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Clifford J. Rogers, *Essays on Medieval Military History: Strategy, Military Revolutions and the Hundred Years War*, Ashgate, Burlington, VT, 2010. 346 pp. £72.50 (cl). ISBN-10: 0754659968.

Review by David Stewart Bachrach, University of New Hampshire.

Over the past decade, Clifford Rogers, professor of history at the United States Military Academy at West Point, has emerged as one of the leading scholars of the Hundred Years' War, particularly during the reign of Edward III of England (1327-1377). In addition to the fifteen essays collected in this volume, Rogers has published an important monograph, *War Cruel and Sharp: English Strategy under Edward III, 1327-1360*, which has revitalized the reputation of Edward as both a sound tactician and an innovative strategic thinker. The essays reviewed here were published originally in a wide range of journals and collections between 1993 and 2005. They demonstrate the continued refinement of Rogers' arguments regarding not only the strategy and tactics of the English armies during the first phases of the Hundred Years' war, but also the implications of these arguments for the military history of the period before 1300, as well as for modern military thinking.

Rogers' work is strongest when he focuses on the tactics and strategy of Edward III and the king's military commanders. In his studies on "Edward III and the dialectics of strategy, 1327-1360," and "The Offensive/Defensive in Medieval Strategy," Rogers makes a compelling case, against the state of the question, demonstrating that King Edward developed a battle-seeking rather than a battle-avoiding strategy in his wars against both the Scots and the French. Here, Rogers distinguishes between the strategic offensive, in which Edward undertook substantial destructive raids (*chevauchée*) in enemy territory, and the tactical defensive, in which the English king took up strong defensive positions in enemy territory so as to compel the enemy commander to launch an attack against him. Rogers argues that Edward wanted battle, but only under the very specific condition that he would enjoy all of the advantages of defense, while the enemy was forced to accept all of the disadvantages of attack.

In several of the essays, including "Sir Thomas Dagworth in Brittany, 1346-7: Restellou and La Roche Derrien," and "The Scottish Invasion of 1346," Rogers refines, and, in some instances, overturns the established consensus regarding the conduct of a number of the most important battles that were fought during Edward's reign. Rogers deploys here information that he developed through an analysis of never before used narrative sources that he discovered in the course of the close reading of unpublished manuscripts of historical works that long have been known to scholars. Rogers published the texts and translations of two of these works in the essays "A Continuation of the *Manuel d'histoire de Philippe VI* for the Years 1328-39" and "An Unknown News Bulletin from the Siege of Tournai in 1340."

Indeed, in reading Rogers' collected essays together as a group, it is clear that he has established a very strong command of the narrative sources for the entire reign of Edward III. By contrast,

however, Rogers makes very little use of the considerable volume of unpublished administrative documents from this period, many of which likely would shed light on Edward's military planning. In addition, administrative documents, including pay records, purchasing records for grain and other food supplies, contracts for the provision of transportation resources, garrison rolls, and memoranda for the purchase or production of arms and ammunition, often provide an alternative view of events than those offered by the authors of narrative sources, whose views were often distorted by insufficient information, unconscious bias, or basic fabrication.

Rogers' arguments are less convincing when he tries to extrapolate from the tactics and strategy of Edward III and the latter's military commanders in the mid fourteenth century, to draw conclusions about warfare in other periods. In "The Vegetian 'Science of Warfare' in the Middle Ages," Rogers takes to task John Gillingham, a leading proponent of the view that medieval commanders in the twelfth century adhered to a battle-avoiding strategy consistent with the teaching of Vegetius, the Roman author of a military handbook that was widely influential throughout the medieval West. Here, Rogers argues that because Edward III undertook a battle-seeking strategy during the mid-fourteenth century, it is necessary to rethink the model that battle-avoiding strategies dominated warfare in the twelfth century, the period on which Gillingham focuses his attention.

However, Rogers does not distinguish between the essentially defensive nature of Edward III's campaigns, which were undertaken to defend English interests in Gascony rather than to conquer France, and the essentially offensive nature of the campaigns of Richard I of England (1189-1199), or other rulers who were similarly focused on campaigns of conquest. In campaigns that were directed toward the conquest of territory, it was the capture of fortifications and the ability to maintain these conquests with garrisons that was of primary importance. Thus, for example, the first two kings of the Ottonian dynasty in Germany Henry I (919-936) and Otto I (936-973), undertook almost 100 military operations that were intended to capture substantial fortifications and fortified cities. These two kings also fought about twenty battles. However, all but one of these battles was fought in the context of a siege in which the enemy force sought to force the Ottonian army to end its effort to capture a particular fortification. The Ottonian kings did not actively seek these battles, and would, presumably, have been content simply to capture the fortifications in question, rather than risk a costly engagement that might have led to the abandonment of a siege.

In part, Rogers' model does not work for many earlier periods of history, because of a number of assumptions that he brings to bear based on his knowledge of the particular circumstances of Edward III's campaigns. Rogers, assumes, for example, that it was only in the early modern period that governments were able to put large forces in the field for lengthy periods of time. Because of this ability, Rogers avers: "Modern armies can outlast opposing garrisons more often than medieval armies could. Thus, in modern times there is more pressure on a defender to risk battle, because risky though it might be it holds a better prospect of success than refusing battle, whereas in the Middle Ages refusing battle often held a better prospect of success for a defender than did accepting a general engagement." It is important to emphasize here that many early medieval rulers were able to keep armies in the field for lengthy campaigns. Otto I, for example, maintained a large army in Italy for the better part of two years 961-963 during which time he was able to conquer almost the entire peninsula, which included the capture of a great many fortifications. Charlemagne (768-814) put three large armies into the field for the better part of two years in 801-802 during which period his son Louis the Pious (814-840) commanded the forces that captured the fortress city of Barcelona as well as the islands of Majorca and Minorca.

A second assumption made by Rogers is that: "the commander of the side pursuing aggressive war aims *typically* wanted a battle, for a battlefield victory was the quickest and cheapest way

(and sometimes the only way) of gaining one's goals, if such a victory could be had." Again, this may well have been true of Edward III. However, this clearly was not the case for other rulers who sought territorial conquest. For example, Fulk Nerra, count of Angevins (987-1040), fought a total of two battles in the course of his half century reign, neither of which he sought. Rather, Fulk engaged in a policy of aggressive fortress construction and siege through which he was able to increase by more than 100 percent the territory that he inherited from his father Geoffrey Greymantel.

In his effort to identify the broader implications of Edward III's tactics and strategy for current military thinking about "revolutions" in technology, training, and implementation, in his study "England's fourteenth-century RMA," Rogers again suffers somewhat from a monistic focus on the mid-fourteenth century. There can be no doubt that Rogers is correct that King Edward employed an effective combination of heavily armed men at arms, positioned in the center of his battle line with archers deployed on the flanks, in his numerous battlefield victories. However, it is also the case that these very same tactics were employed with the same devastating effectiveness by the city militia of Strasbourg in 1259. Indeed, the very notion of a fourteenth-century infantry revolution, a model to which Rogers' grants considerable authority, cannot be sustained when the battlefield actions of previous centuries are examined in detail.

Taken together, the essays published by Rogers over the past seventeen years have had an important, and positive impact on the study of the tactics and strategies of the early phases of the Hundred Years' War. Rogers is owed a considerable debt of gratitude, in addition, for his discovery and publication of new sources of information that shed light on critical battles fought during Edward III's reign. However, Rogers' efforts to extrapolate from Edward III's reign to other periods of history suggests that caution is warranted when making assumptions about earlier periods, and indicates the continuing value of diachronic studies of military history.

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