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Author(s): John L. Teall

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THE BARBARIANS IN JUSTINIAN'S ARMIES

By JOHN L. TEALL

PRECISELY what peoples fought in the expeditionary armies under Justinian and won the victories associated with the names of the incredibly brilliant team of generals that served him: Belisarius, Germanus, Narses, Mundus, and the rest? A simple question, but to it neither the general surveys nor the more specialized monographs have provided an answer beyond challenge. Not many years ago Louis Bréhier revived a point of view that Charles Diehl had popularized in his *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine* and Ernst Stein had adopted into the work of his youth on the origin of the themes. The armies of Justinian, according to Bréhier and his forerunners, "... ont ... un caractère international et toutes les races de barbares y sont représentées." In 1912 Jean Maspero was the first to dissent with effect from a generally received doctrine when he suggested that the East Roman armies of the sixth century were by no means barbarian but national, native, or Roman in composition. Conclusions derived from those of Maspero may be found in Grosse's standard survey of late Roman military institutions and, not unexpectedly, in the current writings of those who reject, root and branch, Stein's explanation of the origin of the themes. Recent studies seeking to account for the survival of the imperial structure in the East have emphasized the "national" character of its armies, contrasting them with the "barbarized" hordes upon which desperate Roman emperors in the West had to depend in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. The armies of Belisarius and Narses were "predominantly Roman, mainly raised by voluntary enlistment from the sturdy mountaineers of the Balkans and Eastern Asia Minor"; so A. H. M. Jones. To summarize briefly the point at issue between the two schools: were the imperial armies of Justinian native-born in composition or were they formed from peoples who were not born subjects of the emperor and were, in that sense alone, "barbarians"?¹

¹ Quotations from L. Bréhier, *Les institutions de l'empire byzantin* (Paris, 1949), p. 337, and A. H. M. Jones, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," *History*, XL (1955), 223. See also Ch. Diehl *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine*, 2 vols. (New York, reprinted s.d.), I, 146; E. Stein, *Studien zur Geschichte des byzantinischen Reiches* (Stuttgart, 1919), p. 123: "Niemand leugnet dass noch unter Justinien in den Expeditionsheeren das barbarische (föderierte) Element dominiert..."; Jean Maspero, "Στρατιῶται" dans l'armée byzantine au VI^e siècle," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XXI (1912), 97-104, esp. 104, n. 4, and *id.*, *Organisation militaire dans l'Égypte byzantine* (Paris, 1912), esp. p. 50, n. 1: "à partir du VI^e on ne peut citer aucun texte établissant la présence régulière et habituelle de barbares dans les corps de stratotai"; R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung* (Berlin, 1920), pp. 276 ff., 279: "Diese Ansicht [eg., Stein's] ist unrichtig, wenn wir die Angehörigen der Armee zählen, denn Römer bildeten die Mehrzahl der Truppen." E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, I (Paris, 1959), 237: "... la grande majorité de l'armée ... se compose aux V^e et VI^e siècles de sujets autochtones de l'empereur" and 238: "jusqu'au début du VII^e siècle ce sont ces Barbares qui joueront le rôle le plus important dans les grandes guerres. . . ." Quotations from J. Karayannopoulos, *Die Entstehung der byzantinischen Themenordnung* (Munich, 1959), below, n. 70; R. Remondon, "Soldats de Byzance d'après un papyrus trouvé à Edfou," in *Faculté de Lettres de l'Université de Paris, Recherches de papyrologie: Recherches*, I (Paris, 1961),

The historiography of the problem, essentially a question of ethnic composition, has been summarized in detail to demonstrate that it impinges upon issues broader than itself. Not all of these implications can be discussed here, but it is well to bear them in mind, for, otherwise, debates about ethnic composition can degenerate into sterile haggling over questions poorly posed in the first place. The primary implication of the present problem is simply this. The composition and size of the army together constitute the only long-term index, however unsatisfactory it may be, of demographic trends in the sixth century. Only if that index has been accurately traced is it possible to determine the relation between such trends and one of the century's traumas: the Great Plague of 541-543. A second implication can be discussed without straining the limits of the present study. If the army became in fact a congeries of peoples, how could its commanders maintain imperial loyalties, the belief that all must defend a common, imperial Roman, frontier even though it was divorced from direct connections with immediate folk and territory? This was an old problem; circumstances were to bequeath it in different formulations to Justinian's successors and, for that matter, to their Carolingian and Abbasid contemporaries as well. How well did Justinian's contemporaries solve it?

To return from the implications to the fundamental debate between the two schools of thought on ethnic composition: both are correct, but only if their conclusions are confined to specific places or specific phases of Justinian's wars. Unfortunately, preceding studies have failed to limit their findings in such a fashion. The generalizations summarized above, while depending in most instances upon evidence drawn from one province or from one year's fighting, have been applied indifferently to all the operations conducted between Justinian's accession and his death. This, without doubt, explains the conflicting statements noted above as well as the failure to recognize a transformation that becomes manifest once the wars are studied chronologically and synchronously rather than—as is the usual practice—compartmentally by frontiers.²

41-93, who corrects Maspero on a number of points and notes (p. 46) that barbarian *foederati* were in the majority in the expeditionary forces, using as evidence the 4:9 proportion of *numeri militum ex catalogis* to the *numeri* of the *foederati* on the Vandal expedition of 533; Karayannopulos, *op. cit.*, p. 40, uses an enumeration of the officers on the same expedition to support his argument that "der Mannschaftsbedarf des frühbyzantinischen Heeres aus der einheimischen Bevölkerung gedeckt wurde." P. Charanis, "The Armenians in the Byzantine Empire," *Byzantinoslavica*, xxii (1961), 200, and "Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), 31, accents the role of the barbarian. All in all, it is difficult to agree with Karayannopulos, *loc. cit.*, when he states that to believe that the army was predominantly barbarian is "eine folgenschwere Fehler, um so mehr, als die Sprache der Quellen keinen Zweifel darüber lässt, wo die Wahrheit liegt."

² The compartmental approach in Diehl, *Justinien*, J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (London, 1923); if Ernst Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, II (Paris and Brussels, 1949), departs somewhat from it, the magnificent work of B. Rubin, *Das Zeitalter Justinians*, I (Berlin, 1960) in progress, seems to be returning to it. Why the compartmental approach should be so prevalent is a fascinating historiographical problem which has to be explained, I think, by something more than the precedent of Procopius. It has led to one unfortunate result: a failure to appreciate the impact of war on East Roman society and institutions beyond the most superficial, and not entirely correct, aspect of "financial exhaustion."

Between 527 and the campaigns of 554, primarily native-born or Roman armies became to a large degree "barbarian." This the following study will seek to demonstrate by examining the two major phases of Justinian's wars: the period of promise and success between 527 and about 540; another of initial crisis and subsequent recovery extending from about 540 to 554. Each in turn may be divided into two sub-periods. Within the first, the expedition to Africa of 533 constitutes an obvious dividing point, while the year 549 marks a distinct upturn in imperial fortunes during the latter. Given the chronological framework it will be easier to identify and evaluate the opportunities and necessities responsible for the transformation: on the one hand, increased supply of barbarian recruits owing largely to expansionist wars; on the other, a desperate need for manpower stemming in part from simultaneous demand on several fronts, in part from short-term effects of the Great Plague.

The reader hardly needs to be warned that the chronological approach has its own disadvantages. In the pages that follow he will necessarily find more drum and trumpet narrative, more record of the comings and goings of armies, than it is either fashionable or easy to compose in an age of analytical history writing. In the absence of statistical documents there is, unfortunately, no other way of eliminating old misconceptions or of presenting the evidence for demographic trends during a period when two generations of warfare profoundly altered the armies and the society that engaged in it.

The terms the sources force us to use present their own problems. The word "barbarian" for example, was freighted with complexities and meant many things to men of the sixth century. Here, lest confusion be compounded, it will be used as the studies enumerated above have used it, and it will mean, quite simply, men who were not born subjects of the East Roman emperor. Their counterparts, individuals born subjects of the emperor, called themselves what we shall call them: Romans.³

Corresponding to this distinction in theory — although less in fact as the wars progressed — were the components of the expeditionary army or the mobile field forces, the *comitatenses* with which we are chiefly concerned. To the Romans enrolled therein by voluntary agreement, by compulsion, or by inheritance, Procopius and the legal sources as well apply the terms *stratiotai* or *catalogoi*. Of the three methods of recruitment, only the first has left any clear trace in the sources; thus the *stratiotai* may be considered in theory native-born Roman volunteers. In addition to the *stratiotai*, there were two other components within the expeditionary armies: (1) *foederati* of mixed Roman and barbarian composition enrolled by virtue of individual agreement; (2) allies or *symmachoi* who fought as ethnic units under their own leaders on the strength of compacts with the Roman emperors. So much Maspero established many years ago; unfortunately his conclusions have become part of the general stock of information only when shorn of the doubts he himself expressed as he sought to explain the practical distinction between *stratiotai* and *foederati*. It is indeed difficult to find distinguishing criteria,

³ I use it in this fashion unwillingly and only to avoid further confusion; see K. Lechner, "Byzanz und die Barbaren," *Saeculum* vi (1955), 292-306, for some of the nuances.

however tenaciously imperial constitutions maintain the separate terms throughout the period.⁴ Along with the others, that of ethnic difference seems to have grown dull with time. "Formerly barbarians alone were enrolled in the *foederati*," writes Procopius at the middle of the century. "But now there is nothing to hinder anybody (*ἅπανσι*) from taking on this name."⁵ Failure to give full weight to this observation, and to the instances of barbarians enrolled among the *stratiotai*, invalidates those previous estimates of the proportion of barbarian to Roman based upon the assumption that all *foederati* were the former, all *stratiotai* the latter.⁶ In the following survey, no such assumption is made.

Since the ethnic composition cannot be considered apart from the size of the armies, it is essential to note the reliability of the statistics to be found in the major source, Procopius. Recent investigations suggest that his sins in this respect are those of omission rather than those of commission.⁷ He likes to omit figures for the enemy when the Romans met defeat, and in the first books on the Gothic Wars he tries to impart an exaggerated notion of the size of the enemy Belisarius faced. Yet, when he gives specific figures for the Romans, or "betrays himself" by giving sensible ones for the Goths, they prove to be consistent among themselves even though widely dispersed through several passages.⁸ No one could have maintained so neat a fabrication over so extended a narrative. On the whole, Procopius provides tolerably reliable figures of common sense proportions in the light of which wilder guesses of less accurate historians assume their proper dimensions. Fortunately, he is available as a guide throughout most of the wars to be reviewed, wars that began shortly before Justinian's accession to full power in 527.

During the period extending from that year to 533 Justinian found a supply of manpower, largely native Roman in origin, that enabled him to engage simultaneously, and generally successfully, a variety of enemies along widely dispersed frontiers. Among these frontiers tradition dictated that the chroniclers award pride of place in the narrative to the conflict with Persia. "Conflicts" might be a better term, for the frontier burst into activity about 526 all along a line stretching from Lazica on the Black Sea south to the desert west of Palestina III, in the latter instance by virtue of the mediation of Arab tribes and client chiefs allied with East Rome and Persia. Already before the death of Justin I, the *magister militum vacans*, Peter, led Huns on two expeditions to Lazica. Concurrently, the

⁴ Maspero, *Organisation militaire*, pp. 43 ff., esp. 45; Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II, 77; Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 85-89. Maspero also stressed that the *stratiotai* would be stationed at fixed points within specific provinces while the *foederati* constituted a mobile field force, sent where the occasion demanded. For many of the *stratiotai*, this distinction, too, would break down as the wars of the reconquest called for their services everywhere. For example, note the composition of the African army of 533, see below, n. 32. Maspero, "*Stratiotai*," pp. 108-109.

⁵ Procopius, *Bellum Vandalicum*, I xi 3; references to Procopius hereafter, *B(ellum) V(andalicum)*, *B(ellum) P(ersicum)*, *B(ellum) G(othicum)*; *Anecdota*.

⁶ As in Stein, *Studien*, p. 12; see below, n. 32.

⁷ G. Downey, "The Persian Campaign in Syria in AD 540," *SPECULUM*, XXVIII (1953), 340-348, esp. 343 f.; K. Hannestad, "Les forces militaires d'après la guerre gothique de Procope," *Classica et Medievalia*, XXI (1961), 136-183; in general, B. Rubin, *Prokopios v. Kaisereia* (Stuttgart, 1954).

⁸ Hannestad, "Forces militaires," *passim*, esp. p. 146.

able Armenian general Sittas bested the Tzani located on the Colchis frontier, introducing them by means of Christianity and military service with Rome to the benefits of civilization and thus making them, if not quite Roman, not quite barbarian either. Then, in association with the young Belisarius, the same Sittas undertook in 527 two *razzias* into Persarmenia, the first successfully, the second with unhappy results. In the same year, too, the Thracian Libelarius, *magister militum per Orientem*, launched an unsuccessful attack upon the Persian stronghold of Nisibis.⁹ The accession of Justinian in August 527 brought only a momentary pause in an outburst of warfare that ended twenty years of peace in the East, for the year 528 witnessed a major engagement near Dara ending in a Roman defeat, an expedition into Hira in which the *limitanei* of Palestine participated, further Roman operations in Lazica, and — finally — a general strengthening of the eastern frontier and the formation of a large army under the command of Pompeius.¹⁰ Nor did the tempo of operations subside in the succeeding three years; to the raid of the Lakhmid al-Mundhir upon Syria I in 529 the Romans responded with a counteroffensive undertaken by Phrygian troops.¹¹ In 530 Belisarius won a major victory at Dara with an army of 25,000 men, considered by Procopius to be of respectable size, while Sittas continued upon a brilliant career marked by victories at Theodosiopolis and near Satala, and by the submission of the fortresses of Pharangium and Bolum. The surrender of the latter fortress brought East Rome an additional reward in the person of the Armenian general Isaac Kamsarakan, who joined his elder brothers Narses and Aratius and the eunuch Narses, also Persarmenian by birth, in the imperial service.¹² Associated with Sittas in his campaigns had been the general Dorotheus; elevating himself to the post of *magister militum per Armeniam* when Sittas assumed general command of the forces in the East, Dorotheus and the Thracian-born Ostrogoth, Bessas, helped during 531, by a series of victories in Arzanene, to avenge the defeat suffered by Belisarius and the sixteen or twenty thousand men under his command at Callinicus.¹³ In that same year, with the death of Khawad and the accession of Chosroes in Persia, envoys undertook the negotiations that would issue, in 532, in the "Endless Peace." The results of six years of war were by no

⁹ General survey with bibliography in Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 245–297; Peter's expedition: *BP* I xii 9.14; Sittas and the Tzani: *BP* I xv 24, cf. Nov. J. I pr. (ed. Schoell-Kroll, p. 1); raids of Sittas and Belisarius and the expeditions of Libelarius and Timostratus: *BP* I xii 20–23, Malalas, *Chronographia*, p. 423 (Bonn), Zacharias Rhetor ix 1. 6 (ed. F. J. Hamilton and E. W. Brooks, *The Syriac Chronicle . . . of Zachariah of Mitylene* (London, 1899), pp. 222, 227–229).

¹⁰ Dara: *BP* I xiii 2–8, Zacharias Rhetor ix 2 (Hamilton and Brooks, pp. 222–224), Malalas, p. 441 f. (Bonn); Hira: Malalas, p. 434; reconstruction of the frontier in the East: Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 289 f., Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 265 f.; Pompeius' army: Malalas, p. 442 (Bonn).

¹¹ Malalas, p. 445 (Bonn).

¹² Dara: *BP* I xiii 12–xvi 51, Malalas, pp. 452 f. (Bonn); Theophanes, *Chronographia*, A.M. 6022 (ed. C. de Boor, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1883–1885), I, 180), Zacharias Rhetor ix 3 (Hamilton and Brooks, pp. 224 f.); Sittas in Persarmenia: *BP* I xv 1–18, 26–33, Malalas, p. 465 (Bonn).

¹³ Callinicus: *BP* I xvii 29–40, xviii 1–50, Malalas, pp. 461–465 (Bonn), Zacharias Rhetor ix 4 (Hamilton and Brooks, pp. 225 f.); I. Kavar, "Procopius and Arethas," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, L (1957), 39–67; campaigns of Dorotheus: *BP* I xxi 4–16, 23–28, Malalas, pp. 468–470, 472 (Bonn).

means unsatisfactory. East Rome had won sufficient victories to negotiate from a position of strength when the time of reckoning arrived.

The dimensions of the achievement become more impressive when they are placed within the context of operations simultaneously conducted elsewhere along the East Roman frontier. During the critical year 528, an expeditionary army in which Goths participated sailed under John, the son of Rufinus, against the Huns of the Crimea, and to aid it in attaining its objective, Justinian dispatched another force by land from Odessa under the command of Baduarius.¹⁴ Hardly had the latter returned from his successful operations when an incursion of Bulgars forced him to join with Justin, *dux* of Moesia Secunda, to protect the Balkan frontier. In this theatre his efforts were far less successful and, in the event, defeat was the lot of the succeeding commanders, Constantiolus and the Bulgar Ascum.¹⁵ After 529, matters improved in the Balkans. A series of generals endowed with great military talents and, in two instances, fortunate in their personal connections with the barbarian peoples opposing them, brought a degree of security to the sorely tried provinces. After defecting from his fellow Gepids in 529, the prince Mundus protected Illyricum by combined military and diplomatic skill until his death in 536. In Thrace, the Slav Chilbudius achieved similar success against Bulgars, Sclaveni, and Antae by expeditions across the Danube. He even achieved one of the notes of the truly great man: after his death an imposter gave himself out to be the true Chilbudius. Finally, the Armenian Sittas added to laurels won elsewhere by successes in Moesia Secunda.¹⁶

Simply from a rehearsal of the names cited above, it is obvious that Justinian's state and society no longer preserved the prejudices of the fifth century against barbarians in positions of high command.¹⁷ Amidst the "first generation" of military talent that won the victories of Justinian's early years, four names are pre-eminent: Sittas, Mundus, Chilbudius, and Belisarius. Of these four, only one was a Roman in the sense defined above. During the wars of the Reconquest after 533 a "second generation" was to succeed them; this generation of commanders, too, was to be of mixed Roman and barbarian composition, with Armenians playing a conspicuous role therein. The expansion of the frontiers, the chance to make one's fortune in successful warfare, obviously enticed a host of individuals brilliant in their talents and diverse in their origins to seek service with the emperor. The Armenian, the Slav, the Gepid, the Bulgar — all found a warm welcome at Constantinople.

Justinian was no less hospitable to groups than he was to individuals. Anastasius had awarded lands to the Heruli as early as 512; in the first years of his reign Justinian seems to have enlarged and improved the gift with better lands near

¹⁴ Malalas, pp. 432 f. (Bonn); Theophanes, A.M. 6020 (176 de Boor).

¹⁵ Malalas, pp. 437 f. (Bonn); Theophanes, A.M. 6031 (217 f. de Boor).

¹⁶ Mundus: Malalas, pp. 450 f. (Bonn); Theophanes, A.M. 6032 (218 f. de Boor); Chilbudius: *BG* III xiv 1-6; Sittas: Marcellinus comes *s.a.* 535, 3 (ed. Th. Mommsen, *M.G.H., Auctt. Antt.*, XI [1894], 104). Bulgars captured by Mundus were placed in the regular troops in Lazica and Armenia (219 de Boor).

¹⁷ E. Demougeot, *De l'unité à la division de l'empire romain* (Paris, 1951), pp. 239 ff., 515 ff.

Singidunum; certainly he did so later and certainly he stood sponsor in 528 when a Herul king became Christian. Some of the Heruli, then, enjoyed the status of *symmachoi* or allies, while others became *foederati*. If he had similar designs upon some of the Huns of the Crimea when he sponsored in like fashion the baptism of their king Grod (528), then his plans collapsed as Grod's subjects revolted, refusing to follow the leader. With a certain Queen Boa of the Sabiri, Justinian had better luck, and the troops following her against two other clans of the Sabiri are called *symmachoi* in one source. Like the Arab tribes under the leadership of Harith, these peoples seemed to have enjoyed the status of allies; others, including the Heruli, certain Huns, Slavic peoples, and many Tzani as well, were drawn more closely into the Roman military structure, becoming *foederati* or even — in the last-named instance — *catalogoi*. It should be noted in passing how wonderfully efficient baptism was as an initial step away from barbarism and towards *Romanitas*. For an emperor needing many men to fight many wars, it was a quicker device by far than education and the cultivation of the gentler or the civilized virtues, a process that seems ordinarily to have demanded a generation to complete.¹⁸

Yet pre-eminence in quality did not mean predominance in quantity. Most of those who gave orders, as well as those who followed them, were native-born Roman subjects. Sources for the period in question (526–532) mention the names of some twenty-eight identifiable generals and other officers of high standing who actively participated in field operations; of these, nineteen may be considered Roman — or even twenty, if the Thracian-born Ostrogoth, Bessas, be added to the number. In general, the larger the force, the higher the percentage of Romans. Thus the army placed under the command of Pompeius during the campaigning season of 529 consisted of Illyrians, Thracians, Scythians, and Isaurians. At Dara, Belisarius commanded 300 Heruli and possibly 1,200 Huns; there is no indication in the text of Procopius, generally careful in recording the presence of ethnic groups, that other distinct peoples were represented among the 25,000.¹⁹ At Callinicus, neither Malalas nor Procopius mentions peoples other than the 5,000 Arabs from a total of 16,000 or 20,000 men.²⁰

Thus, between 528 and 532, the Eastern Roman Empire met concurrent and serious threats on a variety of fronts by virtue of massive recruitment among its own people, supplementing their numbers with barbarian *foederati* and *symmachoi* in smaller quantity. In major expeditionary forces and on extensive raids as well, even the *limitanei* played their part. Justinian's need for manpower was far less

¹⁸ Heruli: Marcellinus comes *s. a.* 512, 11 (Mommsen 98), *BG* II xiv 28. 33; Baptism of Grepes or Gretes: Malalas, p. 427 (Bonn), Theophanes, A.M. 6020 (174 de Boor); Harith: *BP* I xvii 47 and the studies of Kavar, below, n. 46; the Tzani: see above, n. 9; Zacharias Rhetor IX 3 (Hamilton and Brooks, p. 224) mentions Sunica, the Hun, who had taken refuge with the Romans and had been baptized. Convenient lists of *symmachoi* in Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte*, pp. 292 ff., and A. Müller, "Das Heer Justinians," *Philologus*, LXXXI (1912), 111 f.; on the treatment of various peoples in the sixth century and later, see P. Charanis, "The Transfer of Population as a Policy in the Byzantine Empire," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, III (1961), 140 ff.

¹⁹ Above, n. 12 (esp. *BP* I xiii 19–23).

²⁰ *BP* I xviii 5; Malalas, pp. 461–464 (Bonn).

desperate than that of his successors forty years later. While he welcomed and even encouraged barbarians to seek service in the imperial armies, he approved the terms of the Endless Peace of 532 which permitted refugee Iberians to follow their own inclinations and return to their homes if they wished. About fifty years later Tiberius and Maurice were to make peace in a very different spirit, regarding the control of men as an objective sometimes more critical than the possession of forts or land.²¹

Freed by the Endless Peace from his commitments on the Persian frontier — or frontiers, Justinian turned to the reconquest of the West. At the outset, he hoped to win victories on the cheap, using in conjunction with diplomatic manoeuvre armies small in comparison with those that had taken the field in the East. ²² Thus Belisarius defeated the Vandals in Africa with only 16,000 men, and he undertook his "military promenade" through Sicily in 535 at the head of less than 10,000.²³

Thanks to a variety of pressures, these small initial investments proved unequal to the demands made of them. Aside from having to maintain at least a minimum force in the Balkans and Illyricum, Justinian had to garrison Africa with twelve or thirteen thousand while Belisarius pursued new conquests to the north.²⁴ When the African garrison proved disloyal and the Moors opponents difficult to crush, additional contingents had to be dispatched (536, 539) to the newly-won province even though the Vandal kingdom itself had dissolved with Belisarius' victories of 533.²⁵

In Italy, too, events failed to follow as planned. Under Witiges the Goths mounted a force superior in size to that of the Romans they opposed, if not by the margin Procopius implies. To supplement those he had collected by a general levy throughout his kingdom, Witiges obtained additional men by negotiation with his Frankish neighbors to the north. If the latter insisted that they must abide by the letter of a treaty with East Rome and refused to march to aid the Goths, they nonetheless permitted Burgundians subject to them to do so. At the

²¹ Notices of the "Endless Peace" which was agreed upon in September 532, and went into effect in the summer of 533: *BP* I xxii 16; Malalas, p. 477 (Bonn); Marcellinus comes, *s.a.* 533 (103 Mommsen); Zacharias Rhetor ix 7 (Hamilton and Brooks 230 f.). Its terms may be contrasted with the negotiations of 579: Menander, frg. 19 (ed. C. de Boor, *et al.*, *Excerpta historica*, 4 vols. (Berlin, 1903-1906), I, 1: *Excerpta de legationibus romanorum*, p. 217) and P. Goubert, *Byzance avant l'Islam*, I (Paris, 1951), 78.

²² Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II, 126 f.

²³ Expedition to Africa: *BV* I xi 2-21; later Procopius makes Gelimer comment on its small size, xxv 14. Expedition to Sicily: *BG* I v 2-6; since we do not know the exact number of Belisarius' retainers who accompanied it, its total size is a matter of speculation. Hannestad's estimate, "Forces militaires," pp. 139 f., of 9,000 seems as well-reasoned as any. In the course of his narrative, Procopius repeatedly stresses its small size: *BG* I xvii 2.5-6, xxiv 2.3.8, xxvi 19, xvii 11.14.

²⁴ Ch. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine* (Paris, 1896), p. 67, estimated that Solomon may have had 18,000 in the garrison, but this seems large. During the mutiny of 536, the rebels numbered 8,000 imperial soldiers and 1,000 Vandals: *BV* II xv 2-3. Later Germanus found that the rebels comprised two thirds of the force: *BV* II xvi 3. This would be congruent with the 2,000 *loyal* troops found in Carthage alone (II xv 11) for there were loyal troops in other cities, II xv 50.

²⁵ Reinforcements noted, but no figures given: *BV* II xvi 1, xix 1

same time, the Franks themselves remained quiet while Witiges withdrew portions of his garrison from the Cottian Alps and committed them to action against the Romans.²⁶ Considering the resources he had contrived to tap, Witiges may well have commanded 25,000 men when he sought, in 537-538, to capture Rome from Belisarius and his force of perhaps 5,000.²⁷

With so great a disproportion between his own troops and those of the enemy, it is not surprising that Belisarius appealed for help to Constantinople, discovering, in the event, that Justinian had already sent an army under Valerian to his aid.²⁸ Here is a striking characteristic of the first phase of the Gothic Wars: the readiness with which the emperor answered the appeals of his general for more men. In addition to the 1,600 under Valerian who had arrived so fortuitously in 537, 5,100 more came in the same year, while in 538 Narses appeared at the head of a massive army of 7,000.²⁹ During the final stages of the campaign 21,000 seems a just estimate of the total forces commanded by Belisarius in Italy against Witiges. Of this number, somewhat less than 10,000 had been committed to garrison duty in the conquered cities.³⁰ The achievement is all the more impressive in that the Italian operations were only one prong of the offensive against the Goths. Simultaneously with the early phases of Belisarius' campaign Mundus had advanced through Dalmatia, lacking (to his misfortune) an historian like Procopius to record his success.³¹

Throughout these seven years of warfare (533-540) the imperial armies probably remained predominantly Roman, although the availability of barbarians and the sharper need for their services may have increased their proportion in the ranks. Particularly striking is the contrast between the original forces dispatched to Africa or Italy and the reinforcements that subsequently arrived in both areas. In 533 Belisarius had sailed to Carthage with but 1,000 individuals clearly identified as barbarians: 400 Heruli and 600 *symmachoi*, for the most part Bulgars. Out of nineteen generals, only one (Afgan the Hun) was a barbarian.

²⁶ Negotiations discussed in Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II 179 and Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II 348. Burgundians came in 538/9: *BG* XII 38 f.; there were still some Goths in garrison in the Cottian Alps in 539/40 (II xxviii 29), but some had been present at the siege of Rome, *BG* I xix 12.

²⁷ Belisarius' garrison at Rome: *BG* I xxiv 2. Although Procopius makes Belisarius assert that 150,000 opposed him, this is clearly exaggerated. Hannestad's estimate, "Forces militaires," 155-164, esp. 162, of twenty to twenty-five thousand Goths participating in the siege is derived from the one set of circumstantial figures, *BG* II xi 1 ff. As these represent the disposition of the troops at the time of Witiges' surrender, they may be the only precise figures to which Procopius had access. The entire Gothic army may have comprised 30,000.

²⁸ Belisarius' letter: *BG* I xxiv 1-17; Valerian and Martinus had already been dispatched, were wintering in Greece, and were ordered by Justinian to move on with full speed as another army was prepared: xxiv 18; Valerian's arrival: xxvii 1.

²⁹ Of the 5,100 men 4,800 were actually sent from Constantinople. In addition, 500 were collected from Campanian garrisons: *BG* II v 1.2. The army under Narses: *BG* II xiii 16-18.

³⁰ Hannestad, "Forces militaires," 141 ff.; garrison duty: *BG* II xviii 8.9, cf. I viii 1, xiv 1 f., xv 2, xvii 1-6.

³¹ After the fall of Auximum in October or November 539, an army from Dalmatia came to Belisarius' aid: *BG* II xxviii 2. Mundus in Dalmatia: I v 2.11; reconquest of Salona by Constantianus: vii 26-37.

The native character of this army Procopius later stressed when he made Germanus remind the mutineers of 537 that the emperor "took you as you came from the fields with your wallets and one small frock apiece and brought you together in Byzantium."³² Participating in the invasion of Sicily were 4,000 *catalogoi* and *foederati*, 3,000 Isaurians listed separately after Procopius' usual practice, and 500 identified barbarians (200 Huns and 300 Berbers). Later reinforcements seem to have had quite different ethnic backgrounds, although there is no way of knowing how many *foederati* in the initial forces may have had barbarian origins. The 1,600 arriving with Valerian in 537 were Bulgars, Slavs, and Antae. If the other contingent dispatched in that year was exclusively Roman, Narses' army of 538 contained 2,000 Heruli compared to 5,000 regulars.

As successful wars brought new peoples into the East Roman armies, it became difficult if not impossible to maintain old distinctions between *stratiotai* (or *catalogoi*) and *foederati*. Vandals were enrolled ἐς καταλόγους ἰππικούς;³³ the Tzani, subjects now of the emperor were enrolled ἐς καταλόγους Ῥωμαῖκοις.³⁴ Concerning twenty-two who deserted while Rome was under siege, Procopius notes that they were βάρβαροι μὲν γένος, στρατιῶται δὲ Ῥωμαῖοι.³⁵ It is a telling phrase. The process of war had brought about profound changes in the nature of the army itself, changes that at least one of four crises or problems during the years 540–542 would further develop in a direction already visible.

³² *BV* II xvi 13. Stein, *Studien*, p. 123, used the evidence of the expedition to Carthage in 533 to demonstrate that the barbarian element "dominated," concluding that "das zahlenmässige Verhältnis der Numeri foederatorum zu den Numeri militum ex catalogis war das von 9:4." His conclusion is based upon the assumption that the *foederati* were exclusively barbarian in composition and upon an analysis of *BV* I xi 2. 5–9. In the latter passage, Procopius states that the army was made up of 10,000 foot soldiers, and 5,000 horsemen, chosen (συνειλεγμένους) from the *stratiotai* and the *foederati*. He then lists nine officers of the *foederati*, four of the cavalry (στρατιωτῶν δὲ ἰππέων), and six of the foot soldiers (πεζῶν). Now Stein reads this passage to mean that the 5,000 cavalry *only* were selected from both *foederati* and *stratiotai*; in the 10,000 foot soldiers no *foederati* and thus no barbarians were to be found. In other words, *συνειλεγμένους* should modify *ἰππέας* alone and not *στρατιωτῶν πεζοῦς* as well. If this is correct, then we may say that within the cavalry the proportion of barbarian to native is as 9:4 since there were nine *ἄρχοντες φουδεράτων* and only four *ἄρχοντες στρατιωτῶν ἰππέων*. Actually, the text is ambiguous, and it is interesting to note that Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II, 127, read it to mean that *foederati* were scattered throughout both arms, cavalry and infantry, thereby contradicting his earlier statement that the *foederati* consisted entirely of cavalry (II, 77). In the light of *BV* II xv 50, Stein is probably correct in his reading of *BV* I xi 2 since in the former instance Procopius seems to wish to distinguish *foederati*, regular cavalry (κατάλογος ἰππικός) and foot soldiers (πεζοί), the implication being that the first two elements were different kinds of mounted troops. Yet, Stein's fundamental assumption is incorrect. When Procopius states (xi 4) that the name federate could be assumed by "anyone" (ἄπασιν), the force of the word suggests quite literally "anyone": Roman or barbarian. Finally, even were Stein correct in establishing his 9:4 proportion of barbarian to regular in the cavalry, it is not correct to conclude from this (as does Remondon, "Soldats de Byzance," p. 46) that *foederati* comprised the greater part of the expeditionary armies; they may have "dominated" the cavalry arm, as Stein says they did, but there were still 10,000 foot soldiers present who were probably Romans. Quality has been confused with quantity.

³³ *BV* II xiv 17.

³⁴ *BG* I xv 25.

³⁵ *BG* I xvii 17, cf. v 3; *BG* II xxvi 3; Bulgars captured by Mundus were placed ἐν τοῖς νομερίοις ἀριθμοῖς in Lazica and Armenia; n. 16 above.

The first of the four was military in nature. War broke out on two fronts as the Endless Peace proved to have the life-span one would normally predict for any Endless Peace. In 540 Chosroes turned Justinian's deep commitments in the west to his own advantage as he launched an attack upon Antioch. As a result of his initiative, stimulated in part by an appeal from Witiges, Persian offensives and Roman counteroffensives sapped the energies of both powers between 540 and 544, heightening the need for manpower whether native or barbarian.³⁶

The second problem was personal. To contain the Persian attack in the east Justinian recalled Belisarius from Italy. But the great general arrived enjoying less credit with his master than his previous success might have warranted. In apparent contravention of Justinian's wishes, he had pressed on to capture Ravenna in 540, employing a stratagem easily open to misinterpretation which might well have aroused suspicion and jealousy. Although Belisarius did in fact assume command against the Persians as *magister militum per Orientem* and then returned once more to Italy in 544, there to remain until 549, never again did his performance as general quite match his earlier successes nor does he seem to have won back the emperor's, or perhaps the Empress Theodora's, full confidence. Procopius suggests, and more than one modern historian has followed him, that the indecision and procrastination of the military effort in the west during Belisarius' second period of command stemmed from Justinian's *failure* to support his general with adequate reinforcement and supply. May this "negligence" have been the expression of a latent hostility between the two men? The argument is not impressive but it is sufficiently widespread to demand notice here and refutation below. Unless it is refuted, it is impossible to speak of a manpower crisis as the real reason behind Justinian's seeming negligence.³⁷

A third crisis was both personal and administrative. In May 541 John the Cappadocian fell from power, and never again did Justinian retain one man in the praetorian prefect's office for so long a period of time. Few of his successors won any sort of reputation, whether for good or ill, and none had John's opportunity to apply consistent, forceful direction to the administrative processes that supported the military effort. John himself had made good use of his opportunities. Beginning in April 535, at precisely the point when it appeared that the conquest of Italy must come by force and not by diplomacy, a series of reforms (in which his hand is manifest) sought to provide honest and efficient provincial administration, thereby enlisting the sympathies of the subject and, hopefully, increasing the tax return. In the constitution inaugurating the reforms, official propaganda boasted of past military achievements and hinted at greater ones to come — the conquest of Italy was meant.

Knowing how much care we have exerted on your behalf, you who are our tributaries should in full, good conscience pay up the taxes you owe to the last penny . . . our sub-

³⁶ Witiges' letter; BG II xxii 9; Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 319-324

³⁷ Justinian's negligence is suggested in BG IV xxvi 7, and a number of the modern surveys have adopted it more or less explicitly: Diehl, *Justinien*, I, 164, 193 ff.; Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II, 226, 268; Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 596; Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 335: "eine gleichzeitige personalpolitische Absicht des Kaisers . . . die . . . von militärischem Unverständnis zeugte."

jects know that the military expenditures and the prosecution of the wars necessitate great care, and these things cannot be done without money . . . for . . . we have recovered all Africa and enslaved the Vandals and we hope to accept things yet greater than these from God and to accomplish them.

If the taxpayer will meet his obligations in the manner prescribed, a harmony of ruler and ruled will characterize the Roman world: *μία τις ἔσται καλή τε καὶ σύμφωνος τῶν τε ἀρχόντων καὶ τῶν ἀρχομένων ἀρμονία*. The victories noted above suggest that something resembling this harmony must have been achieved. Certainly John himself enjoyed in popular circles a reputation which his enemies, many among the bureaucracy, were quick to interpret in a pejorative fashion. Is it possible that with John's departure, administrative performance worsened to a point that threatened military enterprise? In his survey of Justinian's age, Ernst Stein divided the reign at about the year 540, taking as his point of demarcation John's fall from power and subsuming much of the later administrative history under the rubric "Abolition des reformes." As one among several crises, it at least deserves consideration.³⁸

Had John remained in office, even his talents might have found no solution for the problems stemming from the fourth crisis: the short-term effects of the Great Plague, the first recorded "pandemic" of bubonic plague. Rising in Egypt in 541 and passing thence through Palestine and Syria to Asia Minor, moving always inland from the ports, it struck Constantinople in the spring of 542 before gaining Italy and the West by 543. By 544 it was extinct, but only momentarily so. Like the pandemic of the fourteenth century in western Europe, it returned sporadically in the succeeding decades — in 555, 558, 560–561, 585, and 608 — until it seemed to Agathias, writing on the occasion of the outbreak of 558, that the world had not been free of it since the fifth [sic] year of Justinian's reign.³⁹ His comments fall far short of the human pathos in Evagrius' lament.

³⁸ Quotations from Nov. J. VIII, ch. x, sec. 2 (Schoell-Kroll, 74). The fall of John the Cappadocian and its significance in Stein, *Bas Empire*, II, 282 f., 480–483 and a list of the praetorian prefects, 781–786. John's popularity appears in John Lydus, *De magistratibus*, III, 62 (ed. Wünsch, Leipzig, 1903, pp. 152 f.). The reforms, which have been analyzed with full reference to sources and literature by Karayannopoulos, *Entstehung d. Themenordnung*, pp. 62 f., deserve investigation as examples of social and institutional change under the impact of war.

³⁹ Agathias, *Historiae*, v, 10 (Bonn ed., pp. 297 ff.) where ϵ should be corrected to $\iota\epsilon$. First-hand accounts are those of Procopius, *BP* II, xxii, xxiii, and John of Ephesus, fragments of his *Historia ecclesiastica*, pars II, published in W. J. Van Douwen and J. P. N. Land, *Commentarii de beatis orientalibus et Historiae ecclesiasticae fragmenta* (Amsterdam, 1889), pp. 227–240. Theophanes, A.M. 6034 (222 de Boor) lists the plague as an occurrence of October; it is noted also in Malalas, p. 481 (Bonn) and in Zacharias Rhetor x, 9 (Hamilton and Brooks, p. 313); for its incidence in the West: Marcellinus comes, *s.a.* 543, 2 (107 Mommsen); Victor Tonnenensis, *Chronica*, *s.a.* 542, 2 (ed. Th. Mommsen, *M.G.H., Auctt. Antt.*, XI [1894], 201); Corippus, *Iohannidos seu de bellis libycis* III, 343–389 (ed. J. Partsch, *M.G.H., Auctt. Antt.*, III, 2 (1879), 35 f., and p. xvi of Partsch's introduction); and the barest incidental notice in Jordanis, *Getica*, sec. 104 (ed. Th. Mommsen, *M.G.H., Auctt. Antt.*, VI, 1 [1882], 84 ff.); other references in Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 759, n. 1.

The plague of 541–543 awaits its historian; comparative materials may be gleaned from the studies cited in my "Grain Supply of the Byzantine Empire," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 13 (1959), 92, n. 11, to which should be added the excellent review article of Elisabeth Carpentier, "La peste noire: famines et épidémies au XIV^e siècle," *Annales, Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations*, XVII (1962), 1062–

Thus it happened in my own case . . . that at the commencement of this calamity I was seized with what are called buboes, while still a schoolboy, and lost by its recurrence at different times a number of my children, my wife, and many of my relatives, as well as of my household and rural slaves. . . . Thus, not quite two years before my writing this, now being in the fifty-eighth year of my age . . . I lost a daughter and her son. . . .⁴⁰

Evidence for its impact during the initial outbreak of 541–543 may be found in the first-hand accounts of Procopius and John of Ephesus and in imperial legislation as well. Investigations into the results of the plague of 1348 encourage a sceptical attitude towards estimates offered by the two historians: at the peak of the epidemic, the daily death rate in Constantinople is supposed to have reached 10,000 a day and eventually 300,000 are held to have perished, thus at least half the population of the capital in 540. Possibly the general mood of Procopius is better evidence than the specific data he offers. Why, for example, does he return repeatedly to the apocalyptic theme of depopulation even though he personalizes the issue, blaming Justinian and his grandiose plans for ensuing shortages of men and resources?⁴¹

With the official sources we are on firmer ground. A novel dated 1 March 542 notes in the preface that death, being everywhere, had afflicted all men. The edict in question sought to provide relief specifically for the *argentarii*. The latter complained that, having made loans without proper written records, it was impossible for them to recover their due from the heirs of deceased debtors.⁴² On 23 March 544 another novel appeared, outlining problems strongly suggestive of those England and France had to face after 1348.⁴³ It deserves extensive quotation:

We have learned that, after the punishment which transpired by the mercy of God, those who should have been bettered by it — those engaged in business, crafts, and agriculture, and the shipmasters as well — have abandoned themselves to avarice and ask prices and wages two or three times those of old custom. We have resolved therefore to forbid such avarice by this edict, that, never in the future shall any merchant, artisan, or craftsman of any sort of skill, trade, or agricultural labor have the affrontery to exact wages or prices greater than ancient custom.

1092; the same author's *orvieto: une ville devant la peste noire de 1348* (Paris, 1962); J. F. Gilliam, "The Plague under Marcus Aurelius," *American Journal of Philology*, LXXXII (1961), 225–251; R. Pollitzer, *Plague*, United Nations, World Health Organization Monograph 22 (Geneva, 1954); and M. I. Finley's brilliantly devastating review of A.E.R. Boak, *Manpower Shortage and the Fall of Rome* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1955), possibly the best starting-point for any study of ancient and medieval demography, in *Journal of Roman Studies*, XLVIII (1958), 157–164.

⁴⁰ Evagrius, *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV, 29 (Migne, *P.G.*, LXXXVI bis, cols. 2752 f.). The translation is that of Walford in the Bohn Library version of Theodoret and Evagrius, *History of the Church* (London, 1854).

⁴¹ E.g., *Anecdota*, xxiii, 20, or the speech of the Gepid orator: "And yet thy empire comprises such an overabundance both of cities and lands that thou art actually searching for men upon whom thou couldst confer some part of it for their habitation." *BG*, III, xxxiv, 36 (trans. Dewing, Loeb ed. of Procopius, IV 455); see the commentary in Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 191–197. Procopius is almost completely refuted by the archaeological evidence; see E. Kirsten, "Die byzantinische Stadt," *Berichte zum XI Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress* (Munich, 1958), V, 3.

⁴² Ed. VII pr. (763 f. Schoell-Kroll).

⁴³ Nov. J. 122 pr. and c. 1 (592 f. Schoell-Kroll).

When John of Ephesus complains that, after the plague, launderers raised their fees from a *folles* to a *denarius*, he seems to confirm a literal interpretation of the novel quoted above. Labor shortages occasioned by the plague called for imperial regulation of wages and prices.⁴⁴

Surprisingly, the official sources provide data of a personal nature, suggesting that Evagrius' own tragedy was far from unique. A novel of 544 was addressed to an apparent conflict of laws on the *ius deliberandi*. It tells of a child, Sergia, who died of the plague only sixteen days after her mother's decease from the same cause. The ensuing litigation between claimants to the inheritance raised issues of sufficient general interest to warrant an imperial ruling applicable to other cases.⁴⁵ Justinian's great Novel 118, reshaping the laws on intestate succession, could hardly have appeared at a more opportune time: 16 July 543.

Conspiracy, jealousy, warfare in East and West, administrative collapse, plague, high prices, shortages, and death: certainly the armies of 540-549 had sufficient reason to fight with less *éclat* than their predecessors. The difficulty lies in choosing among the crises listed, in deciding which was of great and which of little effect upon warfare characterized, as the following review will show, by missed opportunities or inadequate reinforcements, and conducted by armies increasingly barbarian in their composition.

The dismal record begins with four seasons of fighting (540-544) between Rome and Persia in the East. At the outset, there were too few men left in the East to meet the Persian threat. To oppose Chosroes at Antioch in 540 Justinian sent Germanus, 300 men, and vague promises of further assistance. Eventually 6,000 men from Phoenicia Libanensis arrived, but their courage failed in the test and it was left to the Antiochenes themselves to bear the brunt of the Persian attack.⁴⁶

The arrival of Belisarius to take command in the following year brought little improvement. How many men he commanded during the campaign of 541, Procopius does not say; the historian notes only that to a nucleus of reluctant provincials gathered from all quarters of Mesopotamia Belisarius added Goths brought as captives from the West, his own retainers, and (we may assume) probably those of the other generals returning with him from Italy. With the subsequent addition of Harith and his Saracens the result was a force so heterogeneous that its general had to control it as best he could by persuasion rather

⁴⁴ John of Ephesus in Van Douwen and Land, *Commentarii*, p. 235. The interpretation given is also that of Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 760 f., which seems convincing, but on some of the problems encountered by historians of the fourteenth-century plague in judging its economic effects see Carpentier, "Familles et épidémies," pp. 1084-1092, and E. Kelter, "Das deutsche Wirtschaftsleben des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts in Schatten der Pestepidemien," *Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik*, CLXV (1953), 161-208.

⁴⁵ Nov. J. 158; for problems on wills and testaments at Orvieto, see Carpentier, *Orvieto et la peste*, p. 130.

⁴⁶ *BP* II vi 9.16, viii 2. 17-19. Glanville Downey has analyzed the sources for this campaign in a number of studies which are now summed up in his *Ancient Antioch* (Princeton, N. J., 1963), pp. 247-253. Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 328, thinks the 6,000 troops from Phoenicia Libanensis were *limitanei*.

than command. Its accomplishments were slight: it did little more than capture a few Persians at Sisauranon before the summer heat forced the army to disperse. Since the same Persians are found on active service in the West during the early months of 542, the transport system apparently continued to work well despite the failure of military effort in other respects.⁴⁷

In his account of the succeeding year's campaign, that of 542, Procopius again fails to indicate the army's total strength although the industrious reader may tot up scattered figures to arrive at a minimum sum of 7,000. In many ways the army of 542 resembles its predecessor of 541: it was brought together with difficulty and it included peoples of diverse origins — in this instance, Thracians, Illyrians, Goths, Heruli, Vandals, and Berbers. Before it Chosroes withdrew; but most historians have felt that Procopius was less than candid in attributing the Persian retreat to the universal awe supposedly inspired by Belisarius and his unmatched reputation. It is possible that the plague may have frightened off the enemy.⁴⁸

In 543, certainly, the plague was of major importance, forcing Chosroes to divert his line of march south from Adarbiganon. Once the news reached Justinian, it suggested to him that there were Persian weaknesses to be exploited by a massive offensive. In response to the emperor's orders, an army of 30,000, including Heruli and Armenians, encamped in Roman Armenia. Martin was in nominal command, Belisarius having been recalled, but the change in commanders was of little help to the Roman cause. Most, but not all, of the 30,000 stumbled out — in great disorder, if Procopius can be trusted — meeting defeat at the hands of 4,000 Persians strongly encamped near Anglon.⁴⁹ It was the end of one of the three great armies collected during the sixth century, and an inglorious episode in a series of campaigns that ended dismally in 544 at Edessa. Upon this final occasion not even a reluctant provincial garrison arrived to aid the city against the Persians threatening it; its defense was left to the city militia and refugee peasants. Of particular significance are the ethnic origins of two men commanding the regular troops stationed at Edessa: Peranius was an Iberian, son of the king Gurgun; Petrus was a Persarmenian captured by the Romans in his youth; under his command at Edessa were several Huns. Even the garrison of a lesser provincial city bore a barbarian character, resembling that of the field armies themselves.⁵⁰

In view of the military situation elsewhere in the Empire, the treaty with Persia (545) could hardly have been more opportune. Since 540, invasions in

⁴⁷ Composition of the army: *BP* II xiv 10, xvi 1. 2. 5; Artabazes and the Persian captives: *BP* II xix 24 and *BG* III iii 10 f; on the campaign in general and some of the problems in evaluating Procopius, I. Kavar, "Procopius and Arethas," *Byzantinisches Zeitschrift*, L (1957), 362–382.

⁴⁸ Assembling of the army: *BP* II xx 19. 25; its composition: II xxi 2. 4. The possibility of plague, first suggested by G. Rawlinson, *The Seventh Great Oriental Monarchy* (London, 1876), p. 401, was accepted by Bury, *Later Roman Empire*², II 106; Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 497, and Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 341.

⁴⁹ Diversion of the line of march: *BP* II xxiv 12; assembly of the army: *BP* II xxiv 12. 16; Anglon: II xxv 9. Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 342 erroneously reads the number of Persians as 40,000.

⁵⁰ Petrus and Peranius: *BP* II xxvi 38; Huns: xxvi 25; city's defense: xxvii 25. 34.

Thrace and Illyricum were endemic, and the frontier had to be maintained against Huns, Sclaveni, Antae, and Bulgars, sometimes by military action, more often by using one group against another.⁵¹ In Africa, too, reinforcements were needed to counter the Moorish threat, more menacing since the plague of 543 had reduced the Roman garrison.⁵²

The danger was greatest in Italy where, with the election of Totila as king, the Goths undertook successful offensive warfare late in 541. Since Totila was a far better general than Witiges had been, the situation demanded again the vigorous course of action Rome had pursued in 536–540 and was again to adopt between 551 and 554. Unfortunately, throughout most of the 540's military activity in Italy resembled the Eastern campaign described above. Armies were under-strength; reinforcements were slow in arriving; soldiers and commanders alike seem to suffer either from a failure of nerve or from a great weariness that choked off initiative. Some of these characteristics are manifest from the start. Early in 542 a sizeable imperial army of 12,000, containing the Persians captured at Sisauranon, failed in its efforts to take Verona and later went down before 5,000 Goths.⁵³ Probably late in that same year Justinian sent Maximinus to Italy at the head of Thracians, Armenians, and Bulgars. For no good reason that Procopius has recorded, he delayed at Epirus, leaving the little offensive action undertaken during that year to Demetrius and a small band the latter had led out from Constantinople after Maximinus' departure.⁵⁴ During 543 the imperial forces received no reinforcements and took no action that the sources have recorded. In 544 Belisarius at his own expense collected 4,000 volunteers in Thrace to form an army he later deprecated as "a small and pitiful band . . . altogether unpracticed in fighting."⁵⁵ The departure of the Illyrians early in 545 to defend their homeland against a Bulgar invasion could hardly have improved Belisarius' prospects, and it is not surprising that he implored Justinian during the summer of that year to send more men to his aid: guards, Huns, and other barbarians, together with the money to pay them.⁵⁶ To bear his letter and carry out the request "immediately," Belisarius sent John, the nephew of Vitalian, to Byzantium. But the latter tarried in the city until the end of the year, returning with an army whose total size, to judge from its subsequent actions, may have been

⁵¹ In 540 there was a Bulgar or Kutrigur attack in two waves; in 544 the Bulgars reappear in Illyricum; in 545 or 546 Narses fought the Sclaveni in Thrace; in 548 the same peoples are found in Illyricum; in 550 they attack Thrace; in 551 Bulgars and Gepids menaced Constantinople and Thessalonica. Sources, discussion, and chronology in P. Lemerle, "Les invasions et migrations dans les Balkans," *Revue historique*, cccxi (1954), 265–309, esp. 285 f., and see below, nn. 61, 67.

⁵² Sources on the plague in Africa, above, n. 38. Areobindus, Athanasius and a small group of Armenians disembarked in the spring of 545: *BV* II xxiv 1–3; John Troglita's expedition of autumn, 546: Corippus, *Iohannidos*, I, 110–416 (5–12 Pertsch); Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, p. 366 and n. 3.

⁵³ *BG* III iii 4, iv *passim*.

⁵⁴ *BG* III vi 10. 11. 14.

⁵⁵ On the arrival of the plague in Italy, above, n. 39. Belisarius' collection of his army: *BG* III x 1. 3; the small size also emphasized in Jordanis, *Romana*, sec. 380 (50 Mommsen); cf. *Anecdota* iv 13 f. 39; Belisarius' comment: *BG* III xii 4.

⁵⁶ Departure of the Illyrians: *BG* III xi 13–16, and Belisarius' appeal: xii 10.

no more than 1,000. It contained 300 Antae.⁵⁷ Shortly after John's return, Narses also landed in Italy, accompanied by a band of Heruli. Thus the total imperial force in Italy may have been increased to perhaps 20,000.⁵⁸ Eventually, in the late months of 547, the trends of the preceding years were reversed. The tempo of reinforcement quickened as Sergius and Pacurius arrived with a few, Verus with 300 more Heruli, Varages with 800 Armenians, and Valerian with 1,000 men. In the spring of 548, an army of 2,000 disembarked in Sicily. Now, at last, Justinian could hope to counter the revived Gothic power.⁵⁹

As the survey will have suggested, the role of the barbarian increased in the ranks and in positions of subordinate command. In addition to Artabazes, commander of the Persians participating in the siege of Verona during 542, Procopius mentions Arufus the Herul, Gilacius, the Armenian promoted to *strategos* who knew no Greek beyond his title, Odalgan the Hun in command at Perugia, and Chalazar the Bulgar at Rossano.⁶⁰

The six years following upon 548 were in both East and West an era of recovery and renewed initiative. As Justinian built up his forces in the West, his intention of mounting a major offensive during the summer of 549 apparently deferred only by the conspiracy of that year, he simultaneously warded off attacks of the Sclaveni in the Balkans, assigned a large force to guard against the Gepids, and undertook an offensive in Lazica.⁶¹ Already in 548 Dagistheus seems to have marched into the land of the Lazi with 8,000 men of whom 1,000 were Tzani. Another large army under Rhecithancus followed him. Subsidies were offered, in 549, to the Lazi themselves and to the Sabiri. Under their king Goubazes, the former joined with the Roman commander to constitute a force of 14,000 at the Phasis while "a few" of the latter — the Sabiri — also took part in the Lazic wars.⁶² Late in 549 or early in 550 further reinforcements were dispatched to

⁵⁷ John in Constantinople: *Anecdota* v 8–15 and *BG* III xii 11; returns with Romans and barbarians, xiii 20, including, apparently, some Antae: xxii 2. 3. Size of the army may be deduced from xxvi 16.

⁵⁸ Heruli: *BG* III xiii 21. Hannestad, "Forces militaires," 148 ff. derives his figure of 20,000 from Totila's speech in 546: xxi 4–5.

⁵⁹ *BG* III xxvii 2 f., xxx 1. The small size of the tactical forces during this period is quite striking: vi 2, xi 19, xv 3, xxiii 8, xxvii 16 and Hannestad, "Forces militaires," 154 f.

⁶⁰ Arufus: *BG* III xxvi 23; Gilacius: xxvi 24; Odalgan: xxiii 6; Chalazar: xxx 6; in Africa, Coutisina the Berber led a group of *symmachoi* and was also *magister militum* in command of regular troops: Corippus, *Iohannidos*, vii 265–271 (88 Partsch), cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, pp. 315–319. The romanesque career of the Arsacid Artabanes is particularly instructive. For his part in the "Armenian" conspiracy of 549, when he had been *magister militum praesentalis* and enormously popular at Constantinople, he never suffered much punishment beyond momentary loss of office. 550 found him as *magister militum per Thraciam* participating in the Italian offensive. See Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 590 f., and for ethnic hostility among Armenians, Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 344, and n. 1119 on 517. Thus Armenian conspirators in the sixth century were treated far differently from Germans and Isaurians in the fifth: Stein, *Bas-Empire*, I, 235–239, 358–360, II, 82–84.

⁶¹ The Antae fell upon Thrace, *BG* III xiv 11, and the Bulgars upon Illyricum in 544, xi 15 f., cf. x 2, xi 12–14. The Antae were offered settlements, xiv 32. In 548 the Sclaveni crossed the Danube and penetrated to Epidamnus, xxix 1–3, where they were followed but not attacked by 15,000 Romans. In the spring of 549 Justinian sent 10,000 horse to aid the Lombards against the Gepids, together with 1,500 Heruli; they were forced to remain as protection against the Gepids: xxxiv 40–47. On the problems of chronology, see Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 531, n. 1.

Lazica in advance of the new commander, Bessas, the replacement of Dagistheus. During the campaigning season of 550 Bessas sent an army under Wilgang the Herul and John the Armenian to discipline the Abasgi while he himself undertook, with 6,000 men, a siege of Petra, ultimately to end with the fortress' capitulation in the spring of 551. When action terminated in 551, the total Roman garrison in Lazica seems to have numbered 12,000 men stationed at Archaeopolis and along the Phasis.⁶³

While Bessas and the generals subordinate to him fought around the southern and eastern littoral of the Black Sea, Justinian's ambassador sought out the Persian Great King at Ctesiphon to renew the truce of 545.⁶⁴ The Roman emperor must have been certain of their success; even before definite action had been taken on his proposals for a treaty, he resumed — in the summer of 550 — the preparations for a western offensive postponed from the previous year. Liberius departed for Sicily to be followed by Artabanes with a smaller group. Meanwhile, Germanus, the prospective commander in the West, drew upon all the available resources of the Roman state to seek out recruits in Thrace and Illyricum while undertaking negotiations with possible *symmachoi*.⁶⁵ Not all of his energies could he apply to the renewed offensive in the West, but, fortunately, his reputation alone frightened off the Sclaveni who had hoped to capture Thessalonica in the summer of 550. At the end of 551 an army had to be sent against them which finally turned defeat into qualified success.⁶⁶ Germanus' death in the summer of 551 interrupted the plans for a western expedition only momentarily; in his place Narses assumed command, departing for Italy in the spring of 552 with an army estimated by modern historians at twenty or thirty thousand. Nor was this great force accumulated at the expense of other frontiers. Simultaneously with its departure Martin and Goubazes contained a Persian offensive in Lazica, and the aged Liberius sailed off in the following summer to undertake the reconquest of Spain.⁶⁷

While the exact size of Narses' army must remain a matter of conjecture, in composition it maintained earlier trends towards barbarization. From the Lombards Narses had engaged 2,500 cavalry and 3,000 "esquires"; 3,000 faithful Heruli followed him together with 400 Gepids, and a variety of peoples whose

⁶³ Dagistheus: *BP* II xxix 10; Rhcithancus: xxx 29; subsidies: xxx 28; force of 14,000: xxx 40; Sabiri: *BG* IV xi 22. Chronological problems noted in Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 505, n. 2.

⁶⁴ Reinforcements preceding Bessas: *BG* IV ix 5; Wilgang and John: ix 13; forces at Petra: xi 42, included Armenians, xi 57; total in 551: xiii 8–10.

⁶⁵ Details in Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 351 f., 358.

⁶⁶ Liberius, Artabanes, and Germanus: *BG* III xxxix 6. 8–10.

⁶⁷ *BG* III xl 1–8, 30–45.

⁶⁷ Martin and Goubazes: *BG* IV xvii 11–19; Liberius in summer of 552: Jordanes, *Getica* sec. 303 (136 Mommsen); on the date, Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II 820 f.; Africa was at peace: *BG* IV xvii 20–22; Corippus, *Iohannidos*, VII, 164–656 (98–109 Partsch); while in the Balkans a combination of diplomacy and force had succeeded by 552; in 551 war was initiated between Outrigurs and Kutrigurs, *BG* IV xviii 18–24; the Kutrigurs were settled, IV xix 6 f.; the Slavs met by a small force at the end of 551, IV xxv 1–6. With the Gepids Justinian signed a *foedus* late in 551: IV xxv 7 f., but then an army was sent against them, xxv 10–15, before peace was restored between Gepids, Lombards, and Rome in 552: IV xxvii 21.

numerical strength is not given: more Heruli, many Gepids, and some Persian deserters. Whether barbarians comprised one third or one half its total, the proportion seems to have been greater than any displayed in previous armies of its size.⁶⁸

It is unnecessary to follow out from the pages of Agathias, Procopius' successor as the historian of Justinian's wars, the remaining battles in the West. It need only be noted that, as Narses led 18,000 to victory over the Franks at Capua in the autumn of 554, a garrison force estimated at 50,000 held the frontier in Lazica. There, too, barbarian contingents were numerous, including Sabiri, Heruli, Lombards, Berbers, and Tzani.⁶⁹ Despite his questionable and probably high inflated statistical data, Agathias confirms conclusions drawn from Procopius: after thirty years of warfare, the expeditionary armies indeed displayed "un caractère international."

Obviously we shall never know the exact proportion of Roman to barbarian throughout all the armies in any one year. Doubtless, if a census had been made, and provided that it included the *limitanei* as well as detachments of the *comitatenses* stationed in relatively peaceful provinces, the Roman element would have predominated. If, on the other hand, enumeration had been limited to those elements of the *foederati* and *comitatenses* actually in the field on expedition, proportions would have been vastly different. At times the Roman armies would probably have been as Roman as Franco's army was Spanish during the Civil War of 1936-1938.

Three conclusions seem reasonably certain. The imperial armies of 554 were truly imperial, composed of peoples far more diverse in origin than those who had taken the field during Justinian's early years. Secondly, Justinian's generals drew constantly on barbarian peoples for recruits, a practice that could have had no other effect than to increase the barbarian element. In the absence of precise quantitative evidence for the process, qualitative indications are suggestive: in particular, the gradual blurring of distinctions between *foederati* and *stratiotai*. Perhaps even more telling is the penetration into positions of command by peoples of non-Roman origins, the Armenians above all. Old prejudices were vanishing in the face of military necessity.

Finally, to say that the armies of Belisarius and Narses were composed mainly of recruits from the Balkans and Asia Minor is to encourage misinterpretation. Armies varied according to specific circumstances; there were differences of time and place. For the same reason there is some unreality about such statements as "wichtig bleibt die Tatsache dass unter diesem Kaiser (Justinian) das einheimische Element in der Armee gegenüber dem barbarischen das Übergewicht bekommt" or "folglich haben wir es bei den Truppenaushebungen und der Nationalisierung der Armee mit einer tiefgreifenden, aber konstanten Entwick-

⁶⁸ BG IV xxvi 5-17.

⁶⁹ Capua: Agathias II 4 (Bonn, p. 73). Garrison in the East and its composition: Agathias III 6. 8. 7. 20. 21 (Bonn, pp. 148, 153, 177, 184, 186.) See M. Ites, "Zur Bewertung des Agathias," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, xxvi (1926), 273 ff., esp. 277, 282.

lung zu tun.”⁷⁰ Aside from the fact that development had taken its course in precisely the opposite direction, the statement overlooks the nature of the truly expeditionary armies. Unlike the *limitanei* and the *comitatenses* in garrison, they were formed on an *ad hoc* basis; if necessity dictated, they might, as a device of desperation, contain elements drawn from frontier and garrison forces. By virtue of their fighting capacity, barbarians were preferable to rustics, but men were taken where they could be found. It is, in short, a question of “armies,” not “an army.”

Much of the confusion stems from misapplication of the conclusions found in Maspero's *Organisation militaire de l'Égypte byzantin*, from a failure to recognize certain limitations in the work which possibly the author himself did not appreciate. By analysis of the papyri he demonstrated (not quite correctly, recent work suggests) that the Egyptian army in garrison was native-born during the sixth century. In the quality of this native army he found reasons for its collapse in the face of Persian and Arab invaders during the seventh century: it was a police force designed to collect taxes and preserve order; it was never supposed to take part in campaigns such as those described above.⁷¹ For that reason, the barbarian's military talents would have been wasted in Egypt. A sensible division of labor resulted, destined to be maintained at least until the end of the major campaigns in 554. A “Roman” army, made up of Egyptians, of a people never known for military valor, performed housekeeping tasks in a relatively peaceful province. “Barbarized” armies took the field at Busta Gallorum, Capua, and other battle sites.

It is important to probe even more deeply into Maspero's work, for it displays an historiographical problem of significance for the study of any aspect of Justinian's reign. Maspero was well aware of many of the texts cited above, particularly of those attesting to the entry of Tzani and Vandals into the ranks of the *stratiotai*. As against the papyri, however, they weighed very little in his judgment: one of them being written off as “un expédient de hasard et il n'y faut pas attacher grande importance dans une étude du fonctionnement normal de l'armée.”⁷² In the course of Justinian's wars, there were a great many of these “expédients de hasard,” involving not only Tzani and Vandals but Bulgars, Slavs, Armenians, Berbers, and Goths — in short, most of the peoples encountered by East Rome between 527 and 554. The source of Maspero's difficulty is obvious. If by “fonctionnement normal” he means peacetime operations as the papyri reveal them to be, then he is to a large degree correct. Armies at war and transformed by war are another matter; to understand them we must give equal weight to the historians who, for all their shortcomings, provide more directly what the Egyptian papyri ordinarily show less clearly: evidence of the impact of war upon a society

⁷⁰ Karayannopoulos, *Entstehung der Themenordnung*, pp. 44–45; italics mine. I should like to emphasize that, while I do not agree with the author's views on the development of the armies, the main points of his work still stand: the themes, which are administrative in nature, were the product of many decades of development and not the creation of a reforming emperor. See note 94 below.

⁷¹ *Organisation militaire*, pp. 126, 130.

⁷² “Στρατιώται,” 106.

and its institutions. It is worth noting that Maspero himself, a brilliant product of the educational system of the Third French Republic, grew up in a peaceful and abundant society wherein (it seems now) it must have been sheer pleasure to live and work. His study was published in 1912, not many years before he fell in defense of his country.⁷³

Even in the early years of Justinian's reign barbarization of the expeditionary armies was under way. The narrative has shown how successful wars thereafter made available peoples prized for fighting capacities. Justinian was fortunate, too, in the fluidity of political or tribal relations around and beyond the Danube. Until the Avars appeared, no one folk blocked off sources of recruitment by achieving unquestioned hegemony over the others; it was always possible for Rome to recruit *symmachoi* among them by promising subsidies or other benefits.⁷⁴ As long as expansionist wars remained the order of the day, barbarians were at hand and they were eagerly welcomed.

Without their aid, the military recovery and victories of 549–554 would have been impossible; and the critical importance of barbarian troops during those years suggests that need or demand for their services had grown along with the supply. If the armies changed, they changed in response to pressures that threatened, as well as opportunities that beckoned. During the period 540–548 these threats were particularly serious, extending beyond the mere play of personality.

Although Procopius suggests otherwise, and modern historians have followed him, something more than Justinian's negligence and jealousy, or a failure of nerve on Belisarius' part, lies behind the ineffectiveness and indecision of these years.⁷⁵ The accusations may be quickly refuted. It seems, in the first place, odd that Justinian would appoint Belisarius to command in 544 and then deliberately withhold troops or money from him. Surely he knew his man. Although cautious, Belisarius was no McClellan, frightened by the spectre of the enemies' size and unable to move save with massive strength. During the first phase of the Gothic wars, each reinforcement, however slight, led to more vigorous action of wider scope.⁷⁶ If Belisarius asked for men, his demands were based upon a realistic assessment of his needs. Procrastination characterized operations everywhere between 540 and about 548; it was not confined to Italy and thus could not have expressed a particular grudge against a particular person or specific neglect of a specific frontier. Similarly, preparations for a renewed offensive in 549 were but one phase of a recovery everywhere visible. Since increasingly larger contingents of men had already been sent throughout 547–548, the army Germanus was supposed to lead in their wake to Italy seems the climax of a military build-up,

⁷³ See now Remondon, "Soldats de Byzance," esp. pp. 83–93, where it seems that after 552 Justinian tried to create a mobile force of predominantly Gothic *foederati* in the Thebaid as part of a general plan to reorganize the defenses of Egypt while economizing men and money. Apparently he wished to reproduce, within Egypt, the division of labor between garrison and expeditionary forces visible throughout the Empire as a whole.

⁷⁴ Stein, *Studien*, pp. 119 f.

⁷⁵ See note 37 above.

⁷⁶ *BG* I xxvii 3–14, xxvii 26 f.; *BG* II vi 1–3, vii 25 f., xvi.

rather than the result of a sudden decision to fight, triggered by the Gothic invasion of Sicily. The same considerations, stagnation and gradual recovery, demonstrate that when John the Cappadocian fell from power in 541 the event had no lasting effect on the administrative services. No more than any other bureaucrat was John the indispensable man; between 550 and 554 the Empire achieved its conquests without him.

During the years when conquests were apparently impossible, the Empire suffered from a manpower shortage for which overcommitment, the result of having to fight too many enemies at once, was in part responsible. Capable troops who might have held Antioch against Chosroes in 540 were away in Italy, and Justinian's diplomacy had tried, before that year and thereafter, to avoid such contingencies. The Endless Peace of 532 gave greater hope of success for the campaigns against the Vandals; Narses' great expedition of 552 did not depart for Italy until combined military and diplomatic effort had brought peace to Africa, the Balkans, and Lazica.

Upon closer analysis, however, it appears that there is another, a missing, variable. There were periods, including that of 526–532, when East Rome could fight many enemies at once; there were times when it could fight no one at all. In 545 Justinian made peace with Persia at the cost of large subsidies; during the two years that followed he twice overlooked provocative incidents that, ordinarily, he might have welcomed as pretexts for war. At the same time, he entertained the Persian ambassador with expenditures lavish enough to cause mutterings at Constantinople.⁷⁷ Quite clearly he wanted peace and, equally clearly, he was prepared to pay well for it. Yet, to what purpose did he use his advantage? In both Africa and Italy the crisis could hardly have been more acute, but reinforcements were small in size and slow in arriving.⁷⁸

Nothing could contrast more sharply with the course of events after 548. In that year Justinian took the initiative in the East by dispatching Dagistheus' army to Lazica while simultaneously continuing a reinforcement of the Italian armies he had undertaken in 547. Germanus gathered together his army in Illyricum before peace was entirely assured in Lazica. While Narses fought during 552 in Italy, Justinian took advantage of a crisis in Spain to send an army into the westernmost regions of the Mediterranean world. As Narses bested the Franks in Italy during 554, the garrison in Lazica was kept at sufficient strength to ward off a Persian offensive.

There is a striking coincidence in time between the pestilence of 541–543 and a period (both concurrent with it and subsequent to it) of missed opportunities and

⁷⁷ Neither Rome nor Persia intervened in a quarrel that broke out in 546 between the Lakhmid, Mundhir, and the Ghassanid, Harith: *BP* II xxviii 12–14. In 547, the Persian ambassador, Isdigou-nas, seems to have attempted to seize Dara on his journey to Constantinople: II xxviii 15–44.

⁷⁸ On reinforcements to Africa, see note 52 above. In the East between the siege of Edessa and the truce of 545, John Troglita as *dux Mesopotamiae* undertook small but highly successful actions at Theodosiopolis and Dara: Corippus, *Iohannidos*, I 48–109 (4 f. Partsch). In the Balkans, Justinian met the attack of 544 or 545 with an offer of federation rather than force: *BG* III xiv 32. The Heruli who, under Narses, defeated Sclaveni in 545 were actually being gathered for the expedition to the West; see note 58 above.

ineffective military action. Is not the missing variable the short-term effects of the Great Plague? Explicit indications of its impact on military operations are admittedly few, but a similar lack of direct evidence in archival materials has momentarily confounded historians of the fourteenth century when they have attempted to assess the results of the Black Death of 1348. Once the pestilence had passed, it seemed that nothing had happened; only upon "reading between the lines" do the full dimensions of the catastrophe appear.⁷⁹ The evidence assembled above from the historians and Justinian's novels certainly justifies taking the hint and making a similarly close analysis and reconstruction of the period in question.⁸⁰ Beginning with the expedition of Maximinus, which left Constantinople in the spring or summer of 542 (thus at the height of the plague) and then inexplicably dallied at Epirus, men's actions are constantly too curiously ineffective to escape suspicion. What lay behind them?

Unfortunately, Procopius' accounts of the campaigns undertaken during the critical years of 542 and 543 are among the most unsatisfactory in the *Histories*. When analyzing them, it is essential to remember that he apparently wished to magnify Belisarius' doubtful achievements in the former year while presenting in the worst possible light the failures of Martinus and the others during the latter. Belisarius left Constantinople in the spring or early summer of 542, at a point when (as Edict 7 proves) plague had already struck the city after passing through Syria. He arrived, then, in an area which had earlier felt the disease in its coastal regions, and pestilence could have moved inland about his headquarters at Europum. Exchanging the metropolis for the lesser cities or the countryside did not, in 542 any more than in 1348, mean that one was assured of escaping disease. John of Ephesus joins Procopius in bearing witness to its impact upon the rural communities.⁸¹ Incidence of the plague could explain the small size of the army Belisarius contrived to collect although he recruited everywhere (*πανταχόσε*). There is something curious, too, in Chosroes' retreat before this unimpressive force. As Rawlinson, Bury, and Stein have all pointed out, if Chosroes did in fact withdraw from fear of Belisarius, why was he given the wealthiest citizen of Edessa as hostage and how could he destroy Callinicus with impunity, carrying off its inhabitants into captivity? Was it not the plague, rather than Belisarius, that frightened off Chosroes?⁸²

Procopius' description of Chosroes' actions in 543 are quite acceptable in the light of known trajectories of this and later plagues. Since all moved inland from ports where rats could most easily bring infected lice, disease would be found in Roman Armenia during 543 after it was extinct at Constantinople. Rather than

⁷⁹ Carpentier, "Famines et épidémies," 1064, and *Orviato*, pp. 192 f.

⁸⁰ Compare the accounts gathered in Carpentier, *Orviato*, pp. 112–119, from Italian chroniclers with *BP* II xxii 9–37, esp. 31. It is a hint all the more readily taken since Procopius' description is a classic, coinciding closely with fourteenth century and modern descriptions of the course of bubonic plague. It is even possible that, since some of the victims died vomiting blood, the bubonic form may (as it was in 1348) have been accompanied by the pulmonary form. The latter is particularly virulent, to judge from modern statistics collected in China and India, and it may be transmitted from person to person.

⁸¹ Van Douwen and Land, *Commentarii*, pp. 227–240.

⁸² See note 48 above.

invading this region, with its numerous frontier cities and active trade routes, Chosroes would naturally have left his base at Adarbiganon for a less urbanized area. In this instance it was Assyria where, according to Procopius, plague was not yet epidemic.⁸³ That Justinian, seeking to exploit his weakness, could then bring together one of the great armies of the century is not necessarily incompatible with the preceding reconstruction. The army in question mobilized all available strength in the East and thus probably contained *limitanei* as well as expeditionary forces. The subsequent behavior of the troops in battle is fully consonant with the low reputation of the *limitanei*, and the actions of the generals no less curious than those of Maximinus or Chosroes in 542. In direct contravention of Justinian's orders, and departing from usual practice, they never assembled at one point, but established camps along a frontier extending for 200 kilometers south from Theodosiopolis by Chorhazianene and Citharizon to Martyropolis. According to Procopius, there was a complete lack of co-ordination among them either before or during the abortive invasion; the group at Martyropolis under Justus even failed to join the others. Thus the strength of the army that met Nabedes and his 4,000 at Anglon fell somewhat short of the full 30,000 collected. It was, nonetheless, an army of unusual size for the period and curiously reluctant to fight so few Persians, however strongly entrenched spies had discovered them to be. Throughout the account there is much to challenge credulity; in particular, Procopius emphasizes repeatedly the contrasting strength of the great army in 543 and of the little one in 542. Certainly we can say that Rome failed to mount an invasion during a year of the plague in a region where it was currently epidemic. If nothing in the sources proves the implicit relation of cause and effect, neither does anything contradict it absolutely.⁸⁴

In other parts of the Roman world, the narrative has shown 543 to have been a blank year. The Roman commanders in Italy are supposed to have passed their time shut up in their fortresses, given over to revelry and lawlessness of all sorts, a note oddly reminiscent of behavior reported after the plague in Constantinople or in the pages of Thucydides and Boccaccio for that matter.⁸⁵ Pestilence also struck Africa in 543; despite reinforcements, the army never recovered its earlier strength and later defeated the Moors (who themselves never experienced the plague) only by making extensive use of Berber allies. The Roman army in Africa was transformed into a force whose barbarized character has often been noted.⁸⁶

Alice's phrase, "curioser and curioser" describes the actions of the next two

⁸³ *BP* II xxiv 12. On plague trajectories, see Carpentier, "Famines et épidémies," 1071 f.; André Siegfried, *Itinéraires de contagions*, Paris, 1960; Procopius, *BP* II xxii 9: always from the coast to the interior.

⁸⁴ See note 48 above. Location of the forces: *BP* II xxiv 17. Suspensions of the account may be found in Bury, *Later Roman Empire*, II, 108, and Rubin, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 343.

⁸⁵ Compare Procopius *BG* III ix 1-6, where (it should be noted) he says nothing of the plague, with *BP* II xxiii 16 and Thucydides II 53. Similar problems in Orvieto and Venice: Carpentier, *Orvieto*, pp. 129, 134. Plagues always seem to provide material for moralists: see Corippus, *Iohannidos*, III, 371-375.

⁸⁶ Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, pp. 361-381, esp. 377; Bury, *Later Roman Empire*², II 141 f., 146 f.; Stein, *Bas-Empire*, II, 556 f.

years as well. 544, the year of the novels on wages and prices and the *ius deliberandi*, saw Edessa left to its own resources and Belisarius unable to find an effective army in Thrace. 545 saw John, the nephew of Vitalian, delayed in Constantinople for the purpose, according to Procopius, of arranging his marriage with the daughter of Germanus. Meanwhile Belisarius impatiently awaited his return with reinforcements.⁸⁷

In this instance we can discover with reasonable certainty what the trouble was. John arrived in Constantinople in the spring or early summer of 545 to find a city beset with shortages and economic difficulties, some of them probably increased by the plague. It had been a bad harvest year in Egypt; even widespread *coemptiones* or forced purchases of grain made throughout Thrace, Bithynia, and Phrygia by the praetorian prefect, Peter Barsymes, failed to compensate for a deficit in the city's grain supply manifest at the end of the summer.⁸⁸ Soldiers complained that their pay was in arrears; in view of the better bargain the agricultural laborer could hope to strike after the plague, military service might have seemed a less promising alternative than it once had to the peasant anxious to escape poverty.⁸⁹

Two problems appear in imperial legislation. A novel of 1 March 545 attempted to regulate *coemptiones* made by troops stationed in the provinces, protecting the interests both of the taxpayers and the soldiers, including barbarians (ἑθνικοὶ) on their way to the aid of the state.⁹⁰ Another novel of 1 June 545 attempted to prescribe in minute detail the administration of those taxes upon which the activities of the Empire depended. Among its other provisions, it established, after many years of experiment, the definitive form of the *epibole*: the forced assignment to certain specified persons of unproductive lands together with the tax burdens upon them. In at least one respect, Justinian's legislation on the *epibole*, in this and earlier years, is more stringent than provisions found in the edicts of his predecessors. During the fifth century, those who would take up uncultivated lands were encouraged to do so by remission of all or some of the taxes for varying lengths of time. In 545, however, both burdens — that of taking up the lands and that of assuring the tax revenues — fell at once. Justinian's novel thus sought to assure an uninterrupted flow of revenue, a goal all the more difficult to achieve if death had removed either the owner responsible for the payments or the hands necessary to assure production. At the same time, the individual forced to assume unproductive lands was not held responsible for any arrears in taxation, and we may assume that the officials charged with the administration of the *epibole* had abused their authority in this respect. Procopius probably had reason to complain *in his own time* that collective responsibility for taxes and the forced assignment of unproductive lands were burdens difficult to bear; quite justly, he could note that the plague had made them more so.⁹¹

⁸⁷ See note 57 above.

⁸⁸ *Anecdota*, xxii 17.

⁸⁹ *Anecdota*, xxii 20; Zimarchus, Dityvistus, and Justin come to Constantinople to escape poverty: *Anecdota*, vi 2; for other examples of rural recruitment, see above, n. 32 and *BP* I xviii 39 (Callinicus).

⁹⁰ Nov. J. 130, c. viii.

⁹¹ Nov. J. 128, cc. vii. viii (639 Schoell-Kroll). The most recent study on the *epibole* with full refer-

In all likelihood John found upon his arrival at Constantinople an Empire strained to the utmost in its efforts to assume burdens of warfare on many frontiers. It could ill afford unpredictable shocks including bubonic plague and shortages in the Egyptian grain supply. It is not surprising that many months passed before John could scrape together a small force and return with it to Italy — about a year after his departure. It is far from surprising, too, that Narses had to seek out a supplementary force among his faithful Heruli, that the reinforcements John Troglita led to Africa in 546 were pitifully small, that the subsequent tempo of reinforcement in Italy was slow, and the proportion of barbarians high among those who arrived. There seems little reason to doubt that the bubonic plague interfered directly with Justinian's plans in 542 and 543, created a manpower shortage of considerable dimensions during the next two or three years, slowed down the process of recovery when it came, and favored further barbarization of the imperial forces.⁹²

Alternative explanations for what men did during each of the episodes analyzed above will immediately spring to mind. Taken collectively, however, the similarities create a pattern, suggesting that (together with factors particular to each) an agent common to all was at play. If the plague was not that agent, is there a more satisfactory way to explain why a distinct period of recovery followed a distinct period of stagnation or why men consistently acted to such little effect during the latter? The hypothesis may be tested further and reinforced if it is placed within the perspective of the last years of the century, following the recovery of the early

ences to sources and secondary literature is J. Karayannopoulos, *Das Finanzwesen des frühbyzantinischen Staates* (Munich, 1958), pp. 236–259. In this and in his earlier work, K. has shown that Procopius' comment is far from valid for the fourth and fifth centuries, before the *epibole* had reached the final stage of definition revealed in Nov. J. 128. At this earlier period, the interests of the emperor in assigning uncultivated lands often coincided with the wishes of those who received them. And, to encourage the assumption of such lands even further, the *adiectio* was often accompanied by partial or complete remission of taxes. The problem lay in forcing the recipients to take sub-marginal along with good land; this the emperors achieved by a sporadic use of the principle of collective tax responsibility: Karayannopoulos, *Finanzwesen*, p. 253. By the time of Nov. 128, these two principles of collective responsibility and *adiectio* are regularly coupled. Yet, as K. admits (*Finanzwesen*, p. 258, n. 53), the *epibole* could at times run counter to the interests of the recipient landowner; the texts that view it as a burden are to be dated after the first quarter of the sixth century, thus contemporary with the fully developed institution and Procopius' strictures on it; Nov. J. 17, c. xiv (535) even makes the *adiectio* a form of punishment. For his own time, then, I believe Procopius' comments to be valid when stripped of a certain degree of rhetorical exaggeration. At the same time, I agree with K. that the primary objective of Nov. 128 is to assure collection of taxes, not the cultivation of land. Whether the *epibole* (either with or without collective tax responsibility) indicates shortages of agricultural manpower or more stringent demands on the part of the state for tax revenues which full cultivation alone could provide is a question that must be answered for each specific instance of its application; there can be no general rule. Procopius, *Anecdota*, xxiii 15–22.

⁹² Compare the problems encountered by the East Roman Empire in the 540's with those faced by England and France in 1348 and thereafter. E. Perroy, *The Hundred Years' War* (New York, 1951), pp. 113, 121–124, 125 f., attributes to the plague not only the failure of the French to mount an offensive in 1348 but the length and indecisive quality of the conflict during the ensuing years. Gilliam, "Plague under Marcus Aurelius," is sceptical of connections among disease, manpower shortages, and military problems during the second century, A.D. During the latter period, however, the disease was not bubonic plague and the sources do not permit the establishment of the close correlations that may be derived from Procopius

550's. In so doing, we may also discover how well a "barbarized" army could defend an imperial frontier.

Recovery seems to have been only momentary, and it never led into those broad, sunlit uplands men might have hoped to find. In 558 Zabergan and his Kutrigurs crossed the Danube and divided into three bands, one of which attacked Constantinople in 559. The aged Belisarius put on armor long unused and led out 300 veterans, *palatini*, city militia, and peasants to defend the walls. It was a nondescript force, strongly reminiscent of those upon which Antioch depended in 540 or Edessa in 544. Within this context Agathias wrote his lament, often quoted out of context, on the numerical decline of the Roman armies. The weakness at Constantinople in 559 was but a particular instance, he believed, of a decline so widespread that 150,000 men had to defend frontiers for which 645,000 would have been a minimum number. Since there was no war on the Persian frontier, feeble defenses reflected the feebleness of a feeble old emperor. Rather than fight, Justinian preferred to rely on subsidies and play off one enemy against another. Weakness at the top filtered down into the lower echelons: the bureaucracy preferred to speculate on pay and supplies rather than transmit them to the proper recipients. For these reasons, soldiers left the service, and the military establishment declined to a critical point.⁹³

The personal aspects of this indictment may be disregarded, for the successors of Justinian—younger, vigorous, sometimes expansionist in sentiment—never solved a manpower problem already discernible in 559. During the reigns of Justin II, Tiberius, and Maurice, it was sometimes impossible to fight on more than one frontier at a time; wars were often designed to win supplies of men more than prestige, strategic advantage, or the land the men occupied. Victory brought back captives whose impact on the domestic economy the historians chose to describe in terms of great hyperbole. An acute shortage of soldiers threatened the Empire's safety. This shortage Ernst Stein noted many years ago, tracing it to the drying-up of sources of recruitment among barbarian peoples but neglecting to include among its causes repeated attacks of bubonic plague.⁹⁴ Surely the long-term effects of the latter are manifest in the military crisis under Justinian's

⁹³ The attack: Agathias, v 11–13 (299–306 Bonn), cf. Malalas, p. 490 (Bonn); the defense of Constantinople: Agathias, v 16 (312 f. Bonn); commentary on the armies: v 13 *in fine*–14 *init.* (305–307 Bonn) and Rubin's discussion of the passage, *Zeitalter Iustinians*, I, 227 f.

⁹⁴ See above, n. 74. Evidence for a long-term decline is noted in my "Grain Supply," pp. 95 ff., and the sources cited, n. 25. I hope to deal with these materials more fully in a forthcoming study. The same pattern of demographic stagnation or decline and subsequent recovery is noted in a series of studies by P. Lemerle, "Esquisse pour une histoire agraire de Byzance," *Revue historique*, CCXIX (1958), 32–74, esp. 63 ff.; "Les répercussions de la crise de l'Empire de l'Orient au VII^e siècle sur les pays d'Occident," in *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo: Caratteri del Secolo VII in Occidente*, 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1958), II, 713–731, esp. 719; "Quelques remarques sur le règne d'Heraclius," *Studi Medievali*, ser. III, I (1960), 347–361. As a partial explanation of Byzantium's recovery after the seventh century, demographic patterns are all the more important to investigate now that Heraclius has lost his title of reformer. See Lemerle, "Quelques remarques," and J. Karayannopoulos, "Über die vermeintliche Reformtätigkeit d. Kaisers Herakleios," *Jahrb. d. Oesterr. Byz. Gesellschaft*, x (1962), 53–72.

successors? They may even explain in part the difficulties of 559, for 558 had been a plague year.

But at least one other factor must be held accountable for the inadequate armies of 559: this was the problem, almost insoluble on both financial and disciplinary grounds, of first turning an expeditionary force into a garrison army or an "army of occupation," and then of keeping it under control and ready to fight at the same time. While not initially and wholly responsible for the problem, the process of barbarization had complicated it in a variety of ways.

When barbarian peoples fought as *symmachoi*, separately organized under their own leaders, there could be no question of keeping them in the conquered lands once their military services were no longer in demand. The aftermath of Busta Gallorum is an excellent example among many. During the battle barbarian and Roman fought with equal valor. After the victory Narses had to buy off his Lombard allies, sending them home to end the rape and arson to which they had abandoned themselves.⁹⁵

Even when barbarian peoples were more fully absorbed within the military establishment as *foederati*, they became a particularly embarrassing element in a generally difficult situation. Regardless of their ethnic composition, garrison forces were difficult to control. Lacking the discipline imposed by having to fight together in an alien land, deprived of easy access to spoils, the units tended to break asunder, seek the safety of fortified points, and identify local interests with their own.

The latter is a particularly crucial point and the African revolt of 536 a good example of it. Roman soldiers in the newly conquered province rebelled in part because their pay was in arrears; they also objected when lands brought them in dowry by their Vandal wives were confiscated by the state. Young men in occupying armies like to marry the young women they encounter, and not very much can be done about it. A further irritant stemmed from an imperial edict against Arianism. Soldiers adhering to the Arian creed, particularly numerous among barbarian *foederati*, could neither accept nor enforce such a law.⁹⁶ A moment's reflection will reveal the irony of the situation. The imperial interest, which Justinian in his legislation of 535 had tried to identify with the general interest, fell before the particular interests of those who were supposed to enforce it. Peoples only partly assimilated could hardly promote assimilation in other quarters if they themselves could not accept the very foundation of imperial loyalties: Catholic Christianity.

In the relatively peaceful province of Egypt, the contrasting situation of full assimilation of barbarian to native created its own range of problems. After the

⁹⁵ BG iv xxxii 11, xxxiii 2; on problems with Antae and Sclaveni, *Anecdota* xi 4-11; the Sabiri and the Persian Mirmeroes' difficulties with them: BG iv xiii 7; the Gepids and their embarrassing allies, the Kutrigers: BG iv xviii 16 f. For the value of the barbarian in war, BG iii xviii 29 (546) and xii 10 (545); Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte*, p. 279.

⁹⁶ BV ii xiv 8-15; cf. Diehl, *L'Afrique byzantine*, pp. 75-77; disciplinary problems were acute in Italy after 540; BG iii i 23, 28-33 and desertions numerous during this period and the second phase of the wars, Hannestad, "Forces militaires," p. 153.

victories of the 550's Justinian hoped to employ some of the Goths captured in Italy as a mobile striking force in the Thebaid against the Blemmyes to the south, leaving the police work and the manning of the fortresses to the less warlike native Egyptian *comitatenses* in garrison. Unfortunately for the plan, the raids of the Blemmyes were neither sufficiently numerous nor sufficiently threatening to keep the barbarian *foederati* in fighting trim; the latter were "Egyptianized," sank into the normal routine of provincial life, and became themselves garrison troops of little value against Persians and Arabs in the seventh century. What had been created *by* war — the "barbarized" army — had to be used *for* war.⁹⁷

Thus, by 559 Justinian's empire was trapped by a combination of its own success and the unpredictable. As the narrative has shown, unless a number of major crises supervened at one and the same time, its resources could support the wars of reconquest undertaken in 533 as they had the defensive operations of the preceding five or six years. Drawing upon reserves of barbarian peoples available to him, Justinian confounded those of his advisors who had doubted, on the eve of the expedition to Carthage, that his projects were feasible. Fiscal and moral resources equal to the tasks of conquest fell short, however, of the demands made by the process of assimilating and controlling what had been won in battle. Financial and disciplinary pressures alike rendered imperative the demobilization that so horrified Agathias in 559. The barbarian character of the army, which both resulted from and accounted for success in time of war, made the disciplinary problem all the more difficult to solve in time of peace.

Constant expansionist warfare would have solved the disciplinary problem, but was this solution possible when the "unpredictable," repeated attacks of bubonic plague, curtailed resources of men and money? During an age of apparent population decline it was necessary to practice economies of both. Upon those occasions when the financial stringency of a Tiberius or a Maurice increased the reserves of the state, the emergence of the Avar hegemony in the Balkans after 562 blocked off full access to peoples who might have sold their services for money. To recruit widely among the native population would have threatened the agricultural base and produced armies of rustics, traditionally considered of little military value.

Inasmuch as the limits of feasible expansion had been reached, the conquests created a dilemma from which there could be no escape until at least one of the following happened. At a cost to its prestige and to the nature of the military institutions it had developed through warfare, the Empire would have to retrench. The demographic curve would have to rise again or new non-Roman peoples become available. Better ways of assuring imperial loyalties and of maintaining fighting capacity would have to be discovered, particularly for partly assimilated peoples upon whose valor so much had come to depend.*

MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

⁹⁷ Remondon, "Soldats de Byzance," pp. 67 ff., 83-87, 90-92.

* The time of its publication made it impossible to use in the composition of this article the recent survey by A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602*, 2 vols. (Norman, Okla., 1964). In his discussion of Justinian's army (I, 657-668) Jones presents views on the barbarization process which are similar to the conclusions of the present study.