

History of the Crusades.
Episode 150.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
Rebel Resistance Rises.

Hello again. Last week we bought the narrative up to the end of the year 1213. We saw rebel resistance continue in Languedoc, despite the disastrous outcome of the Battle of Muret, and we saw Pope Innocent appoint a version of himself, the Italian Cardinal Peter Benevento, to try and preserve the status quo in southern France, pending the calling of an ecumenical council which would meet to determine the future of the Crusade. And Simon de Montfort? Well Simon took off to the east to sort out some problems in Provence, only to encounter some problems of his own when the citizens of the cities of Narbonne and Montpellier refused to open the gates to let him into their towns.

Now, at the beginning of the year 1214 there were a reasonable number of armed knights hostile to the Crusader cause roaming the countryside, looking to cause trouble for any Crusaders they came across. These "routiers", as Laurence Marvin calls them in his book "The Occitan War", weren't part of any army and didn't answer to any specific overlord. They were predominantly made up of dispossessed lesser noblemen who, as the former owners of fortifications or properties taken by Simon de Montfort, suddenly found themselves landless, penniless and purposeless. It must have come as quite a shock to most of them. For generations, they had been raised in privilege in their little corner of the world, secure within the feudal system, administering their landholdings, employing a vast range of knights, attendants, and people to run their households and work their land, when suddenly Simon de Montfort comes in, takes their family's ancient landholding by force, garrisons their fortifications with northern Frenchmen, and expels the noblemen and their family from their homes. According to Jonathan Sumption in his book "The Albigensian Crusade", a troubadour around this time sung of 1,000 dispossessed noblemen across Languedoc, and after singing mournfully of Theodisius, of Raymond, Roger Trencavel, the troubadour went on to sing that 1,000 dispossessed noblemen meant that 1,000 ladies had their hearts broken, 1,000 tradesmen were now out of work, and 1,000 courtiers ruined.

So what happened to all of these dispossessed people? Well some, of course, made their way to the rebel strongholds of Montauban and the city of Toulouse. But these places were already uncomfortably crowded with refugees, and most noblemen decided that sitting around bored, in a crowded town, with no possessions, and no money, wasn't for them. Instead, they banded together with some loyal knights from their former households, and perhaps some family members and other handy tradesmen who had worked on their properties, and became routiers, armed groups of people who belong to nowhere, answered to no one, and spent their days engaged in the business of revenge, making as much trouble as they could for any northern Frenchmen they came across.

At the beginning of 1214 these bands of routiers were joined by others also in the revenge business: military men from Aragon. The Kingdom of Aragon itself at this time was in chaos. Their King had now been dead for four or so months, and it was unclear who was actually running the kingdom. Simon de Montfort still had King Peter's son and heir, young James, in his household and was refusing to hand him back to Aragon. So a goodly number of soldiers and knights from Aragon, not wanting to waste time sitting around twiddling their thumbs while their kingdom got itself back in order again, decided to take matters into their own hands and avenge their King's death themselves. They roamed

around southern France in the same manner as the routiers, having no real leaders, just in little groups seeking out any northern Frenchman who they could give a beating to on behalf of their King. Reportedly, some of these Aragonese knights made it as far east as Beziers on their revenge mission, which is a considerable distance from Aragon.

Now, while these disaffected groups of anti-Crusader armed men are roaming the countryside, what are the main players in the narrative up too? Well, the rebel leaders are all in the city of Toulouse, reconciling themselves with the Church. Before you all drop your phones or listening devices in shock, this isn't quite as crazy as it sounds. Pope Innocent's new Italian Legate Peter Benevento is in Toulouse, and to the desperate rebel leaders what he is saying makes a lot of sense. What is he saying? Well, he's most probably passing on to them Pope Innocent's concerns about the ambitions of Simon de Montfort and Arnold Amaury, and how this whole Crusade-against-the-Cathars thing has gotten a little out of hand, and has turned into an empire-building exercise with Simon de Montfort in the role of Emperor. Peter Benevento probably pointed out to them that Pope Innocent has revoked the indulgences for Crusaders coming to southern France and that really, he just wants to wrap things up and concentrate on the Middle East for a while. So he is placing the city of Toulouse under Rome's protection until the ecumenical council meets to sort things out.

Peter Benevento is probably making lots of soothing noises, telling them everything is going to be fine, Pope Innocent has a plan in place to fix this mess, etcetera, etcetera, and to the rebel leaders still reeling from the Battle of Muret, Peter Benevento presented them with a little ray of hope. If there was going to be a split between Rome and Simon de Montfort, well, it's pretty clear which side the rebels were going to be supporting. They were going to be supporting anyone who opposed Team Montfort. If that anyone just happened to be Pope Innocent, who after all, had started the Crusade in the first place, well so be it, they would support Pope Innocent.

In early February 1214, while the rebel leaders were listening to the soothing words of Peter Benevento, Simon de Montfort was wrapping things up in Provence and getting ready to move his small army back into Languedoc. And Languedoc is really exactly where he needs to be, as in the few months that he's been away in Provence, the roaming groups of routiers and disaffected soldiers from Aragon have been stirring up no end of trouble for Simon in the areas he has conquered. Knowing that the Crusader army was preoccupied elsewhere, the groups raided and attacked with impunity, urging the southern French to rebel, and killing as many northern Frenchmen as they could lay their hands on. The most audacious raid, by far, was carried out around the little castle of Lolmie, just to the north of the rebel stronghold of Montauban.

On the 17th of February 1214, Baldwin of Toulouse, who you will remember is Count Raymond's brother who defected to the Crusader cause, and William of Contres, who you will remember led the initial Crusader charge in the Battle of Muret, were staying the night in the castle of Lolmie, along with a small group of Crusaders. The castle was under Baldwin's control and was garrisoned by a small number of northern Frenchmen. There were, however, also a handful of southern French knights within the castle. Most likely, they had sworn allegiance to the Crusader cause, and so had been allowed to remain after the castle had been taken by Baldwin, but they had stayed quietly loyal to the rebels.

As night fell, these knights managed to send word to two groups of routiers who were in the area, that Baldwin and William of Contres were inside the castle, with only a small

garrison of northern Frenchmen protecting them. The Lord of Lolmie, who was also in on the plan, ordered the castle gates to be quietly opened, while he went to Baldwin's room and locked the sleeping Baldwin in his chambers. When the routiers entered the castle, the Lord handed the keys over to their commander, southern Frenchmen lined up outside the sleeping quarters of the Crusaders, then simultaneously they all burst in, intending to kill as many of them as possible. In the ensuing chaos, William of Contres managed to escape, but Baldwin was captured.

As a prisoner of the southern French, Baldwin didn't do himself any favours. Far from cooperating with his captors, he did his level best to defy them, annoy them, and make them angry. Immediately after his capture, he was taken to a nearby castle, one of the many controlled by him in the area, and was told to order the northern French garrison there to surrender. Far from obeying his captors, Baldwin instead told the garrison to hold out, to resist the rebels, and to wait until Simon de Montfort came to rescue them. In his book "The Occitan War", Laurence Marvin reports that Baldwin irritated his captors to such an extent that they ended up denying him food or water. In the end, the garrison surrendered of their own accord on the promise they would be allowed to leave the castle unharmed, a promise that the southern Frenchmen failed to honor, opting instead to execute the entire garrison once the castle was safely in their hands.

Baldwin was taken to Montauban, and word was sent to Count Raymond that his brother had been captured. Count Raymond travelled to Montauban, along with Count of Foix, the Count of Foix's son, and a particularly loyal Aragonese knight who had been a close companion of King Peter II. I guess it's going to come as no surprise to anyone when you hear that Baldwin was given no leniency by his brother and his compatriots. Charging his brother with the slightly dubious crime of being at Muret at the time of the battle, Baldwin was declared guilty and was hanged.

Baldwin's execution served a number of purposes. Firstly, it sent a message to Simon de Montfort that his men weren't safe, and that even high-born noblemen could be picked off by the routiers in the safety of their own castles. Secondly, it made Count Raymond feel slightly more secure in his role of the Count of Toulouse. It was pretty obvious to everyone that Baldwin coveted his brother's title, and you could place money on the fact that Simon de Montfort would much rather see Baldwin installed as Count of Toulouse than his rebellious brother, so dispatching Baldwin probably made Raymond sleep a little more peacefully at night. And finally, Baldwin's execution was held up as the first blow in a move by the rebels to avenge King Peter's death. All in all, it was a very successful and satisfying exercise for the southern French rebels, and the first major victory by those early proponents of pseudo-guerrilla warfare, the routiers.

Now, at this period in time, in February 1214, Simon de Montfort is facing some serious problems. At the moment, he's back from Provence and he is in the County of Toulouse, raiding, killing, and doing his best to keep the rebellious citizens around the outskirts of the city of Toulouse in line. With Count Raymond and the Count of Foix otherwise occupied to the north in Montauban, he is not facing a lot of opposition. However, with the routiers and the revengeful Aragonese knights roaming the countryside and stirring up trouble, he really needs to be everywhere at once to put down all the rebellions that seem to be springing up.

There are two problems facing Simon at this time, however, which are looming larger than all the others. The first of these problems is the city of Narbonne. Why? Well, because the

large, powerful city of Narbonne, which has never been attacked by the Crusaders and technically doesn't form part of Crusader territory, has decided to join the rebellion. If that wasn't bad enough, Simon de Montfort has just heard that King John of England has invaded France and has landed at La Rochelle in Poitou, a few hundred kilometers north of Montauban.

Now, before you all fall about laughing, thinking it must be just King John himself who has shown up, and that the same "unfavourable winds" that prevented him raising an army to join forces with King Peter and Count Raymond continue to blow, well no, King John actually has turned up with an army. He learned a lesson from the embarrassingly awkward "unfavourable winds" incident, and realizing that the knights and barons of England wouldn't join him in war due to any loyalty to him, he decided to bribe them instead. When the barons, noblemen, and knights of England learned that everyone who showed up to help King John battle King Philip to regain his lands in France will get a reduction in taxes or remission of their debts, King John suddenly found himself with an army that Mark Morris in his book "King John. Treachery, Tyranny and the Road to Magna Carta" describes as, and I quote "tolerably large" end quote. Most of England's more powerful barons decided to send proxies instead of accompanying King John themselves, but still, it was an indisputable fact that King John had actually managed to raise an army.

Not only has King John managed to raise an army, he has also found himself an ally in the form of Emperor Otto IV, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire. The plan was: King John would land in Poitou and invade the Loire provinces of the Kingdom of France, while Emperor Otto would simultaneously invade from the north. With King Philip having to fight invaders on two fronts, it finally looked as if King John had a chance to win back some of the extensive lands he has lost to the French crown.

Trouble is, King John has been super organized and has landed at Poitou already, whereas Emperor Otto was still preparing his expedition, and was some time away from actually invading. Even King John could see that jumping the gun and taking on the King of France by himself before the armies of the Holy Roman Empire had mobilized would be pure folly, so he found himself in Poitou with his army kicking around, killing time, waiting for Emperor Otto to get his act together and invade France. King John initially amused himself by making sure his subjects in Poitou recognized him as their King, and went so far as to successfully besiege a castle whose Lord was having second thoughts about his loyalty to King John. King John defeated the Lord and wrote excited letters back to England, informing his subjects of his glorious victory.

With Emperor Otto's armies still showing no signs of invading France, King John recalled that he was not actually that far from southern France. He knew from Count Raymond's visit to his court in December last year about the disastrous defeat of the rebel forces at Muret, and he still had an itch to defeat Simon de Montfort. Also, he wouldn't mind reclaiming the Agenais region that Simon de Montfort had rudely taken from him. Of course, this time King John was unable to join with the armies of the crown of Aragon because most of them had been killed at Muret, but still, taking on and defeating Simon de Montfort and reclaiming the Agenais seemed like a good way to kill time while he was waiting for the go-ahead to invade the lands of the Kingdom of France. So King John gathered his tolerably large army and headed down south towards Gascony.

Oh dear. It looks like Simon de Montfort is in for a busy year. Join me next week to see Simon de Montfort tackle both King John of England and the Narbonnese rebellion. Until next week, bye for now.

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