

## **John's use of mercenaries**

Some Historians have seen John's excessive use of mercenaries as one of the main reasons for his unpopularity throughout the empire.

Both Richard & Philip used mercenaries – but they did not put them in charge of large sections of the Norman administration.

**Martin Algais** - seneschal of Gascony

**Gerard of Athee** – seneschal of Touraine

**Brandin** – seneschal of La Marche

BUT the most notorious was **Lupescar** (aka **Louvrecaire** 'The Wolf') who was given considerable power in Normandy.

He alienated many Normans by his barefaced greed

e.g. the abbess of Caen had to pay John protection money to ensure that Lupescar did not despoil the abbey's estates further.

The biographer of William Marshal commented: "Do you know why King John was unable to keep the love of his people? It was because Lupescar mistreated them and plundered them as if he were in enemy territory."

It was fortunate for John that these mercenary captains never united – John's position might have been threatened. Their greedy ambitions were aimed at each other. Richard's favourite **Mercadier** was assassinated by one of Brandin's henchmen.

Mercadier said of Richard: "I fought for him loyally and strenuously, never opposed his will, was prompt in obedience to his commands, and because of this service I gained his esteem and was placed in command of his army."

John felt he could trust these men but he had no firm control over them:

- ❖ They had special privileges
- ❖ Special protection for their booty
- ❖ Right to keep & ransom their own prisoners
- ❖ Right to govern their castles & estates according to their own will rather than local laws & customs

"It is difficult to overstate the reign of terror unleashed throughout the Angevin empire when John foolishly let these mercenary captains off the leash." **F McLynn**

It is ironic that in 1204 Lupescar deserted John and surrendered Falaise to Philip.