush its head. The king rejected the barons' advice in favour of his brother's.<sup>43</sup>

So the crusaders advanced up the Nile. In February 1250 they won a battle at Mansourah. Joinville's setpiece description contains a splendid account of the chaos and confusion of the battle and, incidentally, makes clear the crucial role of the king's contingent of crossbowmen. But the victory brought no real advantage to the crusaders. Egyptian re-inforcements came up and both sides settled down — once again — to the round of trench warfare and mutual artillery bombardment that is so typical of medieval war.

A fortnight later the Turks did something that came as a great shock to our people. In order to starve us they took several of their galleys lying upstream above our camp, and after dragging them overland put them back into the river, a good league below the place where our tents were pitched. These galleys caused a famine among us; for because they were there no one dared to come up the river from Damietta to bring us fresh supplies of food.<sup>44</sup>

The sickness in the crusader camp then reached such devastating proportions that total surrender became unavoidable. The whole army, king and nobles all included, either died or were made prisoner. Not even the battles of Hattin and Hastings had been as decisive as this. Vegetius, of course, had made the point

43 Joinville, *The Life of Saint Louis* in trans. M.R.B. Shaw, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, Harmondsworth 1963, 210.

44 Joinville 237.

explicit: 'Time and opportunity may help to retrieve other misfortunes, but where forage and provisions have not been carefully provided for, the evil is utterly without remedy.'<sup>45</sup> The Egyptian campaign of 1250 is certainly exceptional in the scale of its consequences but it serves to highlight the crucial — and perennial — problem of the relationship between supply and disease. In this context it is worth noting the Third Crusade casualty list preserved by Roger of Howden.<sup>46</sup> Of the 98 people on the list fourteen are picked out as being either drowned, captured or killed. Presumably at least most of the other eighty-four died of other causes of which the diseases of the army camp are by far the most likely.<sup>47</sup> Ambroise made the point:

I dare say too with certainty,  
By famine and by malady  
More than 3,000 were struck down  
At the siege of Acre and in the town.

Though it should be said that in Ambroise's eyes an even bigger killer was self-imposed chastity.

In pilgrims' hearing I declare  
A hundred thousand men died there  
Because from women they abstained.  
'Twas for love they restrained  
Themselves. They had not perished thus  
Had they not been abstemious.<sup>48</sup>

The principal duty of a general then was to ensure that his troops were kept reasonably fit and well-fed and usually, of course, there were plenty of women with the army.<sup>49</sup> The point is an obvious one, but its implications are rarely brought out. What, for example, did an army camp look like? Ambroise describes one for us:

As if it were a market town  
Oxen and cows and goats and swine  
Most vigorous and fair and fine  
And rams and sheep and lambs were there  
And many a goodly colt and mare  
And cock and hen and fat capon  
And full-fleshed mules —.<sup>50</sup>

45 'Deinde reliquis casibus potest in tempore subveniri, pabulatio et annona in necessitate remedium non habent, nisi ante condantur.' Vegetius, 69. See, for example, the fate of the German army in Asia Minor in 1190, Lyons and Jackson 315.

46 Howden, *Gesta* ii 147—50.

47 During the American-Mexican war of 1846—8, for example, 1100 U.S. soldiers died of disease and only 150 as a result of enemy action. See the table in Parker, *Warfare*, 216.

48 Ambroise 11. 12, 237 ff.

49 So many essential services did female camp followers perform that an army without women is hard to imagine; see, for example, the reference to their work of washing, cleaning and de-lousing the troops, — *E d'espucer valeient singes* Ambroise 11. 5696—99. In crusader armies, of course, women were always felt to be a problem and indeed in Muslim eyes their activities, whether military or sexual, sometimes took on legendary proportions. See the passage from Imad ad-Din quoted in F. Gabrieli, *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, London 1969, 204—7.

50 Ambroise 11. 1676—84. See Joinville, 233 for a reference to 'the butchers and . . . the women

Problems of disease and supply were doubtless more prominent in the Middle East but they were obviously in no sense confined to that theatre of war. No sooner had Henry II taken the cross than he wrote to Frederick Barbarossa, Bela of Hungary and Isaac Angelus to ensure that his army had an adequate market — *victualium copiosum mercatum* — as it passed through their territories.<sup>51</sup> When Richard I returned to Normandy in 1194 to find Philip Augustus laying siege to Verneuil his response was to send a force round to the east of Verneuil to cut the French king's supply lines. This compelled Philip to abandon the siege — in such haste indeed that he left behind rich pickings for the garrison of Verneuil.<sup>52</sup> In 1197 Philip invaded Flanders and Count Baldwin, instead of bringing the French to battle, concentrated on blocking roads and breaking down bridges. No supply wagons could get through and so the French troops were forced to try to live off the land i.e. they were forced to ravage when it was dangerous for them to do so. Dispersed in this manner they became hopelessly vulnerable to Count Baldwin's well-timed counter-attacks. According to the Coggeshall chronicler they even suffered the indignity of being beaten by bands of Flemish women. As a result Philip had to sue for peace and accept humiliating terms.<sup>53</sup>

What about the strategy of attack?

Richard, of course, is famous as an aggressive commander — leading the attempt to capture Jerusalem, and then, later in the 1190s, recovering the territory lost while he was in prison. A close look at these campaigns makes it clear that supply problems were decisive in the shaping of strategy. Turning first to the crusade, we find that, having captured Cyprus, Richard used it as a supply base. On his arrival at Acre he was given a rapturous welcome — and Ambroise explains why.

The king, by taking Cyprus, had  
 Made all the army to be glad  
 For therefrom would they food derive  
 To keep the mighty host alive.<sup>54</sup>

After the capture of Acre Richard then led the army south along the coast road to Jaffa, the nearest port to Jerusalem. The army was accompanied by supply ships and the waggon train, of course; even so Muslim observers noted there were not enough transport animals and so Richard ordered that each man

who sold provisions'. According to al-Maqrizi there were no less than 7,000 shops in Saladin's army market outside Acre. The opposing Frankish market may well have been smaller; on the other hand it seems to have outstripped the Muslim camp in terms of wine-shops and brothels, Lyons and Jackson 308, 329.

<sup>51</sup> Diceto, ii 51—54.

<sup>52</sup> 'Tant fist li reis qui molt fu sages/Que trestoz toli les passages/Par unt la viande veneit/A rei qui le siege teneit/E par icest mesestance/S'en departi le reis de France.' *Histoire de Guillaume 11*. 10491—96. Rigord, *Gesta Philippi Augusti* ed. H.F. Delaborde, *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton*, Paris 1882—85, i 127.

<sup>53</sup> Roger of Howden, *Chronica*, ed. W. Stubbs, RS 1868—71, iv 20; Ralph of Coggeshall, *Chronicon Anglicanum* ed. J. Stevenson, RS 1875, 77—8; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum* ed. R. Howlett in *Chronicles*, ii 495—6.

<sup>54</sup> Ambroise 11. 2366—70; Cf. 11. 1896—1902; 2102—6. John Prestwich has adduced plausible grounds for believing that the conquest of Cyprus, far from being accidental, may have been in Richard's mind from the outside of his crusade, Prestwich, 8—9, 12.

should carry ten days supply of food. This meant that they advanced very slowly — covering the 81 miles to Jaffa in 19 days — but they got there in a classic demonstration of fighting on the march. It was a dogged march which won the admiration of Saladin's secretary, who was well aware that the slow pace was conditioned by the needs of the heavily burdened foot soldiers.<sup>55</sup> But even so this rate of four miles a day was lightning fast when compared with the speed of the advance from Jaffa towards Jerusalem.

The army began to leave Jaffa on 31 October 1191. On 22 November it camped at Ramleh, approximately ten miles inland. Why was the advance so slow? Because if they had simply marched inland Saladin would cut off their supplies. Therefore the road behind them had to be protected by castles and since Saladin had systematically been destroying all strongpoints (except Jerusalem itself), this meant that they had to be, equally methodically, rebuilt.<sup>56</sup> At Ramleh Richard waited six weeks, stockpiling supplies, while the winter weather got worse and worse.<sup>57</sup> What was Richard doing? Why the delay? Because essentially this was a war of skirmishing and attrition. The question was, who could hold their army together the longer, Richard or Saladin? Winter was traditionally the season when supplies ran out and armies were disbanded. Saladin's men were tired and hungry and wanted to go home. Eventually Saladin had to bow to this pressure; he himself withdrew behind the walls of Jerusalem while the bulk of his army dispersed. Now at last Richard could advance again. By early January he was at Beit Nuba, another ten miles inland and about twelve miles from Jerusalem. He had brought with him enough supplies to be able to lay siege to the city and then, having captured it, to stand siege himself.<sup>58</sup> But, as is well known, he never advanced those last twelve miles. On a second occasion, six months later in June 1192, he again advanced to Beit Nuba — and this time, having fortified the roads, was able to do so more quickly. This time the journey from the coast took only five days. But again at Beit Nuba he gave the order to withdraw. On both occasions it is clear that the question of supplies was uppermost in the mind of the army council. Despite all their efforts, that supply line to the coast just looked too vulnerable — and even if they did take Jerusalem and hold it while the crusaders were there, what would happen when they returned to Europe? The answer to this question was clear and there can be no doubt that, in terms of military strategy, Richard and his advisers took the right decision — though they were of course bitterly unpopular ones.<sup>59</sup> In purely military terms Jerusalem was not a sensible objective — and Richard indeed had been reluctant to go for it in the first place. His own strategy had been to march down the coast, capture Ascalon and Daran, cutting the caravan route between Egypt and Syria, and then go for an attack on Egypt itself — the standard 13th

55 Ambrose 11. 5549 ff. Verbruggen 212—15.

56 Ambrose 11. 7029 ff; 7181—3; 7209—14; 7447—60; 7614—5; Lyons and Jackson 341. More drastic than Saladin was Theobald IV of Champagne in 1229 when 'he set fire to all his towns himself before his enemies could reach them so that they would not find them full of supplies', Joinville, 184.

57 Ambrose 11. 7471—78, cf. 7635—42.

58 Ambrose 11. 7610—53.

59 Ambrose 11. 7,700—16; 10,161—70. Lyons and Jackson 345—6.

century strategy, and a sensible one.<sup>60</sup>

About Richard's campaigns in the West we possess much less detailed information than we do about the crusade, but I would like to call attention to one matter — the building of Château-Gaillard. We know that in the space of two years up to September 1198 he spent about £11,500 on this. This is a fantastically large sum. In the whole of his reign he spent £7,000 on *all* English castles. The nearest approach to the expenditure on Château-Gaillard is the sum of nearly £7,000 spent on Dover between 1180 and 1190.<sup>61</sup> So £11,500 in two years is phenomenal. What was it for? The conventional answer is that it was meant to defend Rouen, to plug a gap in the Norman defences. But in the years of its building Richard was not on the defensive. He was recovering those castles which had been lost while he was in prison in Germany, so a place has to be found for Château-Gaillard within a strategy of aggression. Château-Gaillard and the new town Andeli, associated with it, was to be the forward base from which the Vexin was conquered. Men and supplies could be sent up the Seine from the main arsenal at Rouen. Richard built river boats — long ships — for this purpose. Or they could travel by road, taking a more direct route which crossed the Seine twice — at Pont de l'Arche and Portjoie. Richard we know built bridges, residences and castles along this royal and military road between Rouen and Andeli. The pattern of Richard's advance into the Vexin is, in other words, a very similar one to the pattern of Richard's advance from Jaffa.<sup>62</sup>

By way of conclusion I would like to make two points, one particular and one general. First, that as an army commander Richard was very far from being the impetuous leader of romantic legend.<sup>63</sup> Rather, his usual approach was methodical and carefully prepared. His strategy was based on the systematic use of magazines, supply lines and ravaging, the 'strategy of manoeuvre' which is usually associated with a later period, but the strategy which was in fact adopted by all good medieval generals. This kind of war is largely a matter of effective administration and one of the most comic of modern misunderstandings of Richard I is the widely accepted view that he was a poor administrator.<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, developing further this view of medieval warfare, I would argue that victory in battle normally offered rewards sufficient to offset the risks involved only in those societies where the science of fortification was relatively poorly developed. But, as is well known, throughout most of the European

60 Gillingham, *Richard* 194, 300—1.

61 R.A. Brown, *English Castles* (2nd edn.) 1976, 160—61.

62 Gillingham, *Richard* 262—265. Delaborde, i 207—209. Undoubtedly Richard's intention was 'to recover territory not to gain it' (Prestwich 11), but within the Vexin, as elsewhere along the Angevin—Capetian frontier, this meant adopting an aggressive campaign strategy.

63 It remains true of course, that his prowess and recklessness made him a legend in his own lifetime. This was an image of the king which he himself took pains to cultivate — not surprisingly since it was politically valuable and helped to maintain the morale of his troops, Prestwich 4—5, 14; Gillingham, *Richard*, 284—5.

64 On the importance of administrative preparation, Keegan 296. According to the *Encyclopaedia Americana* 773, Montgomery's successes in World War II induced British military experts to add two 'new' ideas to their list of strategic maxims; thorough administrative preparation and careful provision for the maintenance of troop morale!

Middle Ages this science was a highly developed one. Fortification consumed a significant proportion of men's financial resources and, on the whole, the technology of defence was more than equal to the challenging technology of artillery. In these circumstances a Napoleonic or Clausewitzian *Niederwerfungsstrategie* made little sense.<sup>65</sup> It may well be that for much of its history England has been a special case in that relatively little was spent on fortification. This seems to have been so before 1066 and was certainly so from the 15th century onwards, when English patrons and their architects — unlike their continental counterparts — felt no compulsion to develop defence systems capable of resisting the revolutionary siege artillery of the late 14th century. In consequence warfare in England has been fairly battle-orientated, both in the Wars of the Roses and in civil wars of the 17th century.<sup>66</sup> But in this respect the military history of England has been a peculiar one. In European medieval history as a whole battles are rare and making war did not normally involve seeking battle.

The dominance of the fortified strongpoint meant that wars were mostly wars of attrition and that, in consequence, there was a demand for soldiers who were experts in this kind of war: garrison troops, artillerymen (engineers) and bowmen, incendiaries and foragers. The infantry arm, in other words, was vitally important. Cavalry, of course, was also important, particularly when out on reconnaissance patrol or escorting and guarding foraging parties. But it would be difficult to think of generalisations more misleading than such statements as in the Middle Ages 'the principal arm in any military force was the heavy cavalry' or that as a result of 'deeply significant' Renaissance innovations 'defence became superior to offence' and infantry 'more decisive'.<sup>67</sup> All such statements are based upon a view of medieval warfare which sees it as being largely composed of battles dominated by the charge of heavily armoured knights. But against this view, distorted by its reliance on evidence concerning exceptional and therefore news-worthy occasions we must bear in mind the routine reality of medieval warfare, and the army commander's constant effort 'to secure plenty of provisions for himself and to destroy the enemy by famine'. For the medieval reality of war was very like the medieval theory of war as outlined by Vegetius and it was in his cautious mastery of the logistics of Vegetian warfare that even a 'romantic hero' like Richard I showed his real competence as a general.

65 It is for this reason that some historians have concluded that in the Middle Ages strategy 'im höheren Sinne des Wortes' could not really have existed, Delbrück 3, 344.

66 There is the further point that in civil wars both sides, in order not to alienate the people whose support they are seeking, are usually under great pressure to avoid ravaging and to bring the war to a swift conclusion. They are thus more willing to seek and to risk battle — to act, as Defoe put it in commenting on the English Civil Wars 'as if they had been in haste to have their Brains knock'd out'. John Gillingham, *The Wars of the Roses*, London 1981, 15—50; John Gillingham, *Cromwell: Portrait of a Soldier*, London 1976, 23—28.

67 Parker, 201—3.