

Crusaders vs. invaders

Parts of the World, Europe



In c. 800, Pope Leo III assigned Charlemagne as Emperor of the Roman people. This collaboration and mutual understanding between Charlemagne and the church paved the way for the numerous future successes in the conquest wars. The initial steps taken by Charlemagne as Emperor do not imply a lust for power or riches at any stage. What they did imply was his aspiration to educate the people and build an unbiased government system that solely functions towards the well-being of the whole empire.

Moreover, the major cause behind the conquest wars led by Charlemagne against the German tribes was to announce the revival of the Roman Empire as far as central Europe, and provide an easy access for the church into the pagan tribes (Einhard 61). According to Einhard, in his book two lives of Charlemagne, the Saxons were an extremely disrespectful people. He states: “ They are much given to devil worship and they are hostile to our religion. They think it no dishonor to violate and transgress the laws of God and man. ” (61).

Although the Franks lived peacefully just across the river to the Saxons, consistent crimes like murder and theft eventually gave way to a ferocious war between the two parties. The sole purpose of this war was to convert the Saxons to Christianity and unite them with the Franks (Einhard 61-62). Although the Franks may have initiated the war, it is absolutely transparent that they had no intention of settling matters other than peacefully. This can be deduced from the fact that while crimes were being committed continuously, the Franks bided for a long time until they could endure it no more.

It was not only the Saxon war, but the origins of the other conquest wars were also not quite different. For example, the war in Bavaria against Duke Tassilo occurred under similar circumstances. The duke made allies with the Huns disregarding all Charlemagne's orders (Einhard 65). Einhard states in his book: " Not only did Tassilo refuse to carry out Charlemagne's orders, but he did his utmost to provoke the king to war. " (66). Wars against the Slaves and Huns also lied along the same lines. Absolute disagreement and disregard of the king lead to unnecessary bloodshed with the same result.

Although the actions of Charlemagne may appear to be quite reasonable, the wars fought by the Vikings in Europe are an entirely different story. Their advancements into Europe occurred in various forms; however, they always had a violent and ferocious touch to them. In addition, the Vikings were staunch followers of paganism at the time, making them a more unpopular figure in recorded history. Details of the siege of Paris clearly indicate that the Vikings were solely responsible for their war against Odo, defender of Paris.

According to Frederic Austin in his book *A Sourcebook of Mediaeval History*, Siegfred, the Vikings leader, said to the bishop of Paris: "...if you do not listen to my demands, on the morrow our war machines will destroy you with poisoned arrows. You will be the prey of famine and of pestilence and these evils will perpetually renew every year. " Basically, the Vikings threatened the leaders of Paris that if they do not handover the city, they would wage war against Paris with all their force, resting only after its total destruction. In the same book, Frederic Austin narrates the story of Rollo's conversion to Christianity too.

Although initially he refused to pay respect to King Charles, his conversion had a profound effect on his leadership. “ The duke established for his subjects certain inviolable rights and laws, confirmed and published by the will of the leading men, and he compelled all his people to live peacefully together. ” (Austin 165-173). Literally speaking, a crusade refers to a collaborative attempt by a group of people that is aimed to achieve a credible cause, while an invasion implies to the disturbance of an event by an uninvited subject.

After examining every war fought by Charlemagne during his conquests, it can be safely deduced that he never fought with the wrong intentions, but always aimed to spread the word of Christianity and enforce peace throughout the lands. Moreover, the wars though mostly initiated by Charlemagne, were always provoked by the opposite party. The Vikings on the other hand, were solely responsible for the provocation as well as initiation of wars. At the time of their infiltration into Europe, they mostly used violent methods to take over the city governments against the will of the people.

Although Lief Erikson may have built whole towns in the Americas for permanent settlements, the program eventually failed and the spirit of that deed faded away with time, while the actions behind the more influential settlements of the Vikings in Europe were remembered. Works Cited Austin Ogg, Frederic. *A Sourcebook of Mediaeval History*. New York: American Book Company, 1907. 165-173. Einhard. *Two Lives of Charlemagne*. Trans. Lewis Thorpe. New York: Penguin Books Ltd, 1969. 61-68.