**Fourth Crusade (1202-4)**

Jan 1198 – new Pope, Innocent III: personally convinced God wanted him to retake Jerusalem.

Tr Jaffa, 1192: end of 3rd Crusade Franks ceded control of Jerusalem to Saladin/ Muslims. Despite Saladin’s death, 1193, treaty had lasted for nearly 6 yrs -> Christians held Acre/ pilgrims allowed access to Holy City of God, but it remained under Muslim control. By 1198, however, things seemed less certain to some, which probably prompted the Pope to act as he did. In Innocent’s mind, this was God’s will.

Aug 1198: Pope Innocent III – called for a new crusade (Bull – *Post miserabile*) to retake Jerus for “Christendom”. Innocent talked of “the business of the Cross” -> “Fourth Crusade”, 1202-> April, 1204 Crusaders seized/ ransacked Constantinople, slaughtering fellow Christians and despoiling the Byzantine Empire. The 4th Crusade never got near Jerusalem, and never fought any Muslims. The Byzantine Empire was irrevocably weakened/ “partitioned”, & the schism b/ween Latin and Greek churches deepened profoundly/ irreversibly. The Venetians got what they wanted –> control of Adriatic port of Zara, & effectively became an imperial power. Some new “Crusader states” were (sort of!) estab’d in the Balkans.

How & why did this catastrophe happen – who was to blame?

1. Was it the fault of Pope Innocent III who’d tried to “professionalise” crusading, but whose combination of youthful zeal, naivety, and lack of realism & tact, left the 4th Crusade under resourced, and lacking adequate forces and suitable ldrshp?
2. Or, were, the Great Lords (“Magnates”) who planned & led the 4th Crusade to blame? Were they militarily & politically inept, and self-serving?
3. Maybe the fault lay with the cunning ‘Doge’ of Venice, Enrico Dandalo, whose machinations, and rigorous pursuit of Venetian interests, caused the 4th Crusade to be diverted elsewhere?
4. Or, was the somewhat desperate/ reckless Byzantine Prince Alexios Angelos to blame for what befell the Empire?

Complex: in truth, each of these factors played a part in bringing about an unfortunate chain of events.

Fundamental problem was that Pope Innocent aside, v few people actually wanted a new crusade:

* Franks of “Outremer”/ Crusader States were managing the post 3rd Crusade ‘status quo’, and had no real desire for renewed war with their Muslim neighbours.
* Saladin’s heirs were running Jerusalem (al-Quds) in a reasonable manner – Jews, Christians unmolested, & pilgrims had access to Christian “holy sites” etc.
* Trade/ business on the Levant was recovering from disruption of 3rd Crusade…to the benefit of most. Acre, the main city/ port of the “Kingdom of Jerusalem” was prospering.
* Of the 3 major Italian maritime powers, Genoa and Pisa were caught up in a war with each other. Venice was available “for business”, but had its own agendas to pursue, notably in the Adriatic.
* Richard I of England & Philip II of France were at war, and refused Papal pleas to make their peace and support a new crusade to Jerusalem.
* That aside, Innocent’s self-righteous legate gave an unfortunate impression - that the Pope was ordering kings to go on crusade…Richard was hopping mad –> allegedly threatened to castrate the Papal Legate!
* The German Emperor was at loggerheads with the Papacy over contested Italian lands / political rivalries (“Guelphs” & “Ghibellines”), and so was a complete “non-starter”.
* Consequently, the 4th Crusade lacked Kingly/ “national” ldrshp, and the resources (eg royal tax; troops) & status derived from this.
* The Byzantine Empire was in political disarray: 1195 – Emperor Isaac II Angelos (weak, incompetent) had been ousted in a coup by his brother, who became Emperor Alexios III Angelos (Isaac was blinded/ incarcerated), but his nephew (Isaac’s son), Prince Alexios, fled to try to raise support for a campaign to restore his father.
* Emperor Alexios III rejected totally Innocent III’s rather self-righteous letter requiring support for a new crusade, but Prince Alexios saw an opportunity, esp when it became obvious that the Pope was having problems generating support/ money for the venture ->
* Dec 1202: Prince Alexios’ proposal –> in return for help to restore his Father, he’d commit the Byzantine Empire to the crusade (10,000 trained/ equipped troops; 200,000 silver marks!), plus the Pope wld be given overall spiritual authority over Eastern Church! Reckless, and almost certainly too good to be true.
* Overall, therefore, from the start, the 4th Crusade was under resourced, lacked coherent ldrship and clear strategic direction, and was subject to the vagaries/ interests of parties who did not necessarily have a primary focus on Jerusalem. Arguably, it was doomed to fail, or to go badly awry.

Innocent III & preparation for a new crusade

* In the light of problems of recruitment, retention, and maintenance of forces evident during previous crusades, Innocent aimed to “professionalise” the endeavour better to ensure its sustainability, and also to keep it firmly under his control:

1. Insisted on a 2 yr commitment;
2. Imposed a Church income tax to supplement the self-financing social/ military elite;
3. Indulgences to be given to anyone who’d contribute to financing the crusade;
4. Papally approved preachers wld spread the word, which wld discourage zealotry.

* He was, however, somewhat naïve, and his well- intentioned efforts created more problems than solutions.
* As already noted, he failed to take account of realities – eg the on-going and active antagonisms b/ween French & English kings; the economic & political priorities of the maritime Italian city states; the Papacy’s on-going “issues” with German Emperors in Italy; the situation in the Holy Land; the chaotic machinations/ intrigue of the Byzantine Empire.
* Arguably, this really was not a propitious time to launch a new crusade.
* Innocent, living up to his name (!?), assumed too much, esp that strong Papal direction combined with a systematic (“business like”) approach would be enough to guarantee the generation and sustenance of a committed, well directed, crusade firmly under Rome’s control.
* First, Innocent’s de facto “contract” of a 2 year commitment to the expedition was, in theory, great…
* Aimed to guarantee solid commitment, & deter unsuitable types (ie poorly armed/ unarmed pilgrims; opportunist “hangers-on; deluded chancers and zealots etc), but…a “big ask”!
* Papally approved preachers spread the word. Whilst this discouraged “firebrand”/ nutter types, it also meant that preaching of the new crusade had ltd popular appeal/ traction.
* There was, therefore, no enthusiastic mass response from the “lower orders”, but nor was there generation of much enthusiasm in any level of the social hierarchy.
* Lords & knights provided military ldrshp, & formed the cavalry force (manoeuvre, “striking” arm) of Medieval armies, but the mass of foot soldiers and specialists (eg archers, engineers) were of less elevated social status (free peasant farmers, peasants, craftsmen, urban poor, beggars, rogues and vagabonds et al)…
* Innocent may not have liked this reality (or even been aware of it!?), but without such people (and lots of them) it would be hard to build and maintain a strong, balanced, and flexible, fighting force…
* “Tafurs” especially were not interested in high-minded principles, but were usually ignorant, & self-serving. Such “militias” were, however, useful – did the “dirty work” at sieges, and provided a mass of basic infantry.
* God fearing peasants of the “better type” needed motivating/ enthusing – generally best done by the populist preachers of whom Innocent disapproved.
* “Professionals” (mercenaries; craftsmen et al) provided key skills (eg small unit leadership of “tafurs”; archers; engineers etc), but needed to have confidence in those leading the forces they joined, and to feel sure that they’d be paid/ appropriately rewarded.
* Church “income tax” (2.5% of Church income) introduced to pay poor crusaders of the “right type”, or to hire mercenaries.
* Reality = Churchmen tried to evade the tax. Also, even if affordable, would pure mercenaries (“sell swords”) necessarily be the “suitable type” of crusaders (armed pilgrims fighting for God etc) envisaged by Innocent?
* Those of “rank” (ie lords, knights) were still expected to self-finance (a big personal commitment & risk), which begged the question of what else was in it for them – how to incentivise such important elements?
* Innocent failed to appreciate what motivated most members of the land holding military elite whose commitment he needed to secure.
* For example, he offered “indulgences” to anyone who’d help finance the crusade, so if it was possible to attain an indulgence by paying someone else to go East, why undertake such a risky venture personally?
* Many knights *were* motivated by ideas of “honour”, “chivalry”, “God’s service” etc, but ultimate loyalty was always to their liege lords/ kings, rather than to the Papacy in Rome.
* Most lords & knights were, therefore, disinclined to serve a cause that was unsupported by their overlords/ kings.
* Tournaments were extremely popular in late C12th Europe: showcases of knightly virtues/ skill at arms, and mass popular entertainment, and yet it was well known that the Church (esp under Innocent III) disapproved strongly of such vainglorious and violent events.
* If Innocent wanted to generate a truly sustainable crusade firmly under his direction, then he needed to ‘connect’ with the attitudes, values, and feelings of the many (participants, and audiences) who loved tournaments, and tie this in to ideas of “chivalry”, “taking the Cross”, pilgrimage to Jerusalem etc.
* It’s v telling that an early relative success in recruiting for the 4th Crusade occurred at the great tournament at Ecry, N France, Nov 1199…
* but even so, this probably happened more because of the English/ French polit situ after the death of Richard I (March 1199) than because of Innocent’s campaign of preaching.
* Indeed, despite popular belief, it’s unlikely that Innocent’s authorised preacher, Fulk of Neuilly, was even present at Ecry in Nov 1199.
* Count Louis of Blois & Count Thibaut of Champagne took the cross at Ecry…
* They were Richard loyalists who feared his yngr bro, John, now King John of England.
* Taking the Cross enabled them to skirt round the awkward possibility that they’d be required by John (their feudal liege lord in Blois & Champagne) to join him to fight King Philip of France.
* A political and personal “double bind” which ‘taking the Cross’ provided an “honourable” way out of.
* Their friend Count Baldwin of Flanders joined them.
* Notably, all three lords came from areas of strong crusading traditions – it ran in their families, which were major ‘players’ in NW European crusading “networks”.
* In a sense, therefore, all 3 were “born crusaders” – Papal sanction legitimised something they probably already felt bound to do, and which was also politically & personally expedient for at least 2 of them.
* Certainly, there’s no evidence of any personal affinity with/ specific sympathy for Innocent’s call, and none of the 3 regarded him as the overall director of the 4th Crusade.
* Pope Innocent was simply the legitimising Church authority of their actions: these lords’ subsequent behaviour reinforced the impression of “magnates” doing their own thing.
* Innocent failed, therefore, to generate sufficient momentum (political/ “national”, spiritual, or popular) to sustain a major crusade.
* The 4th Crusade was under-resourced and short of personnel from the start: it probably never had more than 15,000 participants, at most.
* There was no “national”/ Kingly ldrshp, and the few great lords (magnates) who were prepared to take the cross did so for their own reasons, which were probably not particularly congruent with Innocent’s desire to retake Jerusalem.

The Great Lords (“Magnates”)

Spring 1200: Thibaut of Champagne, Louis of Blois, & Baldwin of Flanders started working on their plans to go East, but did not consult with Pope Innocent III, and clearly had no trust in the Byzantines whom were regarded as unreliable, cunning, and duplicitous. The legacy of mistrust from earlier crusades meant that from the start Thibaut, Louis, & Baldwin were determined to avoid crossing Byzantine territory. More generally, the lords were secretive, keeping their cards close to their chests, and not even disclosing their full intentions to other crusaders. Strategically, their decisions made good sense, but for various reasons their plans were not shared widely, which ultimately compromised their credibility. Second, their decisions had significant implications – financial, and in terms of necessary associations, esp with the Italians.

1. They’d travel by sea –> fast/ avoided the Byzantines. But…v expensive, & necessitated a deal with the only Italian naval power available & willing to participate in the Crusade – Venice.
2. Initial objective = Egypt. Strategically vital – (a) source of food & other key resources; (b) centre of Muslim power in Near East. Made excellent sense to neutralise / take Egypt as a prelude to advancing on Jerusalem, which would then be isolated, weakened, and vulnerable.

However, the Pope, and the mass of other crusaders, were not informed of this plan. Possibly the Lords feared a fall-off in recruitment if Jerusalem was not upheld as the initial target. The second potential problem related to “ways & means” – did they have sufficient forces & resources to get the job done? This whole approach was foolhardy, & short-sighted, and did not augur well for the viability of the Crusade.

Venice

The Venetian Republic was not a democracy, but public opinion/ “popular will” was something of which its rulers had to be very mindful because the city’s wealth and power were based wholly on the business acumen and energy of its shipwrights, sailors, artisans, bankers and merchants. The government of the wealthy maritime city state, and its territories, was in the hands of an oligarchy of wealthy merchant “nobles” ,whose extravagant palaces lined the “Grand Canal” running thro’ central Venice. These nobles formed a “Great Council”(similar to the Imperial Roman Senate) from which they selected an executive “Council of Ten”, which then chose one of its number as the head of state, or “Doge”.

(NB “Doge”= simply Venetian dialect derivative of the Italian “Dux” or Duke – ie “great lord” or “ruler”)

(NB The Venetian “Arsenale”, estab. early C12th, was a well-protected complex of shipyards and armouries producing ships & weaponry on an “industrial scale”: a forerunner of the mass production of the so-called “Industrial Revolution”, it was a key element of Venetian maritime power. The prototype of all “arsenals” in the modern world, incl the Woolwich Arsenal in London. By far the most sophisticated manufacturing ‘base’ in early C13th Europe, and probably the World.)

By the start of the C13th the Venetian Republic was poised to become a seaborne trading empire. The Venetians were contesting territory along the Adriatic coast (Doges also styled themselves “Dukes of Dalmatia & Istria”), and particularly aspired to regain control of the Croatian port of Zara, which they’d only recently lost to the King of Hungary. The prospect of a Christian dominated Levant, and the possibility of Venetian control of Alexandria in Egypt (one of the greatest trading ports in the World) had enormous appeal to the rulers of Venice. (Additionally, altho’ it was never stated openly, any weakening of Byzantine influence in the Balkans/ Levant/ Near & Middle East would also be in Venice’s longer-term interests.)

In 1201 the Doge of Venice was the hugely experienced, clever and cunning, 90 year old Enrico Dandalo. Physically blind, but very perceptive and politically adept, Enrico Dandalo never missed a trick, and would do anything in his considerable power to protect and advance the interests of his beloved city state. He had an instinctive grasp of politics and business opportunities, and a “finger on the pulse” of Venice and its people. Respected by all; canny and immensely astute, he was a formidable man. This was the man with whom the Crusader Lords would have to cut a deal if they were to acquire the Venetian support needed to implement their plan to take Egypt. They were out of their depth.

March 1201 – 4th Crusade delegates (incl Geoffrey de Villehardouin, a knight whose memoirs are a key source re the 4th Crusade) were engaging in detailed negotiation/ planning with the Venetians, and esp the Doge Enrico Dandalo. The admin and logistical complexities of coordinating the departure of a crusader force from Venice were immense, and obviously it was vital that ‘the numbers’ were correct. The Crusaders miscalculated hugely, and thus tied themselves into financial and other obligations to Venice which ultimately left them no choice but to do as their Italian allies wished.

Because the Crusader Lords had kept the Pope in the dark re their intentions, and because they had not liaised with other potential crusaders in Europe, their envoys only had authority to speak for them, and nothing agreed with Venice would be binding on other crusaders. The 4th Crusade delegates told the Venetians to expect a crusader force of over 33,000 men (incl at least 2,000 knights/ mounted men-at-arms, plus horses & equipment), and the Doge proceeded on that basis. The Lords, however, could barely generate a combined force of much more than a third of that number. In short, their working assumption was that the Pope, and the rest of Christendom, would simply fall into line with whatever they (secretly) agreed with Venice, and then , somehow, provide the extra 20,000+ men! This was recklessly incompetent.

Enrico Dandalo costed the whole endeavour at 85,000 marks (plus a 50% share of any ppty “acquired” by the expedition) – wholly in line with (a) scale of the commitment; (b) the precedent set by Philip of France & Genoese, 3rd Crusade; (c) requirements to offset loss of normal trade by Venice whilst the Crusade ran. (NB costs/ lost trade aside, in order to participate in the Crusade, about a third of Venice’s male population would be needed to crew the necessary fleet!)

The Doge convened a meeting of Venice’s leading citizens in St Mark’s Cathedral, and “sold” the deal to them:

1. Long-term economic gains if the Levant were to be “Christianised”.
2. Religious imperative to participate in the Crusade – duty of all Christians etc.
3. Broader strategic gains for the Venetian Republic, esp a foothold in major trading centres of Egypt.
4. ie Venice should commit treasure/ resources “up front” in order to acquire longer term benefits – commercial, strategic, and moral/ spiritual.
5. Enrico Dandalo enthused/ motivated the people of Venice in a way Pope Innocent III had failed to do with many people in NW Europe!

The Pope was then presented with the plan/ treaty jointly made by the Crusader Lords & Venice, which was news to him! Innocent III was not very happy (not least because he’d lost control of the Crusade), but had little option other than to accept it.

Summer, 1202: Crusaders started arriving in Venice, but problems were soon evident…

1. Far fewer than promised/ expected – 13,000 max!
2. Many Crusaders, unaware of the Egyptian plan, had gone directly to Acre.
3. Count Thibaut of Champagne died May 1201, meaning many of his “bannermen” (lesser lords, knights), plus their soldiers, did not turn up, & Crusade was deprived of its obvious military commander.
4. -> Other Lords invited the v experienced Italian Count Boniface of Montferrat to take over military command of the Crusade, which he did, but…
5. Boniface (altho’ from a wealthy & strong “crusading family”) was Italian, & much older than the French Lords, and therefore relations b/ween the ldrs were awkward & confused.
6. Boniface unable to muster anything like as many troops as Thibaut could have done.
7. Not only were numbers low, but also they were v short of cash – Innocent’s clerical tax simply had not generated enough capital, and the Pope was not now inclined to sub a deal made behind his back by the French Lords!
8. By August 1202 the Crusade was in big trouble – stuck outside Venice (on an island), & unable to pay for the Venetian fleet readied to take them to Egypt.
9. Dandalo faced a crisis – he was now potentially the Doge who’d lost Venice a year’s trade for nothing. Lords faced humiliation if they fled home…even if they’d been able to leave!
10. Dandalo threatened to cut supplies of food & water to Crusaders unless they honoured their debt. Deadlock.

Sept 1202: Dandalo proposed a way forward…

* Venice wld postpone the debt payment if the Crusaders helped them to retake Zara from the K of Hungary.
* All cld then proceed to Egypt as orig agreed…
* Dandalo wld’ve regained a valuable strategic asset for Venice, and…
* Venice might also acquire control of Alexandria in Egypt.
* Personally, Dandalo also wanted to participate in a Crusade (as his father & grandfather had done, 1122) for the spiritual reward of ensuring salvation of his immortal soul.
* Nice synergy of commercial/ strategic-political/ personal-spiritual objectives.
* As a sign of good faith/ commitment, Dandalo formally “took the Cross” himself -> thousands of Venetians followed his example.
* The crafty old Doge had managed to save his own reputation/ credibility whilst manipulating the Crusade into fighting for Venice’s interests!
* The only problem was that Zara was a Christian city, and the K of Hungary was himself an avowed “crusader”.
* The 4th Crusade was now aiming to attack fellow Christians whose ruler was, in principle, “one of their own”!
* Dandalo argued, however, that Zara was Venetian by right, and whilst the K of Hungary may have “taken the Cross” a year previously, he’d shown no sign of acting on his vow…
* He was, Dandalo implied, a de facto traitor to the cause to which he, the Doge, and Venice were so clearly committed!
* A carefully stage managed/ highly emotive ceremony in St Mark’s Cathedral saw formal commitment of Venice & its people to the Crusade, and the Western Lords (who had no real viable alternative) accepted this new plan, but did not inform most ord crusaders where they were now heading!
* Oct 1202: Crusader fleet left Venice – a spectacular sight…
* On Dandalo’s orders, the Papal Legate was ‘left behind’ (whoops!), and so Pope Innocent’s furious order forbidding an assault on Zara never reached the Crusade before the attack was launched.
* Dandalo had outmanoeuvred everyone, not least the Pope in Rome, who was now totally “out of the loop” of command & control of the Crusade.
* When the Crusade arrived at Zara, Nov 1202, many refused to participate in an attack on fellow Christians, but the city still fell easily to a reduced Crusader/ Venetian force.
* Pope Innocent was outraged, and excommunicated the Crusaders…
* French rapidly repented, and swore sacred oaths never again to assault Christian territories (unless specifically commanded so to do by Rome), but the Venetians argued they’d done no wrong, but had merely asserted their rights, and ignored the Pope, declining to take the oath.
* By late Dec 1202, however, the Crusade had again stalled – camped at Zara, bitterly divided, lacking personnel, money, resources. Momentum lost…at which point, Prince Alexios entered the frame.

Prince Alexios

* Exiled son of recently deposed (1195) Byzantine Emperor, Isaac II.
* Alexios had an ambitious proposal for the Crusade:
* In return for their help to restore his Father, the Byzantines would throw their weight behind the Crusade.
* Alexios’ message promised:

1. Byzantine Empire would accept authority of the Pope, ending the great schism b/ween Western & Eastern Churches!
2. 200,000 silver marks (vast sum) + 10,000 elite troops!

* This really was too good to be true, but it was very tempting!
* Doge loved the idea – not least because it held out possibility of Venice gaining huge trading privileges with Constantinople whilst simultaneously weakening Byzantine power.
* “Christendom” (West & East) wld be properly reunited under Papal ldrshp, which was v attractive to Innocent III, who nevertheless remained cautious.
* Debts to Venice wld be paid in full, & the Crusade revitalised as a truly formidable force.
* But was it feasible/ realistic? What might other Byzantines think of this, even if the plan succeeded & Isaac was restored?
* Again, the whole scheme was predicated on a raft of assumptions, many of which were, at best, naively optimistic, if not downright recklessly stupid.
* Possibly, a combination of desperation, wishful thinking, religious zeal, and overconfidence (plus maybe “group think”) prompted the Crusade’s ldrs to act as they did.
* Prince Alexios stressed that it was a “Christian duty” to restore a wrongfully deposed/ cruelly treated Emperor (conveniently overlooking that Isaac had taken the throne in a murderous coup d’etat, 1185!), and assured everyone that most Byzantines supported his family’s cause, so little serious fighting would be needed.
* A deal was done, but many Crusaders felt this was a breach of their recent oath not to attack fellow Christians, and consequently many deserted the expedition (Spring 1203) to make their own way to the Holy Land – where they managed to do nothing.
* Pope Innocent’s letter of June, 1203 was equivocal, except ordering Crusaders not to interfere directly with Byzantine affairs, but it did not reach them in time to make a difference.
* The Crusaders reached Constantinople in June 1203 – Prince Alexios had now joined them in person.
* Immediately obvious that most Byzantines thought him irrelevant, and that Alexios III was not only going to resist, but was rallying forces behind the mighty walls of Constantinople to fight off this barbarian aggression.

The Rise & Fall of Alexios, and the Sack of Constantinople

* Alexios III was, however, an inept general, and his forces relatively weak/ inexperienced, and by early July the Crusaders had estab’d a base of military operations outside Constantinople.
* A fortnight of attacks (one personally led by Dandalo!) wore down Byzantine resolve ->
* 17th July, 1203: Alexios III fled, and demoralised courtiers released Isaac II & requested that he rule jointly with his son, Alexios, now proclaimed Emperor Alexios IV.
* Big cheers/ hugs all round, but the Crusaders now wanted the rewards promised.
* Isaac II & Orthodox Church ldrs would not honour the terms made by Prince Alexios, esp not submission to Rome!
* Alexios IV tried to buy-off the Crusaders by the expedient of melting down silver & gold church treasures to make coinage to pay them, but this alienated both the Church & people.
* Old enmities/ antagonisms b/ween Westerners & Byzantines started to flare up, culminating in violence & fires that killed many and damaged Constantinople.
* Byzantines regarded Crusaders/ Westerners as crude barbarians who’d invaded Anatolia (Bohemund, 1107), attacked Corfu (Venetians in 1122), captured Corfu (Roger of Sicily, 2nd Crusade), & taken Cyprus (Richard I, 3rd Crusade)…
* From their perspective brutish Westerners simply wanted to smash & grab Byzantine land.
* Yes, they traded with them, but did not trust/ like them – eg anti-western riots in Constantinople, 1171 & 1182.
* By associating with/ pandering to such brutes, Alexios IV had undermined his own credibility in the eyes of many of his subjects.
* Alexios found himself in a brutal double-bind, and in Nov 1203 halted payments to the Crusaders to placate his fellow Byzantines.
* This resulted in a furious row, during which Alexios IV personally insulted the Doge, who in turn responded that he’d destroy the young ‘whippersnapper’, or words to that effect!
* Jan 1204: a Byzantine noble, Alexios Doukas (ldr of the anti-western faction at court), aka “Mourtzouphlos”, launched a coup d’etat, seized the throne, and murdered Alexios IV & Isaac II!
* Emperor Alexios V (as Doukas was now styled) refused to supply food to the Crusaders.
* Instead of evacuating/ going home, as Alexios V clearly hoped they would, the Crusaders concluded that their only option now was to take over Constantinople, and force the Byzantines to honour the terms made.
* April 1204: Crusaders launched all out amphibious assault on Constantinople, and successfully stormed the city->
* Alexios V fled/ courtiers surrendered the city…
* Despite having sworn oaths to respect/ protect the population, what followed was a 3 day orgy of murder, rape and pillage.
* Even Crusader churchmen joined in the plundering, with priests and abbots seen pilfering precious relics, icons, and texts.
* The Hagia Sofia, the greatest church in Christendom, was trashed, and prostitutes danced and plied their trade on the altar!
* To this day, the Venetian Cathedral San Marco (St Mark’s) & Treasury are full of artefacts plundered from Constantinople, 1204…
* The 4 famous bronze horses above its main entrance are copies of the originals plundered from Constantinople.

“Romania”

* Baldwin of Flanders was crowned ruler of the new “Latin Empire of Constantinople”, 16th May 1204.
* This comprised Byzantine lands in Europe, now called “Romania” – not to be confused with the modern state of Romania.
* Venetians took control of Corfu & Crete, thus enabling them to dominate all trade flowing thro’ Constantinople.
* Initially, Pope Innocent III was pleased by this assertion of Western/ Papal control over much of the Byzantine Empire…
* But this soon turned to fury/ shame as he learnt of what had happened in Constantinople.
* Doge Enrico Dandalo (still excommunicated) remained in Constantinople, where he died, June 1205.
* The 4th Crusade was officially ended, 1205.
* Some Crusaders remained in Romania to defend it against rebellious Greek inhabitants, and pagan tribes threatening its borders – a new “Crusader State” to defend!
* [NB Christian rulers of what would become modern Romania (eg Vlad III, “Tepes”, ‘The Impaler’, of House Draculesti, lived 1428-1477 approx) were still doing this v Transylvanian Saxons, & Ottoman Turks in C15th.]
* Most Crusaders, however, eventually slunk home, often taking their ill-gotten gains plundered from Constantinople with them.
* The 4th Crusade never fought a single Muslim, and never got near Jerusalem.
* Main legacy = lasting bitterness, enmity, mistrust b/ween Eastern & Western branches of Christianity.

(CRH, 2018)