A NOTE ON 'PURSUIT' IN ARRIAN[1]

Arrian was better qualified to understand the nature and significance of 'the pursuit' in Macedonian warfare than any modern scholar. He had himself fought and commanded in a very similar kind of warfare, and he was keenly interested in the study of military tactics. He was also better informed about the pursuits which Alexander had conducted, because he was able to use the accounts of Alexander's contemporaries, Ptolemy and Aristobulus. Anyone today who wishes to question the veracity of Arrian's reports of these pursuits cannot do so of his own experience. He should therefore turn to comparable pursuits of recent times which have been reported accurately beyond any shadow of doubt.

One reporter is Colonel (later Field-Marshall Sir) A. P. Wavell, a man not unlike Arrian in his career and interests. He too was a regular soldier and commander, a student of tactics and generalship, and an excellent writer. His subject was the Palestinian campaign of 1917, and he was particularly impressed by the 'pursuits'. These were carried out by cavalry, as one might expect. Allenby, he thought, planned his cavalry pursuits either to intercept a large portion of the retiring forces or to shatter their morale. 'Even a direct pursuit', wrote Wavell, 'if relentlessly pressed, might bring about their [the enemy's] disintegration.'[2] For us the pursuit which followed the Battles of Megiddo is the most relevant. At one point the infantry, attacking at dawn, gained a rapid success and opened the way for immediate pursuit by the cavalry, which had been brought up in readiness. As Wavell put it, on 19 September 'the 60th Division [infantry] . . . broke through all enemy defences at a great pace and by 7 a.m. secured a bridgehead . . . through which the 5th Cavalry Division passed'.[3] At another point the 7th Division (infantry) punched a gap in the enemy line, and the 4th Cavalry Division rode through the gap. By 4.30 p.m. on 20 September these Cavalry Divisions had covered some 70 miles in 34 hours,[4] but their pursuit was far from completed. 'The sustained pursuit to Damascus and Aleppo is remark-able' wrote Wavell, 'by reason of the distances covered, even though the opposition was not very formidable. The 5th Cavalry Division, for instance, marched nearly 600 miles in 38 consecutive days.'[5]

As reported by Arrian, the pursuit of Darius after the battle of Gaugamela extended into the day after the battle. 'The cavalry with Alexander' covered some 600 stades (3.15.5), which is about 110 kilometres or 69 miles, and in the course of this pursuit Alexander rested his men and the horses during the evening until midnight and then pressed on. In the course of the battle and the pursuit the Companion Cavalry lost nearly half its horses as a result of wounds and exhaustion (3.15.6). In the sources which Arrian used (6.11.5) the approximate distance varied between 600 stades, favoured by Arrian himself, and 500 stades, and if we adopt the *via media* at 550 stades or so the comparison with the pursuit by Allenby's cavalry on 19 and 20 September is close in terms of distance

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[1] Mr. G. T. Griffith and Professor A. B. Bosworth have kindly read and commented on the first draft of this note.

[2] A. P. Wavell, *The Palestine Campaigns* (3rd edn., 1931), p.149.

[3] Ibid., p.207.

[4] p.210.

[5] p.235.

and time. Indeed each commander rested his horses and his men for five or six hours on the first day of the pursuit. But Alexander's pursuit was the more remarkable, because his cavalry had been engaged in the battle whereas Allenby's cavalry were fresh.

Some months later Alexander carried out what Wavell might have called 'a sustained pursuit'. At the start Alexander took not only cavalry but also infantry, because Darius was reported to have some 3,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry (3.19.5), the latter including excellent Greek mercenaries. In the first part of the pursuit, from Ecbatana to Rhagae in eleven days, 'many soldiers were left behind through exhaustion and many horses died, but even so he pressed on' (3.20.1). Five days of rest followed. Then he pressed on 'even more', taking a force of cavalry and at first 'the strongest and lightest-armed infantrymen' (3.21.2) and finally only mounted men, because 'he knew that the men on foot could not keep up with him riding fast' (3.21.7). On the last night, between dusk and dawn, when everyone was mounted, he covered up to 400 stades (3.21.9), i.e. 74 kilometres or 46 miles. We may compare the pursuit by Allenby's cavalry with the first part of Alexander's pursuit: nearly 600 miles in 38 consecutive days and some 180 miles from Ecbatana to Rhagae near Teheran in 11 days, i.e. some 16 miles a day in each case. But there is no comparison between the two for the latter part of Alexander's pursuit, because both the number of days and the distance involved in his pursuit are in dispute; but it is clear from Arrian's account that he went much faster and only relatively few horses reached his goal.[6]

These British and Macedonian pursuits were indeed remarkable. In the opinion of Wavell 'perhaps the outstanding lesson is the value of mobility. In a sustained pursuit mobility is dependent mainly on the personal will and determination of the Commander-in-chief, which alone can keep alive the impetus of the troops.'[7] The same lesson appears in the report by Arrian (3.21.6). 'Alexander decided that he must pursue with the utmost vigour. Men and horses alike were exhausted by their continuous efforts, but even so Alexander led them on.' How were men and horses maintained during these long pursuits? 'The cavalry', wrote Wavell, 'were able to live very largely on the country during the pursuit to Damascus and Aleppo, and the wastage of horseflesh was comparatively small.'[8] So too at one stage in the pursuit Alexander's cavalry and infantry took 'nothing but their weapons and two days' rations' (3.21.2−3); but in the following week they must

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[6] Here I am giving only Arrian's account. The tradition that Alexander rode 3,300 stades, i.e. just over 375 miles in 11 days is in Plutarch, *Alexander* 42.6. When Tarn cited the tradition in *CAH* 6.385, he was not misunderstanding Arrian's account and committing 'a serious factual error', as Milns seems to suppose in *Historia* 15 (1966), 256. Milns may be right in criticizing me for following that tradition. But he himself commits a 'factual error' in saying that I accepted a march of 'c. 52 miles from Rhagae to the Caspian Gates', a march which he attributes to Arrian (in fact Arrian 3.20.1−4 is far less specific, because to him Rhagae and the Caspian Gates were districts, not

points). What I did say was that Alexander's picked force covered 'fifty miles in the final night to find Darius stabbed' (*A History of Greece to 322 B.C.*, p.622). That was a different march (Arrian 3.21.9), one which even Milns seems not to reject. Cf. also C. Neumann, 'A note on Alexander's March Rates', *Historia* 20 (1971), 196−8. He is concerned not so much with pursuit by cavalry as the speed of the army, which he substantiates convincingly by giving analogies from European history.

[7] Op. cit., p.168.

[8] 238; the 5th Cavalry Division losing 'only 21 per cent. of its horses' (233; cf. p.167 note, and 223).

have commandeered what they needed as they went along. We may assume that in the early part of these pursuits grooms with remounts kept up with the cavalrymen and that horses were also requisitioned where available.

The effect of these pursuits was devastating to the enemy. 'By the evening of September 20th', wrote Wavell, 'thirty-six hours after the opening of the battle, the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies were already doomed to destruction.'[9] The demoralization of the Persian cavalry under the pressure of the Macedonian pursuit after the Battle of Issus was graphically described by Arrian (2.11.3). 'In the flight the horses of the Persian suffered severely as they were carrying heavily-armed riders; and the cavalrymen themselves, as they fled along narrow roads in great clusters, in panic and in disorder, were damaged as much by being trodden underfoot by their fellow-countrymen as by the pursuit of their enemy.' And it was the immediate pursuit after the Battle of Gaugamela which dispelled the prospect of any large-scale recovery by the Persian forces. The Macedonian infantry was of course necessary for the winning of the set battles, but it was the cavalry pursuit which shattered the resistance of the enemy at a very small cost in casualties to the victor. 'To sum up,' wrote Wavell, 'the campaigns show the great power which cavalry exercised by their mobility . . . and the value of speed on the battlefield in producing results and in saving casualties.'[10]

Such cavalry pursuits, alien to earlier Greek warfare, were probably introduced into Balkan warfare by Philip. The defeat of Bardylis in 358 B.C., achieved by the superiority of the Macedonian cavalry and the fighting power of the picked infantry led by Philip, was followed by 'the pursuit over a great distance'. The pursuit no doubt was general, but the emphasis on its distance and the enormous casualties of the Illyrians—exceeding 7,000 according to Diod. Sic. 16.4.7—indicate that the cavalry played the major part in the pursuit. In 344/3 B.C. Philip was wounded 'when pursuing the Illyrian Pleuratus on the occasion when 150 of the Companions were wounded and Hippostratus son of Amyntas died' (Didymus, *In D.* col. 12.64); as Didymus gives the occasion in each case (cf. 12.45 and 13.5, another pursuit), and as Philip's 'Companions' were cavalrymen, this too was a very considerable pursuit carried out by cavalry. As I have argued elsewhere, it was probably in the Zeta Valley to the north of Scodra.[11] The third recorded pursuit of Illyrians, in 335 B.C., was discussed by me in a recent article.[12] On the basis of the identifications which I then proposed, Alexander's cavalry pursued for a distance of about 100 kilometres, i.e. some 62 miles.[13] The chief target of these long pursuits was the enemy

[9] p.211.
[10] p.239.
[11] See my article 'The Kingdoms of Illyria *circa* 400—167 B.C.', *BSA* 61 (1966), 245 f.
[12] 'Alexander's Campaign in Illyria', *JHS* 94 (1974), 66—87.
[13] The distance is of course different if other identifications are made. For example, N. Ceka and L. Papajani, 'La route de la vallée du Shkumbin', *Studia Albanica* 1972.1.94 with fig. 3, have proposed to place the battle at Lower Selcë in the upper valley of the Shkumbi. The pursuit then would have been a matter of some 50 kilometres. Frano Prendi has suggested Symizë, which would mean a pursuit of some 70 kilometres. On the other hand if the battle is located inside Macedonia e.g. in old Eordaea, the pursuit would be a matter of some 160 kilometres. The remark of A. B. Bosworth in 'Errors in Arrian', *CQ* N.S. 26 (1976), i.124, 'Wherever one locates the site of Pellion, the mountains of the Taulantians were some 100 kilometres from the battle site', makes no sense to me.

cavalrymen, because they constituted the ruling class in the tribal kingdoms of
Dardania and Taulantia; Philip was determined to subjugate them personally and
thus to bring about the capitulation of the kings. Alexander had the same
purpose both in Illyria and in Asia. Of course, if the surrounding countryside
was flat, the enemy infantrymen suffered heavily; but where mountains were
close at hand, as in 335 B.C., they soon got out of reach.

I end with some remarks about the pursuit of 335 B.C., which has been the
subject of some misunderstanding. Alexander had planned a surprise attack,
evidently as dawn broke, by his whole army. Himself leading the way with a
chosen force of infantry he crossed the river unobserved while it was still dark.
Then 'instead of waiting for the concentration of all his troops' he delivered the
attack with his chosen force and broke through the end of the enemy line.
'The rest of the army had been ordered to follow' (1.6.10), and they were now
passing through the gap opened up by the vanguard. When the enemy finally
broke into a disorderly and panicky flight, the stage was set for the next act, as
at Megiddo in the Palestinian campaign.[14] The Dardanian king, Cleitus, took
refuge (καταφυγών) in the near-by fortified city of Pelium, which had been held
successfully by 'many of his [Cleitus'] best troops' (1.5.8); for he knew only too
well what was to follow if he stayed in the open. The sentence describing the
pursuit is as follows (1.6.11):

Ἐγένετο δὲ ἡ δίωξις τοῖς ἀμφὶ Ἀλέξανδρον μέχρι πρὸς τὰ ὄρη τῶν Ταυλαντίων· ὅσοι δὲ
καὶ ἀπέφυγον αὐτῶν, γυμνοὶ τῶν ὅπλων διεσώθησαν.

The pursuit by those with Alexander was as far as up to the mountains of the Taulantians;
and as many of them [the enemy] as did escape saved themselves by throwing away their
arms.

My translation of the first part of the sentence, with which A. B. Bosworth
expressed agreement,[15] is different from that proposed to me by G. T. Griffith
and now given by P. A. Brunt in the new Loeb edition; for they take the opening
and the closing words together and translate as follows: 'Alexander's men carried
on the pursuit of the Taulantians as far as the mountains; those who did escape
survived with the loss of their arms.' If we ask the question, 'what mountains?',
the answer has to be the mountains mentioned in the preceding text, namely 'the
mountains around the city which were lofty and wooded' (1.5.6; also 1.5.11—12
and 1.6.6—7). But the traversing of a few hundred yards to them would not
have been sufficient to merit a mention of 'the pursuit' in a narrative so much
abbreviated.[16] Moreover, the implication of μέχρι is that the pursuit was a long
one, 'as far as' rather than 'as short as'. Again, the pursuit, as I understand it,
was of the enemy, both Dardanians[17] and Taulantians—not just of the
Taulantians, and the word αὐτῶν refers, like αὐτοῖς twice in 1.6.9 and once in
1.6.10, to the enemy as a whole. On the other hand 'pursuit to the mountains of

[14] The preliminaries too were evidently
similar. 'During darkness the 4th and 5th
Cavalry Divisions moved up . . . and placed
themselves close behind the infantry . . .
The mounted troops were thus ready to
take immediate advantage of the infantry
success' (Wavell, op. cit., p.208).

[15] See my acknowledgement in JHS 94
(1974), 85 n.34, where I discussed this
passage. However, I do not share Bosworth's
opinion that this is the only possible

meaning of the Greek (loc. cit.).

[16] For examples of such abbreviation
in this campaign see my article in JHS
94.78, 83, and 85. We have only to
compare the fragments of Callisthenes and
the account of Arrian for the battle of
Issus to see how much Arrian abbreviated.

[17] In JHS 94.86 I argued that the
Dardanians held the right wing which
Alexander broke and routed.

the Taulantians', which is the direct meaning of the word-order, indicates a long, worthwhile, and damaging pursuit in accordance with the precedents set by Philip.

The remark of A. B. Bosworth, that 'a pursuit of those dimensions [100 kilometres] is, I think, impossible', takes no note of Alexander's pursuit after the Battle of Gaugamela as narrated by Arrian[18] or of later pursuits such as those in Palestine. Rather, a pursuit of 100 kilometres is clearly and demonstrably possible, not to say probable. Further, it seems to Bosworth 'incredible that Alexander should have divided his army and taken his infantry on a pursuit several days long.' A division of one's forces is inevitable in a pursuit, because the success of a pursuit depends upon speed. That Alexander could afford without serious risk to divide his army *after* the rout of the enemy should not be doubted when we remember that he had so divided his army *before* the victory (1.5.9–10). The basis of Bosworth's uneasiness seems to be his belief that Alexander took his infantry on the pursuit and left his cavalry out of it. Such a pursuit as Bosworth envisages would indeed have been futile; for the Macedonian infantry had no chance whatever of overtaking the cavalrymen and light-armed skirmishers who made up the bulk of the enemy forces (1.5.11), and the leaving of the Macedonian cavalry behind would have been an act of incomparable folly. However, there is no need to attribute such strange arrangements to Arrian or (if we accept Arrian) to Alexander; for they occur, as it seems to me, not in the text of Arrian but in Bosworth's interpretation of the text.

The source of the difference in interpretation lies in the phrase τοῖς ἀμφὶ Ἀλέξανδρον. The literal meaning is not in doubt: 'the pursuit . . . by those with Alexander'.[19] The context of pursuit means to me that they were cavalry; for the precedents of pursuit make it clear that the king and the Companion Cavalry headed any long pursuit. Only three days earlier Alexander had used these Companions, τοῖς ἀμφὶ αὐτὸν ἑταίροις (1.6.5), to deliver a cavalry charge; and it was they who had held off an enemy attack (1.6.7 twice). Bosworth does not give the reason for his supposition that those with Alexander on the pursuit were only infantry, but it may be that he was influenced by the fact that Alexander himself had taken part in the dawn attack at the head of an infantry force. But Alexander switched readily from the operational command of one arm to that of another, as he had done in this same chapter at 1.6.7, commanding his Companion cavalry one moment and leading his infantrymen across the river the next. Whereas Bosworth thinks that Arrian 'created a [non-existent] pursuit of 100 kilometres', it seems to me that Bosworth has postulated an unprecedented pursuit by infantry alone. The error, I think, lies with Bosworth and not Arrian. Rather Arrian and his sources, Ptolemy[20] and Aristobulus, were entirely dependable in the matter of this pursuit.

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[18] I cited this pursuit in *JHS* 94.86 n.34. Not so Bosworth; perhaps he regards Arrian's account of that pursuit as erroneous.

[19] Compare 'those with Cleitus and Glaucias' in the same chapter (1.6.9) and generally as in Diod. Sic. 16.86.4; see also *JHS* 94.87 n.36.

[20] Ptolemy, a cavalryman, presumably took part in the pursuit. Arrian mentioned his own knowledge of the northern Balkans (8.4.15); he may have travelled along the Via Egnatia and so have passed the southern side of 'the mountains of the Taulantians' by Bradashesh where 'mutatio ad Quintum' was a station on the road (see my article in *JRS* 64 (1974), 188).