

**“Unconquered Louis Rejoiced In Iron”:
Military History in East Francia under King Louis the German (c. 825-876)**

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By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Grand Strategy.....	64
Chapter Three: Campaign Strategy.....	148
Chapter Four: The Fighting Force.....	213
Chapter Five: Taking the Field—Logistics and Travel.....	296
Conclusion.....	349
Maps.....	358
Bibliography.....	360

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Campaigning on the Danube.....358

Figure 2: Treaty of Verdun and Partition of the Middle Kingdom at Meersen.....359

ABBREVIATIONS

- AB** – *Annales Bertiniani*. Georg Waitz, ed., in *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, 5. Hanover: 1883.
- AF** – *Annales Fuldenses*. Friedrich Kurze, ed., in *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, 7. Hanover: 1891.
- AH** – *Annales Hildesheimenses*. Georg Waitz, ed., in *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, 8. Hanover: 1878.
- AI** – *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti*. H. Breslau, ed., in *MGH Scriptores* 30.2. Leipzig: 1934.
- ARF** – *Annales Regni Francorum*. Friedrich Kurze, ed., in *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, 6. Hanover: 1895.
- AX** – *Annales Xantenses*. Bernard von Simson, ed., in *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*, 12. Hanover: 1909.
- MGH** – Monumenta Germaniae Historica.
- ULD** – *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Deutschen*. Paul Kehr, ed., in *MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum*, Vol. 1. Berlin: 1934.
- ULdJ** – *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Jüngereren*. Paul Kehr, ed., in *MGH Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum*, Vol. 1. Berlin: 1934.

PREFACE

The present work is a study of all aspects of military history in East Francia under King Louis the German (c. 825-876). Its intent is to challenge the existing historiographical tradition, discussed in chapter one, which portrays Louis the German as a king who made excessive concessions to the aristocracy, thereby limiting his ability to field armies and project military force. This picture of ninth-century warfare relies excessively on the idea of a fundamental transformation of the nature of the medieval military from the infantry levies of the ancient world into smaller, cavalry- and noble-dominated forces. In an environment where most military encounters took the form of sieges, this view is no longer tenable.

Herein, I examine Louis the German's military institutions, which drew upon the examples established by earlier Carolingians, especially Charlemagne. It is structured from "big picture" goals to minutiae. Chapter two addresses Louis's grand strategy, the overarching military goals of his reign. His major intent was to retain intact the portion of the *regnum Francorum* that he inherited upon the death of his father, Louis the Pious, in 840. Louis the German also did not shy away from opportunities to expand his territory. Chapter three discusses campaign strategy, which was necessarily affected by grand strategy. The king's long-term goals in each region meant that campaigns progressed differently, depending upon the desired outcome. Chapter four concerns the armies, including military organization, training, arms, morale, and tactics. Chapter five discusses travel and logistics, the supply and provisioning of armies on the march. It also examines the effect of weather, climate, and famine upon East Frankish armies. All translations from Latin or German by the author, unless explicitly noted otherwise.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

During the latter half of the twentieth century, in the era after two world wars and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, military history fell into general disfavor, and as a result, it became a relatively neglected topic. Military history does not only concern the study of set-piece battles and generalship; there are important social and economic components, particularly in the pre-modern world. Therefore, to neglect the field of military history does a great disservice to the study and understanding of the medieval western world, since in this atmosphere, most societies tended to expend the greater part of their surplus human and material resources on preparing for and waging war. Recently, early medieval scholarship has gone a long way towards developing a good understanding of the influence of warfare upon Merovingian, early Carolingian, and early Ottonian society.¹ Despite the publication of several excellent recent political biographies of the later Carolingian kings,² greatly lacking are dedicated military histories of the later Carolingians, which would elucidate the effect of endemic warfare in several theatres simultaneously upon society.

As will be examined below, traditional scholarship claims that constant fighting bankrupted royal treasuries and compromised central authority, allowing power to grow increasingly localized as various powerful magnates usurped for themselves powers

¹ Bernard Bachrach, *Merovingian Military Organization* (Minneapolis, 1972); idem, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, 2001); idem, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns (768-777): A Diplomatic and Military Analysis* (Leiden, 2013); David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth Century Germany* (Woodbridge, 2012).

² Egon Boshof, *Ludwig Der Fromme* (Darmstadt, Primus, 1996); Eric Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict Under Louis the German, 817-876* (Ithaca, 2006); Wilfried Hartmann, *Ludwig der Deutsche* (Darmstadt, 2002); Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992).

which ought to have fallen to the Carolingian kings.³ This vacuum of royal power, brought upon the Carolingian state by the kings themselves, by buying magnate loyalty with gifts of land, privileges, and immunities, caused aristocratic resistance to central authority to remove the king's ability even to summon the royal military forces to challenge local authority. The accuracy of such claims remains to be ascertained.

The present work is a systematic analysis of Louis the German's (d. 876) military agenda and war machine, scrutinizing long term strategy, tactics, the raising of armies, the training of troops, logistics, morale, and military effectiveness. In every aspect of his military, from grand strategy to the minutiae of military organization and logistics, Louis deliberately relied upon the administrative systems and precedents established by his Carolingian predecessors, particularly Charlemagne; such institutions survived into the tenth century, to underpin the military efforts of the early Ottonian kings as well. Throughout this study, I shall examine whether it is fair to characterize Louis the German, as some scholars recently have, as a shrewd and adept commander who proved capable of effectively projecting military force over long distances and often in various theatres simultaneously. With regard to the *status quaestionis* presented below, I shall explore Eric Goldberg's idea that Louis's long term strategy was to reunite the *regnum Francorum* under his own authority, which requires slight modification on a basis that Goldberg himself identifies.⁴

³ This trend, it has been argued, even began in the later years of the reign of Charlemagne, when offensive warfare had largely ceased and the imperial administration proved "skeletal" and inadequate. F.L. Ganshof, "The Last Period of Charlemagne's Reign, a Study in Decomposition," and idem, "Charlemagne's Failure," both of which are available in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy*, Janet Sondheimer, trans. (Ithaca, 1971), pp. 240-255 and 256-260, respectively.

⁴ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 2.

Well trained as a military commander and ever a shrewd opportunist, Louis was acutely aware of the capabilities of his forces and did not engage them in overly risky battles or sieges. Like his half-brother, Charles the Bald (d. 877), he chose to pursue strategies of battle avoidance on several occasions, rather than committing his forces to potentially disastrous engagements in the mold of the Battle of Fontenoy (841), from which both siblings learned a hard lesson as a result of the enormous casualties suffered by their combined forces.⁵ The late Carolingian kings were not endowed with infinite resources; their armies were not invincible machines of conquest in the mold of Alexander the Great. Discretion, however, has been said to be the better part of valor, and Louis the German certainly proved a good enough general to know when to attack and when to reserve his forces for more favorable conditions.

Much of Louis's early military career consisted of relatively simple consolidation of his local authority in his Bavarian heartland—the region he ruled initially as a sub-king under his father Louis the Pious (d. 840)—and indecisive warfare between himself, his brothers, and his father. At Fontenoy, however, while the combined forces of Louis the German and Charles the Bald successfully defeated their eldest brother Lothar, they also suffered disastrous casualties.⁶ This was a formative experience for Louis and Charles, and both brothers hesitated to commit their armies to large-scale pitched battles against one another in later conflicts. Certainly, Lothar too learned a hard lesson and would

⁵ The events of 869-870 serve as an excellent example which will be discussed in detail below. See *AF* and *AB*, 869-870.

⁶ See the accounts of the battle in the *AF*, *AB*, and *AX*, 841, and especially Nithard, II.10; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 102-103 for an analysis of casualties.

generally follow the terms of the Treaty of Verdun (843) for the rest of his life—it was his death in 855 that threw Louis and Charles into renewed conflict.⁷

In short, having been given the same military training at their father's court, and with forces comprised of similarly equipped soldiers trained in similar tactics, the half-brothers realized that under normal circumstances, their armies were a relatively even match. Victory in a pitched battle between such forces could only be achieved at a Pyrrhic price, which both kings were unwilling to pay. Still, Louis attempted to gain territory at the expense of Charles and his other Carolingian relatives at any chance he believed was available to him, often through more diplomatic means, such as trying to sway seemingly disgruntled magnates to his side. Louis also did not hesitate to attempt campaigns in other theatres, as evidenced by his frequent offensive expeditions against Slavic territories beyond his eastern frontier, most notably in Moravia.

Louis the German made repeated attempts at territorial conquest in the western portion of his kingdom. He also exerted royal authority and control across the eastern frontier. He made no real attempt to indicate that his kingdom's borders were firmly defined, as he was quite willing to expand at the expense of enemies. The kingdom featured substantial march regions in the east, whose confines were fluid and blurry. Louis also intended the East Frankish kingdom to be divided among his sons upon his death. Taken together, these observations make clear that the old German nationalist

⁷ *AF, AB*, 855.

teleology, represented by Waitz and Kehr, that presents Louis as the originator of the kernel of the German state is a seriously anachronistic exaggeration.⁸

Primary Sources for Louis the German and East Francia

A considerable corpus of administrative evidence exists from the East Frankish court; numerous charters survive which give insight into the workings of the royal administration that undergirded military operations.⁹ As charters are the main surviving evidence produced by the royal court, this project will lean heavily upon them. Charters, which are essentially documents that record grants of land or confirmations of landholding and tax collecting privileges,¹⁰ are inextricably tied to military affairs. In

⁸ For examples of which, see Georg Waitz, *Über die Grundung des Deutschen Reichs durch den Vertrag zur Verdun* (Kiel, 1843); Paul Kehr, "Die Kanzlei Ludwigs des Deutschen," *Abhandlungen der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften: Philosophisch-historische Klasse* (Berlin, 1932). As Hartmann notes, Johannes Fried *Der Weg in die Geschichte. Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin, 1994) has sensibly tempered these ideas, claiming that Germany did not come together as a unit under Louis the German, but his influence contributed much to the genesis of the future kingdom, which might be traced more accurately to the 11th century (here 417). For more of the historiography of this question refer to Hartmann *Ludwig der Deutsche* 1-6; Carlrichard Bruhl *Deutschland-Frankreich: Die Geburt zweier Völker* (Cologne, 1990) 137-141; Niklas Lenhard-Schramm *Konstrukteure der Nation. Geschichtswissenschaftler als politischer Akteure in Vormärz und Revolution 1848-1849* (Münster, 2014), particularly 94-107 for Waitz; Goldberg *Struggle for Empire* 4-7.

⁹ Paul Kehr, ed., *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Deutschen, Karlomanns, und Ludwigs des Jüngeren*, in MGH *Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum*, Vol. 1 (Berlin, 1934). Charters also survive from the other ninth century Carolingian kings, see esp. Paul Kehr, ed., *Die Urkunden Karls III.* MGH *Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum* vol. 2 (Berlin, 1936-37); Theodor Schieffer, ed., *Die Urkunden Lothars I und Lothars II*, MGH *Diplomata Karolinorum* vol 3 (Berlin, 1966); Konrad Wanner, ed., *Die Urkunden Ludwigs II*, MGH *Diplomata Karolinorum* vol 4 (Munich, 1994); Engelbert Mühlbacher, ed., *Die Urkunden Pippins, Karlmanns, und Karls des Grossen*, MGH *Diplomata Karolinorum* vol 1 (Berlin, 1956); Theodor Schieffer, ed., *Die Urkunden Zwentibolds und Ludwigs des Kindes*, MGH *Diplomata regum Germaniae ex stirpe Karolinorum* vol 4 (Berlin, 1960). Theo Kölzer, Jens Peter Clausen, Daniel Eichler, eds., *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Frommen*, MGH *Diplomata Karolinorum* (Weisbaden, 2016). Georges Tessier, ed., *Receuil des Actes Charles II le Chauve, roi de France*, 3 vols (Paris, 1943-55).

¹⁰ On charters in Carolingian government, see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), 77-126; idem, "A King on the Move: the Place of an Itinerant Court in Charlemagne's Government," in Jeroen Duindam et al., eds., *Royal Courts in Dynastic States and Empires: A Global Perspective* (Leiden, 2011); Warren C. Brown et al., eds., *Documentary Culture and the Laity in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2012), particularly the contributions of Matthew Innes, "Archives, Documents and Landowners in Carolingian Francia," 152-188, and Hans Hummer, "The Production and Preservation of Documents in Francia: the Evidence of Cartularies," 189-230; Alice Rio, "Charters, Law Codes, and Formulae: the Franks between Theory and Practice," in Paul

return for a grant of land, the local authority upon whom the king bestowed it would be expected to utilize the holding to provide for the local defense, to contribute to the logistical supply of the expeditionary host when it passed through the region, and to send soldiers to the army.¹¹ Louis issued his first surviving charter in 829, and he continued to issue them throughout his reign, with some halting interruption, which possibly could be due to lost documents.¹²

Patterns can often be identified that confirm Louis's military intent in issuing charters. During the first years of his reign as ruler of Bavaria (c. 825-840), Louis the German issued charters primarily in that region to shore up his central base of noble support and military power. At this point, as established by the 817 *ordinatio imperii*, he was still a sub-king of the region under his father, Louis the Pious, and the pattern continued during the turbulent civil war years following his father's death in 840¹³. Later in his reign, when he prepared to campaign in Moravia, he issued charters to supporters in the regions around the important Sava and Drava river networks to ensure access to

Fouracre and David Ganz, eds., *Frankland: The Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester, 2008), 7-27.

¹¹ From this model, scholars like F.L. Ganshof derived the roots of the concept of feudalism, a debate which is addressed in greater detail below. Also see Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 60, on immunities, which are the key to understanding the Carolingian recruitment process. Of course, since late antiquity and on into the early Carolingian period, anyone of fighting age and shape was required to provide for the local defense, but those upon whom the king bestowed benefices had particular interest in exhibiting their loyalty in order to ensure that they retained them. See Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 52-54.

¹² Most notably from September 837 to December 840 (ULD I.25, I.26), during the period of the civil struggle against his father, and June 868 to March 870 (ULD I.129, I.130), when the king was planning a massive campaign season in 869 that included fielding three separate armies; he was also taken seriously ill during 869, to the point that his death seemed imminent, *AF* 869.

¹³ *Ordinatio Imperii*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.136.

these rivers, an invaluable logistical asset in the transportation of goods to support his host on the march.¹⁴

To supplement the evidence of the royal charters, there exist several collections of monastic charters from the important monasteries of the East Frankish kingdom like St.-Emmeram at Regensburg, Friesing, and Passau.¹⁵ These typically record grants of land to the monasteries, either by the king, another powerful landholder, or even smallholders giving a gift to provide for the good of their souls. These charters are useful in ascertaining the magnitude of the holdings that these important centers of power possessed. Thence conclusions can be drawn regarding the obligations of the abbots to provide troops and supplies to the royal host. Additionally, they are useful in prosopography, in order to ascertain what sorts of people were giving to the monastery and the landed wealth of individuals and institutions.¹⁶

¹⁴ Charles Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: the Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788-907* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 132-140; Wilhelm Störmer, "Zur Frage der Funktionen des kirchlichen Fernbesitzes im Gebiet der Ostalpen vom 8. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert," in H. Beumann and W. Schröder, ed., *Die Transalpinen Verbindungen der Bayern, Alemannen, und Franken bis zum 10. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen, Thorbecke, 1987), 379-403.

¹⁵ *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Freising*, vol. 1: 744-926. Ed. Theodor Bitterauf. Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte, n.s.4 (Munich, 1905). *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Passau*. Ed. Max Heuwieser. Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen und deutschen Geschichte, n.s.6 (Munich, 1930). *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Regensburg und des Klosters S. Emmeram*. Ed. Josef Widemann. Quellen und Erörterungen zur bayerischen Geschichte, n.s.8 (Munich, 1943). *Traditiones Wissenburgenses: Die Urkunden des Klosters Weissenburg, 661-864*. Ed. Karl Glöckner and Anton Doll (Darmstadt, 1979). *Die alten Mönchlisten und Traditionen von Corvey*, vol. 1. Klemens Honselmann, ed. (Paderborn, 1982). *Codex Diplomaticus Fuldensis*, Ernst Friedrich Johann Dronke, ed. (Kassel, 1850). *Codex Lauresheimensis*, Karl Glockner, ed. (Darmstadt, 1929-1936).

¹⁶ This study's focus will not be upon in depth prosopography as such, but in the absence of other evidence, these sorts of charters are an excellent way of determining who occupied what offices at the monasteries at any particular time. Excellent examples of such uses are to be found in the works of Wilhelm Störmer, *Adelsgruppen im Früh- und Hochmittelalterlichen Bayern* (München, 1972), and idem, *Fruher Adel: Studien zur Politischen Führungsschicht im Fränkisch-Deutschen Reich vom 8. Bis 11. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1973).

In addition to the substantial charter evidence, several chronicles provide a considerable body of valuable military information. The most prominent among them are the *Annals of Fulda*, the *Annals of St.-Bertin*, the *Annals of Xanten*, the *Royal Frankish Annals*, and Nithard's *Four Books of Histories*.¹⁷ None of these chronicles can be read uncritically as plain text; taken independently, each work suffers from the typical problems associated with chronicle history, such as authorial bias and limited knowledge of events. When read in conjunction and with a judicious application of *Sachkritik*,¹⁸ however, these sources can be used to fact check one another and glean the closest possible picture of historical reality.

The *Royal Frankish Annals* (*ARF*) treat the earliest chronological period of Louis the German's life, running from 741-829 and encompassing the reign of Charlemagne (768-814) and the early part of the reign of his son, Louis the Pious (814-840). Commissioned and promoted by the Carolingian court, the *Royal Frankish Annals* constitute a propagandistic attempt "to convey to posterity the Carolingian version of Carolingian history." Authorship is uncertain; Einhard and various clerical figures are among those suggested. The *Royal Frankish Annals*, as official court history, deal primarily in politics and warfare and also provide a good deal of climatic detail, which is

¹⁷ The Latin editions of these sources that will be utilized herein are those of the Monumenta Germaniae Historica (henceforth MGH) series *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi*. The separate editions are: Friedrich Kurze, ed., *Annales Fuldenses* (Hanover, 1891); Georg Waitz, ed., *Annales Bertiniani* (Hanover, 1883); Bernard von Simson, ed., *Annales Xantenses et Annales Vedastini* (Hanover, 1909); Friedrich Kurze, ed., *Annales Regni Francorum* (Hanover, 1895); Nithard, *Historiarum Libri IV*, Ernst Müller, ed. (Hanover, 1907). To a lesser extent also see the Hildesheim Annals, Georg Waitz, ed., *Annales Hildesheimenses* (Hanover, 1878); and H. Breslau, ed., *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* (Leipzig, 1926).

¹⁸ Criticism based on objective reality and brute fact. See Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare* 161-162 and n. 6, 350 for the use of the method by Delbrück. The term has a slightly different connotation when applied to biblical exegesis, on which see Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *The Handbook of Biblical Criticism*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY, Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 166.

illustrative of God's impact on human affairs. They were used as source material and continued by the authors of the *Annals of St.-Bertin*, the *Annals of Xanten*, and the *Annals of Fulda*.¹⁹

The *Annals of Fulda* (AF) were composed primarily during the ninth century from c. 830-901, perhaps stretching a bit later in a lost manuscript. There remains a great deal of uncertainty regarding their authorship, though the traditional view points to a conglomeration of three authors: Einhard up to 838 (the same Einhard responsible for the famous *Vita* of Charlemagne), Rudolf of Fulda until his death in 865, and Meginhard from that point until 901.²⁰ Regardless of the authorship, the *Annals of Fulda* exhibit a predictable bias towards the East Frankish realm and show a keen interest in weather, climate and the natural world, particularly miraculous occurrences and natural disasters. They also provide a good deal of military information, albeit usually presented in very terse language. The lack of concrete detail regarding military matters is unsurprising; it was highly unlikely that a monk should ever have any reason to witness a campaign or a battle, though the army might well pass through the monastery's lands, during which journeys the abbot would be expected to provide supplies for the army as the king required. Rather, the authors would have heard of the events through the royal assembly.

¹⁹ Rosamond McKitterick, "Constructing the Past in the Early Middle Ages: the Case of the Royal Frankish Annals," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6th series, Vol. 7, (1997), 101-129; Bernhard Scholz and Barbara Rogers, *Carolingian Chronicles: the Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1972), 2-21 pg. 5 for the quotation. Einhard's possible authorship primarily refers to the revised *Annales Regni Francorum*, also called the *Annales qui dicuntur Einhardi*. See the MGH edition, ed. F. Kurze (Hanover, 1895).

²⁰ Much of the authorial debate took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries between Kurze, the editor of the Latin edition utilized here, and Hellman, who endeavored to show that Kurze's rendering of the AF's authorship rested heavily on limited and methodologically faulty manuscript analysis. See the summary thereof in Timothy Reuter, ed. and trans., *The Annals of Fulda* (Manchester, 1992), and additionally Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 14-15.

The *Annals of St.-Bertin* (*AB*) were composed by several different authors from 830-882. The most prominent was Hincmar of Rheims, who assumed for himself the duty of composing the annals after the death of the previous author, Prudentius, in 861.²¹ Hincmar was one of the more prominent bishops of his age, deeply connected with the west Frankish court, and he focuses mainly on the inter-Carolingian political and military conflict, making his account particularly useful—not to mention particularly well-informed—from a military point of view. Given Hincmar’s position and Rheims’s location in the north of West Francia, the *AB* are primarily oriented and heavily biased towards the western half of the Frankish kingdom. Notwithstanding, numerous eastern events are addressed, which is unavoidable, given the constant political and military entanglement between the subsections of the empire throughout the ninth century. As a source for East Frankish military affairs, the *AB* are particularly weak on the subject of warfare along the far eastern frontier, which is readily understood in light of the distance from Rheims to those regions: some 1100km to Vienna and 850km to Salzburg.

Comparatively little is known about the *Annals of Xanten* (*AX*). They are not associated with any particular Carolingian court, and the authorship remains controversial. They were likely composed beginning at Ghent and then continued at Cologne,²² and they reveal a substantial degree of local interest in the monastery of Xanten itself, in the north Rhine region. Covering the period 812-873, they provide an interesting and relatively impartial counterpart to contrast with and/or corroborate the

²¹ A summary of the debate on the authorship of the *AB* can be found in Janet Nelson’s introduction to her translation of *The Annals of St. Bertin* (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1991), 1-16.

²² Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 16 and 16n.45; *AX*, Simson, V-VIII; Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), 270.

accounts of the east- and west-biased *Annals of Fulda* and *Annals of St.-Bertin*, respectively. Much like the other annals investigated herein, the *Annals of Xanten* provide interesting details on military history, including issues of weather and climate, which are highly useful for considering logistical issues of supply, crop yields, and road conditions.

Nithard, a highly educated layman and an illegitimate grandson of Charlemagne, wrote his *Four Books of Histories* in the early 840's while serving at the court and in the armies of Charles the Bald, who commissioned the work. As such, his work exhibits a prominent western bias, though this does not cast him against Louis the German.

Nithard's histories primarily describe the civil war period of the late 830's and early 840's, during which time Louis and Charles were allied with one another against their powerful elder brother Lothar, who inherited the imperial crown upon the death of Louis the Pious in 840. In spite of his western perspective, Nithard provides invaluable military and political details concerning the period of civil war (roughly 833-843)²³, details he knew firsthand, since he had fought with the combined armies of Charles and Louis at Fontenoy (June 25, 841).²⁴ His personal participation not only in the battle but in the political strife surrounding it generally imbued Nithard with a highly pessimistic view of the state of the Carolingian realms, which he believed was shared by many others in those

²³ I have dated the period of active conflict from the Field of Lies to the Treaty of Verdun, though the roots of the conflict go back to *ordinatio imperii* in 817.

²⁴ Janet Nelson, "Public Histories and Private History in the Work of Nithard." *Speculum* 60 (1985), 251-293, reprinted in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, 195-237; Scholz and Rogers, *Carolingian Chronicles*, 21-30; Bernard and David Bachrach, "Nithard as a Military Historian of the Carolingian Empire, c. 833-843," *Francia: Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 44 (2017), 29-55.

times. In the wake of the disastrous casualties of Fontenoy and the interfamilial struggle that had worn on for years, it is little wonder that he should have felt that way.²⁵

As is the case for most early medieval scholarship, the primary hurdle to be surmounted is a dearth of written material, which is particularly true for Louis the German, from whose court no capitulary evidence survives in extant manuscripts. It is certainly possible—and even likely—that he issued capitularies for the East Frankish kingdom, since Louis, Lothar, and Charles the Bald issued some jointly.²⁶ It would be impossible to argue that Louis was scornful of this central facet of Carolingian legal and administrative practice, as he confirmed that capitularies issued by his predecessors retained their legal status under his administration as well.²⁷ McKitterick and Goldberg postulate that if Louis did not issue capitularies for the East Frankish kingdom, it was due mostly to the low rate of Latin literacy among his subjects, who spoke primarily Germanic languages and would have had a more difficult time learning to read Latin than, for example, the Romance speakers under Charles the Bald.²⁸ Still, the king's

²⁵ Nelson construes the work as a public history written for the circle of magnates surrounding Charles the Bald and Louis the German, largely intended to justify the Battle of Fontenoy as divinely ordained and acceptable in the wake of the catastrophic slaughter of Frank by Frank; “Public Histories and Private History in the Work of Nithard,” in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, 195-237.

²⁶ MGH Capitularia II.204, II.205, II.242. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 18, 229.

²⁷ On capitularies in Carolingian government, see McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word*, 25-37. Her work is indebted to F.L. Ganshof's “Charlemagne et l'usage de l'écrit en matière administrative,” *Le Moyen Age* 57 (1951), 1-25, and republished in English translation by J. Sondheimer, in Ganshof, *Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy* (London and New York, Cornell University Press, 1971), 125-42.

²⁸ McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, 21-22; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 18, 210. This idea is lent credence by the swearing of the 842 Strassbourg oaths in Romance and Germanic languages, in order that subjects from all parts of the kingdom might understand them. Certainly however, the facilities existed for producing high quality Latin (relative to the age, not Cicero), and Bischoff credits the southeast German *scriptoria*, especially Regensburg, Passau, Friesing, Salzburg, and Niederaltaich with high proficiency even during the age of Tassilo, pre-Carolingian conquest; Bernhard Bischoff, “Manuscripts in the Age of Charlemagne,” reprinted in *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, Michael Gorman, trans. (Cambridge, 1994), 20-55, esp. 40-44.

proclamations held the force of codified law, whether or not it was deemed necessary to record them in writing.

Owing to the good, regular frequency with which Louis held assemblies, which magnates were obliged to attend and to keep abreast of proceedings, ignorance of the proceedings and the proclamations of the king would not have been an excuse, whether or not they received a written copy of what was decreed there.²⁹ Most of Louis's important eastern magnates had far less distance to travel to assemblies, typically held at Frankfurt or Regensburg, than they would have under Charlemagne or Louis the Pious, when the travel distance from the borders of East Francia to Aachen, Paris, or another major western city (or *vice versa* for western magnates, as when Louis the Pious held an assembly at Paderborn in Saxony in 815³⁰) rendered travel much more arduous. Perhaps good attendance caused Louis to believe that written proclamations to be transported to the far corners of his kingdom were unnecessary. Perhaps he did issue them, and they went uncollected or simply were lost to posterity. The lack of capitulary evidence, however, is not to be construed as a weak central government in East Francia.³¹ On the contrary, Louis's realm was the most stable of the successors of Louis the Pious, as it went mostly free from Viking attacks and external incursions, and what rebellions there were—and, indeed, there were many, as there were under Charlemagne and Louis the

²⁹ Against which Charlemagne had attempted to legislate late in his reign, see *Capitularia per Missos Cognita Facienda (803-813)*, 67, c6; and see also Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii*, 8.

³⁰ *ARF* 815.

³¹ On which also see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 243-245 and Nelson, "The Last Years of Louis the Pious," in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 147-159,

Pious as well—Louis the German was able to snuff out quickly and without much lasting consequence, at least as far as territorial integrity is concerned.³²

Recent Rehabilitations: Historiography of Later Carolingian Warfare

Historiographical tradition has not been particularly kind to the descendants of Charlemagne (d. 814). In regard to nearly every aspect of their reigns, his son and grandsons have been portrayed by contemporaries and historians alike as grossly inferior to their famous father and grandfather, whose long shadow proved inescapable. Indeed, Charlemagne's legacy still holds a certain glorious gravity, even in the present day, when he has been called "the Founder of Western Culture."³³ Utilizing and building upon the extensive military machine created by his Carolingian predecessors, Charlemagne conquered a vast amount of territory and subjugated various troublesome and militarily problematic peoples, notably the Avars and the Saxons, forcing them under the umbrella

³² Notably, Charlemagne experienced nothing like the filial rebellions which Louis the Pious and Louis the German did, but the Saxons rebelled against his authority for years, particularly during the 790s, on which refer to *ARF*.

³³ Since 1950, the city of Aachen has presented the annual International Charlemagne Prize (*International Karlspreis zu Aachen*) for "the most valuable contribution in the services of Western European understanding and work for the community, and in the services of humanity and world peace." In the original 1949 proposal for the prize, Charlemagne was called "the Founder of Western Culture," an important symbol of European unity in the era following the Second World War. Dr. Kurt Pfeiffer, 19 December, 1949, read to an assembly of the reading group "Corona Legentium Aquensis." For more, refer to the City of Aachen's website at http://www.aachen.de/EN/sb/pr_az/karls_pr/charlemagne_prize/index.html, last accessed 12/20/2018. For recent discussions of the role of Charlemagne's legacy in Western Europe, see Donald Bullough, *The Age of Charlemagne* (London, 1965); idem, "Europae Pater: Charlemagne and his Achievement in the Light of Recent Scholarship," *English Historical Review* 85 (1970), 59-105; Alessandro Barbero, *Carlo Magno, un Padre dell'Europa* (Rome, 2000), trans. Allen Cameron as *Charlemagne, Father of a Continent* (Berkeley, 2004); Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge and NY, Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 1-7. On his medieval *nachleben* see M. Gabrielle and J. Stuckey, *The Legend of Charlemagne in the Middle Ages: Power, Faith, and Crusade* (New York, Palgrave McMillan, 2008). A historiographical discussion of Charlemagne's significance for the identities of the modern nations of France and Germany can be found in Karl Ferdinand Werner, *Karl der Große oder Charlemagne? Von der Aktualität einer überholten Fragestellung* (München, Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1995). Also see Carlrichard Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich: Die Geburt zweier Völker* (Köln, Böhlau Verlag, 1990).

of the *regnum francorum*.³⁴ Charlemagne also proved a masterful administrator, employing a substantial bureaucratic apparatus to survey his growing realm, raise revenue, and ensure a substantial campaign host and successful system of defense year after year.³⁵

If Charlemagne were the master of statecraft, initiated largely through his extensive military conquests, then his son and the second generation of his descendants—Louis the Pious (d.840) and his sons Lothar I (d. 855), Pippin I (d. 838), Louis the German (d. 876), and Charles the Bald (d. 877)—represented the beginning of the end for centralized Carolingian royal authority. Their incompetence and constant inter-familial squabbling caused them to squander the once-great empire that fell into their control upon the death of Louis the Pious in 840. Louis the Pious is traditionally presented as a king who was unable to force magnates to acquiesce to royal demands and allowed them to wrest authority from his control.³⁶ If that were the case, then his sons would have even

³⁴ On the Saxon campaigns in particular, the most thorough military treatment is Bachrach's *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, pp. 177-245, 427-472, and 510-630; the latter section includes the integration of the Saxon realm into the *regnum francorum* proper.

³⁵ F.L. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne*, Bruce and Mary Lyon, trans. (Providence, RI, Brown University Press, 1968); Bernard Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); idem, "Charlemagne's General Staff," *The Journal of Military History* 66 (2002), 313-357; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, esp. 137-213. It is important to note that in spite of his extensive study of Charlemagne's administration and institutions, Ganshof was still a devout member of the small Carolingian armies school of thought, and he still attributed much of Charlemagne's administrative success not so much to efficient bureaucracy but to steadfast personal enforcement that would not really outlive the great emperor and had already begun to fail late in his reign. Ganshof, "The last period of Charlemagne's reign: a study in decomposition," in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: Studies in Carolingian History*, Janet Sondheimer, trans. (Ithaca, 1971), 240-255, and *ibid*, "Charlemagne's Failure," 256-272

³⁶ Ganshof, "Louis the Pious Reconsidered," in Ganshof, *Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy*, 261-272, in summation of the historiography, holds that among the numerous difficulties experienced by the early 9th century *regnum Francorum* must be counted Louis the Pious's own "weakness of character and personal failings to be among the chief factors which caused the downfall of the Carolingian empire." Here 261. The old ideas about Louis the Pious and his sons regarding the rise of feudalism and degradation of royal power and the empire are epitomized in the work of the popular historian and journalist Eyre Evans Crowe, *History of France* (London, 1858), vol 1, 22-43.

less with which to work, since their division of the realm would have further decentralized authority by fragmenting the imperial government into three *teilsreiche*. In a military context, this meant that the kings often experienced trouble raising large armies, since men could simply refuse to show up for the host, and the king held insufficient power to force them to behave otherwise.³⁷

Recently, however, the tide of historiography has shifted towards a more positive interpretation of Louis the Pious and his sons, particularly from a military standpoint.³⁸ What follows is a brief attempt to summarize and engage the historiography as it stands at present, which has made a recent attempt to rectify the overly negative portrait of Charlemagne's son and grandsons that dominated much of nineteenth and twentieth century scholarship. It will focus primarily on the reigns of the emperor Louis the Pious (d. 840), Charles the Bald (d. 877), king of the Western Franks, and especially Louis the German (d. 876), king of the Eastern Franks.³⁹

³⁷ See especially E. Müller-Mertens, *Karl der Große, Ludwig der Fromme und die Freien. Wer waren die liberi homines der Karolingischen Kapitularien (742/43-832)? Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte und Sozialpolitik des Frankenreiches*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963; Josef Fleckenstein, "Adel und Kriegerum und ihre Wandlung im Karolingerreich," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi Sull'alto Medioevo* 27.1 (1979), 67-94. For a contrary viewpoint, see nearly the entirety of Nithard's work, in which the soldier-chronicler continually stresses the large size of the armies, and B. and D. Bachrach, "Nithard as a Military Historian of the Carolingian Empire, c. 833-843," *Francia* 44 (2017), 29-56.

³⁸ Bernard and David Bachrach "Continuity of written administration in the Late Carolingian East c.887-911," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 42 (2008), 109-146; Bernard Bachrach, "Charlemagne and Carolingian Military Administration," in Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, eds., *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History from Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2016), 170-196. The two articles taken together serve to show that the written administration utilized extensively by Charlemagne to record and enforce military obligation lasted through the late Carolingian era.

³⁹ I use these anglicized titular designations only for the sake of consistency and clarity. As Janet Nelson notes, Charles the Bald's actual contemporary title was "king by the grace of God," and Louis the German was either "*rex Germaniae*," to writers from Charles' kingdom, or "king of the Eastern Franks" amongst his own people. See Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London and New York, Longman Group, 1992), 2-3. I have omitted Lothar not because he has not received scholarly analysis, but rather because of his early death: the lifelong rivalry between Louis and Charles (and the fact that they ultimately divided the middle kingdom between themselves) proves more illustrative.

The largely negative picture of the late-Carolingian military and political situation stems from a variety of sources. In the case of the military, much of the contemporary information that is available to historians comes from the reign of Charlemagne, when Carolingian military might was supposedly at its peak. The now classic works of venerable historians such as Sir Charles Oman, Hans Delbrück, F.L. Ganshof, and Ferdinand Lot estimated the size of the Carolingian host to be quite small, certainly numbering less than ten thousand effectives and probably closer to half of that, even at its greatest extent.⁴⁰ The raising of troops, for these historians, was achieved through the system of so-called feudal relations, in which vassals received fiefs from their lords in exchange for military service.⁴¹

Delbrück takes a similarly dismal view of Carolingian military training and battle tactics. For him, Oman, Lot, and others, real skill in medieval warfare was difficult to identify because the only worthwhile exhibition of generalship and tactics, the elusive

⁴⁰ Sir Charles Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages, AD 378-1485* (London, 1924); Hans Delbrück, *History of the Art of War Within the Framework of Political History, Volume III, The Middle Ages*, translated by Walter J. Renfroe Jr., (Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1982) 21-24; F.L. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions Under Charlemagne*, translated by Bryce and Mary Lyon (Providence, RI, Brown University Press, 1968), Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au moyen âge en Europe et dans le Proche Orient* (Paris, Payot, 1946).

⁴¹ Earlier proponents of feudalism, prominently Delbrück and Ganshof, trace much of the evidence for the evolution of feudalism from its embryonic state under the Merovingians to the Carolingian ninth century, when the nobility supposedly forced kings to cooperate with them rather than dominate them outright, as earlier, "stronger" rulers like Charlemagne and his father Pepin III (d. 768) had been able to do. Delbrück, 13-30, and especially Ganshof, *Feudalism*, translated by Philip Grierson (London, Longmans, 1964), 20-61. For Ganshof, feudalism even provided a sort of "checks and balances" system that somewhat helped to safeguard the later Carolingian state against total anarchic breakdown (60-61). This neatly organized notion of "feudalism," as the traditional medieval method for mustering an army, has since been thoroughly problematized to the point of being no longer viable as a teleological concept. Susan Reynolds' watershed study *Fiefs and Vassals* calls the entire system into question by casting light upon the fact that medieval notions of property holding and contractual obligation to military service were simply too heterogeneous to be pigeonholed under one heading. Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: the Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2001). A valuable summary of the feudalism debate can be found in Richard Abels, "The Historiography of a Construct: 'Feudalism' and the Medieval Historian." *History Compass* 7/3 (2009), 1008-1031.

chess match that put the “art” in “the art of war,” was the pitched battle, which was admittedly rare in the Middle Ages.⁴² According to Delbrück, in Carolingian armies “there was no training, and actual battles were so rare that it was no doubt impossible to establish fixed and traditional forms for a battle formation and a real art of fighting.”⁴³ The obvious problem with this judgment is the overly narrow view of pitched battle as somehow the representative epitome of warfare. Pitched battles, however, were extremely rare in the Middle Ages due to the potentially very high cost of fighting them; as the Battle of Fontenoy clearly illustrates for our period, the casualties of an encounter between relatively evenly matched armies could be enormous, and it was rare that military commanders were either too stubborn to come to a different conclusion or too stupid to risk it all against a force they were unlikely to defeat without incurring great cost in manpower.⁴⁴ Instead, the “castle” has come down to us as a perennial symbol of medieval warfare for a reason, and though not every fortification lives up to the image of the grandiose and princely fortresses of the high Middle Ages, these purpose built structures serve well to illustrate the fact that medieval warfare was instead dominated by sieges rather than the pitched battle.⁴⁵

Thankfully for the Carolingian military reputation, these ideas of general military ineptitude amongst their armies and commanders have not held up under the weight of recent historical scrutiny. When one steps back from Delbrück’s narrative for a moment

⁴² Bachrach, “Medieval Military Historiography,” 203-207.

⁴³ Delbrück, Vol. III, 30.

⁴⁴ One need only refer to the accounts of Fontenoy in Nithard II.10 and Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 174, to ascertain the human cost of battle between similar forces, which is why they were, indeed, heavily avoided by the Carolingians whenever possible. Instead, they preferred to cause the enemy to surrender without giving battle through fielding overwhelming force: discussed in greater detail below, chs. 2 and 3.

⁴⁵ Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 1992), esp. 48-92.

and considers his claims carefully, it becomes evident that it is simply not possible that the Carolingians could have established and maintained control over almost the entirety of Western Europe with armies of less than ten thousand wild, undisciplined warriors. Historians have shown the Carolingian army to be quite different than the ludicrously small mass of individualistic fighters that Delbrück and others imagined it to be, views that rely far too much on the prejudiced picture produced by Tacitus and too little on *Sachkritik*.⁴⁶

Since the time of Delbrück *et al*, historians' estimates of the maximum size of the Carolingian armies have only been increasing. The Dutch historian J.F. Verbruggen, writing in the 1950's, postulated that a large Carolingian host definitely could have exceeded ten thousand,⁴⁷ though, as Bachrach notes, much of Verbruggen's Dutch language work was inaccessible to most historians until it was translated more than two decades later in 1977.⁴⁸ Even this number, however, does not come close to approaching the high-end estimate provided by Karl Ferdinand Werner, who somewhat generously postulates that Charlemagne and Louis the Pious had the capability to raise around 100,000 effectives, including perhaps 35,000 well-armed cavalry.⁴⁹ Though Werner's approximation of the numerical strength of a large Carolingian host is quite high, it is

⁴⁶ Tacitus, *Germania*, J.B. Rives, trans. (Oxford, 1999).

⁴⁷ J.F. Verbruggen, "L'armée et la stratégie de Charlemagne," in *Karl der Große, Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, Vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1965), 420-436; also Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe during the Middle Ages from the Eighth Century to 1340*, 2nd ed. Translated by Sumner Willard and S.C.M. Southern. Amsterdam: North Holland, 1997.

⁴⁸ Bernard Bachrach, "Medieval Military Historiography," in Michael Bentley, ed., *Companion to Historiography* (London, Routledge, 1997), pp. 203-220.

⁴⁹ Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Heersorganization und Kriegsführung im deutschen Königreich des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano sull'alto Medioevo* 15 (Spoleto, 1968), 791-843. A useful summary of the historiography of the order of magnitude of the Carolingian host can be found in Phillippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages*, Michael Jones, trans. (Cambridge, MA, Basil Blackwell, 1984), 24-26.

now generally agreed upon by military historians that Werner must certainly be closer to reality than Delbrück's estimate, which is less than one-tenth of Werner's.⁵⁰

There are detractors, of course. Reuter, a self-professed "small-armies man," supported by Halsall, suggests that armies of as few as 10,000 would have wrought disaster on a scale comparable to nuclear fallout.⁵¹ Clearly, he jests wryly, with tongue planted firmly in cheek, but the hyperbole does nothing to support the argument. Armies on the march clearly could be very destructive when they wanted to be, particularly when the tendency to desire plunder was not adequately reined in by the commanders,⁵² but the idea that the army descended upon the land like a plague of locusts eating everything in its wake as per Gregory of Tours—a man far more prone to hyperbole even than Reuter—is to ignore the royal edicts and general good practice that the campaign host should endeavor to take as little from and do as little damage as possible to the friendly territory through which it traveled.⁵³

The small rural settlements that Halsall envisages the expeditionary force plundering completely, were not the ones upon whom the admittedly great burden of provisioning thousands of men—very temporarily and only as that army passed through

⁵⁰ Bachrach, "Medieval Military Historiography," 214-215, and Contamine, 25-26.

⁵¹ Timothy Reuter, "Recruitment of Armies in the Early Middle Ages: What can we Know?" in *Military Aspects of Scandinavian Society, in a European Perspective, 1-1300* (Copenhagen, 1997) 32-37; Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London, Routledge, 2003), 119-133.

⁵² The deliberate "slash and burn" type ravaging of the countryside was of course a legitimate strategy in enemy territory, practiced in the west since the early days of hoplite warfare in Ancient Greece and before. Arthur Ferrill, *The Origins of War, from the Stone Age to Alexander the Great* (London, 1985).

⁵³ See for example Charlemagne's Letter to Abbot Fulrad in MGH Capitularia I.75, in which he instructs the abbot that his men should take nothing on the march from the countryside except for fodder, wood, and water, because they should have brought three months supply of food along with them, in addition to cartloads of tools and weaponry. The practice of burdening counts and abbots with provisioning had old precedent among the Franks; see Bernard Bachrach "Vouillé in the Context of the Decisive Battle Phenomenon," in Danuta Shanzer and Ralph W. Mathisen, eds., *The Battle of Vouillé 507CE: Where France Began*, (Berlin, 2012), 11-42.

the region—but rather, this fell upon the aristocracy, secular and religious, as well as upon the royal estates owned by the king. As Hincmar of Rheims made clear, up to about 40% of a bishopric's or abbey's income was expected to go to military provisioning of the king's forces, which he found to be onerous but not out of the ordinary.⁵⁴ One of the great values of the studies of both Reuter and Halsall is the wisdom that we cannot know for certain the size of armies, but we certainly can know a great deal about the way that they should have been raised, according to the law. The way a historian perceives the extent of enforcement that the kings were able to coax—or command, as it were—from their subjects is the hinge upon which these arguments all rotate.⁵⁵

Army size under Charlemagne's descendants is another matter for debate, though it is more difficult to find a historian who is willing to postulate an exact number for these later forces. Simon Coupland has made some attempt to account for the size of Charles the Bald's available cavalry force in his anti-Viking war efforts, but his calculations are mostly based upon those of Werner.⁵⁶ Goldberg has done the same for Louis the German, arriving at a high-end figure somewhere in the neighborhood of 30,000 men available for muster throughout East Francia, though he believes the most

⁵⁴ Janet Nelson, "Kingship, Law, and Liturgy in the Political Thought of Hincmar of Rheims," in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986) 133-171.

⁵⁵ As indeed Reuter's title hints at: "Recruitment of Armies in the Early Middle Ages: What can we Know?" and Halsall, *Warfare and Society*, 119-125. I rather believe that the indication of struggles in raising armies based on noble refusal to comply are somewhat overwrought. Louis showed several times that he was more than capable of deposing a troublesome aristocrat both at home (Prefect Ratpot, *AF* 854, Count Ernest, Counts Uto, Berengar, Sigihard, Abbot Waldo, *AF* 861; his own son Carloman, *AF* 863; Count Werner, *AF* 865) and abroad (Goztomiuzli, *AF* 844; Moimir, *AF* 846; the Bohemian usurper Sclavitag, *AF* 857) when the need arose, and he successfully quashed the numerous rebellions that sprung up late in his reign, often at the hand of his own ambitious sons. See also Bachrach, "Charlemagne's Expeditionary Levy: Observations Regarding *Liberi Homines*" *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd. ser., 12 (2016), 1-65.

⁵⁶ Simon Coupland, "The Carolingian Army and the Struggle Against the Vikings," *Viator*, Vol. 35 (2004), 49-70.

common expeditionary force size was closer to 10,000.⁵⁷ Louis the Pious, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German are all said to have encountered difficulties in raising sizable armies.⁵⁸ Such difficulties are often attributed to the end of Carolingian expansion; defensively oriented warfare does not tend to bring in nearly as much plunder and opportunity to gain new lands as wars of conquest would,⁵⁹ and several scholars, notably Delbrück, believed that as the now stable-bordered “counties now gradually became fiefs, the royal authority evaporated.”⁶⁰

Eckhard Müller-Mertens claims that Louis the Pious and even Charlemagne experienced a good deal of difficulty raising armies consistently, since the capitulary evidence is so concerned with ensuring that people provided troops to the host.⁶¹ This view he supported with the idea that small landowners could no longer support the

⁵⁷ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 125-126.

⁵⁸ E. Müller-Mertens believes that the Carolingians’ difficulties raising substantial armies stemmed from the reign of Charlemagne and were exacerbated under Louis the Pious. *Karl der Große, Ludwig der Fromme, und die Freien*, 111-143.

⁵⁹ On the supposed importance of plunder from offensive military efforts, see Timothy Reuter, “Plunder and Tribute in the Carolingian Empire,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 35 (1985), 75-94.

⁶⁰ Delbrück, 79.

⁶¹ Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Karl der Große, Ludwig der Fromme und die Freien. Wer waren die liberi homines der Karolingischen Kapitularien (742/43-832)? Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte und Sozialpolitik des Frankenreiches*. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963), 111-143. The methodological problems with such an approach concern the purpose of legislation; did legislation speak to the solving of an existing problem, or was it simply intended to ensure that raising armies would continue to be accomplished on a legal basis? Reality contradicts his ideas; the Carolingians were able to raise effective expeditionary forces year after year and subdue their enemies. Mostly, the approach smarts of Marxism, since his ideas rest on the presumption that the kings were issuing the capitularies in question in order to protect the small freeholders—*liberi homines*—from the burden of insupportable and increasingly feudalized military service to the oppressive local lords. Müller-Mertens himself has since repudiated many of his earlier ideas as having been a product of time and place in which he wrote, the DDR of the 1960s, in his *Existenz zwischen den Fronten. Analytische Memoiren oder Report zur Weltanschauung und geistig-politischen Einstellung* (Leipzig 2011). Recently, Innes dismissed the idea of Carolingian kings legislating for some sort of social change with the claim that the “capitularies were simply ensuring that all those who could fight, did fight, and do not necessarily reflect any substantive social change other than the annual offensive campaign.” *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: the Middle Rhine Valley, 400-1000* (Cambridge, 2000), quotation 151. On the subject of free and unfree peoples also see Herwig Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich: Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und die Quellen Ihrer Zeit* (Munich 1995), 145-155.

financial strain caused by military servitude, and as such, they had to commend themselves to more powerful men in feudal relationships. This sociological explanation for the decline in military servitude—in spite of the thorough debunking of nascent “feudalism” in the Carolingian age—still holds some sway in the historiographical tradition, particularly among German scholars. Josef Fleckenstein corroborates the idea of the decline of the levy of small freeholders in the expeditionary levy, claiming that the practice was extinct by 847. Warfare was now the prerogative of lords and whomever of their personal retinues they could bring to the campaign host. This idea has been debunked by Bachrach and Bachrach, who show that each of Louis the Pious’s sons used traditional Carolingian recruiting methodology in each of their respective *teilsreiche* to produce substantial expeditionary levies comprised not only of nobles and their military households, but free landowners as well.⁶²

In the same vein, the Carolingian monarchy—even under Charlemagne—is thought by some to have lacked the central authority to force magnates to show up for the mobilization of the host if they were unwilling of their own volition. Charlemagne, it has traditionally been argued, was able to hold together his loose conglomeration of various lands and peoples through “such vague phrases as force of character,”⁶³ and “by ruling the far-flung kingdom as a unit.”⁶⁴ Without Charlemagne’s determined and personal style of rule, however, the nobles were left to their own devices, much to the chagrin of the

⁶² Bernard and David Bachrach, “Nithard as a Military Historian of the Carolingian Empire, c. 833-843,” *Francia: Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 44 (2017), 29-55. The discussion here obviously relates to the Carolingian civil war and Fontenoy, during which the massive size of the armies involved is the central focus.

⁶³ Brian Tierney, *Western Europe in the Middle Ages: 300-1475*, 6th ed. (Boston, 1999), 135.

⁶⁴ Delbrück, 79-80.

impotent later monarchs.⁶⁵ Were this true, in tandem with the idea that warfare was now completely dominated by the nobility with no small freeholders in the expeditionary levy, Louis the German and his brothers would only have been able to raise armies at the pleasure of their magnates. Some believe that the process was even underway in the later years of Charlemagne's reign, when the aging king rested on the laurels of his imperial coronation and found that his subjects no longer respected his authority as perhaps they once had done.⁶⁶

From the beginning of his reign in Aquitaine, Louis the Pious struggled to prove himself a man different from and independent of his father. He purged Charlemagne's substantial staff of political and military advisors, replacing them with men of his own choosing. While this would certainly speed the process of transformation from one rule to the other, Louis's purge created rancorous sentiment amongst those who felt they had been slighted and deprived of their offices on account of no faults of their own. He also enacted peaceful policies regarding the disarming of forces after the successful completion of campaigns, which has led some to classify Louis as a king who put religion and societal concerns ahead of maintaining the military. As a result, the nobles were able to struggle for power with the king, forcing him to engage them in feudal negotiations to secure their military service.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Recent reassessments of Charlemagne illustrate that he too had to rely on cooperation with the nobility in order to rule successfully. See for example, McKitterick, *Charlemagne: Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 75-88, 214-215.

⁶⁶ Ganshof, "The last period of Charlemagne's reign: a study in decomposition," 240-255, and idem, "Charlemagne's Failure," 256-272.

⁶⁷ Ganshof, *Feudalism*, 51-61.

The weakening royal authority was only exacerbated by the *Ordinatio imperii*, promulgated in 817 by Louis the Pious concerning his sons' inheritance, and the later modifications thereof to make provisions for the addition of a kingdom for Charles the Bald. With the realm having been segmented into separate kingdoms, Delbrück sees the central authority as deteriorating to the point that

the counts of Louis the German and Charles the Bald, and especially those of their successors, heeded a royal summons only to the extent they wished to do so. The kings could not even exercise severity against an individual. He would be protected by...his colleagues, on whose assistance the king had to depend in the dynastic discord...The very feudal organization that had provided the Carolingian nation with an effective warriorhood was now responsible for the nation's dissolution.⁶⁸

The highly negative characterizations established by Delbrück, cemented into an attractive though misleading paradigm of “decline and fall” in the mold of Gibbon,⁶⁹ combined with outdated concepts such as the feudal system—contrary to the reality of the early Middle Ages—still hold a surprising amount of weight at present, particularly in textbooks and more general works of popular history, which are inevitably slower to change than the work of specialists in Carolingian history.⁷⁰ The ninth century Carolingians kept their realms largely intact in a very challenging environment: one which featured not only civil war but external incursions from Vikings to the north and Slavs to the east. The vacuum of power which enabled the eventual snuffing of the

⁶⁸ Delbrück, Vol. III, 80. On feudalism see especially Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals*, and above. The vicious irony that Delbrück identifies was only exacerbated by the fact that *ordinatio imperii* was intended to legislate for imperial unity in the person of Lothar, while simultaneously maintaining the Frankish tradition of partible inheritance.

⁶⁹ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 6 vols. (London, 1776-1788).

⁷⁰ See for example the influential popular work of John Julius Norwich, *The Middle Sea: A History of the Mediterranean* (London, 2006), esp. 89-94, which clings to the perception that Charlemagne held his empire together more through force of personality than effective administration. Apparently, his “force of personality” must have endured around 75 years after his death, a substantial achievement indeed.

Carolingian royal line came about not so much through administrative ineptitude or weak central government, but rather through the lack of personally effective, legitimate male heirs.

Louis the Pious's damaged reputation received a significant rehabilitation from the 1990 collection *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious, 814-840*. This collection of thirty one essays covers a variety of topics concerning Louis in three different languages—English, French, and German—and as such, is clearly intended for specialists.⁷¹ Published on the heels of a 1986 conference on Louis held at Oxford, it features essays from some of the more prominent Carolingian specialists of recent years, including Janet Nelson, Egon Boshof, Thomas F. X. Noble, and Timothy Reuter, to name but a few of the many. Due to the variety of interpretations and subjects presented therein, it is impossible to identify a single, clear argument about Louis's kingship, but taken as a whole, the essays do provide a much needed fresh perspective on Louis.⁷²

In her contribution, entitled “The Last Years of Louis the Pious,” Janet Nelson asserts that “the last years [were] not the least years of Louis the Pious,” despite his temporary dethroning by the coalition of his rebellious sons that defeated him in battle in

⁷¹ The essays are divided into seven loosely related topical sections: I. Government, Politics, and the Court; II. Church and Empire; III. Fines Imperii; IV. The Framework of Law; V. Learning and Literature; VI. Art and Architecture; and VII. The Historiographical Tradition. To tie the varied themes together, there is only a very brief, two page introduction from the editors. Peter Godman and Roger Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990)

⁷² For further discussion of the collection's faults and merits, see also the excellent review of this volume by Jean Dunbabin, Review of Peter Godman and Roger Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990), *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 422 (January 1992), 116-119; I do, however, disagree with Dunbabin that *Charlemagne's Heir* exhibits “a coherence unusual in conference proceedings,” as the volume's variety makes true coherence difficult to assert.

833 at the Field of Lies.⁷³ Scholars have typically neglected these later years, interpreting them as the weakest time in Louis's government. On the surface, the assertion seems sensible, since Louis was over fifty, and his administration was producing far less documented legislation than it had prior to 834, leading historians to conclude that Louis no longer possessed the royal power to legislate actively.⁷⁴ Nelson, however, quite sensibly points out that the lack of capitulary evidence cannot necessarily be equated to less vibrant, active administration, since it is entirely possible that such documentary evidence, as with many other medieval documents, simply may have been lost.⁷⁵

Nelson also makes a mockery of any claims that Louis's military and administrative capacity suffered as a result of old age, noting quite rightly that the king undertook several successful frontier campaigns "in Charlemagne's mould." The only real problem that resulted from Louis's longevity, Nelson argues, was the fact that his sons were aging as well. The princes, desiring increased power of their own, chafed under their father's dominance, which she identifies as a common problem, calling adult sons one of the "standard tests of medieval rulership." At the same time as he dealt with foreign enemies, Louis successfully reinforced his supremacy over his sons, forcing Lothar to retreat into Italy from 834 onwards and impressively forcing Louis the German back to Bavaria from the Rhineland in 839, very late in his life. In the same year, Louis

⁷³ An excellent account of the political and military circumstances surrounding the battle can be found in Eric Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 63-77.

⁷⁴ On Louis's capitulary activity, see Gerhard Schmitz, "The Capitulary Legislation of Louis the Pious," and Hubert Mordek, "Recently Discovered Capitulary Texts Belonging to the Legislation of Louis the Pious," in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 425-436 and 437-453, respectively.

⁷⁵ Janet Nelson, "The Last Years of Louis the Pious," in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 147-159. Indeed, in a direct parallel, no capitulary evidence whatsoever survives from the East Frankish Kingdom during the reign of Louis the German, which should by no means be taken to mean that the king was not an active administrator.

successfully besieged Carlat, proving equally up to the demanding logistical and tactical considerations of siege warfare⁷⁶ as he was as a much younger man, when in 800-801, he besieged Barcelona at the head of Charlemagne's armies.⁷⁷

Another significant criticism of Louis the Pious and his inability to control the nobility stems from the end of Carolingian military expansion. As summed up by Geoffrey Barraclough in his famous work *The Crucible of Europe*, many historians believe that once active Carolingian conquest came grinding to a halt in the later years of Charlemagne's reign, the lack of booty and new lands that had accompanied military expansion caused the nobles to become restless and rebellious, turning their military efforts inward against the king rather than outward against foreign enemies, as they had previously done.⁷⁸ Louis the Pious' *quietissimus*⁷⁹ and peace-oriented policies of promoting society and religion supposedly contributed to the unrest, which led the frustrated nobility to usurp royal authority and caused the king to resort to policies of appeasement and cooperative kingship. Much of this sentiment still remains evident in the recent work of Egon Boshof, who classifies Louis's reign as catastrophic for Frankish

⁷⁶ In this she is stoutly supported by Innes, who calls the last years of Louis the Pious's life "an astoundingly successful attempt to reassert imperial power over eastern Francia and Alemannia," Innes, *State and Society*, 205.

⁷⁷ Nelson, "Last Years of Louis the Pious," 149-151, 156-159. On medieval sieges, see especially Bradbury *The Medieval Siege*; Bernard Bachrach, "Medieval Siege Warfare, A Reconnaissance." *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 58 (1994), 119-133. Carlat is located in the modern Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region of south-central France.

⁷⁸ Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Crucible of Europe, the Ninth and Tenth Centuries in European History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976), 35-37.

⁷⁹ As Nelson notes in "Last Years of Louis the Pious," p. 156-157, Notker's description of Louis's *quietissimus* should not be taken to mean that he was militarily incapable, since the king consistently proved himself quite the opposite over the course of his military career.

royal authority and attributes the crisis both to Louis's personal failings and outside circumstance, over which the king had little control.⁸⁰

The contribution of Timothy Reuter to *Charlemagne's Heir* tentatively supports the idea of static frontiers causing internal unrest. In "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," Reuter stresses that the end of conquest did not lead to a cessation of military activity, merely a change in grand strategy that made internal difficulties somewhat inevitable. Citing capitulatory evidence from the end of Charlemagne's reign and the beginning of Louis's, Reuter asserts that the general Carolingian strategic focus shifted towards the defensive, including an active coastal watch and a serious attempt to garrison the frontiers through the granting of benefices along the *limes* of the empire.⁸¹ In this he is certainly correct. For Reuter, though, the lack of external expansion led the nobility to turn to an attempt at "internal expansion," in the form of power usurpation at the expense of the king. Reuter is careful to note that these "internal crises of the 830's" were not the fault of any policy of Louis the Pious, but rather were "only a matter of time."⁸² Of course, such internal crises went hand in hand with the fact that Louis was growing older and had ambitious sons who were by now grown men; sons and nobility like were eager to settle and contest the succession issue.

Charles the Bald and the West

⁸⁰ Egon Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme* (Darmstadt, Primus, 1996), 270. Timothy Reuter has criticized Boshof for turning a somewhat blind eye to the findings of the conference and collection of essays *Charlemagne's Heir*, at which he was present and to which work he contributed. See Reuter, review of Boshof, *Ludwig der Fromme* (Darmstadt, Primus, 1996), in *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 454 (November, 1998), 1262-1263.

⁸¹ Timothy Reuter, "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 391-405.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 405.

Traditional critics of Charles the Bald, from contemporaries, to Montesquieu in the eighteenth century, to twentieth century historians, call him politically weak and militarily inept, a king more concerned with the pomp and ceremony of kingship than he was with the defense of the kingdom against foreign threats and the political ambitions of the nobility.⁸³ Both problems had already begun to be evident under Louis the Pious, as discussed above, but quickly became exacerbated by the inefficiency and lack of concern for the military that Charles exhibited.

Perhaps the most damning criticism of Charles the Bald's military capacity, from both contemporary sources⁸⁴ and historians, is that the king was unable to cope effectively with the Viking incursions upon his kingdom. Charles put a great deal of money and legislative effort into the fortification of towns and bridges along the main rivers of the realm, the Seine and Loire, which the Vikings had been accustomed to use as inroads to plunder vulnerable settlements along the banks. Sometimes the bridges and fortifications worked, but Charles's critics still believe that his chosen system of defense was far too static to be effective, and the Vikings quickly proved themselves capable of adopting sophisticated siege techniques to overcome the garrisons. With his armies and fortified garrisons handicapped to the point of uselessness by the ingenuity, mobility, and unpredictability of the Viking invaders, Charles often was forced into the "embarrassing position" of having to buy off the Vikings with massive tribute payments.⁸⁵ Shipping off

⁸³ The use of Montesquieu enters into the discussion of various appropriations of Charles as a proto-Frenchman, which I do not intend to detail extensively here; see Nelson's introduction to *Charles the Bald*, 1-18, and Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich: Die Geburt zweier Völker* (Köln, Böhlau Verlag, 2001), as well as the accompanying bibliographical information for both works.

⁸⁴ For contemporary criticism, see the bibliographical information provided in Simon Coupland's "The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and their Consequences," *Francia* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1999), 59-75.

⁸⁵ Such criticisms were often levied at Justinian for paying off invaders to simply go away rather than confronting them militarily, as in Procopius' *Secret Histories*, trans. Richard Atwater (New York, Covici

huge quantities of silver to foreign lands supposedly crippled the treasury of the western half of the empire even further, exacerbating the well-documented problems that Charles—as well as his father Louis the Pious—already had experienced in reliably raising armies.

Several recent scholars of Charles have reinterpreted the effectiveness of his Viking policies of appeasement considerably.⁸⁶ Simon Coupland has argued for the effectiveness of fortified bridges in conjunction with tribute payments, claiming that neither had quite the crippling effect on the West Frankish economy that has sometimes been thought.⁸⁷ For Coupland, Charles' tribute payments were not an empty-headed policy that encouraged the Vikings to attack year after year, in the hopes of receiving more tribute, but rather a militarily effective way to bolster defense. He shows that there is no evidence that the Vikings ever expected or asked for a tribute payment, and that the initiative for such methods was always Frankish. He also shows that contemporary accounts which claim that the tributary policy ruined the West Frankish economy are highly exaggerated, and that the increase per capita in tax burden needed to support the payments was minimal.⁸⁸ Moreover, Charles' military victories over Viking armies in the field did very little to curb their activity, whereas the tributes seem to have caused an

Friede, 1927), 90-97, but such a policy was often far more efficient than chasing down a very mobile enemy (not lost on Charles the Bald), despite the contemporary chagrin and perceived weakness.

⁸⁶ Janet Nelson and Simon Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent," *History Today*, Vol. 38, No. 12 (1988), 12-19.

⁸⁷ The economic and logistical considerations of bridge-building are covered by Carrol Gillmor in "The Logistics of Fortified Bridge Building on the Seine under Charles the Bald." In R. Allen Brown, ed., *Anglo-Norman Studies XI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* (1988), 87-106. Suffolk, Boydell Press, 1989.

⁸⁸ Coupland, "Frankish Tribute," 59-68.

accompanying cessation in Viking violence, proving “a highly effective means of permanently removing a Viking fleet from the kingdom.”⁸⁹

Similarly, Coupland believes that Charles did not squander a great deal of money constructing bridges from scratch, but rather that he built only one bridge on the Seine and fortified others as Viking incursions required. He also claims that Charles’ construction and reinforcement of Roman bridges that already existed on the Seine and the Loire proved more effective at curbing Viking advances into his kingdom than has previously been allowed, supposedly preventing Viking raids for the better part of a decade (c. 867-876).⁹⁰ Primarily, the bridges were not intended to help in forcing the Vikings to leave, but rather to keep them out once they were gone, since the bridges would be easily defensible for a local levy.⁹¹

Janet Nelson has rightly pointed out that much of the Viking success against Charles should be attributed to the multifaceted threats presented by the shifting tides of later ninth century Carolingian politics rather than Charles’ inability to deal with them militarily. Indeed, scholars have been aware for a long time that Charles was more than willing to take the field against the Vikings in pitched battle. His Frankish armies were better equipped, better trained, and better supplied logistically than the invading Northmen, but the problem was forcing the invaders into a “fair fight.” Vikings were more than happy to take advantage of Charles’ preoccupation with the threats presented by his continental political rivals to attack vulnerable regions. The bridges and garrisons,

⁸⁹ Coupland, “Frankish Tribute,” 68-69.

⁹⁰ Horst Zettel, *Das Bild der Normannen und der Normanneneinfälle in westfränkischen, ostfränkischen und angelsächsischen des 8. bis 11. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1977).

⁹¹ Simon Coupland, “The Fortified Bridges of Charles the Bald,” *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 17 (1991), 1-12.

Charles hoped, would give locals a chance to defend themselves in general levy capacity in the king's absence.⁹²

Louis the German and the East

The past 150 years of the historiographical tradition have generally neglected Louis the German (c. 810-876). Since the 1860's, when Ernst Dümmler first published *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reichs*,⁹³ scholars have written very little about this grandson of Charlemagne, aside from what Simon Maclean identifies as “regular walk-on parts in seemingly endless debates about the origins of the German kingdom.”⁹⁴ Dümmler portrays Louis as a typical late Carolingian stereotype, a bungling, weak monarch whose inability to subdue the prominent nobles of his kingdom led to a decentralization of authority, which contributed greatly to the squandering of Charlemagne's empire. Dümmler, however, in typical nineteenth-century German fashion, was thoroughly committed to a nationalistic, political narrative, the “end” of which was the triumphant emergence of the modern German nation from its cocoon of medieval disunity. He is largely responsible for the very negative picture of Louis's reign upon which historians fell back for the bulk of the twentieth century. It was a bleak and frustrating scenario of decline, due to continual squabbling through endless and inconclusive warfare amongst related kings, who struggled constantly to bend the ambitious and uncooperative nobility to their yoke, always with very limited success.

⁹² Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, (London and New York, Longman, 1992) 160-189.

⁹³ “*History of the East Frankish Kingdom.*” Ernst Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reichs*, 2 Vols. (Berlin, Duncker und Humblot, 1862-1867).

⁹⁴ Simon Maclean, Review of Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire: Kingship and Conflict under Louis the German, 817-876*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006; in *History*, Vol. 92, No. 308 (October, 2007), 560-561.

This relative lack of centralized authority that Dümmler identifies is what contributes to the traditional idea that the later Carolingians were ineffective, weak monarchs.⁹⁵ These ideas have exhibited remarkable staying power, even until very recently, when Johannes Fried has claimed that “the later Carolingians had proved less and less able to control the nobility because they had nothing left to offer...Charlemagne’s successors had given away so much that they had eroded the substance of their power.”⁹⁶

Recently, this trend has changed. In 2002, Wilfried Hartmann published a biography in German, entitled *Ludwig der Deutsche*,⁹⁷ which he organized thematically. In the same year, Hartmann also organized a conference on Louis the German, the findings of which were published in 2004 as a collection of essays edited by Hartmann, entitled *Ludwig der Deutsche und Seine Zeit*.⁹⁸ The collection features a short biographical introduction by Hartmann himself,⁹⁹ as well as an essay by Goldberg concerning Louis’s Moravian wars. Most of the essays in the work are politically oriented; on the whole, the military is severely neglected, since Goldberg’s work is the only one that is militarily focused at all.¹⁰⁰ Still, the work is a valuable corrective to earlier, more negative scholarship. In a review of Hartmann’s *Ludwig der Deutsche*, Goldberg praises Hartmann for his much more positive reevaluation of Louis and for

⁹⁵ Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reichs*, Vol. 1, 879-882.

⁹⁶ Johannes Fried, “The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: East and Middle Kingdoms” *New Cambridge Medieval History* vol. 2 (1995), 142-168. The fact that this idea has made it into the *NCMH* serves as ample proof that it is still taken as doctrine, at least by some scholars.

⁹⁷ Wilfried Hartmann, *Ludwig der Deutsche* (Darmstadt, Primus, 2002).

⁹⁸ Wilfried Hartmann, ed., *Ludwig der Deutsche und Seine Zeit* (Darmstadt, Primus, 2004).

⁹⁹ “Ludwig der Deutsche—Portrait eines wenig bekannten Königs” (“Louis the German—Portrait of a Less-Well-Known King”), in Hartmann, ed. *Ludwig der Deutsche und Seine Zeit*, pp. 1-26.

¹⁰⁰ “Ludwig der Deutsche und Mähren, Eine Studie zu karolingischen Grenzkriegen im Osten” (“Louis the German and Moravia, a Study of Carolingian Border Wars in the East”), in Hartmann, ed. *Ludwig der Deutsche und Seine Zeit*, pp. 67-94. I do not discuss “Ludwig der Deutsche und Mähren” in detail, as Goldberg’s ideas discussed therein are also present and fleshed out more fully in *Struggle for Empire*.

seeing continuity with the early Carolingian period in place of the more negative “decline and fall” paradigm expressed by Dümmler and others, such as Geoffrey Barraclough and Johannes Fried (pp. 4-5).¹⁰¹

Goldberg, also expresses two significant criticisms for Hartmann’s biography. Firstly, Hartmann does not entirely depart from the German nationalist teleology that tends to view Louis as a father of modern Germany, since he argues that Louis deliberately tried to create an independent East Frankish kingdom and *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* (or feeling of belonging together).¹⁰² Goldberg counters this belief with the claim that Louis “saw his reign ‘in east Francia’ as a mere stepping stone to his reunification of the empire,” since “throughout his reign, Louis repeatedly tried to expand his kingdom westward through conquest and diplomacy.”¹⁰³ East Francia to Louis was not a unique state, but merely the extent of the territorial authority that he possessed and defended within the greater Frankish regnum.¹⁰⁴ Secondly, Goldberg criticizes the choice to organize the work thematically rather than chronologically, since this type of organization fails to contextualize the reign temporally, deemphasizing the simultaneity of the challenges that Louis faced, such as “rival Carolingian kings,

¹⁰¹ Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Crucible of Europe: The Ninth and Tenth Centuries in European History* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976); Johannes Fried, “The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: The East and Middle Kingdoms,” in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. 2: C. 700-c. 900 (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 142-168. As referenced in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 4-5 and n. 9 and 12.

¹⁰² If this uniquely German or East Frankish *Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl* was a part of Louis’s agenda, then the adherence to the tradition of partible inheritance, dividing once again the East Frankish unit into several for his sons, makes little sense. I contend that Louis did not intend to promote loyalty to any sort of East Frankish state, as such, but rather to himself, in his role as king.

¹⁰³ Goldberg, Review of Hartmann, *Ludwig der Deutsche* (Darmstadt, Primus, 2002), in *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March, 2003), 84-86.

¹⁰⁴ Eckhard Müller-Mertens in “The Ottonians as Kings and Emperors,” *NCMH* 3, has claimed, in my view more accurately, that “Henry II was thus the first ruler in the succession to the Frankish rulers to be perceived by contemporaries as king of the Germans, and the only saint among the German kings and emperors.

rebellious adult sons, disaffected nobles, ambitious Slavic rulers, an increasingly assertive papacy, and others.” Goldberg closes his review with a plea for further scholarship: “One hopes that his book will encourage further research on the East Frankish Carolingian kingdom and late Carolingian politics in general.”¹⁰⁵

With *Struggle for Empire*, Goldberg answers his own call. Quite in line with his criticisms of Hartmann, Goldberg presents readers with a true, chronological narrative account of Louis’s reign. In the introduction to the work, he stresses the fact that Louis was a practically-minded, opportunistic king who was able to effectively respond to many challenges at once. All the while, Louis had one overarching goal; he “sought to reunite as much of [Charlemagne’s] empire as possible.” This, however, is much easier for Goldberg to say than it was for Louis to do, since such a goal entailed binding together “a sprawling conglomeration of provinces and peoples only loosely bound together through loyalty to the king, a rudimentary system of government, and the Catholic Church.”¹⁰⁶

Accomplishing such a task would have been an impossible for one man to oversee personally, especially under circumstances in which “communications were slow...and the king could be in only one part of the kingdom at a time,” which absolutely necessitated that he secure the cooperation of the powerful nobles in his kingdom. Goldberg, contrary to the rather bleak historiographical tradition, does not see the “supervisory” nature of Carolingian kingship as a sign of weakness, nor as a sign of

¹⁰⁵ Goldberg, Review of Hartmann, 86.

¹⁰⁶ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 2-3.

decline from the era of the “strong and great” Charlemagne.¹⁰⁷ Here, Goldberg again stresses continuity between the early and late Carolingian periods, citing Janet Nelson’s provocative and quite appropriate claim that Charlemagne’s reign was “one goddamned crisis after another,” crises which Charlemagne was only able to overcome through the cooperation of the nobility and very extensive and successful military campaigning.¹⁰⁸ Especially in this military regard, Louis followed in his grandfather’s footsteps; he followed an absolutely grueling campaign schedule, putting expeditionary forces into the field year after year to cope with the constant raids and challenges by his brothers and external enemies alike. This constant campaigning, coupled with substantial diplomatic skill, enabled Louis simultaneously to keep the ambitions of his brothers at bay and to control the very problematic eastern frontier with the various Slavic peoples, the longest and most violent frontier in all of Europe at the time.

Goldberg, throughout *Struggle for Empire*, makes a strong case that Louis the German was a thoroughly effective military commander. Louis reportedly fashioned himself in the Carolingian warrior mold, preferring the woolen military cloak and armor to jeweled royal vestments and other finery.¹⁰⁹ The work is not a dedicated military history. It does focus on the interplay between war and politics, and as such, military activity plays a central role in the narrative, though the actual workings of the army are

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 7-11. Notably, Goldberg’s claim can easily be applied to the criticism of Louis the Pious as well, which portrays him as the first Carolingian king responsible for making so many concessions to the nobility that he seriously weakened royal power.

¹⁰⁸ Janet Nelson, “Making a Difference in Eighth-Century Politics: The Daughters of Desiderius,” in Alexander Callander Murray, ed., *After Rome’s Fall: Narrators and Sources of Early Medieval History* (Toronto, 1998), 172; as quoted in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 8-9.

¹⁰⁹ See Goldberg’s earlier article, “‘More Devoted to the Equipment of Battle than the Splendor of Banquets’: Frontier Kingship, Military Ritual, and Early Knighthood at the Court of Louis the German,” *Viator* 30 (1999), 41-78.

not deeply addressed or investigated. Goldberg's study shows without doubt that Louis's administration was vibrant and highly functional, which lays indispensable groundwork for the argument against the idea that "cooperative kingship," reliant upon noble support and the buying of aristocratic favor, rendered Louis the German unable to raise armies of the same type and magnitude as his predecessors.

The magnates with whom Carolingian kings needed to cooperate (or rule over, or supervise, depending on how much clout one wants to attribute to the central administrative authority) could be divided roughly along the lines of their respective offices into secular and religious. In the early Middle Ages, however, one would err to mark these divisions too strongly into the sort of three orders paradigm that marks the high and late Middle ages of nobles, clergy, and peasantry. In fact, there was a great deal of overlap of administrative responsibility in the military sphere, and the Carolingian kingdom illustrates such quite clearly.¹¹⁰

From their inception as ruling Frankish dynasty under Pippin the Short, father of Charlemagne, the Carolingians had bound up their royal authority with the papacy, which had authorized the deposition of the last puppet Merovingian monarch Childeric III, leading to the all but predetermined election of Pippin to take his place. Charlemagne cemented the alliance with the papacy with his conquest of the Lombard kingdom that had been threatening the pope's stability in Italy, as well as the rescue of Pope Leo from the rival faction that sought to depose and perhaps kill him.¹¹¹ In return for his loyalty,

¹¹⁰ On the interplay of secular and religious authority in law in the thought of Hincmar of Rheims, see Janet Nelson, "Kingship, Law, and Liturgy in the Political Thought of Hincmar of Rheims," in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986) 133-171.

¹¹¹ ARF 799-800; Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* 28.

Pope Leo famously crowned Charlemagne emperor at the Christmas day mass of the year 800.¹¹² By tradition, the act caught Charlemagne by surprise and completely embarrassed him—he said that he would not have even gone to mass that day had he known the pope’s intent¹¹³—but another school of thought holds that Charlemagne not only approved of the act but actively sought it out in an attempt to become the Emperor of the Romans.¹¹⁴ Secular powers also influenced the religious sphere a great deal. Kings had the ability to appoint bishops and abbots, except in the instance where the king granted a monastery the right of *abtswahl*—the privilege granted to the brothers of electing the abbot for themselves from among their own ranks.¹¹⁵

Regrettably, the written sources that survive from Louis’s reign tell us remarkably little about the actual bureaucratic function that powerful East Frankish church magnates performed with regard to military service and the supply of troops, and we are forced to rely largely upon the picture supplied by Charlemagne and the Ottonians to flesh out the understanding of the intervening period. Bigott argues that the silence in the source material does not necessarily mean that the important bishoprics and abbeys did not

¹¹² *ARF* 801—not 800 from the reckoning of the beginning of the year with Christmas.

¹¹³ Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni*, ch. 28.

¹¹⁴ Bernard Bachrach, “Charlemagne and Carolingian Military Administration,” in Peter Crooks and Timothy Parsons, *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: from Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2016), 170-196, here especially 180-181.

¹¹⁵ *Abtswahl* should have been standard practice in accordance with the rule of St. Benedict—as the king even stated in charters when granting it—but the ideal of the monastic rule and reality of operating with royal patronage and under royal protection did not quite match under most circumstances, which necessitated some compromise from both parties involved. Louis the German granted or confirmed this right several times through his royal charters to some of the more prominent monasteries in the East Frankish kingdom. It often accompanied immunity as an important token of royal favor. See for but a few examples ULD I.13 (St. Gall), I.16 (Fulda), I.32 (Hersfeld), I.48 (Altaich), I.58 (Metz), I.63 (Lorsch), I.107 (Kempten), I.150 (Nunnery Lamspringe). In the Carolingian world, the king generally held the power of appointments, and the *Abtswahl* was the exception to the rule, which he handed out when he saw fit. Ganshof, “The Church and Royal Power under Pippin III and Charlemagne,” in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and The Frankish Monarchy*, 205-239. Bachrach, “Charlemagne and Carolingian Military Administration,” 175.

provide troops to the royal expeditionary forces in East Francia. In fact, he believes that it is quite possible that the relative silence on the point of this obligation signifies that by this time, it was simply a foregone conclusion. Of course Salzburg, for example, would have provided troops to the host from its formidable holdings and in return for its privileges; such a commonplace need not be legislated. Bigott also argues that the military exemptions granted to a number of eastern monasteries by Louis the Pious were not renewed by Louis the German.¹¹⁶ Störmer has shown that despite the lack of references to noble “knights” (*miles*) as such, the ideas of nobility and military service or knighthood were bound up together with the offices, explicitly deacon.¹¹⁷

Janet Nelson shows that the annals uphold the ideas of Bigott and Störmer. The *AF* 849 report that a Bohemian rebellion caused Louis the German to send an army led by *dux* Ernest and several counts and abbots. Surely, were abbots leading campaigns for the king, they were also bringing troops to said operations. The idea that such important men would have traveled without at least a substantial retinue to protect their persons is ludicrous, and it is far more likely that they raised a more substantial complement of troops from those men living in the region (*casati*) than just their military households alone (though even the latter would have made up a decent force as a supplement to Ernest’s men), since the force was explicitly called a large one.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Boris Bigott, *Ludwig der Deutsche und die Reichskirche im Ostfränkischen Reich (826-876)* (Husum, Matthiesen Verlag, 2002), 124-136. Halsall concurs with the idea that church provision of troops for military service was taken rather for granted, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London, 2003), 76. For Louis the Pious’s exemptions *Notitia de servitio Monasteriorum* in Cassius Hallinger, ed., *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum* 1 (Siegburg, 1963), 493-499. Louis the Pious drew upon the whole of the empire and thus could afford to allow some institutions an exemption. Louis the German, with only a third as much territory, could not.

¹¹⁷ Störmer, *Früher Adel*, esp 155-199.

¹¹⁸ *AF* 849; Janet Nelson, “The Church’s Military Service in the Ninth Century,” in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, 117-131. Though Nelson’s work is centered on West Francia, its conclusions are still valuable in the

Bigott's view is confirmed by Barbara Rosenwein's work on immunity as an essential administrative tool¹¹⁹ and David Bachrach's study—which expands upon and modifies Rosenwein—of immunities as central to streamlining in the military sphere rather than indicators of administrative weakness. Though Louis's contemporary material often gives little visibility to the actual function of the bureaucratic apparatus for raising of troops by churchmen, the fact that these institutions were present under Charlemagne and survived into the Ottonian period, coupled with the fact that Louis routinely raised large expeditionary forces, which were explicitly headed by clergymen on several occasions, makes it far more likely that he simply continued using the same methodology, rather than that the practice died out for a century and then was resurrected under the Ottonians.¹²⁰

Louis's charters show that Louis both granted and confirmed immunities to important ecclesiastical institutions, rendering them and their holdings essentially free of local, comital authority. The monasteries, therefore, could administer their own justice, collect their own fines and taxes, and did not have to contribute supplies to the counts for use in their own households. By no means, however, did this mean that they were relieved of their responsibility to the expeditionary forces of the king. Rather, by removing all the comital authority from the process of mobilizing the districts bishoprics and monasteries possessed, the king effectively streamlined the process of mobilization

east, where I doubt very much that conditions of enforcement were terribly different, despite the lack of capitulary evidence to confirm the case explicitly, particularly given the annalistic confirmation of abbots and bishops in military service under Louis the German.

¹¹⁹ Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1999).

¹²⁰ David S. Bachrach, "Immunities as Tools of Royal Military Policy under the Carolingian and Ottonian Kings," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung*, 130 (2013), 1-36.

and supply by placing all of that responsibility upon the bishops and abbots holding the immunities. Also, by removing the necessity of mobilizing for the count and supplying his forces, the king ensured that the troops and supplies of these districts and the military households of the important church officials were always available to serve him directly should the need arise.

The distinctions, though difficult to puzzle out from the sources and the variously interpreted levels of vassalage relationships during this period, were necessary in an era of precarial land grants: essentially church lands being given to laymen to hold during their lifetimes and which would revert to the church upon their deaths. Who then, was responsible for mobilization of the troops of that region, the layman who held enough land to render him responsible to supply a man to the royal host concomitant to his level of holdings, or the abbot or bishop under whom he served? It is the contention of David Bachrach that it was the abbot—the man more closely linked with the royal administration—who undertook this responsibility, and indeed, it was this essential streamlining function that caused kings to grant immunities in the first place, deliberately to enable the holy man, represented by his lay *advocatus*, to do so.¹²¹

There is far less doubt about the military function of the secular magnates. In an era of “supervisory” kingship, counts and dukes served as important representatives of royal authority on the local administrative level in nearly all spheres, which naturally included the military.¹²² They were responsible not only for supplying properly equipped

¹²¹ David Bachrach, “Immunities,” esp. 13-19 for the Carolingian period with which we are concerned here. Bachrach goes on to show that the system continued to be utilized during the Ottonian period as well.

¹²² Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii*, 10; Gerd Tellenbach, *Königtum und Stämme in der Werdezeit des Deutschen Reiches* (Weimar, Böhlau, 1937); Karl Bosl, “Staat, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft im deutschen Mittelalter,” in *Gebhardt Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte* I.8 (Stuttgart, Union, 1959).

and trained troops to the royal host—determined numerically by the size of each man’s holdings¹²³—and appearing in person to command those men, but they also shouldered some of the burden of supplying the expeditionary force as it passed through their lands and when it contained their men, whom they accompanied on campaign. This meant, of course, that the magnates and their forces formed an important backbone of the Carolingian military structure, which in turn necessitated that the king must secure their loyalty, if he were to exercise military power effectively.

The primary core of Louis’s power stemmed from that kingdom which he first inherited in the 817 *ordinatio imperii*: Bavaria. With a few exceptions, largely stirred up by his son Carloman later in Louis’s reign, the nobility of Bavaria remained loyal to Louis and provided him with a solid basis of troops and supply for the expeditionary levies.¹²⁴ In a way, this mutual reliance of king and nobility served as a primitive, *de facto* check and balance system, wherein the king had to act in a sensible manner if he expected to retain the loyalty of powerful men in his kingdom, and from the opposite viewpoint, no one of these men could act in a manner that seemed treasonous or against the general good of the kingdom, lest he be subjected to royal justice, backed by the military support given to the king by his peers.¹²⁵

¹²³ *Memoratorium de Exercitu in Gallia Occidentalli Praeparando*, MGH Capitularia I.48; *Capitulare Missorum de Exercitu Promovendo*, MGH Capitularia I.50; *Capitulare Aquisgranense*, MGH Capitularia I.77.

¹²⁴ On the Bavarian nobility and the roots of the prominent families there, see especially the work of Wilhelm Störmer, *Adelsgruppen im Früh- und Hochmittelalterlichen Bayern* (Munich, 1972).

¹²⁵ I do not mean to suggest that this was deliberately set up as such; certainly the king would have preferred to rule absolutely, but the realities of governing such extensive territory made delegation of administrative responsibility necessary, and delegation of authority necessarily provides a check on the personal power of the delegator as a tradeoff, though it has the potential to extend its scope and reach.

Delbrück et al. argue that this “cooperative” nature of kingship amounts to a weakness of central authority in the ninth century. By comparison to contemporaries, however, particularly those in direct contact with Louis the German’s East Francia, the picture is much rosier. Many of the peoples across the frontier had numerous smaller princes rather than a single ruler representing central authority, and those men who attempted to take on this position (Goztomiuzli, et al.¹²⁶) were chronically short lived, often from direct intervention by the stronger central authority of the Carolingian realm.¹²⁷ The one key exception during Louis the German’s reign is Moravia; Rastislav’s preeminent position among his people was relatively secure from 846-869, though in theory, like Tassilo of Bavaria (deposed and tonsured in 788 by Charlemagne), he was more a Carolingian-appointed *dux* than an independent king (even though he and Tassilo both acted the part of the latter far more effectively).¹²⁸ Ultimately though, Rastislav’s position too was unstable, as his own nephew Svatopluk (d. 894) betrayed him to Louis the German. Svatopluk, in turn, made a great effort to drive Moravian expansionism, but

¹²⁶ *AF* 844 for the campaign against Goztomiuzli and the Obodrites, in which Goztomiuzli was killed and the Obodrites restored to peaceable tributary status.

¹²⁷ This paradigm held under Charlemagne as well—strong local rulers such as Duke Tassilo of Bavaria could be deemed a threat to the authority of the Carolingians, and hence were deposed. In Tassilo’s case, the charges against him were rather trumped up, including supposed desertion of Pippin’s campaign army in 763, fully fifteen years beforehand. More realistically, Charlemagne’s superior military might simply muscled Tassilo out of his position, and there was nothing he could do about it, though he tried to concoct an Avar alliance in a last ditch effort at resistance. The fact that this “desertion” was the ultimate grounds of the case, however, suggests the nature of the ducal office—which included the particular responsibility of supplying his Carolingian overlord with troops for the host. See *ARF* 763, 787-788; Kathy Lynne Roper Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties in Early Medieval Bavaria: A View of Socio-Political Interaction, 680-900* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 1999), 68-74. On the historical position of dukes in Bavaria—long before the ninth century of course—it is worthwhile to examine *Lex Baiuvariorum* ch. II, esp 1-14 in *MGH Leges nationum Germanicarum* V.2 (Hannover, 1926).

¹²⁸ On Tassilo’s deposition, *ARF* 788.

it is difficult to gauge the success of his attempts due to a lack of longevity, as the Magyars devastated the Great Moravian “Empire” within a generation.¹²⁹

One of the most important groups of magnates for the maintenance of order were the marcher lords: commanders whose holdings fell along the march, or frontier region. The borders were rather nebulously defined buffers between the Carolingian *regnum* proper and the zone across the frontier. Its extent depended largely upon the tendencies of the marcher lords themselves. More aggressive ones might penetrate further into the trans-frontier territory—as did ambitious Carloman in his quest to expand his own influence—while others, like Ernest or Thachulf of the Sorbian March, might be more content to serve as the bulwark of the general levy in defending the region against incursions or rebellions.¹³⁰

The lords of the southeastern marches have been masterfully addressed in a venerable prosopographical work by Michael Mitterauer, who calls attention to the hugely important roles that these men and families played in the defense of the southeastern portions of the East Frankish realm.¹³¹ A particularly important and unique office of that region was the “Prefect of the Eastern Marches” (*praefectus marcae*), a position that was responsible for defending a large stretch of border and carried with it a good deal of political authority.¹³² In 856, Louis appointed his ambitious eldest son

¹²⁹ Gyula László, *The Magyars, Their Life and Civilization* (Budapest, Corvina, 1996); C.A. Macartney *The Magyars in the Ninth Century* (Cambridge, 1930).

¹³⁰ Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 122-123.

¹³¹ Michael Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen im Südosten: frankische Reichsaristokratie und bayerische Stammesadel im österreichischen Raum* (Vienna, 1963).

¹³² Louis restructured the commands of the march in 826 to streamline the responsibility for defending the border, removing *Markgraf* Balderich and placing three of what were four existing marches under the control of one single Prefect of the Eastland, at that time Gerold, but he would soon die (832). Louis replaced him with his loyal Count Ratpot. Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen*, 85-89. For a prosopographical view of Ratpot, continue 91-103. Ultimately Ratpot would prove less loyal than Louis

Carloman to this important office in the hope of placating his desire for power, without giving him a kingdom of his own (and thus weakening the Bavarian kingdom's central authority by further fragmenting it), as Louis the Pious had done for Louis the German in Bavaria. Louis the German had learned from his father's mistake.¹³³

Bavaria too, had been governed by a prefect prior to Louis's ascension to the kingship over that region. Audulf, successor to Charlemagne's appointee Gerold, who died leading an army against an Avar rebellion in 799, served as prefect until his own death in 819.¹³⁴ No one was appointed to replace him, and it seems that this was likely the case so that Louis the German would be allowed to coalesce more of the region's administrative authority to his own person. Carloman's appointment by Louis the German, it has been argued, stirred up a great deal of aristocratic factionalism that weakened the king's position. The powerful noble families of the region, argues Störmer, sought to exploit Carloman's own desire for power to strengthen their own positions and deliberately weaken the hold the Carolingian state had over them.¹³⁵

Innes adeptly counters any idea of united aristocratic resistance to royal authority. To him, what was really a defining factor of noble and royal relations was the inherent

hoped, and he was forced to remove him for treason in 854, for conspiring with Rastislav of Moravia; *AI* 854, which also shows Carloman's promotion to the office in 856. Also see Herwig Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich: Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und die Quellen ihrer Zeit* (Munich, 1995), 308-311. Also see the circumstances of *AF* 863, in which Carloman temporarily lost his *dignitatum praefecturae* to Count Gundachar, who betrayed him to Louis's army.

¹³³ *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* 856, MGH SS 30.2, p. 744. After all, in this situation, Louis had his own example to learn from; if his eldest son acted in any way similar to the way he had treated his own father, Louis would be hard pressed indeed to keep him reined in and obedient once Carloman had his own kingdom and men who became rather personally loyal to him as a result. See especially the circumstances surrounding the aptly named "Field of Lies," where Louis the Pious's sons, having been endowed with their own kingdoms and therefore able to raise their own armies from those regions—temporarily dethroned and imprisoned their father; *AF* 833, *AB* 833, Nithard I.4.

¹³⁴ *ARF* 799; Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 122-124.

¹³⁵ Störmer, *Früher Adel*, 227-228. An extensive overview of the complicated family dynamics of the nobility in the region can be found in Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen*, 161-246.

instability of the position of a nobleman in the ninth century, understood by the constant striving for *Königsnähe* to secure their positions and holdings.¹³⁶ For several reasons, it is very difficult to talk of central authority in East Francia breaking down at all. First is that so many of these former trans-frontier regions—Saxony, the Avar territories, Bavaria—had been assimilated into the *regnum* so recently by the conquests of Charlemagne. Owing to the extreme distance of Aachen from the eastern regions in question—over 550km from Aachen to Regensburg, for example—most day-to-day administration had occurred under the auspices of the prefects, dukes, and counts of the region, with very little interference from the emperor. Indeed, this was one of the central values of royal delegation, in that it did not require the king to be physically present to ensure that his authority reached all corners of the realm.

Louis the German's physical presence in the east brought a marked change to the region's administration. No more do we hear of rebellions in Bavaria; essentially, the effective governance of the march had been pushed east as much by Louis's presence as it had by Charlemagne's actual conquest. The second problem was the ever-present late Carolingian issue that Pearson delightfully calls a "superfluity of heirs."¹³⁷ The problem was complicated for Louis the German—as again it had been for his father—by his exceptionally and inconveniently long life. Pearson notes that by the time of Louis's death he was a terribly old man by the standards of the age at around 70 or just under, and his sons were long since grown. By now they chafed at their father's authority over them, understandably desirous for freer hands, since they too were growing relatively "old."

¹³⁶ Innes, *State and Society*, 197-222.

¹³⁷ Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 134.

The magnates, too, believed that the king was liable to die at any time, and they wanted the succession question settled well and properly, in order that they might cement their own positions with the new king of their respective regions—from whom should they seek *Königsnahe* and favor? Certainly, his sons were right to be impatient: Carloman (d. 880, of stroke) and Louis the Younger (d. 882, undetermined illness) were both dead within six years of their father, and Charles the Fat was deposed in 887 after being incapacitated by a stroke.¹³⁸

While they and their father were all still alive, however, the sons' attempts to rebel against their father stemmed from Louis the German's attempts to a) govern the realm more tightly by including his sons in its management and b) provide them with authority of their own, which was necessarily regional so that they did not overlap one another. Finally, late in his reign, the king had turned his attention to the "Drang nach Westen,"¹³⁹ attempting several times to conquer portions of Lothar II's and Charles the Bald's kingdoms—with varying degrees of success—and also to secure for Carloman the inheritance of the kingdom of Italy.¹⁴⁰ This led to "royal absenteeism" in the east, a phrase which is only a little misleading.¹⁴¹ There was a royal personage present in the

¹³⁸ These strokes often have been attributed to genetic hypertension inherited through Queen Emma, though she herself was very long lived. As Pearson notes, the realities and tensions of early medieval politics, not to mention the stress of constant military campaigning, would have done little to ease any hypertension problems that might have existed. Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 143. On Charles the Fat see Simon MacLean, *Kingship and Politics: Charles the Fat and the End of the Carolingian Empire* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. 161-198 for the circumstances of the deposition.

¹³⁹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 233-262.

¹⁴⁰ Louis the German attempted to have his own son Carloman named as the heir to Italy after Louis II, who ultimately died in 875—see *AF* 875, and *AB* 872 for the succession plan.

¹⁴¹ Pearson, 125. She also believes that Louis undermined the magnates' confidence in him by repeatedly reinvesting rebellious sons with their previous power after the rebellions had been quelled. While the situation for the magnates must have seemed unstable indeed, Louis's refusal to depose and perhaps tonsure his sons outright is pretty understandable in light of their potential usefulness in military matters. Louis had invested a great deal in their education as Carolingian princes and future rulers, and Carloman in particular had proved to be a highly competent general. On his side, they were too valuable a resource to

eastern regions in the form of the Carolingian princes; regrettably for the aging king, however, they often had their own interests foremost in their minds instead of those of the kingdom as a whole unit. This was understandable, given the Frankish practice of partible inheritance, since the kingdom would not, indeed, be a unit as it had been under Louis the German. Central authority, as it were, was almost certain to deteriorate under that system, which ought not damn the memory of Louis the German particularly to be one of ineffective administration for “failing,” as Fried suggested, to dismantle a system he never intended to dismantle or to create a system of central administration unique to East Francia that no contemporary expected, nor the king himself desired.¹⁴² While he lived, he was quite effective; the dynasty though, was undone by the one-two punch of partible inheritance, followed by a lack of legitimate male heirs, as Goldberg has argued successfully.¹⁴³

Fried claims that after the deaths of Louis’s successors, “no longer were the raising of armies, the keeping of the peace, and the administration of justice, and the right of judgment over freemen were no longer royal prerogatives...Nevertheless, the uniqueness of the name of king outlived the Carolingians themselves...it did become the basis for the reestablishment of kingship by the Ottonians.”¹⁴⁴ It is undeniable that there was a notable void of royal authority in the late ninth and early tenth centuries, but Fried overstates why this was the case. He follows classic historiographical tradition in blaming the Carolingians for having given away so many privileges that they had nothing left to

abandon completely, and on a less pragmatic and more personal note, that must have been a difficult thing for a father to do to his son.

¹⁴² Fried, “East and Middle Kingdoms,” 155.

¹⁴³ Goldberg, “Struggle for Empire,” 338-346.

¹⁴⁴ Fried “East and Middle Kingdoms,” 167.

buy loyalty, as if the Carolingian king depended on acting as a Beowulf-esque ring-giver for the maintenance of his power. The “break” in royal authority owed not to the absence of any underpinnings of administration, but rather to the lack of a capable man of the current ruling dynasty to wield them effectively after the deaths of Louis the German’s heirs.

The period from the death of Louis the German until the election of Henry the Fowler as Henry I spanned 43 years from 876-919, during which time East Francia had no less than six separate kings, several of whom ruled only part of Louis the German’s erstwhile territory.¹⁴⁵ By contrast, Charlemagne (768-814), Louis the Pious (813-840), and Louis the German (c. 825-876) had all ruled East Francia for a very long time, lending a remarkable degree of constancy and continuity in administration.¹⁴⁶ Julia Smith notes that even when the turnover from one king to another was relatively smooth, there was usually a sort of consolidation, settling in period where the new king consolidated power and showed his military competence, particularly along the frontier regions.¹⁴⁷ Is it any wonder that these short lived kings were never quite able to get themselves deeply established? As Fried notes, during this period the nobles raised armies without royal prerogative—perhaps, when there was no truly authoritative king to give them direction. This was nothing new, however. As David Bachrach has shown, it was just that sort of

¹⁴⁵ Louis the German’s three sons Carloman (d. 880), Louis the Younger (d. 882), and Charles the Fat (deposed 887 by Arnulf, d. 888), Arnulf of Carinthia (d. 899), Louis the Child (d. 911, the great bulk of whose reign was a regency government during his minority), and Conrad I (d. Dec. 918); Henry was elected King Henry I in May of 919.

¹⁴⁶ I have dated the reigns of the respective kings according to their reigns in East Francia, and hence the overlap between Louis the Pious and Charlemagne, who ruled as co-emperors from 813 until Charlemagne’s death in 814, and between Louis the Pious and Louis the German, who began ruling personally in Bavaria in c. 825, though he had technically been proclaimed king of the region by Louis the Pious in the *ordinatio imperii* of 817.

¹⁴⁷ Julia Smith, “*Fines Imperii*: The Marches,” in *NCMH* 2 (1995), 169-189, here esp. 182-183.

local military service for a nobleman that the Carolingian kings had circumvented through the granting of immunities, funneling all that potential military power into the royal expeditionary forces when summoned.¹⁴⁸

David Bachrach illustrates that the early Ottonians, in their turn, did not innovate in mustering troops, as Fried notes of Louis the German as well. The governments, and the methodologies by which they raised their armies, were indeed backward looking—and very deliberately so—to the paradigm for the Carolingian world established by Charles Martel and deeply codified and bureaucratized by Charlemagne, which in turn looked backward—though in substantially repurposed and revised forms—to the late Roman imperial model as epitomized by men like Vegetius, Frontinus, and Ammianus Marcellinus, all of which texts were available at Carolingian royal courts.¹⁴⁹ The military institutions by which large royal hosts were raised survived the “shocking weakness of royal authority” in the very late ninth and early tenth centuries to be exploited in a very recognizable way by the Ottonian kings, which indicates strength of the institution, despite the very temporary lack of utilization while the turbulent transfer of dynastic power took place. The instruments for projecting effective military force remained, but the repeated restructuring of the *regnum* caused by early death and partible inheritance (not inherent institutional weakness), had rendered it necessary for a new and capable monarch to establish control over the potentially wavering nobility just as the Carolingians had: with “harder fists and sharper elbows.”¹⁵⁰ Our story, as ever so often in

¹⁴⁸ D. Bachrach, “Immunities,” 1-36.

¹⁴⁹ David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 70-101.

¹⁵⁰ McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 38, and as quoted in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 3, in order to make the same point regarding Carolingian ascendancy.

late antiquity and the early medieval period, is one of continuity and transition, rather than abrupt, jarring, or catastrophic change that created new military institutions through “revolutionary” alterations.¹⁵¹

In the same vein, Bernard and David Bachrach together have thoroughly dismantled Karl Leyser’s idea of a Saxon military revolution designed to establish control over East Francia through the use of a nearly exclusively professional heavy cavalry force, which would replace the previously incompetent Saxon foot soldiery that was insufficient to repel Magyar attacks.¹⁵² Instead, they argue, the underpinnings of the forces of Henry I and Otto I were derived directly from the Carolingian model, as a result of the Saxons having been gradually integrated into the Carolingian fold since the conquest of Saxony by Charlemagne. As will be shown below, they are undoubtedly correct, since by the time of Louis the German, Saxon forces comprised an indispensable part of the East Frankish military. If, indeed, there must be a military revolution under the Ottonians, the Bachrachs argue that it is to be found rather in the bolstering of the Carolingian system of defense in depth with more extensive frontier fortifications and a stouter version of the general levy: the *agrarii milites*. Additionally, David Bachrach shows in detail that the Ottonians, like Charlemagne, renewed the emphasis on offensive

¹⁵¹ But for the catastrophe model of the end of the Roman Empire in the west, see Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005).

¹⁵² Karl Leyser, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours, 900-1250* (London, 1982), esp. 11-67. Bernard and David Bachrach, “Saxon Military Revolution, 912-973?: Myth and Reality,” *Early Medieval Europe* 15.2 (2007), 186-222. This systematic tearing down of Leyser’s thesis harks back to Bernard Bachrach’s “Charles Martel, Mounted Shock Combat, the Stirrup, and Feudalism,” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 7 (1970) 49-75, a memorably savage discrediting of the Brunner thesis and its expansion by Lynn White in the technologically deterministic *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (Oxford, 1962).

warfare and the siege,¹⁵³ the latter of which type of operations rendered Leyser's heavy cavalry argument particularly ineffective.

The Eastern Frontier and the Slavic Fortifications¹⁵⁴

Much has been made of the logistical and transportation considerations that Frankish rulers, particularly Louis the German, had to make during campaigns along the long eastern frontier by Charles Bowlus. During such eastern campaigns, particularly in the later decades of the 850s through the 870s, with the help of his sometimes rebellious son Carloman, Louis was able to deploy effectively several armies at once in a pincer attack on the enemy, a trademark of Carolingian warfare under Charlemagne.¹⁵⁵ This, of course, required substantial calculations regarding transportation and logistical support, since the king himself could not be present to oversee both armies at once. Most of the time, Louis's armies were successful in reducing the Slavs to tributary status, and were able to enforce the payments by force of arms when they were not offered willingly.¹⁵⁶ Much of this success can be attributed to the king's good sense in appraising the strength of his rivals.¹⁵⁷ Several eastern fortresses, notably Mikulčice and Staré Město,¹⁵⁸ were notoriously impregnable. As such, Louis prudently avoided attempting to lay siege to

¹⁵³ D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth Century Germany*, 151-168.

¹⁵⁴ Here, the terms frontier and borders are used interchangeably, divorced from their modern zonal versus linear connotations, as indeed the Carolingians themselves made no distinction between Latin terminology like *finis*, *limites*, *termina*, and *confinia*. The march, *marca*, refers specifically to the border zone in which the limits of Carolingian authority faded gradually into foreign territory. See further Julia Smith, "*Fines Imperii*," here esp. 176-178.

¹⁵⁵ Charles R. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians and Magyars, the Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788-907* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 173-185.

¹⁵⁶ In "Plunder and Tribute," Reuter attributes the readily available tributes from the eastern frontier peoples to the difference in the economies of East and West Francia (92-94). Charles the Bald made a sustained effort to mint coins, as evidenced by coin hoard finds in the west, while comparable evidence from the eastern kingdom of Louis the German is lacking. See Nelson, Charles the Bald, 19-40, and also Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 201-205.

¹⁵⁷ Bowlus, 114-186.

¹⁵⁸ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 283-288.

them, which would have necessitated the expenditure of enormous resources in men and supply.

Goldberg argues that a good part of this “discretion” was owed to Louis’s main military ambition, which might appropriately be classified as his grand strategy, the effort at reuniting Charlemagne’s fractured empire under his own control, which Goldberg calls the “*Drang nach Westen*,” or “Push to the West.”¹⁵⁹ As such, the eastern frontier wars, though important for the plunder and tribute that resulted from them and for the stabilization of the frontier, were secondary objectives to westward expansion, and Louis may not have wanted to devote a determined effort to a direct, expansionist conquest of regions beyond the eastern frontier.¹⁶⁰

Warfare across the eastern frontier of his kingdom presented a number of unique challenges for Louis the German that he did not experience in the west. The first was the difficulty of gathering reliable intelligence concerning the enemy. In the west, Louis the German knew more or less exactly what to expect from his brothers in regards to armies, troop compositions, tactics, weaponry, and so forth. He also had a keen grasp of the holdings and fortifications of the entire Carolingian realm, knowledge which grew only more thorough after the royal brothers jointly oversaw a grandly-scaled survey of the entire realm after Fontenoy (841), in order to ensure equitable division of kingdoms between them.¹⁶¹ This survey formed the basis for the *divisio* enacted by the Treaty of Verdun (843).

¹⁵⁹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 233-262.

¹⁶⁰ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 233-234, 288-289.

¹⁶¹ Nithard, IV.4-6.

In the east, however, the situation was rather murkier. Across the long eastern frontier—nearly 1000km from Hamburg to Moosburg¹⁶²—lived a number of diverse Slavic peoples. Their various princes, kings, dukes, and other leaders were constantly in a state of flux, as a result both of civil wars and Carolingian intervention. Louis commonly replaced problematic rulers with client officials of his own choosing, as was the case with the deposition of the troublesome Moimir and subsequent installation of Rastislav in his stead in 846.¹⁶³ Louis and his court of course strove to obtain the best available information regarding the Slavic peoples and their political and military situations. The annals consistently report that the king often received intelligence of rebellions before they were too far progressed, and it was the responsibility of march commanders to bring the most thorough information that they could obtain to the assembly.¹⁶⁴ The king also had a good grasp of the regional geography, having compiled a catalogue of the various peoples across the frontier and the fortifications that they possessed.¹⁶⁵ Still, even with good intelligence, frontier warfare was difficult to manage. It took a great deal of planning and effort to ensure that logistical supply routes could be maintained to keep the army safe and provisioned on the march.¹⁶⁶

Territorial conquest was usually not the intended aim of Louis's eastern warfare. He was content to keep most of these peoples—Obodrites, Sorbs, Bohemians, and

¹⁶² Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 12.

¹⁶³ Of course, this particular appointment worked out quite poorly for Louis the German, as Rastislav in turn became even more rebellious and threatening to his Frankish overlords than Moimir ever had. Louis's son Carloman finally captured Rastislav in 870 when his nephew Svatopluk betrayed him to the Franks. *AF* 870, *AB* 870.

¹⁶⁴ Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 29-33; Bachrach, "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," *Journal of Military History* Vol. 66 No. 2 (April 2002), 313-357.

¹⁶⁵ The *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, ed. Erwin Herrmann, in *Slawisch-germanische Beziehungen im südostdeutschen Raum von der Spätantike bis zum Ungarnsturm: Ein Quellenbuch mit Erläuterungen*, (Munich, 1965), 212-222.

¹⁶⁶ Discussed in detail below, ch. 5.

Moravians—in a dependent, tributary client status,¹⁶⁷ which enriched the royal treasury while also leaving the administration of these regions largely up to the residents thereof, with a few important exceptions of which Moravia was the most notable. Conquest meant that the king would have to be responsible for the incorporation of these various peoples into the *regnum francorum*, which in turn necessitated assuming the burden of administration and military protection. The distance of travel to make war upon the Slavic tribes was already problematic, and as such, extending the frontier further into eastern territory, putting the realm directly in contact with a different group of potential rivals further east, was not the most attractive prospect. Besides, two previous generations of Frankish kings, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, had both warned against the dangers of continued expansionist attempts, and they spoke from experience, having put armies into the field against eastern challengers numerous times.¹⁶⁸ Louis the German ruled many of the regions that resulted from the conquests of Charlemagne, including the erstwhile territories of the Avars and Saxons, which provided him with a valuable source of troops and revenue. Louis knew the price of these conquests; Charlemagne struggled against the Saxons for decades during the 770s-790s, and even in Louis's own time they were yet imperfectly incorporated into the Carolingian realm, as the Stellinga rebellion of the early 840s indicates.¹⁶⁹

A serious difficulty presented by the Moravians in particular was the stoutness of their fortifications. The catalogue of fortresses often referred to as the Bavarian

¹⁶⁷ Effectively termed “a kind of suzerainty” by Fried, “Frankish Kingdoms,” 151.

¹⁶⁸ The warnings are preserved in Charlemagne's *Divisio Regnorum*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.45, esp ch. 6, and Louis the Pious's *Ordinatio Imperii*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.136, intro and ch. 6-8.

¹⁶⁹ *AF* 842, *AB* 842, *AX* 841-842.

Geographer provided locations and numbers, but this survey did not explicitly mention the scale, which was often massive. Stoutly built stone fortifications like Mikulčice and Staré Město were extremely difficult to attack by direct assault, and blockading and starving them into submission, while the invaders were already deep in enemy territory and constantly under threat of ambush by relief forces, was a dangerous prospect. Since he did not intend to attempt massive and consistent territorial conquest, Louis the German's expeditionary forces seldom hauled siege impedimenta with them on eastern campaigns. Eastern armies usually did not challenge the Frankish expeditionary forces in open battle, since the Franks' numerical superiority would have wrought disastrous results. Instead, Slavic forces typically withdrew with their leaders into the nearest available fortress to wait out the campaign season. Just because he did not intend to storm the fortification, however, did not mean that Louis the German was content to stop there. Since he was only attempting to bring the rebellious clients to heel, it was usually sufficient to ravage the landscape with fire and sword, destroying the harvests and razing any lesser fortifications, thereby attempting to demonstrate to the population that resistance to the Franks did more harm than good to their home territory.

This sort of warfare, Reuter argues, provided Louis with more of an outlet for obtaining plunder and tribute to placate his noble supporters than his brothers enjoyed—particularly as Charles the Bald seemed to be funneling treasure in the opposite direction into Viking coffers.¹⁷⁰ Reuter takes this idea much too far, suggesting that Louis's capability for fielding several armies stemmed directly from the plunder and tribute payments, despite himself having just noted the enormous income that the East Frankish

¹⁷⁰ Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute," 93.

kings could expect from monasteries and bishoprics and noting the huge military responsibilities of these church institutions.¹⁷¹ Large armies, divided into multiple pincers, were a central tenet of Carolingian warfare from the very beginning; the practice did not depend upon plunder.¹⁷² The frontier did not provide Louis with the potential for fielding large armies, but rather it burdened him with the necessity of doing so. The logistical difficulties brought on by marching one massive force together were one of the best reasons for splitting up the army on the march, and traveling outside the kingdom proper across the frontier compounded the problem.¹⁷³ Charles and Lothar did not have to cope with this. Additionally, the plurality of trans-frontier enemies accounts for the splitting up of armies that Reuter identifies as his examples in 858 and 869.¹⁷⁴

Scholarship on the frontier Slavs themselves is both rich and troublesome for the Anglophone or Germanophone scholar. Much work has naturally been published in Slavic languages, of which translations are few and far between. Thankfully, a number of recent works have been published both in English and German which shed important light upon the situation beyond the frontier. A good overview of the early Slavic migrations and settlements, largely through the view of Byzantine sources coupled with archaeological evidence, can be found in Florin Curta's *The Making of the Slavs*.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute," 85-86.

¹⁷² Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 48-50, 83, 191-200.

¹⁷³ Even so, Louis's Carolingian expeditionary forces tended to mitigate the logistical burdens by marching along river systems, particularly the Danube *en route* to Moravia. See below, ch. 5, for a detailed discussion of logistical concerns.

¹⁷⁴ Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute," 92 and n.84. Loot as the "prime mover" for offensive warfare is further debunked by Halsall, *Warfare and Society*, 91-92.

¹⁷⁵ Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs* (Cambridge, 2001). Also cf. his edited collection *East Central & Eastern Europe in the Early Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor, 2005), particularly the very extensive and useful bibliography of over 80 pages, conveniently organized into subcategories based on subject to enhance reference and readability. The collection derived originally from Kalamazoo conference sessions in 2000-01.

Curta's work is also strong historiographically, providing an excellent introduction to the evolution of historians' views on early Slavic governance and leadership.¹⁷⁶ He points up the constructed nature of ideas such as primitive democracy—military or otherwise—naturally popular among Marxist historians, and that the Slav migrations were necessarily disjointed or chaotic. Still, there was an undoubted, although gradual, move from looser tribal conglomerations in the early context, towards firmer leadership by chiefs who were often rivals. Certainly, in Louis the German's dealings with the Slavs, we can see shades of this development stubbornly clinging on—such as the fact that it was difficult for the Franks even to discern whether there were lots of smaller princelings or a definite king, more in the mold with which they were familiar.¹⁷⁷

From very early on in the history of the westward migrations, Slavic peoples both encountered and built fortifications. Justinian's Byzantium boasted a strong system of defense in depth, which must have been very influential to those peoples migrating into the southern portion of the regions that would ultimately border the eastern edge of Carolingian territory. This example provided a valuable learning experience for the migratory Slavs, and the next few centuries witnessed a good deal of fortification building among Slavic peoples, most famously Moravia. The archaeology of their fortifications, particularly the massive sites at Mikulčice and Staré Město, prove the significance of these building projects.¹⁷⁸ Most Moravian fortifications, as Herold

¹⁷⁶ Particularly p. 6-35.

¹⁷⁷ See for example the circumstances surrounding the Abodrite rebellion under Goztoiuizli, described as the Abodrite king by the *AF*, who had supposedly secured a position for himself over the other leaders of the region that sounds rather like the *Bretwalda* of Anglo-Saxon England. At any rate, Louis the German's forces defeated and killed him in battle, and Louis appointed a Frankish *dux* to administer the region in his stead. *AF* 844, *AX* 844.

¹⁷⁸ Josef Poulík, "Mikulčice: capital of the lords of Great Moravia," in Rupert Bruce-Mitford, ed. *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Europe* (London, 1975), 1-31; Jiri Machacek, "Great Moravian Central

explains, took one of two forms. The larger sort, such as Mikulčice, Staré Město, and Pohansko, were placed upon relatively higher ground in the floodplains of river basins. The swampier regions that surrounded the higher places would add to the natural defenses by complicating the approach of invading armies, particularly those encumbered by horse-drawn carts. The other sort were *Fluchtburgen*—flight fortresses—purpose-built hilltop fortifications into which the populace could flee in case of attack, such as the fortress of Devín, which Louis the German besieged in 864.¹⁷⁹

Established as it was along the bank of the Morava River, Mikulčice was initially constructed with a series of stout wooden and earth palisades around five meters high and three meters in width at the bases. By the ninth century, however, the wooden palisades had been strengthened with far more substantial stone fronted ones, and the size of the settlement's central stronghold had been substantially increased from around 3 hectares to over 7. Poulík estimates that the suburban settlement to the northwest of the stronghold could have housed around 1000 people, which Poláček pushes to 2000.¹⁸⁰ This, however, was in times of peace, and does not take into account the residents of the palace complex and churches within the stronghold. When an invasion was threatened, everyone from the surrounding regions—the settlement as a whole of fortifications and “suburban” hinterland covered around 200 hectares—would have poured into the defenses to repel

Places and their Practical Function, Social Significance, and Symbolic Meaning,” in *Zentrale Orte und Zentrale Räume des Frühmittelalters in Süddeutschland* (Mainz, 2013), 235-248.

¹⁷⁹ Hajnalka Herold, “Fortified Settlements of the 9th and 10th Centuries AD in Central Europe: Structure, Function and Symbolism,” *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012), 60-84.

¹⁸⁰ Lumír Poláček, “Great Moravia, the Power Centre at Mikulčice, and the Issue of the Socio-Economic Structure,” in P. Velemínský and L. Poláček, eds., *Studien zum Burgwall von Mikulčice VIII* (Brno, 2008), 11-44.

potential attackers.¹⁸¹ This would have provided more than enough men to defend the ramparts effectively from attack, assuming that a large East Frankish campaign force numbered around 10,000 soldiers.¹⁸² Owing to their size and locations, Louis the German did not really try to besiege them, save for ravaging the countryside in order to starve the defenders into submission. Had he actually intended on conquering and annexing Moravia rather than restoring it to tributary status, it might have been worth considering attempting a more deeply invested siege, but given the huge cost in men and material, he opted not to.

Conclusion

To recapitulate, the aim of the present work is to examine Louis the German's military capacities in an attempt to evaluate the success and progression of the Carolingian war machine in East Francia. It will address all aspects of the military, including grand strategy, military organization, strategy and tactics, logistics, and performance in the field. The end result will be to determine whether it is accurate to characterize Louis the German as a competent and successful military commander, or whether the borders of the realm held solidly during his reign in spite of his incompetence and interfamilial squabbling, as traditional scholarship might have us

¹⁸¹ Using a ratio of one defender per meter length of wall, and assuming relatively square walls, an area of 7 hectares would be effectively enclosed by walls 265m in length, it would only have required just over 1,000 fighting men to garrison the walls effectively. Since an attacking force requires at least four to five times the number of men as the defenders to successfully execute an assault on a fortification, even at the barest level of defense, without the army of Rastislav to bolster the defenses—which never happened, as Rastislav usually led the defense of such places personally once he got word of the Carolingian approach—Louis would have required forces of 4,000 in addition to siege impediments to attempt taking the city. Since I reckon the actual number of defenders, once the populace and the more professional soldiery had taken up inside the city, at closer to perhaps 5,000, it is easy to see why Louis's forces declined to besiege them, since 20,000 men and substantial siege *impedimenta* would have been required at a minimum.

¹⁸² Discussion below, ch. 4.

believe. In doing so, it will attempt to fill the gap in concerted military history and knowledge between the early Carolingian army, which reached its zenith of sophistication and success under Charlemagne, and the forces of the later Carolingian kings.

Hopefully, over the course of *The Unconquered Louis Rejoiced in Iron*, a clear picture will emerge of the later Carolingian military under Louis the German as a more organized and capable force than historians previously have asserted. Louis the Pious, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German have also been recently reevaluated as vibrant, capable rulers in the image of Charlemagne. All three were highly trained, adept battlefield and siege commanders, and proficient logisticians, who, for the most part, were able to defend their realms from foreign threats while simultaneously juggling one another's ambitions and those of the nobles. What is conspicuously lacking in the present scholarship are systematic studies of the progression of army size, composition, organization, and tactics for the various Carolingian kingdoms following the Treaty of Verdun in 843, which might parallel the efforts of Werner and Bachrach for the earlier Carolingian period. The present work will seek to fill a part of this aforementioned void by showing that Louis the German and the rest of the ninth-century Carolingian kings deliberately looked back to the earlier Carolingian period for military *exempla*, relied upon already existing institutions that were established strongly, and passed on to posterity vibrant and intact realms. Contrary to the paradigm of the breakdown of central, royal authority asserted in the earlier scholarly tradition, discussed above, the military institutions of the early Carolingians survived intact in East Francia throughout the ninth

century, to such an extent that the early Ottonian kings could draw directly upon them in building their own armies to maintain and expand their realm.

CHAPTER TWO: GRAND STRATEGY

What is grand strategy? Bachrach explains that in the past, many military scholars and politicians have tended to utilize terms such as “grand strategy” or “long term strategy” without taking the trouble to define adequately what such terms mean.¹⁸³ The lack of formal definition for grand strategy undoubtedly derives from the difficulty of pinning down just what the concept entails, or even a chronological scope necessary for the determination of such a strategy.¹⁸⁴ Even without advancing an epistemologically sound definition, however, one can identify certain key factors of grand strategy. First, it is intentionally planned; those in charge—in this case Louis the German and his advisers—have a clear idea of what is to be accomplished. Secondly, it is concerned necessarily with means; one cannot undertake a successful military campaign, let alone achieve an overarching goal spanning the course of, for example, an entire reign, without a solid backbone of economic, military, and political resources for the army. Here the true breadth of the term emerges. Grand strategy concerns nearly every aspect of military policy and preparedness, including but not limited to campaign strategies, operations,

¹⁸³ Bachrach does not attempt to advance a formal definition of his own, recognizing full well that the “epistemological criteria of both necessity and sufficiency” are nearly impossible to satisfy in a neatly contained manner. For some early, unsatisfactory attempts to define grand strategy, see especially the historians cited by Bachrach, in *Early Carolingian Warfare* 1-3 and n. 1-11, pp. 260-261, chiefly Liddell-Hart and Luttwak, the latter of whom does not attempt a formal definition despite the fact that his book contains the term in the title: *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976). Luttwak primarily relates the term to Roman imperial security and survival.

¹⁸⁴ Yale University’s “Brady-Johnson Program in Grand Strategy,” a division of their International Security Studies program, has attempted to define grand strategy alternately as “a comprehensive plan of action, based on the calculated relationship of means to large ends” (2013) or a “comprehensive approach to achieving large ends with limited means” (2019). <http://iss.yale.edu/grand-strategy-program>, last accessed 4/15/2013, and <https://grandstrategy.yale.edu/about>, 1/28/2019. These descriptions are intentionally vague, but they capture the very basic essence of grand strategy even in the military sphere.

training, tactics, morale, logistics, equipment, leadership, and more. Finally, grand strategy is in essence the overarching vision that governs all of these aspects.

The next step is to decide whether or not a specific long-term strategy can be identified for Louis the German. A consistent grand strategy—or long term strategy—that overarches the entirety of Louis the German’s reign is difficult to identify. Considering the reign of a single king removes at least one of the many problems with the study of grand strategy indicated above; at the very least there are clear chronological limits to the study. Louis the German and his staff of military advisors certainly never produced a clearly defined statement of grand strategic intent. As such, it is necessary to reconstruct grand strategy through consideration of the progress of the various campaigns undertaken by Louis the German, in light of the political environment of ninth-century Francia.¹⁸⁵

Without actually using the term explicitly, Eric Goldberg believes that Louis the German’s grand strategy was to reunite the *regnum Francorum* under his authority, so that he could rule over its entirety in the image of Charlemagne.¹⁸⁶ If one accepts this view, it follows necessarily that Louis would have oriented the surplus military and economic resources of the realm towards achieving this goal. I argue that Goldberg’s schema requires modification.

¹⁸⁵ Considering that the grand strategy discussion has been built essentially through consideration of much of the material which follows in later chapters, it would also be sensible to have the grand strategy chapter follow them. Conceptually, however, I have elected to structure the study in this fashion to follow the progression of military planning from “big picture” grand strategic considerations, through the increasingly more granular and detailed considerations of campaign strategy, military organization, tactics and training, and equipment and supply.

¹⁸⁶ This position is outlined in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, p. 2-7 and particularly Ch. 7, “Drang nach Westen, 853-860,” 233-262.

The idea that Louis the German's grand strategy was intended to enable him to reconquer the entirety of the *regnum Francorum*, that he might rule it as a unified kingdom as Charlemagne once did, is overly idealistic in the context of later ninth century kingship and politics. To be sure, this ambition had very likely crossed the mind of each of the brother Carolingian kings who succeeded Louis the Pious upon his death in 840, and it may have underpinned some of the decision making during the turbulent civil war period from 840-843, particularly for Lothar I, who held the imperial title. To claim, however, that this was the central focus of Louis the German's military campaigning, would be to underestimate the king's pragmatism and opportunism, not to mention undermine one of the foundational principles of Frankish kingship in partible inheritance. As Louis was aware, he and each of his brothers had undergone comparable military training, received roughly the same education, and boasted relatively similar complements of military assets throughout their respective kingdoms. The latter point is especially true after the Battle of Fontenoy in 841, when the kings themselves agreed to survey the whole of Carolingian territory, using representatives from each king's part of the realm, in order that they might ensure an equitable division of resources between brothers. The results of the survey formed the basis for the 842 *divisio* and the 843 Treaty of Verdun.¹⁸⁷

At least in theory, the equality would prevent each king from coveting his brother's realm, as he possessed an equal share, thereby precluding another mutually costly disaster like Fontenoy. Moreover, Romano-Frankish tradition dictated that kings

¹⁸⁷ Nithard, IV.4-5; *AB* 842, *AF* 842; *AX* 843 (sic, 842). Refer to F.L Ganshof, "On the Genesis and Significance of the Treaty of Verdun (843)" in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy: studies in Carolingian History*, trans. Janet Sondheimer (Ithaca, 1971), 289-302.

did not practice primogeniture, instead dividing the realm between their sons in the mold of Clovis (d. 511).¹⁸⁸ Each brother, therefore, accepted his brothers' right to rule, however much he might chafe at it or attempt to improve his own relative position at his brothers' expense.¹⁸⁹ The one possible caveat to this general idea is that Lothar, Pippin, and Louis the German may not have believed that Charles the Bald should have as much right to rule a kingdom as they did, since he was only their half-brother, and his kingdom was carved out by Louis the Pious after the 817 *ordinatio imperii*, at the expense of the other three, full brothers.

The very diverse threats faced by Louis the German and his armies seems often to have necessitated grand strategic shifts that can be understood more clearly by dividing his reign into several phases. These divisions are not even particularly artificial or modern periodization; it is clear that the king and his advisers understood that the changing circumstances meant that the military assets of the kingdom would have to be deployed differently in order to adapt successfully to varying circumstances, which can be discerned from both narrative and charter sources. Also, it is necessary to state that Louis's changes in grand strategy were not necessarily abrupt, distinct changes but slowly shifting adaptations that came about gradually, often over the course of several campaign seasons.

¹⁸⁸ The Frankish tradition harks back to the later Roman imperial tradition of Diocletian (abdicated 305) and Constantine the Great (d. 337). Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Divisio legitima und unitas imperii: Teilungspraxis und Einheitsstreben bei der Thronfolge im Frankenreich," *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 52 (1996), 423-485. By the ninth century the principle was firmly rooted enough that AB 840 referred to Lothar's attacks on Louis and Charles as *iura naturae transgressus*—violations of the laws of nature.

¹⁸⁹ Indeed, this was one of the central objections to the 817 *ordinatio imperii*, in which Louis the Pious violated the system of partible inheritance by attempting to pass the united empire on to Lothar, relegating his brothers to sub-kings over particular regions instead of equals. Thegan, *Deeds of Emperor Louis* ch. 21; ARF 817. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 31-47.

Three rough phases of grand strategic intent can be identified. The first includes the pre-civil war and civil war period spanning the years 826-843, when the young Louis strove primarily to keep his kingdom intact and consolidate his power in Bavaria. With this goal achieved, he was then able to contest the perceived offense done to him by the *ordinatio imperii* of 817 by mounting repeated military challenges both to his father and his elder brother Lothar, whom the *ordinatio* had named co-emperor with Louis the Pious, and sole emperor after his father's death.¹⁹⁰ This conflict was further exacerbated by the creation of a kingdom for Charles the Bald in 829, to which the full-blood brothers Lothar I, Pippin, and Louis the German all took great offense.

The second phase is the period of relative civil peace from 843 until Lothar's death in 855. Following the disaster of Fontenoy, Louis the German, Charles the Bald, and Lothar I attempted to prevent further civil strife through an equitable division of the kingdom, an end that they largely achieved through the Treaty of Verdun in 843. The ostensibly fair division of resources succeeded quite well while the three cosigning brothers lived: though diplomatic relations were often rather tense, interfamilial warfare remained nearly absent from the historical record for twelve years, until just before Lothar I died, leaving behind a weaker son, Lothar II (d. 869), whom Louis and Charles both attempted to exploit. The relative lack of civil conflict left Louis free to shift his attention to other pressing pursuits, namely the consolidation of power throughout the whole of the eastern realm that he had received as his share of the Verdun settlement. Additionally, Louis attempted to exert military supremacy over the longest frontier in Europe at the far eastern edge of his kingdom—roughly six hundred miles long—and the

¹⁹⁰ *Ordinatio Imperii*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.136.

variety of peoples that lived beyond it.¹⁹¹ These peoples frequently defied royal authority, either through open rebellion or by leading plundering raids into Louis's territory.

The final portion stretches from 855 until Louis's death in 876. With Lothar I dead, Charles and Louis, former allies against Lothar during the civil war, turned hostile to one another as they each attempted to disinherit Lothar's heirs and claim his erstwhile middle kingdom for themselves. These efforts only increased after the death of Lothar II in 869. Louis also made a corollary effort in the east. In order to enable his armies to pursue the struggle against Charles without interference, Louis devoted a great deal of military effort to solving the persistent problem with Moravia and its rebellious and cunning *dux* Rastislav, whom Louis himself had appointed in 846, and his successors Sclagamar and Svatopluk during the early 870s.¹⁹²

Hence, Louis the German exhibited a general pattern of grand strategic intent that shifted from consolidation of very local authority in Bavaria (824-832), to contesting the *ordinatio imperii* and the creation of Charles the Bald's kingdom in 829 in an attempt to win the largest possible kingdom (832-843), to pacification and consolidation of the entirety of his realm (843-855), to cautious expansionism at the expense of Lothar's heirs and his brother Charles, while also attempting to contain Moravia (855-876). If one had to identify one grand, overarching theme that remained valid for the entirety of the reign and applied equally to all of these periods, it would be fair to say that Louis the German

¹⁹¹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 12-13.

¹⁹² *AF* 846 for the appointment of Rastislav, *AF* 870-71 and *AX* 871 (sic, 870) for Sclagamar and Svatopluk.

always steadfastly safeguarded the integrity of his own portion of the kingdom above all, since he was keen to ensure that his realm was never reduced in size or productivity.¹⁹³

Consolidation of Power (824-832)

In 817, Louis the Pious promulgated the *ordinatio imperii*, in which he attempted to cope with the difficult problem of ensuring imperial cohesion while still giving each of his three sons—Lothar, Pippin, and Louis—royal authority and an accompanying territory over which to exercise it.¹⁹⁴ He and his magnates elected the eldest son Lothar to inherit the imperial title, and Pippin and Louis were made subkings over the regions of Aquitaine and Bavaria, respectively.¹⁹⁵ As subkings, the two younger siblings theoretically needed to confer with Lothar and obtain his blessing before waging any wars against external enemies or even negotiating treaties or engaging in diplomatic relations with them; their primary military concerns were limited to defending their own borders against attack.¹⁹⁶

The emperor's attempt to legislate against further expansion had precedent in Charlemagne's *Divisio Regnorum* of 806, in which he divided his own empire among his

¹⁹³ I explicitly do not intend this to mean that Louis meant to create some kind of unique kingdom or identity. His kingdom to him represented his portion of the Frankish realm, and the fact that he fully intended upon partible inheritance signifies that there is no nascent Germany or unique East Frankishness in the contemporary mind. Retaining hold of the largest possible territory simply meant that there would be more of it to pass down to his sons.

¹⁹⁴ F.L. Ganshof, "Some Observations on the *Ordinatio Imperii* of 817," in Ganshof, *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy*. Trans. Janet Sondheimer (Ithaca, Cornell, 1971), 273-288; Egon Boshof, "Einheitsidee und Teilungsprinzip in der Regierungszeit Ludwigs des Frommen," in Godman and Collins, *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990), 161-189.

¹⁹⁵ The territory which encompassed Louis the German's Bavarian kingdom had been assimilated in 788, when Charlemagne deposed Tassilo, the last of the powerful Agilolfing dukes of the region, instead adding Bavaria to the Frankish empire. *ARF* 788, and see also the excellent account of Frankish-Bavarian relations in McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 118-127.

¹⁹⁶ *Ordinatio Imperii*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.136, intro and ch. 6-8. In practice, this restriction on wars of conquest proved mostly irrelevant, as none of the brother kings would attempt them except against one another (for which the emperor certainly would not have given his support).

three living sons, without making any provision for the imperial title.¹⁹⁷ Though the division was rendered unnecessary, since Louis the Pious was his only surviving legitimate son upon the emperor's death in 814, Charlemagne had proclaimed in 806 that his sons should settle for the territory bequeathed to them, rather than attempting to expand their borders at the expense of brothers or external enemies.¹⁹⁸ The *ordinatio* was a deliberate attempt by Louis the Pious to sidestep the Frankish tradition of partible inheritance among all the surviving sons, instead preferring to safeguard imperial cohesion in the hands of Lothar while still giving his younger sons royal responsibility.¹⁹⁹ This "injustice," with the concomitant reduction in relative power that it entailed, was not lost upon Louis and Pippin, and indeed, the *ordinatio* proved the root of the conflict that would spawn civil war.²⁰⁰

For Louis the German, the position of his kingdom along the eastern frontier brought with it a twofold problem. First, the frontier was the longest in the kingdom at about 600 miles,²⁰¹ and second, Louis in theory could not wage external, aggressive warfare without his father's, or after his death, Lothar's, consent.²⁰² Surely, he could

¹⁹⁷ Ganshof considers that Charlemagne might have construed the imperial title as a personal dignity, the prestige of which might have felt diminished to the old king from its apex around 802-803. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions Under Charlemagne*, Trans. Bryce and Mary Lyon (Providence, Brown University Press, 1968), 16-17.

¹⁹⁸ *Divisio Regnorum*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.45, esp ch. 6. On which also see McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 96-103; Matthew Innes, "Charlemagne's Will: Piety, Politics and the Imperial Succession." *The English Historical Review* 112, No. 448 (1997), 833-855.

¹⁹⁹ He outlines this as the purpose of the decree in *Ordinatio imperii*, introduction.

²⁰⁰ Indeed, it caused immediate repercussions much earlier than the brothers' war of the 830s and early 840s. Many traditionalists at court were upset by the new preference for imperial cohesion over Frankish tradition, and Bernard of Lombardy, whom the *ordinatio* disinherited in favor of Lothar, organized a rebellion and conspiracy. This was snuffed quickly, and Bernard was sentenced to death, but the emperor commuted the sentence to blinding, which was done carelessly, killing him. *ARF* 817-818; *Astronomer* 29-30; *Thegan* 22-23.

²⁰¹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 12, for the measurement.

²⁰² *Ordinatio Imperii*, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum I.136, ch. 6. These prescriptions were hardly enforceable and generally ignored.

defend his borders and see that tributary relationships with frontier peoples were maintained, but it fell to the emperor to conduct offensive warfare. Early in Louis the German's reign, while his father still lived, this distinction mattered little, as Louis was not yet powerful enough to conceive seriously of attempting offensive wars against Moravia in the southeast.²⁰³ What he needed first was to ensure the stability of his position in the core of his kingdom, Bavaria. Since he was now the ruler who would be physically present in the region,²⁰⁴ rather than his father, who ruled the empire as a whole and necessarily spent much of his time in the west as well, it was of great importance for Louis the German to ensure the loyalty of the Bavarian magnates, the great landholders to whom it fell to ensure the king could raise an army successfully and that it would be sufficiently provisioned.²⁰⁵

Louis the Pious, likely after endowing Louis the German with his swordbelt in a typical Carolingian coming of age ceremony, signifying his ascent to manhood, decided to send his young son into Bavaria to take up the crown personally in 825.²⁰⁶ After spending the winter at Aachen, Louis the German departed for Bavaria in early spring, arriving sometime between March 27 and May 27, 826.²⁰⁷ Bavaria would remain the most important and dependable source of troops and resources for Louis's entire reign. It was the only region he retained consistently in the face of his father dispossessing him

²⁰³ Later in his reign, Louis the German would not attempt to conquer the peoples across the eastern frontier outright, but rather he wished to keep them under tributary status, as will be shown below.

²⁰⁴ As indeed Louis the Pious intended when he first sent Louis out to Bavaria to be introduced to the nobility in 817, after promulgating the *ordinatio*, Astronomer 29.

²⁰⁵ More on military organization and logistics below, chapters 4 and 5, respectively.

²⁰⁶ See for example that which Louis the Pious sought from Charlemagne upon coming of age, as recorded by the Astronomer, VI: *Ibique ense, appellens adolescentiae tempora, accinctus est*. Following the ceremony, Louis, now a man rather than a boy, immediately accompanied Charlemagne on campaign.

²⁰⁷ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 47 and n. 84.

during the turbulent 830s, and it housed one of the two most important royal palaces at Regensburg—the other of which was Frankfurt. Regensburg served as the primary rallying point for operations in the east of the realm, while Frankfurt was the equivalent in the west. Of 171 authentic surviving royal charters, very nearly half of them, 85 in total, were issued from either of these two palaces, 41 at Regensburg and 44 at Frankfurt. The vast bulk of the Frankfurt charters come from the years 856 and later. This was no coincidence; after emperor Lothar's death in 855, Louis became far more entangled in the affairs of the western and middle portions of the Frankish kingdoms, and Frankfurt was a more appropriate place to receive the western nobility and rally armies in terms of distance traveled (more on this below).

Louis the German probably began issuing royal charters in the year 829, but the initial production was slow to start, as only two examples survive that were produced from 829-830.²⁰⁸ It was in late 830 that he began issuing charters in earnest, producing five surviving charters over the next year. Most of these early charters were concerned with the part of the Danube region located in what is now modern Austria, east to southeast of Regensburg.²⁰⁹ This region, particularly the important river running through it, provided an essential route of transportation from Regensburg to the realm that had once belonged to the Avars, having been conquered by Charlemagne from 788-796 and transformed into the eastern marches of the empire.²¹⁰ Stoutly enforced control over this

²⁰⁸ It is also possible, of course, that he may have issued some earlier that were later lost. Though I cannot substantiate the claim directly, it is worth considering the possibility that Louis's first surge into charter production came as a result of rumblings of the creation of Charles the Bald's kingdom in 829, as an important symbolic gesture and a way for Louis to legitimize his authority in East Francia.

²⁰⁹ ULD 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6.

²¹⁰ On Charlemagne's Avar campaigns, see *ARF* 788-792, 796; Einhard, *Vita Caroli Magni* 11-13; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 131-133.

portion of the Danube was also of the utmost importance in campaigns against Moravia, whether one ascribes to the northern or southern thesis regarding the location of that region.²¹¹ Were Moravia located in the south, as Boba, Bowlus, et al. have posited, then the control of this portion of the Danube would secure essential linkages with its confluences with the Sava and Drava further to the southeast. Or, as more general scholarly consensus would have it, if Moravia were, indeed, located in the traditionally agreed location to the north (to which the present author ascribes), then this portion of the Danube led directly into Moravia.²¹² Hence, regardless of the location of Moravia, the middle Danube region proved equally important for Louis the German to control, for expeditions into formerly Avar territory or against the Moravians, and therefore, he made efforts very early on in his reign to secure this crucial region for the movement of armies in the future. This marcher region was also especially important to control in order to guarantee that the eastern borders of Bavaria were safe from damaging and troublesome enemy raids by various Slavic groups.

Family Conflict (832-843)

²¹¹ Imre Boba, *Moravia's History Reconsidered: A Reinterpretation of Medieval Sources*. The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971 was the first to make the argument for a Moravia originally located more south of the present day location, nearer the Sava and Drava confluences with the Danube, which would spread further north through expansion and conquest during the late ninth and early tenth centuries. Boba has found more recent support in Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: the Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788-907* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995). Martin Eggers proposed yet another alternative location for the origins of the Moravian territory on the valley of the Tisza, for which see *Das 'Großmährische Reich.' Realität oder Fiktion? Eine Neuinterpretation der Quellen zur Geschichte des Mittleren Donauraumes im 9. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1995). An overview of the historiography to date can be found in Florin Curta, "The History and Archaeology of Great Moravia: an Introduction," *Early Medieval Europe* 17.3 (2009), 238-247.

²¹² Jiří Macháček, "Disputes over Great Moravia: chiefdom or state? The Morava or the Tisza River?" *Early Medieval Europe* 17.3 (2009), 248-267. The answers to the questions posed in the title tend more towards "chiefdom" and "Morava." On the basis of archaeology, Macháček rejects the alternative locations championed by Boba, Bowlus, Eggers, and their supporters. A highly valuable asset of Macháček's study for Anglophone readers is its concise summation of much of the Czech archaeological evidence.

After a very stable decade during the 820s, following the initial wave of indignation in the wake of the promulgation of the *ordinatio imperii*, Louis the Pious unintentionally—though probably not without knowing that some sort of serious conflict would result—set the stage for a clash of wills and armies in 829 when he altered the *ordinatio imperii* by creating a kingdom for the six-year-old Charles the Bald. Naturally, the three brothers Lothar, Pippin, and Louis the German, not wanting their kingdoms reduced and another royal rival created, were highly dissatisfied with their father’s decision.²¹³ Louis the Pious proclaimed this alteration in the presence of Lothar and Louis the German, but while Pippin was not there for the actual announcement, he was one of the first to act out against it, along with his eldest brother Lothar. Lothar was particularly angry, since it was primarily his land in Neustria from which Charles’s kingdom was carved. In 830, Louis the Pious launched an unpopular campaign into Brittany. Pippin and Lothar raised their forces, along with several of their father’s magnates whom the sons convinced to support them, and met the emperor at Compiègne, where Pippin and the rebels attempted to dethrone the emperor, with the consent of Lothar.²¹⁴ Louis the German, however, remained loyal to his father during this early confrontation. He brought his men to bear against his brother Pippin, who ultimately backed down; the

²¹³ Thegan, *Deeds of Emperor Louis*, 35. This year was the last one covered by the *ARF*, which makes no mention of the creation of Charles the Bald’s kingdom. There is an interesting excerpt concerning Louis the Pious’s use of the general levy to combat the threat posed by the Northmen, however. Hearing that a large Viking invasion of Saxony was imminent, he sent *missi* into all parts of the kingdom, ordering that the general levy should accompany him to Saxony as quickly as possible and be prepared to cross the Rhine at Neuss in the middle of July. Before this could be enacted, however, the emperor called off the levy, having ascertained that this threat of invasion was merely a rumor. *ARF*, 829.

²¹⁴ *AB* 830. The political scheming that led to this attempted coup involved accusations against Bernard, the former Count of the Spanish March and now Louis the Pious’s chamberlain. Astronomer 43–45 outlines the charges against Bernard, including adultery with Queen Judith, mother of Charles the Bald. The rebels incited Pippin and Lothar to action, and it did not take much to persuade them to avenge the slights done them by the creation of Charles’s kingdom at their expense.

episode amounted largely to an extended threat rather than any sort of decisive settlement.²¹⁵

Louis the German, however, showed that he was indeed harboring a great deal of dissatisfaction over the new division of the realm two years later. The recent allotment of Alemannia to Charles placed another potential rival directly on Louis the German's western borders, and in cooperation with Lothar, Louis decided to rebel and march against his father in 832 with as large a force as he could muster from Bavaria and various Slavic peoples.²¹⁶ The rebellion of sorts proved rather anemic, however, and as soon as Louis the Pious raised a substantial army and marched against his son from Mainz, Louis the German was forced to retreat. Ordered to appear before his father, Louis came, and Louis the Pious received him kindly, in the hopes of encouraging reconciliation. This measure succeeded temporarily, though it revealed shades of the discontent festering in Louis the German's mind.²¹⁷ He did not intend to allow the matter to pass peacefully without further military action, nor did his brothers.

In 833, Louis the Pious's three sons Lothar, Pippin, and Louis the German banded their forces together to move against their father, who met them between Strasbourg and Basel on a plain that would come to be known as the Field of Lies, aptly named for the treachery that befell the emperor.²¹⁸ With his sons arrayed against him, the emperor

²¹⁵ Thegan, *Deeds of Emperor Louis*, 35-38. Louis the German's exact role in the rebellion and its resolution are difficult to ascertain; only Thegan mentions his stoppage of the threat by preventing the deposition of the emperor, while the *AB* state that the emperor was indeed deposed, albeit very temporarily, until he could negotiate a settlement with the rebellious magnates and his sons, partly through diplomacy, and partly through bribing his sons Louis the German and Pippin for their support of his cause with promises of increased inheritances if he were rightfully restored. Nithard, I.3.

²¹⁶ *AB* 832, Thegan, 39; Astronomer, 47 mentions this rebellion as "movements...in Bavaria." Lothar would later deny responsibility for any stirring up of Louis's aspirations, as Thegan, 40.

²¹⁷ *AB* 832 and esp. Thegan, 39.

²¹⁸ Astronomer, 48

proved unyielding in his insistence that Charles's kingdom should remain intact. His resolution, however, was undermined by many of his magnates, who defected to his sons, causing the emperor's forces to be woefully insufficient to continue to oppose his determined children. Dismissing the remaining army that remained loyal to him in order to prevent needless bloodshed with the situation already hopeless, Emperor Louis allowed himself to be taken prisoner by his son Lothar.²¹⁹ Louis the German had rebelled openly against his father twice to this point, and he clearly resented the creation of a kingdom for his half-brother as well as the favoring of his eldest brother with the imperial title, while he remained a sub king.²²⁰ Still, he seemed to harbor some filial devotion or tenderness toward the emperor. He asked Lothar to relax his strict guard over Louis the Pious, whom Lothar treated rather disgracefully as a prisoner of war, and Louis the German reportedly felt quite sad when his brother determinedly refused.²²¹ This episode points up the complicated nature of the duality of being family on the one hand and opposed politically and militarily on the other. It was an opposition that would, sadly, trouble Louis the German for the rest of his life.²²²

The combination of filial piety and Lothar's clear ambition to secure the imperial rule for himself, alone, at his father's expense caused Pippin and Louis the German to abandon Lothar and begin to attempt the restoration of Louis the Pious. In the long term, keeping their brother in check made sense from a political and strategic perspective, if the brothers Pippin and Louis wished to rule over the largest possible amount of territory.

²¹⁹ Thegan, 42; Astronomer, 48, *AB* 833, *AX* 833.

²²⁰ Nithard I.4 highlights this as the reason for Pippin and Louis's resistance to Lothar during the period of the emperor's captivity.

²²¹ Thegan, 45, 47; *AB* 833.

²²² Louis died in 876, in the midst of conflict with Charles the Bald, fighting his half-brother to the last breath.

After all, Louis the Pious would ultimately die, and if Lothar had managed to entrench himself too firmly as emperor among the nobility, his brothers would find themselves in a position of compromised authority that rested on the approval of their eldest brother. Given that Lothar had already shown himself to be rather inflexible and determined in his treatment of his father and half-brother, the tenuous nature of ruling as a sub king under his authority must have seemed unappealing at best. Louis therefore, began plotting how to reverse the effects of the Field of Lies and get his father back on the imperial throne.²²³

Louis the German wrote to Pippin, bemoaning Lothar's inhumane treatment of their father and asking for Pippin's help in quashing Lothar's aspirations. Pippin acquiesced, raising an army from Aquitaine and from the region between the Seine and Loire to complement Louis the German's host of Bavarians, Austrasians, Saxons,²²⁴ and Alemanians. Both armies moved quickly towards Aachen, where Lothar held Louis the Pious. When Lothar received intelligence of Pippin's approach, he brought his men and his father to the fortress city of Paris to prepare for a confrontation with Pippin, who had already arrived in the region but was unable to cross the Seine due to quite unusually high floodwaters that had swollen the river, leaving bridges and ships alike destroyed.²²⁵

At Paris, Lothar's scouts brought the news that Louis the German was coming to his brother's aid with the full complement of expeditionary force that he had been able to muster. Lothar realized that these two armies, combined with popular sentiment in favor

²²³ AX 834.

²²⁴ The Saxons would play a larger and larger part in Louis the German's expeditionary forces following the death of Louis the Pious, who technically controlled them while he retained the imperial title. Saxony, however, fell to Louis the German after the settlement of Verdun. In this instance, however, with the emperor in captivity, Louis the German could rally the Saxons to his cause in assisting with the rescue mission. See below, ch.3.

²²⁵ Astronomer, 51.

of Louis the Pious's restoration,²²⁶ were more than he could handle. It is likely that Lothar originally planned to deal with his two brothers separately, believing that he would be able to drive off Pippin before Louis the German could get his forces into position from their starting point at Frankfurt. Louis, however, anticipated the necessity of speed, and he marched his men some four hundred miles from Frankfurt to Paris during the period from February 5 to February 28.²²⁷

With both brothers and the general feeling of many magnates against him, Lothar freed his father and fled Paris, heading for Vienne in Provence. Louis the Pious, with his imperial power restored, wasted no time in sending messages to Lothar, asking him to come and swear his fidelity, promising in return to forgive all that Lothar had done against him. These were generous terms, considering that Lothar had stripped him of his power, kept him prisoner under poor enough conditions to offend Pippin and Louis the German, and seriously mistreated the emperor's wife Judith. Lothar refused, however, and it took one final show of combined military strength and unity by Louis the Pious, Louis the German, and Pippin to force Lothar's surrender. Louis the Pious set off on campaign in August to wipe away the remnants of the rebellion, and he met his two younger sons at Blois on the Loire, not far from where Lothar's men were encamped. This time, Louis the Pious was successful in reconciling his son to him; Lothar could not profitably offer battle to his father and brothers, and as such, he agreed to peace terms.

²²⁶ Nithard, I.4.

²²⁷ *ULD*, I.15. This pace is almost unbelievably fast for a period when an army encumbered with substantial baggage was doing well to make ten miles a day. This sort of rate of march could only have been maintained within the confines of the Carolingian heartlands—where the roads were at their best and the territory was known to be free of threat from the enemy—and under extreme circumstances. On speeds of march in the premodern world refer to the classic Donald Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978).

With that, the armies dispersed, and the sons all returned with their men to their respective kingdoms to pass the winter.²²⁸

Louis the German's charters shed additional light on his political and military aims during this early period of the civil conflict. Primarily, they were geared towards the continued consolidation of power, particularly among the major monastic and ecclesiastical landholdings in and around Bavaria. He also attended to the eastern frontier, as controlling that region would be critical in ensuring the safety of his kingdom from invasion while struggling for a greater portion in the west. His 832 grant to the church of Salzburg bolstered the substantial holdings of that place with the villa at Deinting, roughly 50km to the northwest, towards Regensburg and the core of Bavaria.²²⁹ In October of 832, he gave to St. Emmeram the villa Herilungoberg;²³⁰ he further shored up holdings along that eastern region of the Danube in March of 833, giving Litaha to the church at Passau.²³¹ Turning his attention again westward, he conferred to St. Emmeram the villa Dingolfing on the Isar, roughly 60km southeast of Regensburg.²³² During the autumn and winter of 833-834, following the Field of Lies, he attempted to ensure continued support of the monasteries at Fulda²³³ and St. Gall²³⁴ by legislating for their continued immunity and right to elect their own abbot (German *Abtwahl* is a less cumbersome phrase), and he granted the villa of Langen in the Rhine district to the

²²⁸ *AB*, 834; Thegan, 45-58; Astronomer, 50-53.

²²⁹ *ULD* I.7.

²³⁰ At modern Pöchlarn on the Danube, roughly 100km west of Vienna. *ULD* I.8.

²³¹ Somewhere in the region of Vienna, in Avar territory. *ULD* I.9.

²³² *ULD* I.11.

²³³ *ULD* I.15.

²³⁴ *ULD* I.13.

monastery of Lorsch.²³⁵ The strategic purposes of these grants were manifold: they streamlined the responsibility for raising large expeditionary forces from Bavaria, as Louis realized that seriously challenging his father and brothers would require very large armies, lest he be overwhelmed by sheer numbers. The landholding privileges and immunities served to consolidate a good deal of territory to important churchmen, who then bore the responsibility to requisition troops and supplies from those regions when called upon by the king. They also facilitated communication and logistics throughout the regions in question, processes in which the prominent monasteries and churchmen were indispensable.²³⁶

Louis the German to this point in 834, had revealed both that he was unhappy with the general terms upon which the inheritance of the kingdom was organized, but also that he harbored some reluctance to betray his father and fight against him openly. Whether it was familial affection or political acuity—or most likely, a combination of the two—that led him to take his father’s side against his brother Lothar, he remained in Louis the Pious’s favor for most of the 830s, while young Charles the Bald was still a child.²³⁷ During this period, he continued currying church support when he bestowed a

²³⁵ ULD I.14. On *Abtwahl* see Bigott, *Ludwig der Deutsche und die Reichskirche im Ostfränkischen Reich (826-876)* (Husum, 2002), 223-228.

²³⁶ On which see especially David S. Bachrach, “Immunities as Tools of Royal Military Policy under the Carolingian and Ottonian Kings,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung*, 130 (2013), 1-36; also Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, 1999); on the role of monasteries in communication, travel, and logistics, see especially Wilhelm Störmer, “Zur Frage der Funktionen des kirchlichen Fernbesitzes im Gebiet der Ostalpen vom 8. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert,” in Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder, eds., *Die Transalpinen Verbindungen der Bayern, Alemannen und Franken bis zum 10. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen, 1987), 379-404.

²³⁷ Thegan takes particular care to stress that Louis, the emperor’s namesake son, was very dutiful to his father during the stressful situation with Lothar, earning him a special place as the emperor’s favorite. Thegan, 45-47, 57.

substantial gift of 100 manses at Kirchbach on the Danube to Passau,²³⁸ confirmed the protected status of Metz²³⁹—originally bestowed by Charlemagne—and confirmed Salzburg’s immunity and royal protection.²⁴⁰ He legislated directly for logistical support in that region, granting the monastery at Kempten the right to six cartloads of salt tax-free, an essential mineral required by men on the march, preparing to assist his father in provisioning an army slated to march against Lothar in Italy.²⁴¹ Importantly, the grants of immunity bolstered the logistical preparation for this campaign, since the church institutions would be responsible for the muster of men and provision of the army, and the immunity from standard taxation and comital and royal justice helped give them the means to do so.²⁴²

The issue of Charles’s succession once again brought strife to the relationship between Louis the German and his father when Charles came of age in 838.²⁴³ Combined with the political machinations of several magnates, especially Otgar, Archbishop of Mainz and Count Adalbert of Metz, who supported Lothar’s imperial claims in the hopes of increasing their own power, the situation concerning inheritance quickly undermined Louis the German’s position as the favorite son of Louis the Pious.²⁴⁴ The emperor’s suspicions against Louis were first raised over a meeting that he had with Lothar

²³⁸ *ULD* 1.18.

²³⁹ *ULD* 1.20. On protection see Ganshof “The Institutional Framework of the Frankish Monarchy” in *The Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy*, here 93-94, and idem, “The Church and Royal Power under Pippin III and Charlemagne,” in *ibid.*, here 214-215.

²⁴⁰ *ULD* 1.22-23.

²⁴¹ *ULD* 1.24; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 80-81.

²⁴² On this important point see David Bachrach, “Immunities as Tools of Royal Military Policy under the Carolingian and Ottonian Kings,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Germanistische Abteilung*, 130 (2013), 1-36.

²⁴³ *AB* 838.

²⁴⁴ The complicated political machinations of Otgar, Adalbert, and others are thoroughly and skillfully distilled by Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 80-91.

concerning the Brenner Pass, which Lothar had blockaded. Since the emperor and Lothar were still mutually suspicious of one another, Louis the Pious feared conspiracy, which was not the meeting's intent.²⁴⁵ Louis the Pious still sent *missi* throughout the realm to summon his supporters to raise the army in case of a conflict, but none was forthcoming.²⁴⁶ Still, the meeting between his sons likely made the emperor more receptive to the ideas of Otgar and Adalbert, who supported Lothar, since they wanted Louis the German as weak as possible in East Francia, in order that they might be free to act more freely and have greater clout with the emperor, rather than Louis the German, who was a theoretically less-powerful sub king. At any rate, an argument broke out between Louis the German and his father, and Louis began to mount a new military challenge, this time to protect his right to the lands he already held against the further reduction that the emperor proclaimed in June at the Nimwegen assembly.²⁴⁷

With this new reduction in territory, Louis the German was temporarily stripped of Saxony, Thuringia, Alsace, Austrasia, and Alemannia, which, had it lasted, would have been a massive blow to his economy and ability to raise troops from those regions. He had little choice but to mount a resistance, which was an important indication that he would not be content to rule only as King of Bavaria, both during and after his father's lifetime. Rather, he intended to rule all of East Francia. He brought a force to Frankfurt, where he attempted to recruit more men to bolster his army's strength. Moving west, he garrisoned the banks of the Rhine stoutly in an attempt to stop his father's larger army

²⁴⁵ *AB* 838. Nithard asserts that contrary to stirring up any sort of rebellion, the brothers Lothar and Louis decided that they had no cause for additional grievances against their father at that time, but they were both still rather angry about the inheritance plan for Charles, which they concealed.

²⁴⁶ *AB* 838.

²⁴⁷ *AF* 838, *AB* 838. *AF* holds that Louis the German ignored this decree, knowing that it had come as a result of the bad advice of his father's counselors.

from crossing the river. Louis the Pious managed to cross anyway, and he rendezvoused with a contingent of Saxons—notably troops from the territory he had just removed from his son—which left Louis the German outflanked. Louis had no choice but to retreat back to Bavaria, outmaneuvered militarily and politically by his father.²⁴⁸

Louis the Pious and his namesake were temporarily reconciled around Easter in 839, when the father, as was his usual habit, pardoned his son, though he did not restore lands to him.²⁴⁹ Instead, in summer, he divided the empire—save for Bavaria, which Louis the German would keep—along the Meuse, attributing the East to Lothar and West to Charles. Louis the German was now in a critical position, as such a division would render him decidedly inferior to his brothers in royal prestige, economic potential, and ability to raise soldiers to combat anything his brothers might do contrary to his wishes. Thus, he met the necessity of mounting a challenge to it. Mustering his Bavarian host, complemented by Saxons and Thuringians,²⁵⁰ he marched through Alemannia on a campaign to win over loyal support, coming ultimately to Frankfurt once again. The emperor was understandably furious, as he had just caused Louis the German to swear an oath never to leave Bavaria without his express permission.²⁵¹ This was untenable for Louis the German in the face of the new division, and of course, he believed that the

²⁴⁸ *AF* 839, *AB* 839. *AF* 839 glosses over this, saying that Louis fell back willingly because it was evil for a son to make war against his father. More on this campaign below, ch. 3.

²⁴⁹ *Astronomer*, 60-62. Louis the German would remember the example of this mercy in dealings with his own rebellious sons, pardoning them repeatedly throughout the 860s-70s, and continuing to make provisions for their inheritances even after swearing that Carloman particularly would never hold power as long as he remained king. *AF* 863.

²⁵⁰ *Nithard*, I.8.

²⁵¹ *AB* 839 for the oath.

whole eastern kingdom—not just Bavaria—still rightfully belonged to him through the Frankish tradition of partible inheritance,²⁵² but his father became angry nonetheless.

The aging and ill emperor summoned a large host once more and set off in pursuit of his rebel son in early 840. He chased his namesake all through Thuringia and into Slavic territory, where Louis the German was forced to buy his safe passage through their lands with bribes, as the army was weak and starved, and many were dying or deserting.²⁵³ His father seemed to have struck a decisive blow, when suddenly, age and ill health²⁵⁴ overcame Louis the Pious. Mid-campaign, he took seriously ill, and he had to be evacuated by boat to a Rhenish island near Ingleheim. There he died sometime between June 20-29.²⁵⁵ On his deathbed, he divided the royal regalia between Lothar and Charles, leaving Lothar the imperial title. Louis the German received nothing of this. The emperor, in extremis, pardoned his namesake son for his wicked deeds, but Louis the Pious ended his life essentially unreconciled to Louis the German.²⁵⁶

The later 830s had not been kind to Louis the German. He maintained the loyalty of the core of Bavaria and control of the eastern frontier, but that was about the extent of his strategic success. Against his father, he was unable to pose serious military challenges, and his rebellions were quickly and effectively quashed. With the emperor able to call upon troops from across most of the empire, including deserters from the

²⁵² Louis's sentiment is reflected in the East Frankish leaning *AF*, which assert bluntly that Louis came from Bavaria to claim what was his by right; *AF* 840. *Ordinatio imperii* was a breakaway from tradition, as Louis the Pious indeed knew, since he showed as much in the introduction to that document. Perhaps that contributed to his willingness to pardon his sons their rebellious ways so frequently.

²⁵³ *AF* 840, *AB* 840, Nithard I.8.

²⁵⁴ Astronomer 62 has him suffering from both lung ailments and a serious stomach ulcer which caused livid bruising all over the king's abdomen.

²⁵⁵ Astronomer and Nithard have June 20th, *AF* 29th, *AB* 26th.

²⁵⁶ Astronomer 63.

territories that he had stripped from his son, such as Alemannia, Louis the German's host of the Bavarian expeditionary forces plus whatever Slavs and Saxons he could coerce into coming along or buy as mercenaries was wildly inadequate numerically.²⁵⁷ The combination of his father and Lothar was also too much for him diplomatically, since the weight of the jointly held imperial title was enough to sway most magnates whose loyalty was in question one way or the other. Perhaps luckily for Louis, his father's death would alter the balance of power significantly, creating a vacuum of royal influence in those lands so recently stripped from him. The magnates of the previously confiscated areas swore an oath of fidelity to Louis the German at the expense of Lothar, whom the Franks elected emperor after Louis the Pious's death. The election itself essentially amounted to a technicality, since Louis the Pious had ordained that to be the case years before in 817.

Louis the German would have to struggle hard to secure the inheritance initially given to him by the *ordinatio imperii*. In the course of the fierce civil conflict that followed, he would truly prove that his generalship and strategic thinking were more than equal to the task, as well as more than equal to his brothers. This was the moment that he would solidify his reputation for military excellence in the mind of the Franks, east and west alike. The reputation would last until the end of his days and beyond, for it is in the unadorned Frankish military tunic, overlaid with iron armor, and wielding a stout and well-made sword symbolizing strength in arms, that Notker (d. 912) would remember

²⁵⁷ The coercion is important in this sense as these territories would not fall within the purview of typical Carolingian recruiting methods for different reasons. The Slavs across the marches were not obligated to do expeditionary service for the king owing to their tributary relationship, and the Saxons technically owed their loyalty to Louis the Pious, though that situation changed with Louis the Pious's death, which enabled Louis the German to firmly secure Saxon loyalty and troops by 842; see the circumstances of the aftermath of Fontenoy below.

him to posterity: “Truly, how much the unconquered Louis rejoiced in iron, from youth up to the seventieth year of his life.”²⁵⁸

The Opening of the Civil War, 840-841

At this point Louis initiated a new phase of grand strategy. The emperor’s death opened up new opportunities to consolidate his leadership over the East Frankish territories surrounding his Bavarian core that the emperor had removed from his control in 838. He had, of course, attempted to protect his control over all of East Francia during the 830s, but his father had prevented him from doing so after Louis the German’s fall from the emperor’s favor. Reestablishing control over Saxony, Thuringia, Alsace, Austrasia, and Alemannia would allow Louis to draw upon these regions for troops and income; eastern border regions such as Saxony and Thuringia would also prove indispensable in the defense of the kingdom’s eastern frontier. Now, with a succession struggle looming, Louis needed to act quickly to secure the greatest possible military support in East Francia. Equally important, any territories that he could place under his

²⁵⁸ *Quantum vero a primeva aetate usque ad LXX annum ferro gauderet invictissimus Hludowicus.* Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, 2.17. There follows upon this quotation a likely fictional episode in which Louis received envoys from the Vikings who brought him swords as tribute. Louis tested their pliability by bending the tips inward towards the hilt; the cheaply crafted swords snapped. The envoy, sensing the king’s dissatisfaction with this low quality, offered his own sword, which the king bent mightily backwards, leaving the diplomats in awe. Although Louis did, of course, treat with Danes on several occasions, the particular episode surely is exaggerated or completely fictionalized, but the point was made: Louis cared more for the quality of arms than most and knew his way around the sword. In his own time, Louis’s reputation for military excellence was enough to effect settlement. In 870 Charles the Bald backed down and removed himself from Aachen from the mere threat of warfare from Louis. *AB* 870.

ditio would not be available to the new, sole Emperor Lothar I in the forthcoming military struggle.

In view of his newly realized strategic potential, Louis's first move after his father's death was to reclaim speedily all the lands east of the Rhine, which the late emperor had stripped from him. This would put him into immediate, and probably unavoidable, conflict with Lothar, who sent his *missi* throughout the empire claiming the entire territory as his own, on account of the imperial title, and proclaiming that he would honor, confirm, and increase all the benefices which magnates held from his father.²⁵⁹ Louis received intelligence that Lothar was sending an army against him. Louis had anticipated this, and he had already raised his expeditionary forces and headed for Worms on the middle Rhine, about 250km to the southeast of Aachen. Louis garrisoned Worms with a portion of the army and moved 70km north to Frankfurt. The garrison force proved inadequate to defend the fortifications against Lothar, who routed them after a quick skirmish, allowing him to cross the Rhine in safety and pursue his younger brother. Louis and Lothar's armies encountered each other outside Frankfurt, where an exchange of envoys resulted in a temporary truce; the armies encamped very near to each other without engaging in any direct conflict. Louis arrayed his troops for battle, but Lothar, who knew well that he had Charles to deal with in addition to Louis and could not afford a Pyrrhic victory, agreed to a truce, in which the kings arranged to meet one another in the same place on November 11 for further negotiations.²⁶⁰ The truce with his brother allowed Louis time to solicit firm support from the eastern nobility. He quickly replaced

²⁵⁹ Nithard II.1. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 96-97.

²⁶⁰ Nithard II.1, *AF* 840.

several supporters of Lothar—most prominently Abbot Raban of Fulda—and personal enemies with faithful men, shoring up the base of support from the kingdom's important monasteries, which would simultaneously detract from Lothar's ability to raise troops while augmenting Louis's.²⁶¹

Lothar set off against Charles. The campaign brought no decisive result, but Lothar's indecision during this phase of the brothers' conflict seems rather confused and noncommittal. His position was appreciably difficult, as he attempted to fight a two-front war against Charles and Louis, although Lothar's forces were probably the largest of the three.²⁶² Lothar also did not appear for the meeting that he had scheduled with Louis for November,²⁶³ and Louis used this sudden free time to his great benefit.²⁶⁴ Sensing his brother's refusal to meet as an ominous threat of a real military confrontation in the future, Louis headed to Saxony to attempt to secure support from the nobility of that region, in order that he might not have to face the threat of a Saxon rebellion to the northeast and an attack from Lothar to the west at the same time.²⁶⁵

Lothar's campaign against Charles had yielded nothing, and he again began an about-face to challenge Louis again in 841. Together with his chief counselors, including Louis's deeply impassioned enemies Adalbert of Metz—fresh from his sick bed after

²⁶¹ *AF* 840, in which Louis makes eastern Franks, Alemans, Saxons, and Thuringians swear fidelity to him, and Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 96-98 and n.51 p. 86, where Goldberg cites the Fulda charter of February 22, 841 as evidence for the fact that Louis stripped Raban of his position rather than the typical interpretation that Raban simply retired after Lothar's defeat at Fontenoy.

²⁶² Nithard calls it a massive army, *ingenti exercitu*, II.4.

²⁶³ Nithard II.9 illustrates that Lothar made a habit of this, rather more as an intentional diplomatic tactic against his brothers and to stall for time, rather than because he simply ignored the meeting.

²⁶⁴ Nithard II.3 and II.4 for Lothar's pursuit of Charles with the army and concomitant political maneuverings in the hopes of gaining defectors from Charles's men, which were somewhat successful but still left Lothar caught in between his brothers without decisive results.

²⁶⁵ Nithard IV.2.

lying seriously ill for nearly a year—and Otgar of Mainz, Lothar raised a massive expeditionary force, which Nithard called an “infinite multitude,” and marched for the Rhine to provoke his younger brother.²⁶⁶ Louis was not unprepared; he had been busy garrisoning the Rhine early in the year, but the sheer size of Lothar’s army cowed many eastern magnates into submission to the emperor, and Lothar supplemented the military effort diplomatically by issued charters confirming their benefices and granting additional ones to others.²⁶⁷ Louis was nearly captured by some of these defectors, who intended to hand him over to Lothar to be dealt with as the emperor saw fit, but Louis escaped into Bavaria with the core of his forces.²⁶⁸ Lothar, satisfied with having reduced Louis once more to the scanty foundation of support that he had relied upon during the conflict with Louis the Pious, turned again to attempt to deal a decisive blow to Charles the Bald. He left Adalbert, at the head of a large Austrasian army, to defend the eastern border of his kingdom against Louis, so that “in no way” should Louis be allowed to join up with Charles.²⁶⁹

Louis, however, was not nearly as beaten as Lothar assumed. Having received a desperate plea for help against Lothar from Charles, Louis rallied his supporters once again and turned back westward. Adalbert attempted to stop him, but Louis marched him straight into a trap, letting Adalbert’s men pursue him into the Reis. There, Louis caught Adalbert’s much larger forces as the men were crossing the Wörnitz, routing them and killing Adalbert himself.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁶ Nithard II.7 *infinitam multitudinem*.

²⁶⁷ Nithard II.7, *AF* 841, *AB* 841.

²⁶⁸ *AF* 841.

²⁶⁹ Nithard II.7.

²⁷⁰ *AF* 841, Nithard, II.9.

After the victory at the Reis, Louis marched with all possible haste to meet Charles. Lothar again refused to negotiate upon any terms, puffed up by the arrival of the reinforcements under the command of his nephew Pippin II, and he claimed the whole empire as his right.²⁷¹ Louis and Charles could take no more, and they ordered that Lothar should either agree to a more even division of the empire by the very next day, or they would meet on the battlefield. Lothar refused.²⁷²

The Battle of Fontenoy (841)

Lothar's refusal forced the hands of Louis and Charles. Though a sentiment existed in the armies and leaders that it was wicked for Franks to kill one another, the imminent battle was now necessary.²⁷³ The issues of imperial succession and who ruled what territory needed to be settled immediately if the Carolingian empire as a whole was to continue to be strong, as plenty of outside enemies like Vikings and Slavs required the attention of the empire's military strength, rather than having the armies be devoted constantly to the struggle between rival Carolingian kings. Acquiescing to Lothar's stubbornness was also not a feasible option for Louis and Charles. Their royal *dignitas* simply would not permit being disinherited—in their view wrongfully²⁷⁴—by their greedy eldest brother. Therefore, abandoning all hope for peace among the Frankish

²⁷¹ *AF* 841 points to this as the factor that caused negotiations to break down.

²⁷² Nithard II.10.

²⁷³ *AB* 841, Nithard II.10, III.Preface, III.1, where the victorious kings hold council with the bishops and magnates, in which it was determined that every man that fought at Fontenoy was forgiven the sin that he had done by killing his fellow Christians, since he had done it as an instrument of God, fighting against Lothar's unnatural greed and dishonest claim to the whole realm. It is this sentiment that led Nithard to devote so much time to justifying or excusing the actions of the army of Louis and Charles, for which see Nelson, "Public Histories and Private History in the Work of Nithard." *Speculum* 60 (1985), 251-293.

²⁷⁴ Nithard II.9-10 for the sentiment.

people and the Christian church, Louis and Charles drew up their battle lines on the morning of June 25, 841.²⁷⁵ After a protracted struggle, their forces emerged victorious over Lothar and Pippin, winning the day at the expense of a huge number of casualties on both sides.²⁷⁶

Though Louis's and Charles's armies looted a huge amount of plunder from Lothar's defeated host, and the casualties on both sides were enormous,²⁷⁷ Fontenoy was not a decisive battle in Clausewitzian terms.²⁷⁸ As Goldberg notes, none of the Carolingian rulers were killed, nor were a large number of magnates.²⁷⁹ While the expenditure on the battle of human and material resources was enormous, all of the Carolingian brothers' armies still boasted a strong complement of soldiers, arms, and armor, and their kingdoms were still producing enough resources to support the armies on the march. The military strength of both sides, far from being crippled, remained intact, and the civil war wore on for fully two more years before the Treaty of Verdun (843) brought a temporary end to open hostilities.

For Louis, Charles, and Lothar, however, the indecisive but catastrophic battle did cause a large-scale change in grand strategy away from fighting one another and towards consolidating power against external enemies. The grand strategic alteration was evident almost immediately. As Regino of Prüm noted, the brother kings ceased attempting to

²⁷⁵ AB 841.

²⁷⁶ Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 174, has over 40,000 killed in Lothar and Pippin's forces alone. His number is surely exaggerated, but serves to stress the terrible cost in human life of the battle.

²⁷⁷ Nithard, III.1, "*fuit quidem ingens numerus praedae et ingens cedes et insuper ammirabilis.*" Cf. AB and AF, 841.

²⁷⁸ I.e., neither party gained the ability to bend the will of the enemy to their own. Carl von Clausewitz *On War*, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed. and trans (Princeton University Press, 1976) chs 1.2, 4.9-11, and 8.4.

²⁷⁹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 103.

expand their borders after Fontenoy, and instead they contented themselves with the defending the portions of the kingdom that they owned.²⁸⁰ Conspicuously lacking from the rest of the civil struggle was pitched battle; the kings and their leading magnates were loath to endure another disaster of Fontenoy's magnitude. The Battle of Fontenoy produced limited gains—outside of copious treasure—for the victorious Louis and Charles at the expense of their brother Lothar, who still retained his kingdom and the imperial title. Louis the German used the remainder of 841 to consolidate power further in his eastern kingdom. Through the typical combination of diplomacy, gifts, bribes, and, of course, violence, he extracted loyalty from Saxons, Austrasians, Thuringians, and Alemans alike, using the new prestige obtained via his substantial victory at Fontenoy to ensure the loyalty of men who otherwise might have supported Lothar.²⁸¹ Still, in spite of the absence of further pitched battle, the conflict dragged on. Even after Fontenoy, Lothar still enjoyed some support among the eastern nobility. He spent the remainder of 841 alternately pursuing Louis and Charles in turn, and yet gaining nothing for all of his marches and countermarches.²⁸²

Louis and Charles refused to give battle, but all the marching back and forth was causing serious strife among the soldiery. To shore up morale, Louis and Charles publicly swore the Strasbourg Oaths in front of their assembled armies, promising mutual loyalty and brotherly love. Strategically, the oath was important to demonstrate trans-Frankish unity between the kings and kingdoms in spite of linguistic, regional differences among

²⁸⁰ Regino of Prüm, *Chronicon*, 841. *Non modo ad amplificandos regni terminos, verum etiam nec ad proprios tuendos in posterum sufficerent.* His words echo Charlemagne's *division* of 806.

²⁸¹ *AB* 841. The *terroribus* presumably refers to the vicious quelling of the Saxon *Stellinga* rebels.

²⁸² *AF* 841 dismisses his activities as futile effort, and Nithard III.4 calls his winter campaign asinine, *inaniter*, and stresses the length of the march to ultimately withdraw *maximo ambitu*.

the soldiery. Louis the German's son Carloman also arrived at the head of a force of more Bavarian and Alemannian soldiers. With morale buoyed up, the two kings and Prince Carloman set out via three separate routes, meeting at Koblenz, where they crossed the Moselle by ship together to attack Lothar; his garrison, which was designed to prevent that crossing, immediately fled in the face of the united army.²⁸³ When Lothar received word that his garrison had been dispersed, he knew that his position was compromised, and he fled Aachen for the banks of the Rhône. Louis and Charles marched on Aachen, where a number of bishops were convened to review the political and military situation. This council proclaimed that it was on account of divine vengeance that Lothar was forced from his kingdom, and when Louis and Charles promised to rule it fairly, according to God's will, the bishops proclaimed that they should divide the middle kingdom between them. Men were actually chosen to divide the kingdom into two parts—including Nithard himself—and they drew up a proposal for an even division between Charles and Louis.²⁸⁴ The execution of the plan never came to practical fruition, as Lothar was never truly disinherited, but for all practical purposes, it was the final nail in the coffin for Lothar's ambition of ruling the entire empire as one under authority.²⁸⁵

Saxon Policy

The early 840s saw the initiation of Louis's Saxon policy. Earlier in his reign, Louis had been unable to utilize the Saxons effectively, since he had only been king in Bavaria, and his father had retained control of Saxony and used troops from the region in suppressing his son's rebellions. Henceforth, however, Saxony would play a highly

²⁸³ AX 842, AB 842, Nithard III.7.

²⁸⁴ Nithard IV.1, AF 842, AB 842.

²⁸⁵ Ganshof, "On the Genesis and Significance of the Treaty of Verdun (843)," 289-302.

important role in Louis's grand strategy. First, he intended the Saxons to provide large numbers of soldiers for the expeditionary forces. Second, the Saxon general levies would serve as a buffer against potential Viking and Slav attacks against the northeastern regions of East Francia. Third, the system of defense in depth, represented by Saxon fortresses established by Charlemagne, would aid the general levies in the struggle against these enemy raids.²⁸⁶

First, however, he needed to secure firmly the loyalty of this important region that had so recently opposed him under Louis the Pious.²⁸⁷ At his assembly at Paderborn in late 840, Louis made several important gestures: he held the first Carolingian assembly in Saxony in twenty five years,²⁸⁸ and he issued the first surviving royal charters that his chancery had produced in over three years. The new wave of charter legislation shows a positive change in Louis's fortunes; the situation with his father had been so dire in the late 830s that, as Goldberg put it, the "chancery ceased to function."²⁸⁹ Now, in a display of confidence calculated both to garner important support in Saxony, and also to continue to assert his claims to legitimate power in all of the kingdom east of the Rhine, Louis issued four charters for Corvey in Saxony. He confirmed the monastery's landholdings²⁹⁰ as well as granting it immunity,²⁹¹ the right to elect its own abbot,²⁹² and

²⁸⁶ On the fortress systems on the Saxon frontier, see Matthias Hardt, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," in Walter Pohl et al., eds., *The Transformation of Frontiers from Late Antiquity to the Carolingians* (Leiden, 2001), 219-232.

²⁸⁷ *AF* 839.

²⁸⁸ Since Louis the Pious had held his own Paderborn assembly, July 815. *Astronomer* 25; *ARF* 815.

²⁸⁹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 90. I do not agree with the position that government apparatus broke down, but the general assessment of the situation—that Louis was in no position to issue grants of land when his own claims were very much in doubt—is quite reasonable.

²⁹⁰ *ULD* I.26, I.27.

²⁹¹ *ULD* I.27.

²⁹² *ULD* I.26.

a large gift of over thirty manses,²⁹³ complete with the right to trade free of taxation in goods and slaves as the monks saw fit, empowering the monastery to obtain continuous prosperity.²⁹⁴

From this point forward, Louis could count the Saxon magnates, especially the abbots of Corvey, among his chief supporters, and, of course, they brought with them a large supply of Saxon warriors for the expeditionary forces and general levies.²⁹⁵ Louis had, of course, experienced the effectiveness of the Saxons firsthand when his father used troops from that region against him in 839, when Louis had attempted to make a stand at Frankfurt. Several thousand Saxons were summoned to join his father's army, marching against Louis in just the type of pincer movement that he hoped to avoid in the present conflict against Lothar: his father had approached from the west, while the Saxons came to meet him from the north. Louis's position was compromised, as his father effected a river crossing, nearly completely encircling his son, and Louis had to retreat from Frankfurt into Bavaria.²⁹⁶ Clearly, the king had learned from this earlier experience, taking a decisive step to make sure that he did not oppose the Saxons again.

After Fontenoy, Lothar turned to trickery in an attempt to get the Saxon *Stellinga* rebels to side with him against Louis the German.²⁹⁷ The prospect was not necessarily unattractive to the rebels, as the Saxon nobles, against whom the *Stellinga* rebels were

²⁹³ ULD I.28, I.29.

²⁹⁴ ULD I.26.

²⁹⁵ More on the role of the Saxons in the expeditionary forces below, ch.3, and also see B. and D. Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution, 912-973?: Myth and Reality," *Early Medieval Europe* 15.2 (2007), 186-222 for the competence of ninth century Saxons in the Carolingian armies.

²⁹⁶ *AF* 839, *AB* 839, and also Nithard I.7, though he does not mention the Saxon forces that were a key part of the emperor's success.

²⁹⁷ Goldberg, "Popular Revolt, Dynastic Politics, and Aristocratic Factionalism in the Early Middle Ages: The Saxon *Stellinga* Reconsidered," *Speculum* 70.3 (1995), 467-501.

struggling, had largely sided with Louis the German, due both to his position in the east and to the legislative effort that he had made at Paderborn on behalf of Corvey. The fact that he held the assembly there shows a good-faith effort to be the king physically on the ground in Saxony, which could not have been lost on the nobility there, in consideration of the importance of *königsnahe*. Late in 841, Lothar supposedly ordered Saxon supporters to come to him at Mainz. This effort was probably abortive or inconsequential, but he remained in contact with the *Stellinga* leaders, promising the right to use the old customary laws from pagan times, if only they would support his rule.²⁹⁸ At the same time Lothar's supporters spread rumors that Charles was killed and Louis wounded and in hiding after Fontenoy, hoping to extract a measure of support before the truth was discovered.²⁹⁹

At Strasbourg in 842, the Saxon Count Bardo returned to express the support of the Saxon nobility for Louis, which meant that the bulk of the region's nobility had rejected Lothar's claims to power.³⁰⁰ After the 842 assembly at Aachen, Louis the German headed for Saxony to stamp out the problem of the *Stellinga* rebellion and Lothar's influence in the region once and for all. His position relative to Lothar had never been stronger, and so this was the perfect time to root out his machinations with finality and truly cement the support of Saxony for the future of his reign. Louis particularly feared that the rebels might join up with his Slavic enemies across the frontier or, indeed, the Northmen, whom Lothar had also been attempting to stir up against Louis.³⁰¹ Viking

²⁹⁸ *AF* 841, *AB* 841, Nithard IV.2.

²⁹⁹ Nithard III.2.

³⁰⁰ Nithard, III.7.

³⁰¹ *AB* 842; Lothar had been giving benefices to the Viking Harald to secure his loyalty against Louis. Viking allegiance with Slavic peoples had very recent precedent, as King Horic had attempted to gain the lordship over these Slavic peoples in 838 from Louis the Pious, *AB* 838-839.

attacks had hit the emporium at Quentovic, as well as some English towns. In spite of this action that he may have initiated, however, Lothar was still hard pressed for support, sending envoys to his brothers in the hopes of effecting a mutually agreeable peace, now that he was on the losing end of the military struggle.³⁰²

Many of Louis's troops at Fontenoy had been marshaled from Saxony, a region that had earned a reputation for producing brave and skilled warriors, and any political instability or division in the region threatened an important foundation of his armies. If, indeed, the conflict with his brothers was to be pursued any further, he certainly could not afford the sort of Saxon difficulties that perpetually plagued the early decades of Charlemagne's reign.³⁰³ If, like Charlemagne, Louis had to squander numerous campaign seasons heading out to Saxony to quell rebellions, his opportunistic brothers would surely have taken advantage of his absence from the western portion of the kingdom to foment more political strife by attempting to sway wavering magnates to their own causes. Indeed, Lothar had done his part to stir up the *Stellinga* situation in an attempt to undermine Louis's authority in Saxony by promising the rebels that they could utilize the old laws.³⁰⁴

Decisive action was required, and Louis took it. The result was a bloodbath. After securing his alliance with Charles in the Strasbourg oaths and ensuring that his position in the west against Lothar was stable, Louis embarked on a punitive campaign through Saxony, executing some 154 rebels and punishing many others with the loss of

³⁰² Nithard IV.2, IV.3.

³⁰³ On Charlemagne's Saxon campaigns see the very thorough treatment provided by Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 177-245, 427-472.

³⁰⁴ Nithard IV.2, AB 841.

limbs or blinding.³⁰⁵ Following this royal effort, the nobles united in support of him and dealt with any aftershocks of the uprising personally, executing many more *Stellinga* rebels by their own authority. Lothar's plot had failed; Louis would continue to recruit large numbers of Saxons for further campaigns.

The Treaty of Verdun (843)

In the autumn of 842, Louis and Charles again met, accompanied by their expeditionary forces. Lothar it seemed, was finally in the mood for negotiations and an equitable division of the empire, particularly since his men had been deserting him in greater numbers after he was forced to flee his kingdom.³⁰⁶ Although the negotiations were delayed somewhat by mutual suspicion among the kings and their envoys, in October the three brothers met at Koblenz. They and their leading advisers determined that forty men from each of the three factions should be chosen to survey the realm, and then they would divide it three ways as fairly as was humanly possible. A truce was agreed upon while the survey was underway, which would last until July 843.³⁰⁷

The three year civil war culminated in the Treaty of Verdun. The kings attempted to divide the kingdom as equally as they could manage, leaving the first choice among

³⁰⁵ *AF* and *AB* 842 as well as Nithard IV.4 all attribute the executions to Louis the German, and it is *AB* that provides the exact figures for the number of men executed. *AX*, however, glosses over the king's role in putting down the revolt, instead attributing the executions to the Saxon nobles themselves.

³⁰⁶ *AB* 842.

³⁰⁷ Nithard IV.4-6, *AB* 842, and cf. Ganshof, "On the Genesis and Significance of the Treaty of Verdun (843)," 289-302.

the partitions to Emperor Lothar.³⁰⁸ Essentially, Louis, Charles, and Lothar had come to an important realization that underpinned the agreement: they were too evenly matched to make substantive territorial gains at the others' expense. While Nithard relates that the magnates did not wish for another pitched battle, some of them still had criticized the kings for not following up on their victory at Fontenoy and attempting to achieve a militarily decisive conclusion against Lothar.³⁰⁹ Like Hannibal after Cannae, or Pyrrhus of Epirus, however, Louis and Charles did not attempt to press their success. They concluded that defeating Lothar decisively was not worth the potential catastrophic casualties of Frank versus Frank, Christian versus Christian, that Nithard so deplored.³¹⁰ It was eminently clear to the brothers that any attempt at a reunification of Charlemagne's erstwhile empire under one banner was impossible, at least for the present time.

With the prescribed survey of the kingdom having been carried out by the *missi*, the three brothers finally terminated the civil war. They agreed to what they believed was as equitable a division of the kingdom as could be reached. Louis the German received, of course, the easternmost portion of the realm, which was bounded primarily by the Rhine in the west, but also included all the regions and cities around Worms, Mainz, and Speyer. Lothar, predictably, took the middle kingdom, while Charles got the western portion. These borders were to remain relatively unchanged until Lothar's death, which,

³⁰⁸ Nithard IV.4. Lothar, of course, would choose the middle portion that he had already been ruling, which contained the capital city of Aachen.

³⁰⁹ Nithard III.1-2. Bernard and David Bachrach find that Nithard himself was critical of this decision, believing instead that the kings ought to have kept their large armies united as one overwhelming force to pursue and defeat Lothar. "Nithard as a Military Historian of the Carolingian Empire," 41-42. The strategic merit of pressing the attack makes sense certainly, and it probably would have brought about settlement sooner than what was ultimately reached at Verdun. Louis and Charles reached the decision they did—not to pursue Lothar and see to affairs in their respective kingdoms—in large part due to the unpopularity of Christian Franks fighting one another, which Nithard opines in III.1.

³¹⁰ Nithard III, preface. III.1, AB 841 present their actions as those of merciful and forgiving Christian princes.

for Louis the German, was a very welcome contrast to the territorial instability and concomitant shifting loyalties of the magnates that had troubled him for the last five years.

The Treaty of Verdun did not put to rest the imperial, territorial aspirations of any of the Carolingians. These sentiments lay dormant inside the minds of Louis and Charles, and they would reemerge later in the kings' lives, particularly after Lothar's death in 855. For the time being, however, the kings saw fit to devise a truce rather than destroying the military might of the various kingdoms by risking further conflict amongst themselves. Equally, it would be inappropriate and anachronistic to say that the kings conceived of themselves ruling separate realms or kernels of nations.³¹¹ Each king cherished the idea of the Frankish realm as a unit, as Louis the Pious had hammered into them as children and in the *ordinatio imperii*. The idea of mighty Charlemagne, ruler of all the Christian empire, was already legendary in their own time.³¹² Francia was one whole, of which East Francia, West Francia, et cetera were a part, and each king identified himself as Frankish, ruling a part territorially of what essentially belonged to them all. For now, although each brother—demonstrably and especially Lothar from his repeated claims on the entire realm—would have enjoyed the ability to exert his authority over the whole, each realized that the peace among Christian Franks could only be kept were he content to rule that land allotted to him at Verdun. Besides, they had many other enemies that required military attention. Viking raids had been heating up in the later years of the civil

³¹¹ Contra the ideas of Johannes Fried in "The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: East and Middle Kingdoms" *New Cambridge Medieval History* vol. 2 (1995), 142-168, here esp. 145-146.

³¹² Even a cursory reading of Notker confirms the strength of the already nascent *nachleben* of Charlemagne in the ninth century.

war, and they would remain a serious problem for Charles in particular. Louis had just tentatively secured Saxony, which would hopefully be a boon in controlling the eastern frontier and preventing Viking raids into his own realm, and with western affairs in regards to competition with his brothers settled, it was now time to shift his attention eastward.

Controlling the Eastern Frontier (843-855)

Outside of occasional diplomatic squabbles, the conflict between the brother kings generally ceased until Lothar's death. Louis saw an important window of opportunity to devote his attention to the affairs in the eastern border of his kingdom. The consistent warfare of the past several years had left Louis conspicuously absent from the eastern frontier, which had not gone unnoticed by the Slavic peoples across his borders. Often referred to by contemporaries as simply "the Wends," a catch-all term for western Slavs³¹³—relative to the rest of the Slavic lands, which lay further east—the various tribal groups across the eastern frontier staged frequent and problematic raids into Louis's kingdom, plundering and burning before retreating back to the relative safety of their own lands.³¹⁴ Until the Treaty of Verdun in 843, Louis had been so occupied with the western civil war that he had been unable to pay substantial attention to eastern frontier affairs.

³¹³ Rado L. Lencek, "Note: the Terms Wende – Winde, Wendisch – Windischin in the Historiographic Tradition of the Slovene Lands," *Slovene Studies* 12.1 (1990), 93-97.

³¹⁴ Viking raids similarly troubled Charles in the west, though the execution of the attacks differed in that the Slavs generally executed overland raids, whereas the Vikings tended to utilize fast moving, shallow draft ships to exploit the navigable rivers that crisscrossed Charles's kingdom. Though the Vikings could and did prey on any coastal areas, inroads into the kingdom itself tended to follow predictable paths down the rivers for ease of travel. This led Charles to create a network of fortified bridges that had some—though certainly not complete—success in alleviating the raids. Simon Coupland, "The Fortified Bridges of Charles the Bald," *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 17 (1991), 1-12; Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, (London and New York, Longman, 1992) 160-189.

Now, with the western situation temporarily stable, he was able to begin the task of forming a coherent eastern strategy.

First, he aimed to provide a greater measure of safety for those residents and lords of the eastern marches against dangerous, troublesome, and economically damaging raids. Second, Louis demonstrated to the peoples across the frontier that he did not intend to be an absentee ruler who would leave them entirely free to ignore his overlordship however they wished; failure to respect Carolingian authority would have real, military consequences. Third, Louis showed his brothers—especially Lothar—that he would be content to direct the attention of his armies elsewhere than the west and central Carolingian kingdoms. This was important both because it showed that Louis did not intend to invade personally, but also that he trusted his brothers not to violate the treaty and invade the east. The peace that they forged at Verdun, though it had been hard won and must certainly have been tenuous at first, carried through until Lothar's death over a decade later.

Louis would not attempt outright conquest of Slavic lands; this was the central tenet of his grand strategy for the frontier, from the north along the Elbe to the southern regions around the middle Danube. Instead, he continued the Carolingian tributary policy that had been initiated in the Merovingian period.³¹⁵ This entailed forcing the Slavs to pay an annual tribute to the Carolingians instead of attempting to assimilate them directly into the empire. Through the payment of tribute, the Slavs recognized the Carolingian monarch's superiority monetarily and symbolically, while retaining a large measure of

³¹⁵ See Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute," 75-76, for the Merovingians. Those peoples subject to tribute had changed through conquest, as many were assimilated formally into the empire as the frontier pushed eastward, but the basic nature of the tributary relationships did not.

their own governance for themselves. Still, these terms were not necessarily attractive ones for the Slavs, since it meant a siphoning off of a good deal of wealth to pay the Carolingians every year. As a result, and absent any guarantee of Carolingian military protection, the prospect of complete self-rule was attractive, making rebellions common, particularly during those years when the Carolingian king in East Francia seemed either weak or distracted by other affairs, such as the civil war.

Louis combated the frequent raids with a two part strategy, consisting of a buffer zone comprised of the marcher lands, undergirded by a system of defense in depth. The march system fell under the authority of the powerful dukes, counts, and prefects of the region. It had been recently reshuffled by Louis the Pious in 828 upon the removal of Duke Balderic of the Friulian March, whose perceived ineptitude had caused Louis instead to divide his territorial responsibility among four counts.³¹⁶ The primary authority for overseeing the coordination of the eastern march rested with the prefect of the east; Gerold II held the office until his death in 833, at which time Louis the German placed Ratpot in the position.³¹⁷ Louis would ultimately depose Ratpot in 854 under accusations of conspiracy with Rastislav, and by 856, he had replaced him with the momentous appointment of his son Carloman.³¹⁸ To the existing march system, Louis also added formidable supporters whom he viewed as having great personal loyalty to him,

³¹⁶ *ARF* 828. Bowlus objects to the idea that this was a fundamental restructuring of the march, since the division of this responsibility in Friuli would have caused disunited resistance owing to the need to coordinate four separate men's forces. Rather, he believed it to have been done out of fear of the potential power of Balderic himself. *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 97-101.

³¹⁷ Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen* 91-103; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 67; Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 101-103; Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 126; Herwig Wolfram *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich: Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und die Quellen ihrer Zeit* (Vienna, 1995), 310-11.

³¹⁸ *AI* 854, 856; Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, 317-321.

particularly Ernst, who took command of the Bohemian March,³¹⁹ and Werner, whose *comitatus* was located in Upper Pannonia/Lower Austria.³²⁰

Raids from the east were somewhat unpredictable, owing to the fact that these incursions came from a variety of peoples, including the Moravians, Saxons (until 842), Bohemians, Sorbs, Obodrites, and even Vikings on several occasions. Still, most raids usually shared some common characteristics: they tended to occur, with some exceptions, in the summer; they usually aimed at plunder rather than conquest; and they were executed by forces much smaller than those of a typical East Frankish campaign army. These considerations led Louis to utilize the military topography left to him by Charlemagne and the earlier Carolingian kings, who in turn had built upon that of the late Roman Empire, to create a network of fortified places that together, comprised a formidable system of defense in depth.³²¹

The essence of defense in depth hinged upon the effectiveness of the local levies, for when word of enemy incursion reached rural peoples, they were to head with their families and whatever they could carry by horse or ox and cart, to the nearest

³¹⁹ Bowlus *Franks, Moravians and Magyars*, 102-103, has Ernst as Prefect of Bavaria, while Pearson, *Conflicting Loyalties*, 124 claims that the office had been allowed to lapse in the wake of Louis the German's own authority in the region. Regardless of the precise office, Ernst certainly had command of operations against Bohemia, as *AF* 849 attest. Given that the office of prefect was usually occupied by a count, who essentially supervised and coordinated the military efforts of other regional counts, Bowlus's classification seems reasonable through Ernst's prominence and command positions, though nowhere is he explicitly called *praefectus*.

³²⁰ On Werner's particular locality Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 65-66; Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars* 103; Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich*, 318.

³²¹ This network would be substantially expanded by the early Ottonian kings, for which see D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 25-27, 59-60, 71-77; B. and D. Bachrach, "The Costs of Fortress Construction in Tenth-Century Germany: The Case of Hildagsburg," *Viator* 45.3 (2014), 25-58. For Charlemagne's establishment of fortifications in Saxony, see Matthias Hardt, "Linien und Säume. Zonen und Räume an der Ostgrenze des Reiches im frühen und hohen Mittelalter," in Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, eds., *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2000), 39-56; idem, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," 219-232.

fortification, which in turn, the males of fighting age and shape were obligated to defend. Thus, while raiders might be able to plunder goods and ravage crops, the people would have refuge from all but the most determined siege until the king or a local magnate could bring a more substantial, professional force to bear upon the enemy. Indeed, Louis enjoyed a good deal of success with this system, since raids of plunder never transitioned into raids of conquest, which would have necessitated a concerted siege effort that the Slavic plunderers never deigned to undertake. While the Vikings besieged Dorestad and Paris in Charles' kingdom, Louis's enemies were generally content with booty.³²²

Generally, Slavic rebellions took two forms. One was simply the failure to pay tribute or attend the royal assembly. The second was open military action and revolt, launching raids into Carolingian territory to gain back some of that wealth they were supposed to be paying into the Carolingian realm. Usually, the plundering raids were all that could be managed, since protracted siege warfare in Carolingian territory would have rendered the raiders particularly vulnerable to the system of defense in depth that Louis employed against them. They would be cut off, surrounded, and either captured or killed—neutralized, at any rate. Thus, raiders usually were content to return with their ill-gotten gains. If Louis the German arrived to lead the army against them, the threat or act of invasion was typically enough to reduce the troublesome rebels to tributary status once more.³²³

The notable exception to the paradigm of plundering expeditions originated in Moravia, where Rastislav and his brethren posed several serious threats to royal power, in

³²² *AB* 845, 847, and 848 provide several examples, though there are many more throughout the ninth century.

³²³ More on the strategy of defense in depth below, ch. 3.

which they attempted to set up an independent Moravian state, free from any sort of tributary burden imposed by the Carolingians. Indeed, the Moravians utilized a similar system of defense in depth against the Carolingians, which proved nearly as effective until Louis the German's armies under the leadership of his son Carloman were able to capture a large number of fortresses in the early 870s.³²⁴

Louis's first military action after the treaty of Verdun illustrates the basic nature of his frontier policy. In 844 Louis led an attack against the rebellious Obodrites, who ignored his authority during the late stages of the civil war. Their rebellions were certainly not unprecedented; the Obodrites had rebelled several times against Louis the Pious as well.³²⁵ This particular rebellion was precipitated by Goztomuizli, who had declared himself king of the Obodrites independent from any Carolingian authority and rallied support to him with the promise of Obodrite independence. With his hand now freed from brotherly conflict, Louis gathered the army in late July 844 and invaded Obodrite territory beyond the Elbe River in August.³²⁶ Goztomuizli's independent kingship was incredibly short lived, as he died fighting against Louis's invading force. With Goztomuizli dead, the rest of the Obodrite magnates were easily subjected once more to Louis's yoke, and he appointed loyal dukes to rule over them.³²⁷ The victory so swiftly won was not decisive by any means, and the Obodrites knew full well the distance the king had traveled to subdue them temporarily. As a result, they began plotting the next rebellion almost as soon as the king had turned his back.³²⁸ Such was the troubling

³²⁴ *AF* 870-871.

³²⁵ *ARF* 817, 819, 823, 826,

³²⁶ *ULD* I.37.

³²⁷ *AF* 844, *AB* 844.

³²⁸ *AX* 844.

nature of frontier warfare and the policy of keeping rebellious people under tributary status. Generally, however, the policy was effective enough; large and organized rebellions that posed any legitimate threat to Carolingian rule were exceptional, and Louis dealt with them swiftly.³²⁹

Viking Policy

Louis's Viking policy closely resembled his strategy regarding the Slavs, with an important exception: Louis dealt with the Danes as a polity with a legitimate king, rather than a territory to be ruled by clients. Though the Danish king Roric was subject to tribute payments, the Carolingians did indeed recognize his authority.³³⁰ While the kingdoms of Charles the Bald and Lothar certainly suffered more from Viking attacks than Louis the German, Louis was not immune to their occasional attacks or political machinations, particularly as regards those Slavs, such as the Obodrites, who lived beyond the Elbe, across the northern end of the long eastern frontier. Louis's general Viking military strategy relied heavily upon the local levies of those portions of his kingdom most vulnerable to attack: Saxony and later, after 870, Frisia.³³¹ Equally important for Louis, however, was the fact that diplomatic maneuvering surrounding the Danish civil war largely took care of the problem for him. Louis and his Carolingian brethren could support Danish exiles with benefices in vulnerable areas, particularly Dorestad, employing a system somewhat like the Roman usage of barbarian forces as

³²⁹ The rebellions by the Obodrites in 845, the Moravians in 846, and the Bohemians in 848 and again in 849 are excellent examples of the several rebellions which cropped up in the wake of the civil war. Louis dealt with them all within the scope of a campaign season

³³⁰ See eg. *AF* 845, *AB* 845, and *AX* 845.

³³¹ *AF* and *AX* 873 for the Frisian levy.

limitanei to defend against the incursions of other Germanic tribes, though on a much smaller scale.³³²

The success of Louis's Viking policy owed to the stout defenses of Louis's Saxon and Frisian³³³ local levies, which ensured that the Viking raiders who attempted incursions upon East Francia met with concerted resistance. Equally important, perhaps, was the fact that the Viking raiders could find more, easier to obtain plunder, by raiding the western and middle portions of the Carolingian kingdom. The wealthy western and middle Rhine cities and emporia like Quentovic and Dorestad were more appealing targets than the cities of East Francia, many of which were usually located deeper inland in Bavaria than Dorestad, Quentovic, or even Paris (deep inland to be sure, but not so much as Frankfurt or Regensburg, and easily accessible via the Seine).³³⁴ Louis attempted to make treaties with the Danes to prevent incursions, and he generally did not offer support to his brothers in their own struggles against Viking incursions.³³⁵ Primarily, the Danes paid into East Frankish coffers, rather than the other way around, for which Charles met so much criticism in the west.³³⁶

Paderborn, 845

³³² On which practice see *AB* 841 (Lothar), *ARF* 826 (Louis the Pious), and *AF* 850 (Lothar, Louis the Pious, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German), and *AF* 852 (Louis the German). The effectiveness of this policy was questionable, as the Danes likewise attempted to exploit Carolingian politics to their advantage, for which see P.H. Sawyer, *Kings and Vikings: Scandinavia and Europe, AD 700-1100* (London, 1982), esp. 80-90.

³³³ After Lothar II's death in 869 and the partition of Lotharingia.

³³⁴ For Viking sieges of Paris see *AF* and *AB* 845 (an abortive siege that Charles the Bald bought off with a massive tribute payment), *AB* 857, *AB* 861, *AV* 885, and Abbo of St. Germain *Bella Parisiaca Urbis*, ed. Paul von Winterfeld, *MGH Poetae Latini aevi Carolini IV*. Berlin 1899.

³³⁵ Lothar and Charles sometimes cooperated against Danish attacks, as in *AB* 852, but in spite of the vows of brotherly love and mutual assistance, Louis refrained from sending troops to assist his brothers.

³³⁶ Simon Coupland, "The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and Their Consequences," *Francia*, 26.1 (1999), 59-75.

Early in 845, Louis received fourteen Bohemian *duces* at Regensburg, who asked to be baptized into the Christian religion. This would have been an incredible boon to Louis's attempts to consolidate the eastern frontier, since it would have provided him with important logistical allegiances in the east, through territory concerning which his armies would have had less intelligence than what they had of their own kingdom. The conversion of these men was at least partly a politically inspired gesture. Most likely, the conversion was an attempt by the Bohemians to avert the sort of treatment that the Obodrites had just received the year before: a Frankish invasion. In addition to his satisfaction over spreading the faith, Louis of course welcomed the opportunity for allies across the frontier, especially since he was planning to invade Moravia during the next campaigning season, in 846. It is clear, however, that Louis's motivations for accepting the conversions of these men—military assistance in campaigns across the eastern frontier—and their motives for seeking conversion in the first place—averting Frankish campaigns—were not compatible. As a result, the Christianization of these Slavic *duces* proved very short lived, slightly longer than a year and a half.³³⁷ The consequences of offending his newly Christianized “allies” would become brutally clear on the Moravian campaign, when the Bohemians offered no support to the royal army, instead harrying its return march and causing serious difficulties.³³⁸

Late in 845, Louis held another assembly at Paderborn. There, the nature and function of the tributary relationship was on full display, as the king received embassies

³³⁷ Dušan Třeštík, “The Baptism of the Czech Princes in 845 and the Christianization of the Slavs,” *Historica: Historical Sciences in the Czech Republic 2/XXXII* (1995), 7-59. The very short duration of the conversion lends itself to the interpretation that this gesture was more politically motivated than genuinely religious in nature.

³³⁸ *AF* 846, *AX* 846.

from the Obodrites, Bulgarians, and the Northmen, as well as from his brothers.³³⁹ The Obodrites, having plotted and begun to execute another rebellion as soon as Louis had left in 844, reversed course again and sought peace with gifts and hostages as soon as they received word of the large Carolingian force that had assembled against them in Saxony.³⁴⁰ It seems as though no actual combat was necessary this time; the results of last year's pitched battle, including the death of the so-called king Goztomuizli, loomed large enough to render the Obodrites compliant by the mere threat of military force. The Northmen brought the promised captives and treasure from the earlier campaign and destruction of Hamburg.³⁴¹

This assembly at Paderborn in 845 was also the probable time and place for another signal event in eastern warfare and logistical preparation. To aid in the consolidation of power on the eastern frontier, Louis and the council drew up a document cataloguing the peoples beyond the frontier and the number of fortifications that they possessed, called the *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, which listed the enemies beyond the Danube in north-south order.³⁴² The purpose of this survey document is clear. It establishes the structure of defense in depth that the Frankish armies could expect to deal with when campaigning in particular

³³⁹ *AF* 845. Reuter's translation and edition of the *AF* posits that the legates from the other Carolingian kings were likely related to the Viking attacks that plagued the previous year, which seems equally likely as a general confirmation of Verdun and the peace that persisted between them. Reuter, *Annals of Fulda*, 24 n.4.

³⁴⁰ *AX* 845.

³⁴¹ *AF* 845; *AX* 845.

³⁴² *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, ed. Erwin Herrmann, in *Slawisch-germanische Beziehungen im südostdeutschen Raum von der Spätantike bis zum Ungarnsturm: Ein Quellenbuch mit Erläuterungen*, (Munich, 1965), 212-222; Maddalena Betti, "La *Descriptio civitatum et regionem ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*. Lo spazio oltre il "limes" nel IX secolo." *Melanges de l'école française de Rome* 125.1 (2013). The manuscript text of the *descriptio civitatum* is available in scanned images online at http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/bsb00018763/image_321 (3/10/2019).

regions, and the relative strength and density of fortifications in each part of the vast Slavic lands beyond the march.³⁴³ The *Descriptio civitatum* reveals a central facet of trans-frontier grand strategy: any attempt to extend the frontier eastward would necessarily mean conducting lengthy sieges or storming well-defended enemy fortifications. It proved incredibly important to know the locations and numbers of the fortifications that enemies would employ against him; Louis needed to know where enemies could be expected to flee when his armies approached.

At the large Paderborn assembly, Louis the German and his council undoubtedly worked on plans for the invasion of Moravia that he envisioned for the next year. This was an appropriate location for the planning, as a contingent of Saxons were intended as one of the key arms of the expeditionary force that would undertake the campaign. In January of 846, Louis made a key grant to *dux* Pribina of Pannonia, an exiled Moravian whom Louis had appointed as his client ruler of that region in 838,³⁴⁴ granting him 100 manses on the Valchau, which was right along the route of march that an army would take to Moravia from Bavaria.³⁴⁵ Pribina's newly augmented wealth would serve to supply both his own troops and any Bavarian contingent that would pass through the region. Louis intended that Pribina would be his eager supporter against Moravia, not only because he ruled the region as his subordinate, but because the Moravian ruler Moimir had been the one to exile Pribina from Moravia. The campaign succeeded in

³⁴³ Goldberg also hypothesizes that, in addition to its obvious military implications, the document was intended to establish the burden of tribute payments that should be charged to and expected from each group that was in a tributary relationship with the East Frankish crown. *Struggle for Empire* 135-137.

³⁴⁴ *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, Fritz Lošek, ed. (Hannover, Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1997), 122. See also Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars* 104-111; Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich* 311-316.

³⁴⁵ ULD I.45.

removing Moimir, and in his place Louis installed Rastislav, a nephew whom Moimir had offered to Louis as a hostage to guarantee his loyalty. Louis had now used two of Moimir's exiles against him, indicating his willingness to exploit local politics and loyalties to his favor.

The Seeds of Change: Aquitaine, 853

The year 853 brought a hint of growing distrust between Louis and Charles the Bald, the initiation of which came from Charles' magnates. A legation from numerous Aquitanian nobles sent to Louis, essentially asking him to take over Aquitaine from Charles. This request was certainly a strange one, and Louis treated it cautiously, sending his son Louis the Younger with a force of uncertain size on ahead to investigate in the spring of the next year.³⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Louis the German busied himself crushing a rebellion by an allied force of Slavs and Bulgars, which had essentially been bought and paid for by a bribe from Charles, probably as a deterrent to keep Louis occupied so that Charles could buy a little time to deal with the thorny Aquitanian situation.³⁴⁷

In the spring of 854, Charles was understandably furious at Louis the Younger's incursion, and he raised an army from the north of his kingdom and marched for Aquitaine. His control over his men, however, was abysmal, and they accomplished nothing but looting and pillaging. Lothar and Louis met on the Rhine to discuss the

³⁴⁶ Goldberg (240) believes that Louis the Younger led a large army into Aquitaine, which was certainly possible, but there is not much evidence in the annals that he cites to support the claim that he led any more than his own military household, which seems more likely, if indeed Louis the German intended to follow him with the full might of the expeditionary forces later in the year. At any rate, Louis the Younger stayed six months in Aquitaine, and the presence of a large occupying force in the region for such a long time would have been costly and taxing for his Aquitanian hosts to maintain, particularly with Charles's own force looting and pillaging—*AB* 854—at the same time.

³⁴⁷ *AB* 853.

meaning of the situation, a meeting which started hostile and gradually became more civil.³⁴⁸ Surely, it ran contrary to the Treaty of Verdun for Louis to invade Charles's kingdom in order to seize Aquitaine, even if it was done at the request of the Aquitanian nobility. Louis and Lothar contracted a hasty non-intervention pact between one another, and Lothar went on to meet Charles, following the latter's disastrous Aquitanian campaign that had failed to dislodge Louis the Younger from the region. Together, Charles and Lothar asked Louis to recall his namesake from Aquitaine; whether or not Louis actually wrote to his son at all is unknown, but Charles led an army into Aquitaine and ultimately drove Louis the Younger from the region without a struggle.³⁴⁹

Louis the Younger did not put up much resistance, as it was never the intent of his mission to do so, or actually to invade the kingdom. This was more an intelligence gathering expedition, to gauge the sentiment of the Aquitanian nobility and bring intelligence back to his father, so that the king could decide if any further action was warranted. Had it been a true invasion of his brother's kingdom, Louis himself undoubtedly have led the army at this point in his military career. There is some evidence, however, that Louis did intend to launch—or at least, he considered the possibility of—a concerted invasion of Aquitaine with himself at the helm. On July 21 of 853, Louis established the nunnery of St. Felix & St. Regula at Zurich, which lay very conveniently along the most feasible route for an invading army to take from Bavaria to Aquitaine and was therefore superbly positioned to serve as a waypoint on that march.³⁵⁰

³⁴⁸ AB 854.

³⁴⁹ AB 854.

³⁵⁰ ULD I.67. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 239 calls the nunnery “a monument to [Louis's] western imperialist policies,” which, while perhaps slightly overstated, definitely highlights its importance as a logistical stopover on the long road from Bavaria to the western portions of the Carolingian realm. Goldberg also astutely identifies a Friesing charter recording a private transaction of a very extensive

In July, Louis also held an assembly at Ulm, where he settled property holding disputes between St. Gall and Constance, confirming the holdings of both to avert such disputes in the future. Whether or not he initiated the process of raising an army there is uncertain, but as many of the leading men of Alemannia and Bavaria would have been in attendance, there certainly were a large number of military households and potential leaders for detachments of an expeditionary force.

At the bare minimum, the king had considered it prudent for him to be as nearby as possible to the unfolding situation in the west, in order that he could receive intelligence from his son and be present to negotiate with his brothers. If, indeed, it had come to an invasion on a full scale, the raising of an Alemannian/Bavarian army at Ulm would have been simple and could have been done efficiently. There ultimately would be further action indeed, though it would not come this year; Lothar had successfully brokered peace and avoided outright fraternal warfare. Lothar's death in October 855, however, would change the political landscape dramatically, exacerbating the conflict between Louis the German and his half-brother Charles.

After this abortive incursion into Charles's western kingdom, Louis returned his attention to the east, specifically to Moravia. Duke Rastislav, whom Louis had installed as a client ruler to replace his rebellious uncle Moimir,³⁵¹ had proved to be cut from the same cloth as his predecessor, leading the Moravians in open rebellion against Louis's authority. The campaign achieved little. Rastislav and his forces simply evaded the king's army, taking refuge inside Moravia's powerfully built fortifications. Louis certainly knew

hayfield in the region near Ulm, further bolstering the claim for logistical preparations for western campaigning (Friesing 730), p. 239-240, n. 24.

³⁵¹ *AF* 846.

that this would be the strategy to which the rebellious enemy would resort. His catalogue of fortresses had summarized the knowledge of the enemy fortifications, and this was rather more a punitive campaign intended to quash the rebellion than one of conquest.³⁵² This type of campaign was perhaps unsatisfying to some, as *AF* quips that Louis “returned without victory.”³⁵³ Though Louis ravaged the countryside heavily and defeated a Moravian raiding party that attacked his camp, Rastislav’s forces launched raids into Carolingian territory immediately after Louis’s army had returned home; something more drastic would need to be done to solve the Moravian problem.³⁵⁴

The enormity of the death and destruction at Fontenoy in 841 had left a deep impression, and after Verdun, the brother kings had ruled in cooperation with one another, meeting several times to confirm their oaths of brotherly love and assistance while they dealt with the threats from external enemies that faced their respective kingdoms.³⁵⁵ Louis the German focused grand strategy in the eastern kingdom toward the frontier, content to utilize his armies to consolidate his authority along and beyond the marches. This served the dual function of increasing the defensibility and security of the eastern borderlands while bolstering the royal treasury with annual tribute payments from those frontier peoples that the king was able to bring back into cooperation with the terms of their tributary relationship.

³⁵² *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*.

³⁵³ *AF* 855, “*sine Victoria rediit*,” suggesting that victory ought to be equated with conquest, even though the Carolingian army defeated the Moravians in the only military confrontation of the campaign.

³⁵⁴ *AF* 855, *AB* 855.

³⁵⁵ See especially the capitularies issued from the Meersen assemblies in 847 and 851 (Louis the German, Charles the Bald, and Lothar I), as well as from Koblenz in 860 (Louis, Charles, and Lothar II); MGH *Capitularia* II.204, II.205, and II.242. Fried, “The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: East and Middle Kingdoms” characterizes the oaths of mutual cooperation as sporadic and disingenuous, 145-146; I disagree, and instead offer that they were important diplomatic tools to ensure unity among the Frankish realm.

From the events of the later years of the period preceding Lothar's death, however, it is clear that Louis the German's aspirations in the west did not entirely die out as a result of Fontenoy. As he and his sons aged, they faced the same problem that Louis the Pious had: his aging sons wanted kingdoms of their own, and while the king could give them leadership roles within his own kingdom, bestowing upon them important military commands and increasing responsibilities at court, it was too difficult or costly to provide a unique kingdom for each son. Doing so would have compromised the military structure in East Francia that Louis had been struggling to build, by fracturing it into independent units reliant upon the cooperation of his sons to form adequate expeditionary forces. It would be an attractive prospect to have been able to give Aquitaine to Louis the Younger, for example, but Louis's caution in examining the climate rather than invading with an army shows that he was unwilling to be the one to initiate a fracturing of the peace that had been obtained with such great difficulty. The risk of uniting Lothar and Charles against him with an act of open aggression was also more than could be undertaken sensibly. Once again, however, as Louis the Pious's death had roused the brothers to action against one another in 840, the issue of succession would thrust Louis and Charles into direct conflict when Lothar died in 855.

A Return to the West (855-876)

The death of his eldest brother, the Emperor Lothar, in 855, caused Louis to return his attention gradually to the affairs of the western portions of the Carolingian kingdom. He and Charles the Bald increasingly challenged one another in a conflict for influence, power, and control of Lothar's erstwhile magnates and lands. Louis played a leading role in the transition of power in the late Lothar's middle kingdom. The nobles

brought his son Lothar II to his uncle Louis at Frankfurt, proclaiming that they wished for Lothar to assume the throne. Louis consented, and his nephew was crowned Lothar II. Even so, Lothar had two brothers—Charles (the Child) and Louis II of Italy—whom Lothar I had intended to receive shares in Provence/Burgundy and Italy, respectively.³⁵⁶

At least initially, much like his father, Lothar II was interested in disinheriting his brothers, and he tried to have Charles tonsured and shut up in a monastery.³⁵⁷ Either due to perceived weakness from Lothar II, a desire to sidestep the entire succession issue, or deference to Louis the German as the oldest Carolingian, Hratulf, the bishop of Strasbourg, came not to the young Lothar II but to Louis the German, asking him to confirm Strasbourg's possessions that had been given by Louis the Pious. It is possible that Strasbourg had been ceded to Louis the German in exchange for his support of Lothar's claim to the throne,³⁵⁸ or perhaps Hratulf thought that Louis would ultimately invade the western and middle kingdoms per the request of Aquitaine and in view of the early tenuous kingship of Lothar II, or at the least, take over his late brother's imperial title. If that were the case, he was attempting to get into Louis's good graces by recognizing him as the king in the Alsatian region. Regardless of Hratulf's motivation, Louis indeed did confirm Strasbourg's holdings.³⁵⁹ If he did temporarily possess the

³⁵⁶ *AF* 856.

³⁵⁷ *AB* 856.

³⁵⁸ As per the hypothesis of Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 249. The theory makes sense, and if Louis did indeed harbor the deep western aspirations that Goldberg believes he did, Alsace generally and Strasbourg particularly would serve as an excellent base of operations for mustering Bavarians, Alemanians, and Saxons in preparation for launching an attack to the west.

³⁵⁹ ULD I.75. If this charter was a power play on Louis's part and an attempt to exert authority in a new region, rather than the execution of the bishop's request as the senior Carolingian king, Louis did not show it in the signature, using the usual title "King in East Francia" that he had been employing.

region, however, Louis the German was unable to keep it, since the sons of Lothar I eventually agreed to the succession plan that their father had prescribed.³⁶⁰

It is important to note, from a grand strategic perspective, that Louis's aspirations for the eastern frontier did not cease because of the rise of opportunity in the west. It is a strong illustration of the fact that grand strategy, as well as the reality of the royal political situation, was rather shifting and reactive, as opposed to clearly defined and deliberately, continually pursued. Despite the change in leadership of the middle kingdom after Lothar's death, which revived Louis's western and trans-empire aspirations somewhat, the situation across the eastern frontier remained continually troublesome for the East Frankish king. Rastislav and his successors in Moravia would rebel against Louis the German until his death, and they would continue to trouble his successors after that. In the west, however, Aquitaine again was the site of the main conflict between the brothers, where the nobility once more conspired to get Louis the German to come and take over authority from Charles in 856. This time, Louis simply did not have the luxury of investigating the situation, as he was campaigning across the eastern frontier. The fickle Aquitanian rebel faction apparently could not wait that long—which, indeed, pointed to the difficulty that Louis would have had ruling them effectively from far-off Regensburg and Frankfurt³⁶¹—and instead, they accepted the authority of Charles the Bald's namesake son.³⁶²

³⁶⁰ *AB* 856.

³⁶¹ This should not be construed as a problem unique to Louis the German, of course. The enormity of governing the far-flung empire was exactly the reason for Charlemagne and Louis the Pious warning against further attempts at expansion.

³⁶² *AB* 856.

Louis still had more pressing matters to attend to than the Aquitanian conflict, a situation which seemed tenuous at best. Still smarting from the blow of the 855 campaign and the subsequent Moravian raids across the Danube, Louis began to make plans for a more concerted attempt to crush the growing power of Moravia, which Rastislav evidently intended to bolster. The grand strategy pursued up until this point had been the same as that which Louis employed against the other frontier peoples: to keep the Moravians in a tributary relationship to the Carolingian crown, administered by a local ruler whom Louis could count on to be loyal. It was clear to Louis that this was not working as he had intended. Rastislav was by no means the loyal pawn that Louis had intended to appoint; rather, he was becoming something of a Moravian patriot hero, leading his people in open revolt against Carolingian power. Now, Louis prepared to shift the strategic aim toward more direct intervention in Moravia. He knew that to break Moravian power, he would need to solve the thorny problem of taking Moravian fortresses, which was a complicated proposition due to maintaining supply lines over long distances outside of Carolingian territory. He wanted to enable the use of pincer movements: sending multiple large armies against an enemy position that marched independently, both to attack the enemy from several directions and to ease the burden of supply. For this to be successful, the rest of the frontier needed to be stoutly secured.

To ensure this security, Louis took several important actions in 855-57. First, he secured the route of March from Saxony to Moravia, using a Saxon expeditionary force in order that they might familiarize themselves with the route and the peoples along it. Second, he used this same force to defeat the Bohemians in two bloody battles, that they

might no longer be able to harry his return marches.³⁶³ Third, and most importantly, he appointed his son Carloman prefect of the eastern marches.³⁶⁴ This rendered Carloman responsible for the defense of the eastern portion of Bavaria from costly raiding, for mustering troops for future Moravian expeditions, and for leading those expeditions personally, giving Louis an important general for the large army pincer strategy that he hoped to enable.

From a political perspective, the king hoped that by imparting this important command to his son, Carloman's ambition for authority might be fulfilled, and Louis could show that he trusted in him to execute his duties competently. The risk, of course, was that Carloman would gain prominence with the men of the eastern marches whom he commanded, and they might likely exhibit personal loyalty to the son instead of the father, as indeed Bavaria had to Louis the German over Louis the Pious. Still, it was a risk worth taking for Louis the German; so long as his sons remained satisfied to serve as commanders under his ultimate authority, they would be very useful, and while Louis did not wish to fracture his kingdom by making them subkings, he was happy to gratify their ambitions with military commands that were mutually beneficial to both parties. Louis hoped that all three of these measures would enable him to utilize overwhelming force against Moravia, that he might stop their expansion with minimal losses.

In 857, Louis made preparations for a huge eastern campaign in 858, which he intended to feature three separate armies in the field at once against the Obodrites, Sorbs, and Moravians. An opportunity arose in the west, however, which Louis found too

³⁶³ *AF* 856-7; for campaign details see below, ch. 3.

³⁶⁴ H. Breslau, ed., *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* 856, MGH SS 30.2, p. 744.

tempting to ignore, and which would change his grand strategic aims markedly for the future. A number of Charles's dissatisfied magnates sent a legation to Louis led by Abbot Adalhard of St.-Bertin and Odo, Count of Troyes, asking Louis to come and take over the rule of the western kingdom from Charles.³⁶⁵ Louis did not make sweeping grand strategic changes overnight in the face of this invitation. Rather, the opportunity revealed that he had probably been harboring some latent desire to rule as much of Francia as possible all along, which the new circumstances reawakened. This second invitation to invade suggested continued weakness in Charles's position, as well as planting the idea in Louis's mind that the western magnates might support the rather dubious claims with which he might justify an invasion.³⁶⁶

Louis was supposedly quite troubled as to the proper course of action. On the one hand, he felt bound to help the supposedly oppressed people of the western kingdom, out of obligation to his fellow Franks. On the other, he and his brother Charles had been formally allied since Strasbourg in 842, oaths of fidelity which had been confirmed several times since then. He also labored under the charge that he only wanted to move westward in an attempt to extend his own kingdom rather than for the sake of the people, and the *AF* expends substantial ink trying to disprove this particular charge, which, of course, had the ring of truth to it, or rhetorical plausibility at the very least.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ See especially the account of Louis's challenges to Charles's authority in the 850s in Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (New York, 1992), 160-189.

³⁶⁶ *AF* 858, *AB* 858.

³⁶⁷ *AF* 858. Goldberg believes, correctly in my opinion, that Louis was less morally divided over the issue than the *AF* have us think. Rather, the chance to seize a portion of Charles's kingdom appealed greatly to Louis, and he struck opportunistically when given the chance to justify it diplomatically; *Struggle for Empire* 248-254; and see the parallel account in Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 186-189. Additionally, the military effort involved would not be nearly as arduous for Louis the German if he could convince Charles's own men to desert and join Louis's cause.

No matter what one makes of his motives, Louis decided to invade. He traveled through Alsace, welcoming many of Charles's dissatisfied magnates and their retinues to his forces. The initial invasion was successful, and Charles was forced to break off a siege of a Vikings force on the island of Oissel in the Seine to come and deal immediately with his brother.³⁶⁸ A standoff resulted, though no battle took place, as Charles fell back into Burgundy to buy time for negotiation.³⁶⁹ With winter fast approaching, Louis dismissed much of the expeditionary force for fear of it being trapped in a compromising position in his brother's kingdom, and he resorted to diplomacy to try and solidify his position with the church in the west, particularly Archbishop Hincmar of Reims.³⁷⁰ Louis met with Lothar II at Attigny, where he also issued a unique diploma. The substance was not particularly special, confirming a private exchange of lands to a *fidelis* named Tuto and granting him the right to exchange further lands as he saw fit, but the signature certainly was. Louis dated the charter not only in terms of his reign in East Francia as he usually did, but also "in the first year in the west,"³⁷¹ which indicated that he did, indeed, hope to achieve lasting power.

Louis's authority would prove only temporary, however, because of the objections of Hincmar of Reims, who, as a prominent member of Charles's court circle, was unwilling to throw his lot in with this potential usurpation of power.³⁷² If Louis did not succeed, and Hincmar had supported him, the archbishop was likely to be removed

³⁶⁸ Details of which siege are available in *AB* 858.

³⁶⁹ Campaign details below, ch. 3.

³⁷⁰ *AF* and *AB*, 858-9.

³⁷¹ *ULD* I.94.

³⁷² On Hincmar generally, see Rachel Stone and Charles West, eds., *Hincmar of Reims, Life and Work* (Manchester, 2015), as well as the earlier Jean Devisse, *Hincmar, archevêque de Reims, 845-882* (Genève, Droz, 1975). For this episode Goldberg, 255-260.

from his position when and if Charles regained power.³⁷³ In case Louis's coup d'état did succeed, however, Hincmar did not want to condemn him outright, lest he anger the powerful East Frankish king and earn his eternal enmity—which of course would also result in Hincmar losing power under Louis. One can appreciate the difficulty and delicacy of the situation in which the archbishop was placed, trying to walk the thin line between two kings, while really only trying to do what was best for his own influence and the position of the church of Reims. Hincmar delayed meeting with Louis in person, preferring to communicate with the East Frankish king via letters, admonishing him for his incursion into his brother's kingdom and warning him not to persist lest he meet damnation (excommunication).³⁷⁴

Louis not only felt the political repercussions of Hincmar's warnings; all signs point to the fact that he was a devoutly religious man, concerned for the souls of his family and himself,³⁷⁵ rather than the sort of king who only used church patronage for political and military ends³⁷⁶—though that is not to say that he was not acutely aware of such implications, as of course he was. Militarily, as Archbishop of Reims, Hincmar was in the unique position of not only objecting to Louis's incursion on a political and theological basis, but from Reims's substantial holdings, he could provide the troops and resources necessary to help Charles resist Louis, now without much of the substantial

³⁷³ As was the case with Archbishop Ebbo of Reims, who was deposed by Louis the Pious at Thionville in 835, as punishment for having supported Lothar against him, *AB* 835.

³⁷⁴ Flodoard of Reims, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, III.20 in MGH *Scriptores* 36. General information regarding Flodoard's career at Reims can be found in the introductory material in Stephen Fanning and Bernard Bachrach, eds., *The "Annals" of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966* (Toronto, Broadview Press, 2004).

³⁷⁵ Prayer for the souls of the royal family was frequently the purported reward (not stated, of course, are the military and administrative values of such grants, as per D. Bachrach, "Immunities") Louis sought for granting lands and privileges to the church. The charter examples are too numerous to list them all, but ULD I.73 for an example: *pro pii genitoris nostri animae salvatione et pro nobis coniuge proleque nostra...exorare delectet.*

³⁷⁶ Goldberg, 32-38, for Louis's Christian education and resulting piety.

army that he had sent home for the winter. Louis was understandably frustrated, as he knew that he would be unable to keep the western kingdom if all the bishops still supported Charles. Louis headed to St.-Quentin to celebrate Christmas, but he soon returned to the east, ostensibly to deal with a serious Sorbian rebellion.³⁷⁷

In 859, Lothar, Charles, and Louis met on a Rhenish Island near the castle of Andernach by Koblenz. The location of the meeting was perhaps a small ideological victory for Louis; by traveling to his territory to conduct the meeting, Lothar II and Charles symbolically recognized his authority if not direct superiority. Perhaps the deference was a sign of respect for his military might; perhaps it was owed to him as the eldest living Carolingian king; or perhaps it was a concession made to keep Louis within the borders of his own kingdom. Regardless, the kings met on the island while their military households waited on the shore in order to prevent a fight breaking out during the course of the potentially heated discussion. This ultimately proved inconclusive, though they tentatively arranged another meeting in autumn at Basel, which neither Lothar II nor Charles would bother to attend.³⁷⁸

Louis needed to right the situation with his Carolingian relatives. In June of 860, Lothar II and Charles came to the eastern kingdom once more (though admittedly just across the border rather than at Frankfurt or Regensburg, to ease the travel burden on everyone) to Koblenz, where they restored peace with one another.³⁷⁹ In essence the

³⁷⁷ AB 858; the charter ULD I.94 was issued from Attingy on Dec. 10.

³⁷⁸ Louis had attempted to get Charles to excuse those men guilty of inciting Louis's invasion, and Charles had tried to get Louis to restore the benefices of the Welf family in his lands, but neither king would budge on this matter. AF 859, and see the discussion in Goldberg 260-261; and in Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 190-199.

³⁷⁹ MGH Capitularia II.242.

meeting did little more than reestablish the peace that had been transacted at Meerssen in 847 and 851,³⁸⁰ which in turn reinforced the arrangement set forth at Verdun in 843. It was an important gesture on Louis's part, given that he had almost launched an invasion in 853 and actually did so in 858. The other Carolingian monarchs needed to know that Louis did not intend another invasion. Oaths were exchanged to in a similar manner to the way in which they were sworn at Strasbourg in 842, bilingually in Romance and Frankish, so that the supporters of the respective kings could all understand what was being said without any sort of linguistic confusion.³⁸¹ The other key terms of the negotiations concerned those magnates who had supported the claims of a king other than their rightful lord. In keeping with the conciliatory mood of this meeting, pardons were handed down and benefices restored by both Louis and Charles.³⁸² Following the meeting, Lothar II allied with Louis against Charles, granting Alsace to his uncle as the price of the alliance.³⁸³ This exchange revealed Lothar II's weak position relative to his uncles and revealed that Louis, even in the wake of the frustration of his invasion's failure, still had designs on expansion in the west. Finally, it shows that the Alsatian nobility continued to support Louis to some degree even after he had been driven out of the western kingdom.³⁸⁴ Louis would strengthen this base of support diplomatically

³⁸⁰ MGH Capitularia II.204-205; at which meetings the kings had agreed upon mutual defense of one another's kingdoms in case of a serious *lantweri* invasion.

³⁸¹ *AF* 860. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 261.

³⁸² See also *AB* 859 for the case of Wenilo of Sens, to whom Charles finally issued a pardon after nearly causing him to be tried for treachery.

³⁸³ Also heavily involved in this exchange was the scandal of Lothar's divorce of Queen Theutberga in favor of a noblewoman named Waldrada with whom he had had an affair and fathered a son named Hugh. Louis turned a blind eye to the scandal in exchange for Alsace and in return for Waldrada's having given Louis family land by the Brenner Pass, an important route to Italy (*ULD* 84). *AB* 860, Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 292-294.

³⁸⁴ *AB* 860.

through the marriage of his son Charles (the Fat) to the daughter of the Alsatian Count Erchangar in 862.³⁸⁵

Rebellions Complicate Frontier Strategy

Just as the situation in the west appeared to be calming down, family troubles brought Louis to the eastern frontier. His son Carloman, craving titular royal authority of his own, had allied himself with Rastislav, who had by now proclaimed himself king and rejected Louis's authority once again.³⁸⁶ This joint rebellion by his son and arch-nemesis Rastislav, though perhaps not unexpected,³⁸⁷ enraged Louis, not least because it frustrated the plans that he had been making for another serious invasion of Moravia, of which Carloman's prefecture was an important part. Louis immediately took steps to punish Carloman and set the situation straight. From May of 859 through November of 860, Louis issued six charters for his eastern supporters, granting them increased lands in an attempt to cement their loyalty against possible interference from Carloman.³⁸⁸ Still, Carloman's growing influence and power in the southeast of Bavaria was appealing to many magnates, and as his father was aging, Carloman represented the potential next generation of powerful Carolingians.

Probably the biggest blow to Louis came from the defection of Count Ernest of the Bohemian marches, whom the *AF* had once called Louis's best supporter.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁵ *AB* 862.

³⁸⁶ *AI* 858.

³⁸⁷ Indeed, this was probably the reason that Louis made Carloman a frontier commander and not a sub king in the first place: to restrict his authority and ensure that the son was still firmly subservient to his father.

³⁸⁸ *ULD* 96, 98-102.

³⁸⁹ *AF* 849. Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen*, 132-137.

Carloman won Ernest over with a marital alliance, bringing his family directly into the royal one by marrying Ernest's daughter. Then, with the help of Ernest as well as Rastislav and his contingent of Moravian troops, Carloman took over a great deal of the eastern portion of East Francia, up to the river Inn. Louis was furious. Following Easter at Regensburg in 861, Louis accused and convicted Ernest—recently Carloman's father in law—of infidelity, along with his nephews counts Uto, Berengar, and Sigihard, for their roles in supporting Carloman's rebellion.³⁹⁰ Ernest remained in the eastern kingdom on his family land, which he retained in spite of losing all his benefices, and his nephews all moved west and allied with Charles the Bald. As a result, Carloman struck back at his father in similar fashion, replacing all the *duces* in Carinthia and Pannonia, who had been appointed by his father, with men of his own choosing, which caused Louis to demand that Carloman come to Regensburg and account for his actions. He did so in 862 after being assured safe passage, but apparently he did not amend his actual behavior. Louis vented his frustration with his son upon the Obodrites, leading the expeditionary levy alongside his namesake son against them and forcing the *dux* Tabomuizli to give tribute and hostages, including his own son, to ensure his continued future loyalty.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ *AF* 861, *AB* 861. This sort of occurrence was emblematic of what Störmer identified as the beginning of serious problems for the central Carolingian authority, which could no longer really control the nobility in the region—see Störmer, *Friher Adel*, esp 227. I disagree slightly, on the basis that Carloman represents centralized royal authority to me just as much as his father, and such aristocratic factionalism pertains more to what branch of the central authority one wishes to attach one's loyalty. After all, it could be argued that these noblemen anticipated the end of Louis the German's life approaching, while Carloman was on the rise, particularly in that local region where he was prefect and expected to ultimately become king.

³⁹¹ *AF* 862. *AB* 862 holds that this campaign was not a success, yet resulted in compulsory hostage giving, a strange contradiction in terms. The giving of hostages and restoration of tributary status was typically a very satisfying end for these sorts of missions, and as such, the only way one could construe it as unsuccessful is if the goal of the campaign is misrepresented as territorial conquest, which indeed it was not.

In order for his Moravian strategy to operate properly, Louis needed to restore his control over Carloman. His position as a frontier prefect was indispensable to the security of the eastern marches, and by this point, he had gained enough local influence to foment rebellion against the king. Louis knew that this influence and power could sway the balance of the Moravian conflict significantly, and as such, he needed to make sure his son was on his side. Carloman had immediately returned to treachery in cooperation with Rastislav after 862, which led Louis to make the proclamation that Carloman would never again hold a position of power while Louis ruled.³⁹² This decree was likely made deliberately to cause Carloman to stay loyal to hold onto his authority, or was simply made rashly while Louis was enraged by the situation. At any rate, Louis did not intend to stick to it. In 863, Louis feigned an attack on Moravia and instead moved against Carloman, whom he forced to submit and to swear oaths of loyalty in the future. Louis kept watch over Carloman in rather loose confinement at his court.³⁹³

Louis's reason for moving against Carloman before Rastislav related not only to the desire to keep all of his nuclear family on one side. It was also a direct reflection of his central grand strategic aim, which was to safeguard the borders of his own realm above all else. Opportunistic expansionism appealed to him, to be sure, but first and foremost he intended to protect the territory that he had won at such high cost at Fontenoy. Louis could not have Carloman attempt to proclaim Carantania an independent kingdom. Although the revolt never quite made it that far—what Carloman really wanted was probably the same sub-king status that his father had received from his grandfather,

³⁹² *AF* 863.

³⁹³ *AF* 863, *AB* 863.

rather than an independent polity—the splintering of his realm while he still reigned was anathema to Louis. This prospect was made especially distasteful by its use of Rastislav as an ally to further that goal. Importantly, Louis also wanted to use Carloman’s military acumen in the ultimate showdown against Moravia; indeed, it was the main reason he had given his son the eastern prefect appointment in the first place. The ability to place his son at the head of one army while he himself invaded from another route was invaluable in executing the pincer movement, and Carloman’s royal *gravitas*, strong leadership, and good training—which Louis could count on, having largely imparted that knowledge to Carloman himself—would prevent disaster from breaking out among lower ranking leaders, as had happened in 849.³⁹⁴

First, however, Louis had to ensure that Carloman was indeed fully loyal to him. During his captivity, Carloman played an active role in his father’s court circle, cosigning a royal charter that confirmed the holdings of Niederaltaich on December 18th 863. It was an important gesture toward his future authority. Carloman made only one feeble attempt at restoring his rebellion.³⁹⁵ Kept in generally free captivity, he escaped while out on a hunting expedition and headed back toward Carinthia, where he briefly reoccupied the eastern march of which he had been deprived. There, he found insufficient support for a really strong attempt at renewing the rebellion, and Louis cowed him without battle, forcing him again to come back to him, this time promising to restore him to his former position in exchange for his loyalty.³⁹⁶ Having witnessed firsthand the danger and

³⁹⁴ *AF* 849

³⁹⁵ So feeble, indeed, that *AF* makes no mention of it, and events on the eastern frontier were usually of paramount importance in those annals. I do not believe that this was but a sputtering of the rebellion and one final ploy by Carloman to get his father to restore him, which indeed he did.

³⁹⁶ *AB* 864.

uncertainty of allying himself with the treacherous Rastislav, and having been outwitted militarily by his wily father, Carloman finally decided on loyalty to the Franks against Rastislav. In return, as promised, he regained the eastern marches; from this point forward, he would play a definitive role in his father's plans for and execution of the conflict against Moravia.

Westward Expansionism: the Death of Lothar II

A tripartite campaign in 869 against the Sorbs and Moravians had been a massive success;³⁹⁷ Louis, however, was in no position to celebrate fittingly, as he was lying ill at Regensburg, in what his doctors thought would be his death bed. He was not the only ill Carolingian; during a journey back from Rome after a visit with the pope concerning the case of his divorce,³⁹⁸ Lothar II and his magnates that had accompanied him were struck with fever, and many of them, including the king himself, died from it. Hearing of the death of their nephew, Louis and Charles opportunistically arranged to meet and divide the middle kingdom between them. Knowing well that his brother lay sick at Regensburg and unable to lead the army, however, Charles the Bald leapt at the opportunity to invade Lothar's erstwhile kingdom. There he went to Metz, where he had himself crowned emperor by Bishop Adventius. He moved throughout Lothar's realm as far to the east as Alsace, winning over the nobility with promises to retain or increase their holdings, and those who opposed his coronation, Charles stripped of their benefices. These dispossessed men came to Frankfurt in the hopes that Louis the German would be able to

³⁹⁷ Details of the campaigns can be found below, ch. 3.

³⁹⁸ On Lothar's scandalous divorce of Queen Theutberga and elevation of the noble concubine Waldrada, as well as the political ramifications thereof, including Louis and Charles's attempts to intervene, see Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 292-295; Stuart Airlie "Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II." *Past and Present* 161 (1998), 3-38. And cf. *AB* 863 and Regino, *Chronicon* 864, 866.

recover and do something about Charles. Charles headed to Aachen to celebrate Christmas as his grandfather Charlemagne often did.³⁹⁹

When he did, indeed, recover against his doctors' speculations, however, Louis set out for Frankfurt in the middle of winter, where he arrived on February 2, 870. Lothar's erstwhile magnates welcomed him there, and Louis promised to restore the benefices that Charles had taken from them in exchange for their support against Charles. Louis also sent word to his younger half-brother that if he did not remove himself immediately from Aachen, the capital seat of Charlemagne's imperial power, Louis would make total war on him with the full might of his eastern kingdom. The memory of Fontenoy was enough for Charles. He did as Louis demanded and withdrew to Compiègne. An exchange of envoys brought the kings to the conclusion that they would meet at the beginning of August in the neutral ground that was Lothar's kingdom, halfway between Meerssen and Herstal. As a show of good faith the kings would leave the bulk of their military households behind at those respective cities while they met halfway with a bare-bones council of forty-four men each.⁴⁰⁰

Louis nearly did not make it to Meerssen. At Flammersheim he and a group of men were talking upon a second floor balcony when the rotted beams supporting the floor gave way, sending the king and several others tumbling below. Louis broke two ribs in the fall, and several people feared that he had been killed.⁴⁰¹ The king steadfastly stood up from the wreckage, however, insisting that he was fine and in good enough condition to proceed to the important meeting with Charles the next day, despite the fact that he

³⁹⁹ *AF* 869, *AB* 869. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 294-295; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 218-224.

⁴⁰⁰ *AB* 870.

⁴⁰¹ *AF* 870, *AB* 870.

probably had sustained multiple rib fractures.⁴⁰² After the meeting, at which the brothers divided the middle kingdom roughly north to south, almost exactly in the same manner they planned in 842, Louis had infected flesh cut away by the doctors, an operation that nearly killed him for the second time in six months. For now though, Louis gritted his teeth and met with his brother as planned. Notably, Louis received Alsace, where he had been courting support all along, even while Lothar was yet alive, and many other territories of which the most notable were probably Prüm, Metz, Cologne, Strasbourg, and especially Aachen.⁴⁰³

These new holdings would significantly bolster the king's ability to raise armies in the future and to supply them as well, not to mention carving out new territories to bestow eventually upon his sons. Now, he returned to Aachen to have his surgery, after which he was convinced that his death was nigh. He gave the church at Aachen to the monks of Prüm, intending them to oversee his burial in the crypt there.⁴⁰⁴ Also from Aachen, he gave land to the monastery of Corvey, as well as recording the productivity of that land, indicating that even while recovering from his near-fatal injury, he was deeply concerned with the productivity and military capabilities of his realm.⁴⁰⁵ Again though, the king recovered from the cusp of death.

The political victory in the west came paired with one in the east. Rastislav's nephew Svatopluk, perhaps seeking independence from his uncle, or perhaps seeking to

⁴⁰² Regino, *Chronicon* 870, who reports in grisly fashion that those present could hear his broken bones grinding together when he moved.

⁴⁰³ *AF* 870, *AB* 870.

⁴⁰⁴ ULD 133. He also confirmed the immunity and royal protection that Prüm had enjoyed under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, ULD 134.

⁴⁰⁵ ULD 132.

ally himself with the Carolingians after the very successful campaign of the preceding summer, placed himself under Carloman's overlordship. Rastislav's anger at this treachery led him to devise a plot to have his nephew assassinated at a banquet. Svatopluk, however, received intelligence of the plan ahead of time and set out with some of his men, purportedly on a hawking expedition, but in reality he set a trap for his uncle. Rastislav and the assassins pursued Svatopluk, but the wily nephew surrounded his uncle's party with soldiers, captured him, and tied him up to be delivered to Carloman in Bavaria. After a career of nearly a quarter century harassing and rebelling against Carolingian authority, Rastislav was finished. Carloman shipped Rastislav off to Regensburg under heavy guard, where he was imprisoned to await justice from Louis the German. Carloman himself gathered the expeditionary force and marched straight away to Moravia, where, without Rastislav's leadership and with Svatopluk's allegiance to the Carolingians, the various fortresses and cities all surrendered to him with little resistance.⁴⁰⁶

Much in the same way that Rastislav himself had first been appointed in place of Moimir, Carloman removed all the local leadership and replaced them with Carolingian clients to administer the region. He also brought home the Moravian royal treasury with him, which must have included not only vessels and jewels and the like, but a great deal of weaponry with which to equip his own men.⁴⁰⁷ In November, Louis made the journey to Regensburg, where he received annual tribute from various Slavic peoples.⁴⁰⁸ There, the royal council condemned Rastislav to death for his years of rebellion and pillaging

⁴⁰⁶ *AF* 870, *AB* 870, *AX* 871 (sic, 870).

⁴⁰⁷ *AF* 870, *AX* 871 (sic, 870).

⁴⁰⁸ *AB* 870.

against the Carolingian realm. Louis, however, fulfilled the trope of merciful kingship and commuted his old adversary's sentence to blinding.⁴⁰⁹

Carloman's victory over Rastislav earned him a great deal of favor with his father. He had fulfilled the highest possible objective that Louis could have hoped for when appointing his eldest son prefect of the eastern marches: the defeat of perhaps Louis's greatest and most successful enemy. His father's pride in Carloman's triumph, however, brought him the enmity and jealousy of his brothers Louis and Charles. They feared that Louis the German was about to revise the proposed division of the kingdom that he had promulgated in 865-866, and that the new revised succession plan would give Carloman more land at their expense. They gathered a good sized army and occupied Speyer, where they plotted a more substantial rebellion. Louis acted quickly, arriving in Frankfurt on the first of February, where he sent word to his sons to come to him. They declined, but they agreed to meet later on in May at Tribur. Louis came, but his sons declined to attend in protest against the fact that Louis the German had blinded an unnamed Saxon vassal of Henry, a general of Louis the Younger and the man who had been sent to court the support of Rastislav for Louis the Younger's rebellion against his father in 866.⁴¹⁰ Louis promised and ultimately granted them increased benefices to quash the revolt.⁴¹¹

The Plot for Italian Succession

In 872, Louis the German planned to put four separate expeditionary forces into the field for another invasion of Moravia to settle the situation with Svatopulk, who had

⁴⁰⁹ *AF* 870.

⁴¹⁰ *AF* 866.

⁴¹¹ *AF* 871.

predictably betrayed Carloman and slaughtered a Bavarian force that had escorted him back to Moravia.⁴¹² Louis, however, absented himself from leadership of the armies of the 872 campaign for two reasons. First, he was getting rather old by this point, and many years of campaigning had taken its toll on his body. Second, he had somewhere else to be. In May, he traveled to Trent in northern Italy to meet with Louis II's queen, the Empress Engelberga. He conceded—through Engelberga—to Louis II some of the Lotharingian lands that he had received from Lothar II's death, and in return, Engelberga made Louis the German's son Carloman heir to Louis II's imperial title.⁴¹³

This rather shocking bit of diplomatic maneuvering fits within Louis the German's grand strategic pattern of opportunism and craft with regard to the western kingdom. He steadfastly avoided direct invasion and open battle against fellow Franks, but the opportunity to get a foothold in the west through diplomatic and bloodless means was very appealing. Naturally, Louis the Younger and his brother Charles were upset at this clandestine alteration to the inheritance plan. The Lotharingian lands initially had been earmarked for them, and if Carloman gained the imperial title, Louis the Younger and Charles would be sub kings under their elder brother—a situation which paralleled Louis the German's own distaste for the provisions of *ordinatio imperii*. Louis the German needed to ensure that this deal that he had secretly brokered would continue to have legitimacy, especially after his death, which meant that he needed to get the magnates behind it, in order that the transition would go smoothly. He scheduled an

⁴¹² See below, ch. 3, for details of the campaign. Carloman had sent Svatopluk home with a Carolingian army, ostensibly to retake power from Sclagamar, who had been appointed to lead the Moravians while Svatopluk was on trial in East Francia.

⁴¹³ *AB* 872. This certainly bent the “rules” of Carolingian inheritance practice, but it is indeed a strong argument in favor of Louis's favoritism for Carloman. See Goldberg *Struggle for Empire* 313-314.

assembly at Frankfurt for late January, ordering that his sons and the leading men of the kingdom should be in attendance. Louis and Charles had apparently had enough of their father's perceived favoritism, and they secretly began plotting with their supporters to imprison him at the Frankfurt assembly.⁴¹⁴

It is difficult to ascertain how far the plot to depose Louis had progressed, since the two younger princes never had a chance to put it into action. At the assembly, Charles began acting strangely, proclaiming that he wished to give up secular life, his kingdom, his sword (symbolic of the first two), and his wife in order to enter a monastery. He drew his sword and threw it to the ground, then began stripping off his swordbelt, but he was struck with a fit while fumbling with the clasp, and he fell to the ground thrashing and shaking.⁴¹⁵ With his brother incapacitated, Louis the Younger fell at his father's feet, divulging the plot and begging his forgiveness. Louis the German pardoned him, chastising his namesake to beware of the devil and pray to God for forgiveness.⁴¹⁶ Charles, when he was able, also confessed his guilt in the matter, and his claim that he

⁴¹⁴ *AF 873, AB 873, AX 873*. Their sentiment, which was attributed to Satanic possession, was that Louis the German was planning their ruin in order to benefit Carloman. *AB 873*. While this rather overstates the case, since they would both still receive an ample, though lesser, share in the kingdom, Louis's secretive actions in trying to obtain the imperial title for Carloman understandably seemed underhanded to his younger sons. Of course, this idea would not have been at all foreign to Louis the German, since he could remember feeling rather similarly towards his own father regarding the division proposed in the *ordinatio imperii*.

⁴¹⁵ Whether this was a seizure, epileptic or otherwise, or whether the weight of guilt and sleeplessness at plotting wickedly against his father is up for debate, which can be found in Hans Oesterle, "Die Sogennante Kopfoperation Karls III, 887," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 61.2 (1979), 445-451, with the literature cited therein. Contemporary observers, however, believed it to be demonic possession, and the prince was led into the church, where Archbishop Liutbert began to celebrate mass by way of exorcism. Charles shouted "Woe, woe!" for nearly the entirety of the service, and afterwards, he was given over to the bishops to be brought into the presence of numerous martyr's relics, that their holiness and the bishops' prayers might drive out the demon. *AB 873*.

⁴¹⁶ *AF 873, AX 873*.

had felt the devil's power whenever he plotted against the king gives a hint into the level of anguish that the plots had caused for him.⁴¹⁷

Thus, the deposition plot fizzled without any real disaster for Louis the German, though the potential had certainly been there. Louis the Younger and Charles could not have plotted to undertake such a dangerous course of action without the support of at least some magnates; without it, they would have been unable to actually wrest the kingdom from their father's hands, since they would not have been able to raise the troops to do so. The fact that such a plan had even been able to take root showed Louis the German the necessity of solving the succession problem and taking more seriously his sons' aspirations to some royal power, even during the waning years of his lifetime. With the assembly already underway, he was in a perfect spot to shore up support in areas whose loyalty might lie in question, which he attempted to do straightaway on February 1. He confirmed the immunity and royal protection of the powerful Alemmanian monastery of St.-Gall, which, if Charles recovered and quit his plan of becoming a monk, he would rule as a part of his kingdom.⁴¹⁸ This was an important move politically. At this point, Louis could not be sure of Charles's future, and he needed a way to assert control in Alemmania during his own lifetime and under whichever of his sons might inherit the region. Obtaining the favor of St.-Gall was a strong way to start ensuring a firm foothold in the region.

Charles did recover. Louis the German made certain that Charles and the Alemannian counts knew where they stood relative to St.-Gall with a further charter of

⁴¹⁷ AF 873; *...se totiens adversae potestati traditum, quotiens contra regem conspirationem inisset.*

⁴¹⁸ ULD I.144.

April 9, 873. Therein, the king warned his son and the counts to respect and honor the immunity and judicial rights of St.-Gall and not to interfere. He then charged Charles to make sure that any man who violated this decree should be sent immediately into the king's presence to face charges for his disobedience and account for the wrongdoing.⁴¹⁹ It was clever delegation designed to make Charles respect the decree by giving him the authority to enforce it and to ensure that it was respected by the counts of the region as well—with, of course, the full might of Louis's own royal authority behind his son. As for Louis the Younger, Louis the German confirmed that son's royal authority by allowing him to cosign a charter (March 9) with him, in which the younger Louis was also called "Lord King Louis."⁴²⁰

Still seemingly unsatisfied, Louis the Younger met secretly with a several of his father's magnates at Seligenstadt. Louis the German hurried to Frankfurt, where he held counsel and managed to maintain peace despite his namesake's machinations. Thence, he crossed the Brenner into Italy after Easter, to meet with Pope John VIII (r. 872-882) concerning the succession situation in Italy that he had been brokering for several years. Afterwards, he made haste back to Forcheim, where he met his sons Carloman and Louis, confirming their future kingdoms and holdings while sending Charles to request a meeting with Charles the Bald that summer, also concerning the Italian succession.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁹ ULD I.146.

⁴²⁰ ULD I.145. Louis the Younger is differentiated from his father by the lack of the designation *serenissimi* (most serene) which Louis the German usually took for himself.

⁴²¹ Owing to a serious bout of dysentery, Charles the Bald was unable to attend the meeting on the Moselle that summer. Louis sat and waited at Aachen, symbolically occupying his grandfather's capital all summer while planning what to do should Charles die of his illness, which was extremely likely, as Charles was an old man, and dysentery could kill even a healthy youth. Charles recovered, however, and the two kings met at Liège in December. There is no mention of any sort of agreement resulting from the meeting, but at the very least there was no serious discord either. The problem remained, however, that if Charles sought to interfere with Carloman's very tenuous claim to the Italian succession, it would create a great deal of

Ambassadors also came to Forcheim from Svatopluk, who reinforced his pleas for peace from the preceding year with a similar request, swearing to remain loyal and render the annual tribute so long as he was allowed to rule without having to struggle against Carolingian raiding parties year after year. This time Svatopluk's envoys were led by a certain Venetian priest named John, who was likely to have been charged with this mission by Pope John VIII himself, since the Roman popes had been angling for the Moravian alliance at the expense of the Byzantine church since before the 862 mission of Constantine (d. 869) and Methodius (d. 885).⁴²² This change in policy from Moravia was a welcome shift from the time of Rastislav, whose persistent rebellions necessitated numerous campaigns. It is noteworthy that even after all of Rastislav's defiance, the king was still happy to maintain this sort of relationship with the Moravians rather than attempt conquest. Svatopluk too was content to let his western frontier with the Carolingians alone for the time being in order that he might expand his kingdom in other directions.⁴²³

In the meanwhile, however, Louis the German planned for a complicated invasion of Italy should Louis II of Italy die, in order to defend Carloman's claim to the imperial title. It would require the cooperation of Louis the German's sons Carloman, Louis the Younger, and Charles the Fat, since the East Frankish king would rely upon them to lead the separate branches of the expeditionary forces from their respective portions of the

trouble for a peaceful execution of that plan. The need to account for this beforehand became immediately clear the very next year, when Charles would reveal his secret plot, which he had not divulged to his brother at the Liège meeting. *AF* 874, and cf. *AB* 874, which places the meeting alternatively at Herstal on the Meuse.

⁴²² *AF* 874. On Pope John VIII and the Moravian church see Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 318-319, 323-326.

⁴²³ *AF* 874.

kingdom. This was one of the chief difficulties with the plan, one which fractured sentiment and support across the realm. Louis the Younger and Charles the Fat saw no real benefit to themselves and their realms in increasing the kingdom of Carloman. Rather, elevating him to the imperial title and winning him the kingdom of Italy would only decrease their power, relative to their older brother. As emperor, he would be their superior, and with the increased wealth, manpower, and presumably papal support that the Italian throne would bring, he would have increased economic, military, and political resources upon which to draw should conflict break out between them after Louis the German's inevitable death. This, of course, seemed rather likely, since they already had been fighting one another and their father over this issue for a decade.⁴²⁴

When Louis II died in 875, Charles the Bald immediately scorned Carloman's claim to the throne and invaded Italy to take it for himself. Louis the German and his namesake son quickly invaded Charles's kingdom and sent Carloman with a separate army to Italy to defend his claim, leading to a standoff between nephew and uncle.⁴²⁵ Charles, not wishing another battle of opposed Carolingian forces, bribed Carloman to return to his own territory. Carloman was happy to accept, given the tenuous situation of a military confrontation in his uncle's kingdom, which would likely cost him many men and compromise his military strength, even if he did win the battle. To accompany this

⁴²⁴ These tensions boiled over at the assembly which Louis held at Tribur in May of 875. Saxons, from the kingdom of Louis the Younger, and Franks, probably supporters of Carloman, though it is not explicitly stated, became embroiled in a savage argument, which escalated to the point that the two sides actually drew swords against one another. Louis the Younger, however, authoritatively stepped between the two parties with his armed military household, quelling the disquietude temporarily. Still, the problem was not solved, and the presence of this prolonged conflict rather torpedoed the assembly, since Louis the German was unwilling to harbor these two factions in this sort of state of mind. Giving them time to cool off and perhaps come to agreements, he dismissed the assembly and scheduled a second meeting for August in the same place. *AF 875, AB 875.*

⁴²⁵ For details of the campaign see below, ch. 3.

bribe, Charles swore that he would allow Louis the German to mediate the judgment upon the imperial inheritance. Carloman, himself eager to avoid armed conflict, accepted. Enriched by the bribe, he bided his time for later potential conflicts with his own brothers.⁴²⁶

Charles, however, had no intention of keeping the latter promise. As soon as Carloman left Italy, Charles set off for Rome, where he continued his policy of bribery, giving massive gifts to the pope in exchange for an invaluable treasure of his own: the imperial coronation. Charles's support among the Italian magnates,⁴²⁷ combined with the recent illustration of military power shown in his invasion, and last but certainly not least, his gift to Rome, caused Pope John VIII to throw his lot in with Charles, forgoing the beginnings of tenuous alliance that he had forged with Louis in early 874.⁴²⁸ On Christmas day, 875, seventy five years to the day after Charlemagne's iconic Christmas 800 coronation ceremony, Pope John VIII crowned and anointed Charles the Bald as emperor and Augustus.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ *AF 875*. The amount of the bribe is uncertain, but it included *aurum et argentum et gemmasque preciosas infinitae multitudinis*.

⁴²⁷ Some Italians undoubtedly supported Louis over Charles, including Engelberga, who had brokered the deal for Carloman's succession in the first place. She sent missi to Louis at Ingleheim, asking him to confirm the properties given her by her late husband, which Louis did in the final surviving charter he would issue, ULD I.171. This indicated three things, first that she did not trust Charles not to disinherit her from these gifts; second, that she still recognized the oaths that she had exchanged with Louis; and third, that Louis still believed his power and claim in Italy to be legitimate, since he saw fit to legislate in that region even though Charles had been proclaimed emperor. In fact, in spite of the disastrous political situation in Italy, the last sixteen-odd months of Louis's life were particularly active with regard to issuing charters; the chancery penned fourteen from April 3, 875 to July 19, 876.

⁴²⁸ After all, this relationship had been rather troubled from the beginning concerning the East Frankish treatment of Methodius, who had been left to languish in prison for several years. *The Vita of Constantine; the Vita of Methodius*, ch. 9-10. Nelson believes that this bribe probably included the Cathedral of St. Peter, adorned with plaques depicting the labors of Hercules: see *Charles the Bald*, 235-243.

⁴²⁹ *AB 875-876, AF 876 imperatorem et augustum*, Andrew of Bergamo, *Historia*, 19.

Charles's success was a terrible blow for Louis late in life, but in no way would it alter the borders of the East Frankish kingdom or the succession plan that had been enacted for Louis's sons. Louis, for his part, refused to accept it entirely, and he carried on governing as if to defend his and Carloman's claims to Italy, even though the pope condemned him outright for doing so. In a scathing letter, Pope John VIII accused Louis of envying his brother and desiring to slaughter Christians with Christians, repeating the disaster at Fontenoy, where the ground was still damp with the blood he had spilled as a young king, and he threatened Louis and his bishops with excommunication if the king did not repent and respect his brother's new status and kingdom. This slightly hypocritical reckoning conveniently neglects the fact that Louis and Charles, whom the letter supports, were on the same side and equally guilty of spilling the blood of Lothar's men.⁴³⁰

King Louis received threats from his newly imperial younger half-brother that he would invade the eastern kingdom with a massive army drawn from Francia and Italy combined. Charles issued this challenge presumably because he was puffed up by the imperial title and hoped that the new economic means and troop base, combined with the powerful papal alliance, would be enough to get Louis to submit. Louis would not be cowed by insolent threats, however. Charles had never defeated him in any conflict, unless one counts driving his sons out of Italy without battle but with bribery. Louis collected a massive army of his own, preparing to challenge Charles for supremacy in

⁴³⁰ John VIII, *Epistolae passim collectae* 7-8, in MGH *Epistolae* 7, p 320-326. "...pacem regni diuturno fratris studio radicatum corrumpere gestiat et lactatus a peccatoribus suis dumtaxat complicitibus adquiscens pedes suos ad malum currere faciat, madentibus adhuc campis Fontanicis, quos in iuventute sua humano sanguine tinxerat, in senectute decrepita minarum et caedis spirans ad fundendum christianorum multorum sanguinem pro sua singulari ambitione discurrat," here p. 321.

Italy and for the imperial throne, which he still intended to bestow upon Carloman.

Charles's bluff had been called, and his actions revealed that he never really intended to make good upon the threats of invasion, instead sending legates to begin to arrange some kind of peace between himself and his brother. Talks were indeed initiated, but they were cut short when the aged and troubled Louis the German became terminally ill. He died on August 28, 876 at his palace at Frankfurt.

Conclusion

Entering into Italian conflicts while his brother still lived was probably foolish for Louis the German. The actions reek of desperation to achieve a title for his son that he had been unable to achieve for himself, not that he had given it much effort after the conflict at Fontenoy. In fact, therein lies the very root of the problem. Louis knew full well that to repeat the disastrous inter-Carolingian conflict in an attempt to wrest the title from Lothar's heirs and from Charles would have ruined all parties involved; to think that he could bring the same to bear via underhanded diplomacy and that Carloman could enforce it was erroneous. His best claim to the title would, of course, have been a papal sanction for Carloman's inheritance, and that was what Louis had been working towards. Still, it was not enough to overcome Charles's Italian support and outright bribery. Most importantly, the Italian sidebar was a strange diversion, which did not really suit the primary grand strategic aim of Louis's reign, which had been to protect the integrity of his eastern kingdom's border, in order that he might pass on an undiminished and intact kingdom to his sons.

The Italian campaign of sorts had flown in the face of the advice of his father and grandfather not to seek enlarged territory and be happy with the kingdom that he already possessed. It certainly did not end in disaster for Louis the German, as his lands remained intact and his armies capable regardless of the failure to obtain that particular campaign objective. Indeed, his sons continued to utilize the East Frankish armies effectively after their father's death, including and especially Louis the Younger's defeat of Charles the Bald, who tried to invade and absorb his nephew's realm upon the death of Louis the German. Importantly, Louis had settled affairs with Svatopluk, the most important trans-frontier enemy, before the initiation of the Italian schemes, which left him the window of opportunity to pursue western affairs. Though the king probably did not feel this way at all, the Italian campaign seems a strange and ineffectual footnote to an otherwise militarily successful reign, in which Louis the German consistently achieved his main objective of safeguarding the East Frankish kingdom's borders, protecting them from raiders and concerted invasions alike.

Over the course of his very long reign in Bavaria (c. 825-840) and East Francia (840-876), Louis the German orchestrated grand strategic policies that enabled him to best exploit the military resources at his disposal in various and often difficult circumstances. He consistently looked to Carolingian precedent for strategic examples to emulate, rather than making serious innovations in the military sphere. In the early reign, (c. 825-843), Louis's kingdom and resources were mostly restricted geographically to Bavaria. He used the loyalty of this core region to muster resistance to his father's authority and the power of his elder brother Lothar I, who was to inherit the imperial title according to *ordinatio imperii*. After 838, Louis attempted to retain the entire kingdom of

East Francia in the face of his father's disinheritance decree. As such, his strategies usually centered on catching opposing forces in compromised positions, particularly during river crossings. Once his father died in 840, Louis the German shifted his strategy towards mustering overwhelming force against his brothers during the civil war years of 840-43. After Fontenoy in 841, Louis attempted to adhere to a strategy of battle avoidance, hoping to avoid massive casualties in the future.

After the Treaty of Verdun formally ended the civil war in 843, East Francia experienced a twelve-year period of inter-Carolingian peace (843-855), in which Louis shifted his attention to the eastern frontier. His strategy of a defense in depth system of mutually reinforcing fortifications and the buffer zone of the eastern marches proved highly effective at defending the edges of East Francia against invasion and Slavic raids. Importantly, on the eastern frontier, Louis adhered to the advice of Charlemagne in the *divisio regnorum* of 806 that he should content himself with what he had inherited and not attempt further territorial conquest. He maintained the policy of subsuming the peoples across the frontier to the Carolingians through a system of tribute payments. Louis attempted to contain his most prominent eastern rivals in Moravia by appointing Rastislav as *dux* in 846, but he proved completely disloyal and led numerous Moravian revolts against Carolingian authority.

In the latter two decades of his reign (855-876), Louis continued to deal with Moravian rebellions and challenges to his authority. He appointed his son Carloman Prefect of the Eastern March to spearhead the struggle against Moravia, but Carloman would also rebel in cooperation with Rastislav. Louis pacified his eldest son in the early 860s, and thereafter, Carloman fulfilled his duties as prefect admirably. Louis continued

the combination system of marches and defense in depth, but he also launched successful campaigns in the late 860s that succeeded in capturing numerous fortifications and deposing Rastislav. Meanwhile, along the western edge of his kingdom, Louis returned to inter-Carolingian conflict. He attempted unsuccessfully to invade Charles's western kingdom in 858. Late in his reign, during the 870s, he attempted to secure the inheritance of Italy and the imperial title for his son Carloman, in which effort he was stymied by Charles the Bald.

Overall, the factor that unified all the phases of Louis's grand strategy was the steadfast defense of the borders of his kingdom. Louis's territory survived intact, and East Francia was, relative to the west and middle kingdoms, generally untroubled by serious raiding and invasion. Carolingian military organization and the kernel of the defense in depth system of fortifications that protected the eastern frontier survived to be emulated and markedly expanded upon by the Ottonian kings.⁴³¹

⁴³¹ D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 15-27.

CHAPTER THREE: CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

Much as he did in every facet of military planning and execution, Louis the German looked back to the early Carolingian example for his preferred campaign strategies for the entirety of his reign. Carolingian precedent, from Charles Martel through Louis the Pious had established several very effective and often-utilized campaign strategies. These entailed 1) fielding very large armies to overawe the enemy with overwhelming force and 2) putting several armies into the field at once, in order to execute pincer movements against the enemy and ease the burden of logistical supply by marching separately.⁴³² In this regard, however, Louis was forced to adapt his preferences to circumstances, particularly during the first fifteen years of his reign. As king of Bavaria, Louis the German alternately fell in and out of his father's favor as he struggled to protect his inheritance from his father's shifting whims, as Louis the Pious carved out a kingdom for Charles the Bald.⁴³³

With Louis the Pious's death in 840, Louis the German reclaimed the kingdom and inheritance of which his late father had divested him in 838.⁴³⁴ His eldest brother Lothar, now the new emperor, attempted to claim the whole realm for himself. Louis the German exhibited his intent to adhere to Carolingian strategic precedent in the military struggle against Lothar. All of the Carolingian brother kings fielded the large armies that they were able, and the result of the clash of these forces at Fontenoy in 841 was bloody and catastrophic. Louis would continue to field large armies, sometimes several at once,

⁴³² For the early Carolingians, see Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 202-242. For Charlemagne, idem, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 77-80 and *passim*, since the bulk of the work elucidates Charlemagne's campaign strategy early in his reign.

⁴³³ Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), 75-104; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 58-94.

⁴³⁴ *AF* 838 for Louis the Pious removing his son from control of all of East Francia, except for Bavaria.

in the wars against Moravia and the eventual struggle for supremacy among his Carolingian relatives that resulted from the death of Lothar I (855) and its intensification after the death of Lothar II (869). Louis was flexible in his strategic methodology in stamping out frontier rebellion. His strategies included large armies, slash and burn tactics as he ravaged the countryside in punitive raids, storming fortifications, and relying on general and select levies, as well as defense in depth, as circumstances required.

The Early Reign, 825-840

Much of the early part of Louis the German's reign concerned the military struggle against his father and eldest brother Lothar. He was constrained, at first, by the regional limitations of his kingdom; until Louis the Pious died in 840, Louis the German was nominally the king only of Bavaria, which was thus the only region from which he could marshal troops reliably, often complemented by a smattering of Saxons and Slavs.⁴³⁵ It was clear, however, that Louis intended to lay claim to the entirety of the kingdom east of the Rhine; he proved as much by repeatedly challenging his father's authority, up to that western border river, throughout the late 830s. Still, while his father lived, Louis was primarily restricted to raising expeditionary forces from Bavaria. This necessarily restricted the viable campaign strategies that Louis was able to employ, as he was frequently forced to challenge much larger forces with far fewer men, such as he did in 838-839, discussed below.

Louis the German learned typical Carolingian strategy under his father's tutelage. He seems to have gotten his first practical military command experience in the field in

⁴³⁵ As in *AB*, 832.

824, in a campaign led by Louis the Pious to put down a Breton rebellion. A substantial famine gripped the kingdom, due to bad harvests resulting from the unusually harsh weather of the previous winter (*hiemps aspera valdeque*).⁴³⁶ Probably as a result of such suffering, the Bretons rebelled. Because of the famine, Louis the Pious delayed dealing with the rebellion directly until the start of autumn, when the harvest was fully completed. Early in October, he raised a large army from all over the empire (*adunatis undique omnibus copiis*), with adequate provisions for what he rightly presumed would be an involved campaign.⁴³⁷

The emperor divided the army into three parts, which was useful in several notable ways. Firstly, it was easier to provision three smaller forces traveling on separate routes than one massive one. More forage for the animals could be obtained from a greater area by an army that was already spread out thinner into three, than would have been feasible for one massive and more unwieldy force. Secondly, the nature of this campaign would involve slash and burn tactics. The army ravaged the lands of the enemy, further compounding the already dire problems of hunger and starvation induced by the famine. This would be devastating for enemy morale and confidence in the ability of their leaders to provide for them adequately, thus conveying the futility of resistance to the Carolingian overlords. An army divided into three parts would be able to cover more territory and lay waste to more land than one large one. Thirdly, Louis the Pious, having divided the kingdom into separate territories to be ruled by each of his sons, had it in his best interest—and the interest of the dynasty as a whole—to ensure that each of his sons

⁴³⁶ *ARF* 824.

⁴³⁷ *ARF*, 824, which states that the army spent more than forty days on campaign and returned to Rouen on November 17, hence the beginning of October for the initiation of the campaign.

was a competent and experienced military commander. They had already learned a great deal as youths in the palace through hunting, horseback riding, reading, and training in arms, not to mention the tutelage of their father and his noble advisers constantly present at the palace,⁴³⁸ but this sort of “on the job” experience would be invaluable to their military education. The princes would learn to inspire confidence in their men, to be aware of and solve logistical problems of supply and transportation, and put readings about tactics, training, and strategy—such as might be gleaned from Vegetius—into practice in actual campaigns.⁴³⁹

The campaign took the armies into Brittany for some forty days in the autumn, where they ravaged the lands of the enemy with fire and sword, successfully causing the rebels to sue for peace and give hostages and tribute to the Carolingians.⁴⁴⁰ As Goldberg notes astutely, the effectiveness of this type of mission would prove an invaluable learning experience for Louis the German, since similar types of operations characterized much of his later warfare against the Slavs across his eastern frontier.⁴⁴¹ This formative campaign, fought under his father’s leadership while Louis was still technically a boy

⁴³⁸ Methodology for training of young noble youths is generally delineated by Raban’s abridgement of Vegetius’s Roman military manual: Raban, *De procinctu Romanae militiae*, *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, 15. Bd. (1872), pp. 443-451. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 32-46.

⁴³⁹ Alcuin specifically mentions logistical calculations as part of the training of Carolingian youths in his work *Propositiones ad acuendos juvenes*, in J.P. Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 101 (Paris, 1863), specifically col. 1163. Vegetius’s manual had been important reading for any military commanders since its composition in the late 4th or early 5th century, and copies definitely were available to Carolingian kings, evidenced by Raban’s abridgement, and it was certainly at Louis’s court; Bernhard Bischoff, “Bücher am Hofe Ludwigs des Deutschen und Die Privatbibliothek des Kanzlers Grimalt” in Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien* (Stuttgart, 1981), 3:187-222; Bachrach, “The Practical Use of Vegetius’ *De Re Militari* in the Early Middle Ages,” *The Historian* 47.2 (1985), 239-255; idem, *Charlemagne’s Early Campaigns*, 61-105. On the dating of Vegetius see N.P. Milner, *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, xxxvii-xli; Walter Goffart, “The Date and Purpose of Vegetius’ *De Re Militari*,” *Traditio* 33 (1977), 65-100.

⁴⁴⁰ *ARF*, 824-825.

⁴⁴¹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 43-44.

(*puer*) rather than a man,⁴⁴² and certainly before he ever took up his kingship in Bavaria in his own right, likely had profound implications for the rest of his reign. The slash and burn strategy, while not perhaps as satisfying to some as full-scale conquest, certainly had substantial merits. It was less costly and dangerous than establishing a siege and storming fortifications, and it brought the rebels effectively back under Carolingian rule. Lack of outright conquest beyond the eastern frontier became the norm rather than the exception during Louis the German's reign. Very rarely would Louis attempt to conquer territory outright, save for opportunistically annexing portions of the middle kingdom, Aquitaine, and Italy. Frontier warfare usually meant an attempt to restore a rebellious group to tributary status, providing income to the royal coffers,⁴⁴³ rather than an attempt to expand the already difficult border further into the eastern territories. Expansion would only exacerbate the difficulties of defending the frontiers from distant bases of power in Frankfurt and Regensburg.

The early portion of the Carolingian civil war often saw Louis the German struggle against total forces far larger than his own. This was worsened by the fact that in 838, Louis the Pious stripped Louis the German of all his kingdom save for Bavaria.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴² Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 26-27, convincingly argues for Louis's birth in 810, rather than Notker's idea that he was born around 806.

⁴⁴³ Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute," holds that this sort of income was profoundly important to the early Carolingians, in that it enabled them to distribute wealth to the nobility, keeping them eager to participate in offensive campaigns year after year in the hopes of winning booty. Defensive warfare would thus be less appealing, since it would not carry the promise of plunder. When offensive warfare ground to a halt after the reign of Charlemagne, the prospect of plunder was lessened. Tribute, however, was still very likely, as this episode illustrates, and it would continue to be so during the whole of Louis the German's reign, given the length of his frontier to the east. Charles the Bald, Lothar, and Pippin did not have similar circumstances to benefit them in more western parts of the kingdom. Indeed, Charles the Bald would find himself on the opposite end of tribute payments to buy off Viking invaders. See esp. Coupland, "The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and their Consequences," *Francia* 26.1 (1999), 59-75.

⁴⁴⁴ The decree resulted from an argument that broke out over Charles the Bald's inheritance, *AF* and *AB* 838; Nithard I.6 for Charles's kingdom; *Ordinatio Imperii* in *MGH Capitularia regum Francorum* I.136 for the initial inheritance plan before Charles.

Several times, Louis would challenge his father—who, as emperor, could draw upon the whole of the realm for his troops—with a much smaller army derived mostly from Bavaria. After his father’s death, Louis the German also was heavily outnumbered in 840 and 841 by his brother Lothar and his powerful supporter Adalbert of Metz.⁴⁴⁵ To deal with the large disparity in the magnitude of these forces relative to his own, Louis’s main strategy hinged upon stopping the larger force from crossing a river, which ideally, Louis had fortified beforehand.⁴⁴⁶

Louis the German initiated the first of the difficult campaigns against his father in 832. He gathered the largest possible army that he could, calling up the entire Bavarian select levy consisting of all free peoples and slaves (*liberis et servis*) alike, together with as many Slavs as he could rally to the cause. Louis planned to invade Alemannia, which the emperor had bequeathed to Charles in his 831 *divisio*.⁴⁴⁷ There, he would bolster his Bavarian army with Alemannian forces and use this new, combined force to proceed westward, conquering as much as possible of his father’s kingdom.⁴⁴⁸ The start of the campaign encouraged Louis. He led the army unopposed to a villa called Langbardheim outside Worms on the eastern bank of the Rhine, at which the army encamped. There, he received false intelligence (*vanis pollicitationibus*) that all the Saxons and the rest of the eastern Franks were coming to join him.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ Once Louis and Charles managed to join forces in the struggle against Lothar and Pippin, however, the armies were of a much more comparable magnitude.

⁴⁴⁶ River crossings and the difficulties involved in them are discussed in detail below, ch. 5.

⁴⁴⁷ *Regni Divisio*, in MGH *Capitularia* 2.194.

⁴⁴⁸ AB 832, “*de regno patris suis, quanto plurimum potuisset, invadere sibi que subicere.*”

⁴⁴⁹ AB 832; p. 425, n. 11 for the location of the Langbardheim. The false intelligence derived from Mathfrid, whom Louis the Pious had spared the death penalty (and even restored his lands) after the rebellion of 830; AB 830; Thegan, 55; Astronomer, 44; Nithard, I.2-4. Apparently Mathfrid was now eager to show his support for the emperor against other rebels.

In reality, the only force *en route* to Worms was his father's. Louis the Pious had received intelligence of his son's movements in sufficient time to assemble at Mainz a large force, comprised of eastern and western Franks as well as Saxons. This force crossed the Rhine and Main rivers, encamping at Tribur around 40km north of Louis the German's force. The younger Louis's scouts brought word of the emperor's crossing and the magnitude of his forces (*patrem suum cum tanta fidelium copia Rhenum transisse cognovit*), and he retreated to Bavaria, whence he obeyed his father's summons to appear before him to swear an oath of future loyalty.⁴⁵⁰

The confrontation that would earn the moniker "the Field of Lies" in 833 featured very large armies amassed by all of the Carolingians involved.⁴⁵¹ Lothar, Pippin, and Louis each mustered a large force (*ingentem exercitum*) from Italy, Aquitaine, and Bavaria, respectively, and mustered at Rotfeld in Alsace (near the modern Colmar).⁴⁵² The emperor marched another large force against them. The rebel sons' massive force exhibited strong cohesion, however, and Louis the Pious's remaining men began to desert him on the field in the face of far superior numbers.⁴⁵³ The emperor dismissed the

⁴⁵⁰ AB 832, "he learned that his father had crossed the Rhine with such a multitude of his faithful men."

⁴⁵¹ The "Field of Lies" nomenclature owed to contemporary parlance. Thegan 42 ("Campus-Mendacii") and Astronomer 48 ("Campus Mentitus") both use the terminology. One manuscript of AB also contains a marginal gloss which elucidates the same, for which see Nelson, *Annals of St.-Bertin* 26 n.1.

⁴⁵² Lothar had brought Pope Gregory IV with him to try and lend legitimacy to the rebellion, see esp. Nithard I.4; cf. Astronomer 48; Thegan 42; see also Johannes Fried, "Ludwig Der Fromme, das Papsttum, und die fränkische Kirche," in Godman and Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814-840)* (Oxford, 1990), 231-273.

⁴⁵³ The cohesion among the forces of the emperor's sons is highly important, owing to the geographically disparate nature of the soldiers. When forces derived from various territories lacked strong leadership, they tended to lack organization as well, such as the disastrous frontier campaigns of 849 (AF, AB, and AX 849) and 872 (AF). Presumably, the presence of three Carolingian rulers who were themselves united in the purpose of deposing the emperor was a powerful leadership presence, which could enforce strong discipline. Whether Louis the Pious's remaining army deserted because the cause looked hopeless or because Louis the Pious dismissed them to avoid shedding Christian blood is a matter for debate; see the accounts in AB 833, Thegan 42, and Astronomer 48, which suggest a combination of these circumstances was at play.

remainder and allowed Lothar to take him prisoner without battle. The sons accomplished their “victory” at the Field of Lies through a combination of treachery, diplomatic maneuvering, and fielding overwhelming force against their father’s army. The early Carolingians had established this type of victory as far preferable to costly and destructive battles on a large scale, and such tactics continued, in general, straight through the ninth century.⁴⁵⁴

Louis the German soon shifted allegiance, however. He found that Lothar’s treatment of their father as a prisoner of war was overly harsh, and Lothar himself soon showed that he still planned to rule as emperor and relegate his younger brothers to sub-kings.⁴⁵⁵ Louis plotted with Pippin to try to reverse what had been done at the Field of Lies, by attempting to reestablish Louis the Pious upon the throne. With the emperor captive at Aachen, Louis managed to muster a massive army from nearly all corners of the Frankish realm—explicitly including Bavaria, Alemannia, Saxony, Austrasia, and the Franks northeast of the Ardennes forest⁴⁵⁶—and Pippin again summoned the Aquitanian forces at his disposal, supplemented by Neustrian soldiers from between the Seine and Loire.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 243-246, and 51-83 for the military organization which enabled such strategies, and see also idem, *Charlemagne’s Early Campaigns*, 77-80 for the consistent continuity of the “doctrine of overwhelming force” under Charlemagne.

⁴⁵⁵ Lothar also experienced discontent among the major magnates Hugo, Lambert, and Mathfrid, who struggled with one another for supremacy as *secundus post Lodharium*. Nithard I.4.

⁴⁵⁶ AB 834. As Nelson notes in her translation of *The Annals of St.-Bertin* p. 28 n.2, the perspective is from Aachen, hence “*Francos qui citra Carbonariam consistebant*,” means northeast of the Ardennes.

⁴⁵⁷ It is worth noting here that Pippin’s influence was severely limited geographically, while the younger Louis the German was the commander who managed to appeal to the empire at large to come to the defense of the emperor. This could attest to his growing reputation as a commander, and at any rate, Louis clearly had command of the expedition as AB 834 and especially AX 834 show; cf. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 71-75.

Both forces began a coordinated pincer march on Aachen, but Lothar received intelligence of their approach and fled for Paris. Louis and Pippin pursued him. Pippin got to Paris first and encamped his army along the Seine, since he could not yet cross the river owing to extreme flooding which had wrecked bridges and boats alike.⁴⁵⁸ Louis's march from East Francia took longer, but he traveled as quickly as possible, leading his army around 600km from Frankfurt, through Aachen and Soissons, to Paris in slightly over three weeks.⁴⁵⁹ Lothar received intelligence of the imminent approach of Louis's army, and he decided that the combined forces of his two brothers was more than he was able to handle. He freed his father and fled Paris for Provence with most of his men. The flight spared Louis and Pippin the difficult task of crossing the swollen Seine under duress from Lothar's forces, and Louis the Pious was reinstated as emperor.⁴⁶⁰

Late in 838, Louis the German fell precipitously from his father's favor, with the result that the emperor removed his son from control of all of his eastern territories save for Bavaria. Louis took steps to contest his father's disinheritance decree, bringing a small force, possibly comprised of only his own military household and those of his core Bavarian supporters, to the large palace city of Frankfurt, which he fortified further upon arriving with small fortresses (*castella*) on the eastern bank of the Rhine.⁴⁶¹ It was upon this river crossing that Louis attempted to make his stand against his father, who was encamped at Mainz, 40km to the southwest. Louis hoped that by garrisoning the right bank of the river and showing determined resistance by forcing his father's much larger

⁴⁵⁸ Astronomer, 51; AB 834.

⁴⁵⁹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 73; AX 834; ULD 15.

⁴⁶⁰ AB 834.

⁴⁶¹ AF 838, *cum suis*, without mention of an army—*exercitus*—which Louis the Pious brought to counter his son's move. AB 838-839 for the fortifications and entrenchments along the Rhine at Frankfurt. Louis built fortifications and entrenchments to supplement the Roman fortification there, AB 839 and n. 19.

army to cross under unfavorable circumstances, he could buy some time to win over the nobility in the lands he was purportedly losing, forcing or persuading his father to reconsider the rather harsh political blow he had struck.⁴⁶²

Louis the Pious was not to be outmaneuvered, however, nor was he an inexperienced general who would be frustrated by his son's tactics. In early 839, the emperor forced a river crossing downstream from Frankfurt with three thousand picked troops, and he received Saxon reinforcements who had been summoned—though it seems rather unwillingly⁴⁶³—to help deal with his rebellious son.⁴⁶⁴ Louis the German was now nearly surrounded at Frankfurt, and he simply did not have enough men to defend the place properly. With a camp established on both sides of the river, Louis the Pious would be able to cross his troops over at leisure and in relative safety, which Louis the German could not hope to prevent, since giving open battle with such a small force could be ruinous. Indeed, it seems likely that he never actually sought a *bona fide* clash of arms, but rather intended to make a show of force and hope that his father would reconsider. With such a solution not forthcoming and considerably outnumbered, Louis's problems were compounded when the contingents he had managed to win over locally began to desert and beg the emperor's mercy in the face of his vastly overwhelming force. Louis

⁴⁶² Roughly two weeks before Christmas, Pippin died unexpectedly, and a further thorn arose concerning succession *AB* 838, *AF* 838, Nithard I.8, Astronomer 59, which features a comet as an omen of Pippin's death.

⁴⁶³ *AF* 839 shows that the Saxons had come "*partim minis, partim suasionibus Adalberhti comitis*" ("partly from threats, partly from the urgings of count Adalbert"). It is understandable that the Saxon magnates might not want to involve themselves in the struggle between these rival kings, since, in spite of Louis the Pious's recent disinheritance decree, it was pretty clear that Saxony would ultimately fall within the purview of Louis the German upon the emperor's death.

⁴⁶⁴ *AF* 839, *AB* 839. Note that the figure of three thousand picked men speaks well to the size of Louis the Pious's expeditionary force. The tactic depended upon leaving the bulk of his army encamped outside Frankfurt, so that the detachment that marched downstream to cross the river would not be detected by Louis the German's besieged men.

the German had no choice but to abandon Frankfurt and retreat deep into Bavaria to spend the winter.⁴⁶⁵

Owing to the lack of any real confrontation, let alone decisive defeat, Louis attempted to reclaim the entirety of the eastern kingdom once more in the next year. In the early Spring, he raised a substantial force from Bavaria, Thuringia, and Saxony, which allowed him to march all the way to Frankfurt once more, before the emperor received intelligence of the rebellion.⁴⁶⁶ This time, Louis the Pious acted very quickly to quash the uprising. He sent Count Adalbert of Metz to guard the western bank of the Rhine and prevent his son from crossing while the emperor mustered an army at Aachen during the Easter holiday celebration, which was March 28. The approach of the emperor's overwhelming forces again caused Louis the German to beat a hasty retreat. This time, his father's force drove Louis straight through Thuringia and across the march into Slavic territory, where he had to bribe the Slavs to help provide him safe passage back to Bavaria without conflict. The bribes reflected the extremely compromised nature of Louis's campaign; with his father's larger force in hot pursuit, Louis could not afford any sort of delay to force a passage or to be harried by Slavic forces while he attempted to get back to Regensburg and regroup. Louis the Pious called off the pursuit by May, heading back to Salz, where he announced that he would hold an assembly at Worms on July 1 to discuss what ought to be done about Louis's consecutive rebellions.⁴⁶⁷ This never came to pass. Louis the Pious fell seriously ill and died on July 29, 840.

⁴⁶⁵ *AB* 839, *AF* 839.

⁴⁶⁶ Nithard I.8.

⁴⁶⁷ *AB* 840, *AF* 840, Nithard I.8.

A Freer Hand: the Death of Louis the Pious

After Louis the Pious's death in 840, Louis the German immediately reclaimed all of East Francia, which broadened his strategic range substantially. Now able to raise much larger armies, he shifted his focus towards more classical Carolingian campaign strategies, such as attempting to subdue enemies without battle by marshaling overwhelming force and setting several armies into the field at once. This alteration in strategy set the stage for the disastrous clash at Fontenoy, which resulted in a victory for the armies of Louis and Charles, but at great cost of life. Along the eastern frontier, the various enemies that Louis faced necessitated the use of flexible strategic planning and execution. Most raids and rebellions could be crushed without using the full bulk of the king's expeditionary forces, relying instead upon the local levies (often led by march commanders: counts, dukes, or the king's sons), defense in depth, and in more extreme cases, direct intervention by the king at the head of a rather large army.

In 840 and 841, Louis again mustered armed resistance against an emperor—this time his brother Lothar—by garrisoning the Rhine near the major cities of Mainz and Worms. Louis's first encounter with his eldest brother occurred outside Mainz, where Lothar hoped to win an easy ideological victory with the imperial title and a military one with the huge size of his army. Louis and his force showed no signs of backing down, however, having garrisoned the fortifications beforehand. Lothar was unwilling to fight an actual battle against Louis, given that he also had Charles to deal with in the west. The brothers agreed to defer the issue, and Lothar marched west against Charles. Louis

wasted no time in further garrisoning the Worms and Mainz, knowing well that Lothar would return.⁴⁶⁸

In this appraisal, Louis was proven correct very quickly. Intelligence of Louis's garrison preparation reached Lothar in early spring of 841, and by April, he and his *infinitam multitudinem* of an army were back at Worms. Louis's garrisons were temporarily very successful, even though Lothar's army was massive; Louis's defenses prevented Lothar from attempting to cross the river. Eventually, however, the defense of the fortifications on the banks of the Rhine was compromised by some form of treachery from within Louis's army that enabled Lothar to cross in safety and secret.⁴⁶⁹ Many men, including those who had nearly betrayed Louis into Lothar's hands, deserted at this point, reducing the size of Louis's forces. Back in Bavaria, however, he could rally his men and presumably summon reinforcements if necessary.⁴⁷⁰

Having driven off Louis's army temporarily, Lothar left *dux* Adalbert, Count of Metz, to guard the Bavarian/Alemannian border. This guard was probably stationed initially along the Danube route into Alemannia from Bavaria, perhaps near the confluence with the Lech, a southern tributary of the Danube, about 50km north of Augsburg. Lothar, himself, divided the army and marched west to deal with Charles the Bald, who, in turn, sent emissaries to Louis begging for any help that he might be able to offer. Louis knew that if Lothar was able to force Charles to surrender, the emperor

⁴⁶⁸ *AF* 841; *AB* 841; Nithard II.7.

⁴⁶⁹ *AF* and *AB* 841; Nithard II.7 also notes Lothar's attempt to persuade the army to desert Louis diplomatically, but he believed that the deciding factor was the huge size (*infinitam multitudinem*) of Lothar's army. The idea of a secretive crossing forced downstream paralleled the conditions under which Louis the Pious had crossed the Rhine and entrapped Louis the German in 839.

⁴⁷⁰ *AF* 841.

would then turn all of his military might upon East Francia. Louis turned back to the west to come to Charles' aid. Standing in his way, however, was Adalbert, with the second part of Lothar's army at his back. He relished a chance to do away with his long-standing political opponent Louis, whose Bavarian expeditionary force was probably outnumbered by Adalbert's men (*cum exercitu magno*)⁴⁷¹, whom the emperor had derived from all over the empire, including East Francia.⁴⁷²

Much as he had attempted with his father's forces in the 830s, Louis intended once more to play the only real trump card that he held against a much larger enemy force: to entrap them in a compromising situation.⁴⁷³ Most likely, Louis had followed the Danube and accompanying right-bank Roman road to the west into Alemannia, where he encountered Adalbert's force. Louis then led his men north, across the Danube, following the course of the Wörnitz river on its eastern (left) bank, into the Nördlinger Ries—so called for its location in Bavaria around the town of Nördlingen—which was just the place for an entrapment.⁴⁷⁴ As Goldberg notes, the Ries was a “geographically distinct region,” a fifteen-million-year-old meteor impact crater. The Ries features numerous little

⁴⁷¹ Ratpert, *Casus Sancti Galli* 7.

⁴⁷² Nithard II.7 reports that Adalbert hated Louis the German to the point that he wished him dead, *habebat...Lodhivicum ad mortem usque exosum*. Louis the Pious had also assigned Adalbert to guard the western bank of the Rhine against Louis the German in 840, before the emperor drove his son back into Thuringia, *AF* 840. Adalbert had also been instrumental in inducing the Saxons to come to Louis the Pious's aid in 839, with the assistance of his brother Banzleib, who was a Saxon march commander, *AF* 839 and Reuter, *The Annals of Fulda*, 16 n. 2. At this point, the loyalty of the Saxons and Alemmanians hung in the balance of the conflict. Louis could not be sure of Saxon loyalty until 842, and Lothar could boast some political support in Alemannia as well, since that region had technically been taken from Louis the German by Louis the Pious in 838-39, a matter which remained unreconciled upon the late emperor's death in 840. See the discussion above in ch. 2.

⁴⁷³ *AB* 832, 839; *AF* 839, Nithard I.6. More on river crossings below, ch.3 and 4.

⁴⁷⁴ It is for this reason that I suggest Adalbert's men had attempted to block Louis from continuing along the Danube near the Lech: Louis could not have gone north along the Wörnitz without Adalbert having been encamped to the south, on the western bank of the Lech, which would have been a very sensible place for a garrison, since he of course would have anticipated Louis's route along the Danube road. By crossing the Danube, with the enemy on the opposite bank of the Lech, Louis had time to execute the maneuver safely and head north along the Wörnitz.

rivers and streams leading into the Wörnitz River, as it flows south to its confluence with the Danube at Donauwörth, only about 15km west from the confluence of the Lech and Danube.⁴⁷⁵ Adalbert pursued, crossing the Danube and following the western (right) bank of the Wörnitz northward. Certainly, Adalbert should have been aware of the physical geography of the region, and if he was not before the initiation of the campaign—which was highly unlikely considering that he had a key hand in planning Lothar’s invasion—he would have scouted the area into which his army marched before chasing Louis straight there.⁴⁷⁶

Perhaps the size of his forces made Adalbert overconfident; perhaps it was opportunism and the chance to eliminate Louis personally, winning great glory, enormous gratitude, and probably hugely increased power in the east from Lothar in the process. Most likely is that Adalbert simply thought that he could outmuscle Louis’s smaller forces,⁴⁷⁷ regardless of the circumstance, but he soon learned the error of his overconfidence with deadly and decisive results.

⁴⁷⁵ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 99-100. On the meteorite origins of the Ries, contrary to earlier theories that it had been formed as a result of volcanic activity, refer to E.M. Shoemaker and E.C.T. Chao, “New evidence for the impact origin of the Ries Basin, Bavaria, Germany,” *Journal of Geophysical Research* 66 (1961), 3371-3378.

⁴⁷⁶ *AF* 841 calls him the inciter of discord, *incentor discordiarum*, and Nithard II.7 points to his counsel as the deciding factor in Lothar’s decision to summon the huge army and pursue Louis in the first place: *cuius instinctu Lodharius collectam hinc inde infinitam multitudinem* (“at the instigation of whom [Adalhard], Lothar collected thence an infinite multitude”).

⁴⁷⁷ Louis and Charles’s combined force was still noted by Nithard to have been very large at Fontenoy, enough that it was able to defeat Lothar’s “infinite multitude.” Had either army been very small, Nithard almost certainly would have played up the discipline and training of the smaller force, a topic he addresses in I.5; and cf. B. and D. Bachrach, “Nithard as a Military Historian,” here esp. 38. As Bachrach also notes therein, 38 and n.49, a common topos of medieval battle narratives generally was the small “underdog” force that succeeded in battle against overwhelming odds, thus proving their valor, discipline, and favor in the eyes of the lord. On the latter subject Bachrach, “Early Medieval Military Demography: Some Observations on the Methods of Hans Delbrück,” in Donald Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon, eds., *The Circle of War* (Woodbridge, 1999), 3-20.

Essentially, there are two possible scenarios for the progress of this battle on May 13. The first is that Louis crossed over the Wörnitz and attacked Adalbert and his men on the western bank of the river. Then, with Adalbert's men arrayed against him or somehow caught unprepared for battle, Louis ordered the attack, and his men charged and killed the greater part of them, including Adalbert himself.⁴⁷⁸ In this context, the fact that the battle was fought *ultra ripam Werinza* would simply reflect that the battle was fought on the other bank of the Wörnitz, from the perspective of Salzburg.⁴⁷⁹

This seems unlikely. First, Adalbert's force was larger, and defeating them in open battle, while not impossible, was not a strategy which Louis would have relished. Nor did it fit with his general practice regarding river crossings and the opposition of a more substantial enemy force. In the conflicts against his father of the late 830s, discussed above, Louis had always ensured that his men occupied defensive positions in situations that required river crossings. Simply put, he usually made the other army come to him. Adalbert had been charged by Lothar that "if Louis should attempt to come to Charles, in no way should he be allowed [to do so]."⁴⁸⁰ Having encountered Louis's forces, it is unlikely that Adalbert would have let that army out of his sight long enough for Louis to execute an unopposed river crossing and attack Adalbert's men upon the further bank.

⁴⁷⁸ "*Hludowicus in Lotharii adversus se dispositas turmas irruens, magnaue ex parte internecioni donans, ceteros im fugam egit*" ("Louis rushed upon the troops of Lothar's stationed against him, and giving the greater part over to slaughter, he put the others to flight"). *AB* 841.

⁴⁷⁹ *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* 841, MGH SS 30.2, p. 740. These Salzburg Annals are otherwise often worded quite shortly, although they do contain the interesting detail that the Ries was fought *ultra ripam Werinza*.

⁴⁸⁰ "*si Lodhuwicus ad Karolum ire vellet, nullo modo posset.*" Nithard II.7. Ratpert, *Casus Sancti Galli* 7 has "*Hludovico...ne fines illorum [Alemmania] intraret, prohibere vellent*" (Louis ought not be allowed to enter the borders of [the Alemmanians], and they ought to prevent him.)

Goldberg construes *ultra ripam Werinza* to mean that Adalbert had crossed over the Wörnitz, therefore, from the western to the eastern bank.⁴⁸¹ Taking the argument a step further, it is probable that Adalbert's overconfidence and personal hatred for Louis could have made him so rash as to attempt to force a river crossing, knowing full well that Louis was in the region. If Louis's Bavarian force had been able to catch Adalbert's men mid-crossing, either of the Wörnitz or any of the other small streams which flow through the Ries, Adalbert's position and deployment would be seriously compromised. This fits well with Louis's preference for defensive positions upon rivers, and the totality with which he ultimately was able to crush the larger force. The battle might have proceeded thus: Adalbert's army was engaged in crossing the Wörnitz. While this operation was underway, Louis gave the signal to attack, and his Bavarians fired their bows and then charged the larger force (*adversus se depositas turmas irruens*),⁴⁸² possibly while they were mid-crossing (*ultra ripam Werinza*).⁴⁸³

Chaos ensued. Adalbert's army was either caught halfway across the river on either bank, or had just finished crossing and was not properly deployed for battle. Partially trapped by the river, Adalbert's men turned in a rout as Louis's frustrated Bavarians—who had marched backwards and forwards for years in pursuit and flight from Louis the Pious and now Lothar, vented their rage upon Adalbert's force. The rout failed to evade Louis's pursuers, and the Bavarians killed a huge number of Lothar's men, including Adalbert himself.⁴⁸⁴ News of the victory spread fast, giving new hope to

⁴⁸¹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 100.

⁴⁸² AB 841.

⁴⁸³ AI 841.

⁴⁸⁴ AF 841 "*innumerabilis multitudo hominum prosternitur*"; AH 841.

Charles's men, since Louis's reinforcements were now on the march to assist them, rather than a distant possibility hemmed in by Adalbert's formidable opposition.⁴⁸⁵

The Battle of Fontenoy, 841

There was little time for celebration, however. After stripping the corpses of the fallen, resulting in a wealth of arms and armor for his men, Louis led them 600km west in a matter of about a month.⁴⁸⁶ He rendezvoused with Charles somewhere near Châlons-sur-Marne, where the two half-brothers received one another warmly and prepared to make a joint stand against Lothar if necessary. Nithard claims that they hoped to avoid a pitched battle if at all possible, particularly considering the carnage that Louis's forces had just perpetrated at the Ries.⁴⁸⁷ Louis and Charles even went so far as to offer Lothar all the treasure that they had with them to negotiate a settlement, but Lothar's stubbornness rendered the offer futile, and pitched battle seemed unavoidable.⁴⁸⁸ Pippin II of Aquitaine had been recruited by Lothar to support his cause, and he and his reinforcements soon joined Lothar's men.⁴⁸⁹ Lothar refused to negotiate, and the issue was settled by the greatest battle of the age.

⁴⁸⁵ Nithard II.9, *AB* 841, *AF* 841. For Charles's viewpoint in the months leading up to Fontenoy, refer to Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 114-118.

⁴⁸⁶ Goldberg has 250 miles (about 400km), which is more like the distance between the Rhine and Châlons, rather than that between the Wörnitz and Châlons. It is uncertain just when the armies met, though sometime in the middle of July seems likely from Nithard. Charles had been at Châlons-sur-Marne when he received intelligence of Louis's victory at the Ries. By the time that the armies met in battle, Louis and Charles had marched south to Auxerre in pursuit of Lothar, who was endeavoring to meet Pippin II *en route* from Aquitaine. Nithard, II.9-10. For rates of march Donald Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, 1978); Bachrach, "Animals and Warfare in Early Medieval Europe," *SS Spoleto* 30 (1985), 707-764; idem, "The Crusader March from Dorylaion to Herakleia, 4 July-ca. 2 September, 1097," in Ruthy Gertwagen and Elizabeth Jeffreys, eds., *Shipping, Trade, and Crusade in the Medieval Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of John Pryor* (Farnham, 2012), 231-254.

⁴⁸⁷ *AB* 841, Nithard II.9; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 115-117.

⁴⁸⁸ Nithard II.9.

⁴⁸⁹ Son of Pippin I, full brother to Lothar and Louis, who had died in 838. *AB* 841, Nithard II.10.

Fontenoy serves as a very strong testament to the continuity of the preferred Carolingian strategy of utilizing very large armies to establish overwhelming force. Indeed, the brother kings each brought with them as many men as they could possibly muster, with the result that two huge Carolingian forces faced one another on the battlefield.⁴⁹⁰ Louis and Charles stationed a third of the force atop a hill overlooking Fontenoy, occupying the plain at the foot of the hill with the remainder of their men. Lothar arrived with his forces shortly, accompanied by Pippin II and the Aquitanians; they arrayed their own men for battle on the other side of the plain.⁴⁹¹

Unlike so many of the skirmishes and abortive encounters that the Carolingian kings had fought against one another in the civil struggle up until this point, Fontenoy would be a “fair” fight: a set-piece, pitched battle on relatively even ground. This way, Louis, Charles, and their advisors reasoned, they could ensure that the results of the fairly-arranged battle would truly dictate the will of God for the Christian, Frankish people, since He would grant victory to the force fighting for just cause.⁴⁹² In the pre-battle negotiations of several days before, Louis and Charles had even declined to attempt to stop Lothar’s men from crossing swampy ground, an ideal place for an ambush, in the

⁴⁹⁰ Nithard consistently attests to the magnitude of the forces, which he more than the authors of any other account of the battle would be in a reliable position to know. On this point see esp. B. and D. Bachrach, “Nithard as a Military Historian of the Carolingian Empire, c. 833-843,” *Francia* 44 (2017), 29-56.

⁴⁹¹ Nithard, II.10.

⁴⁹² On Nithard’s agenda and intended audience for his account, see Nelson, “Public Histories and Private History in the Work of Nithard,” in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, 195-237; B. and D. Bachrach, “Nithard as a Military Historian of the Carolingian Empire, c. 833-843,” *Francia: Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 44 (2017), 29-55. Both works bear on Nithard’s need to excuse his Frankish aristocratic readers for having spilled Frankish/Christian blood and the trope of a “fair fight.” See also, as Nelson notes on 207-208 and n.46, Frank Pietzcker, “Die Schlacht bei Fontenoy,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 81 (1964), 318-42, who suggests that Fontenoy was not actually a “fair fight” at 8am but rather a treacherous surprise attack by Louis and Charles on Lothar’s camp, which was not yet prepared to do battle; Nelson shows that this could not have been the case, owing to the fact that Nithard’s audience would have known it to be false and therefore rendered his account incredible.

hopes of winning Lothar over to peaceable settlements.⁴⁹³ This sort of fight was a real rarity in medieval warfare generally, as, indeed, it had been in the civil war specifically.⁴⁹⁴ The results illustrate why this was the case.

At 8am, the commanders gave the signal to attack.⁴⁹⁵ Louis sent his men against Lothar directly. They enjoyed several advantages over Lothar's host. First, they were combat veterans, recently experienced in battle, having just defeated Adalbert at the Ries.⁴⁹⁶ This provided a significant boost to morale and confidence, as well as real experience in close combat, which could be a horrifically stunning experience to the uninitiated, often causing panic and rout. Second, in defeating Adalbert, they had earned a great deal of additional fine weapons and armor to complement whatever they initially had of their own, with which they were now girded. There is no reason to doubt that Lothar's force was also well equipped, given that Lothar and his supporters had a huge amount of territory and supplies, as well as the entirety of the imperial treasury, upon which to draw, but the point remains that Louis's host would have been exceptionally well armed. The one advantage that Lothar's men enjoyed over Louis's also resulted from the battle at the Ries: Louis's men were wounded, tired, and somewhat low on horses from the combination of battle and a very long march immediately thereafter. It is highly important to note, however, that the lack of horses is mentioned by Nithard in the context of the battle- and road-weary condition of Louis's army; he makes no mention of

⁴⁹³ Nithard, II.10.

⁴⁹⁴ See above, ch.1, and the literature cited there, regarding pitched battle.

⁴⁹⁵ Nithard II.10, *horam secundam*, i.e., the second hour after dawn.

⁴⁹⁶ This was likely not the first combat experience for the more professional soldiery of the military households of the king and prominent magnates, but it was very important and noteworthy that the expeditionary levies, many of whose number may have been on their first campaign, had experience fighting together in a real battle.

the fact that lack of horses would cause them to alter tactics to compensate for a lack of available cavalry forces. This points to the fact that the very large army fought predominantly as infantrymen.⁴⁹⁷

Apparently, however, the combat experience and concomitant military discipline, plus the additional weapons, more than offset the exhaustion and lack of horses. Louis's men fought fiercely and overcame Lothar, who retreated with his army after suffering heavy losses.⁴⁹⁸ Charles's portion of the force suffered somewhat from lack of discipline, and some of them broke formation and were immediately surrounded and killed. Charles ordered them back into lines, and the regrouped force routed the Aquitainians, causing numerous casualties, particularly in pursuit, where cavalry forces could do their heaviest and most lethal damage.⁴⁹⁹ The final division of Louis and Charles's army contained the chronicler himself, Nithard, who reported that the fighting in that region was particularly deadly and strenuous, and that neither force really got the better of the other. Still, once Lothar's men in that quarter of the field saw that their comrades had all been routed, they too fled the battlefield, leaving the outcome a complete, though indecisive, victory for Louis and Charles.⁵⁰⁰ The victorious army pursued Lothar's fleeing men, inflicting heavy casualties, but eventually, Louis and Charles called off the pursuit and the slaying of the fugitives.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁷ Nithard II.10, *equorum inopia*. And cf. the account of AF 876 on the Battle of Andernach, where the Saxon infantry is flanked by cavalry units, as was typical Roman deployment (and indeed, the reason the cavalry were so often called *alae*—"wings").

⁴⁹⁸ AB 841 considered his retreat and defeat shameful, *turpiter victus aufugit*.

⁴⁹⁹ More on cavalry in pursuit below, ch.4. As Nelson notes in *Charles the Bald* 118, Andrew of Bergamo *Historia* p. 226, claims, with huge exaggeration, that the Aquitanian nobility suffered such massive casualties that they were unable to offer effective resistance against the Vikings, even in 860.

⁵⁰⁰ Nithard, II.10.

⁵⁰¹ The cessation of the pursuit was done very mercifully in the eyes of Nithard III.1 and AB 841, though this is a trope of merciful kingship rather than a reality, since AB makes clear that the kings only called off

Once again, Louis the German was able to gain a considerable amount of wealth for his forces by despoiling the corpses of the enemy dead. He also looted all of the imperial treasury that Lothar had in his possession, as well as a heavy bribe intended for Lothar from Archbishop George of Ravenna, which consisted of three hundred horses and a great deal of gold and gems.⁵⁰² This was an enormous boon for Louis not only economically, but politically as well. With this treasure, he could act the part of ring-giver,⁵⁰³ handing out the spoils of war to his followers as a very tangible and immediate reward and morale boost for their good and loyal service in the face of a very trying and potentially deadly circumstance, as Fontenoy certainly was.

The death toll was enormous, according to contemporaries. The high end estimate by Agnellus of Ravenna states that more than 40,000 men were killed in Lothar and Pippin's armies alone.⁵⁰⁴ Certainly, this number must have been exaggerated. Even if one considers the high-end figures for size of Carolingian expeditionary forces, it is likely that Lothar and Pippin could not have mustered many more than 100,000 effectives from their portion of the kingdom, even for a struggle of this magnitude.⁵⁰⁵ A loss of nearly

the slaughter of the fleeing, defeated army after it had been going on for some time; *Palantium autem caedes passim agitabatur*. See John Gillingham, "Fontenoy and After: Pursuing Enemies to Death in France from the Ninth to the Eleventh Century," in Paul Fouracre and David Ganz, eds., *Frankland: the Franks and the World of the Early Middle Ages. Essays in Honor of Dame Jinty Nelson* (Manchester, 2008), 242-265.

⁵⁰² George had been sent by Pope Gregory IV to try to negotiate for peace among the brothers. Agnellus of Ravenna *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, c.173, in MGH *Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*, 265-391. AB 841.

⁵⁰³ This was the purpose that Agnellus stated for George carrying so many treasures with him, *ut ad omnes larga manu largiret*. I do not suggest that Louis and his forces fought like a crude band of Beowulfian heroes.

⁵⁰⁴ Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 174.

⁵⁰⁵ J.F. "Verbruggen, "L'armée et la stratégie de Charlemagne," in *Karl der Große, Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, Vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1965), 420-436. Karl Ferdinand Werner, "Heersorganisation und Kriegsführung im deutschen Königreich des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano sull'alto Medioevo* 15 (Spoleto, 1968), 791-843.

half that many men would have been beyond catastrophe, seriously damaging the kings' further potential for exerting military force. This is impossible, since they continued to struggle for two years with very large armies (*cum ingenti exercitu*)⁵⁰⁶ until the Treaty of Verdun in 843, and they fielded effective forces against other enemies afterwards. Even laying aside as highly exaggerated the figure of 40,000, the sources are in agreement that several thousand men died, all of them subjects of the Carolingian empire. Such a death toll would alter royal military policy substantially for Louis the German.⁵⁰⁷

Janet Nelson notes that even in spite of the massive casualty figures, it is very difficult to actually identify any of the men who died in the course of the battle.⁵⁰⁸ Numerous members of noble families must have been among the fallen; indeed, the battle developed a reputation for having reduced the Aquitanian nobility so significantly that it would affect that region's military preparedness for generations.⁵⁰⁹ Still, most of the huge numbers of dead remained nameless, while the deaths of important magnates, such as Adalbert at the Ries, were usually recorded rather diligently, as momentous events.⁵¹⁰ This rather lends credence to the idea that if the Carolingian armies at Fontenoy were so large as to escape accurate recording from an informed source like Nithard, that they were likely composed largely of those freemen of lesser means and holdings who

⁵⁰⁶ Nithard III.4; before Strasbourg oaths in 841-42.

⁵⁰⁷ As discussed in greater detail above, c. 2.

⁵⁰⁸ The lack of evidence for who actually fell in the fighting is due, as Gillingham reinforces, to the fact that the heaviest casualties were suffered by the Aquitanian forces, and we lack a heavily Aquitanian source to attest to the identities of the dead. Janet Nelson "Violence in the Carolingian World and the Ritualization of Ninth-Century Warfare," in Guy Halsall, ed., *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 1998), 90-107; John Gillingham "Fontenoy and After," here 245-246.

⁵⁰⁹ Andrew of Bergamo, *Historia*, MGH *Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum* c.7, p. 226; as cited and discussed by Gillingham, "Fontenoy and After," 245 and n. 12; and cf. Wace, *The Roman de Rou*, trans. G. S. Burgess (St. Helier, 2002), appendix, lines 313-18, for the battle's later reputation.

⁵¹⁰ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 100 and n. 71 says that the death of Adalbert "sent shockwaves through the empire," stressing the number of chronicles that recorded it.

typically comprised the large bulk of Carolingian expeditionary forces, rather than a smaller, elite mounted force of magnates and their military households.⁵¹¹

The Battle of Fontenoy was huge and deadly, but Lothar was not decisively defeated. Louis and Charles, rather than pursue Lothar, disbanded much of their large armies and went to deal with affairs in their respective parts of the kingdom. As such, Lothar remained unsubdued, and the issue of the *divisio* remained unsettled, until the treaty of Verdun stabilized the situation in 843. The lack of follow through and decisive defeat of Lothar had its critics, including possibly Nithard himself.⁵¹²

Frontier Campaign Strategy

Campaign strategy along much of the eastern frontier of East Francia was largely dictated by grand strategy. Louis did not intend territorial conquest in the east, instead preferring to adhere to the Carolingian long-term strategy of keeping the trans-frontier peoples in a tributary relationship to the East Frankish crown. This meant that most military confrontations in the march and frontier regions consisted of Louis the German—or the local levies led by march commanders—snuffing out sporadic rebellions by the trans-frontier Slavs against this tributary status. This type of expedition did not always require the same massive armies as those conflicts against his Carolingian

⁵¹¹ Discussed in greater detail below, ch. 4, and cf. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare* 51-57; idem, Bachrach, “Charlemagne’s Expeditionary Levy: Observations Regarding *Liberi Homines*” *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, 3rd. ser., 12 (2016), 1-65. The historiography of a smaller Carolingian military dominated by cavalry is discussed above in ch. 1.

⁵¹² B. and D. Bachrach believe that Nithard’s criticism that the public welfare was neglected in the wake of Fontenoy is to be read in the context of the disbanding of the very large armies, which allowed Lothar’s force to continue to remain at large and actively seek additional military confrontations in spite of the defeat it had just suffered, see “Nithard as a Military Historian,” 41-45.

brothers or the Moravians, against whom Louis tended to raise very large expeditionary forces.

Obodrite Rebellion, 844

In 844, with the civil war having been concluded by the Treaty of Verdun, Louis turned his sights to the east, where a serious Obodrite rebellion was underway. One Goztomuizli had declared himself the king of the Obodrites, independent of Carolingian authority. Louis summoned the expeditionary force in July, and by August he had plunged into Obodrite territory east of the Elbe River. There are no concrete details concerning the fighting in the campaign, but it must have been rather easy for the Carolingian forces, since Louis was back in Regensburg, via Thionville to meet with his brothers and confirm their earlier oaths, by October 28.⁵¹³ As Goldberg notes, this huge triangle of nearly 1,000 miles (around 1,600km) of marching in three months meant that even at a very fast pace of around thirty miles per day, grueling even for horses over the long term, Louis had perhaps a month to defeat Goztomuizli's force, win over the other Obodrite nobility, and appoint client dukes to manage the region.⁵¹⁴ The pace at which the campaign was conducted also points to it having been carried out largely by the military households of the king and leading nobility: i.e., the cavalry arm of the expeditionary force, with minimal baggage, since thirty miles a day for nearly a month at a stretch was more than could be consistently managed by loads of laden carts, for which even four miles per hour was a very fast pace, and three miles an hour far more likely. Alternatively, a supply line could have been maintained through Saxony using ships upon

⁵¹³ ULD I.39.

⁵¹⁴ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 132-133.

the Elbe, although there is very little evidence concerning the precise location of the campaign at all, let alone the methods of transportation which might have been used along the route.

Viking Assaults, 845, 873, and 876

Typically, the grand strategic tendency to utilize diplomatic means to keep Danish raids out of his eastern kingdom proved effective for Louis the German.⁵¹⁵ When diplomacy failed, however, the local levies of Saxony and Frisia (after 870) often took up the burden of defending the kingdom so effectively that Louis the German did not have to lead an army personally against Danish hosts. The Danish King Horic, in 838, had attempted to pry lordship over the Obodrites and other northern Slavs from Louis the Pious, causing a large Slavic rebellion. Again in 842, Lothar had tried to coerce Vikings into action against Louis the German, who feared that they might ally in rebellion with the Saxon *Stellinga* rebels. Louis acted quickly to quell that rebellion in order to secure the loyalty of the Saxon nobility and ensure that Saxons would continue to defend this northern frontier zone.⁵¹⁶ The wisdom of this policy was quickly proven.

In 845, King Horic sent a very large fleet up the Elbe—six hundred ships according to the *Annals of St. Bertin*. Though this figure is likely to be highly exaggerated, it is worth noting that *AB* numbers the fleet that invaded Charles's kingdom through the Seine and besieged Paris at 120 ships. Charles paid this fleet 7,000 pounds of silver to depart without further conflict, and the one that invaded via the Elbe was

⁵¹⁵ This strategy, like most others, was a precedent that had been established by Charlemagne, on which subject Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 81, and above, ch. 2.

⁵¹⁶ On the *Stellinga* *AF* and *AB* 842; Nithard III.7, IV.2.

supposedly five times as large. Payoffs, however, would not do for Louis the German, nor for the Saxon general levy, who made good on their new loyalty to Louis after the Stellinga rebellion and the 842 Paderborn assembly, proving the initial success of Louis's Saxon policy.⁵¹⁷ The Saxons rallied a force to oppose the Northmen, successfully defeating them in battle and driving them out, though the victory was not decisive or crippling, since the retreating Vikings plundered and burned Hamburg on their return route.⁵¹⁸ Later that year, however, Horic sued for peace, which Louis was all too happy to grant under terms favorable to East Francia.⁵¹⁹ The plunder and captives that had fallen into Danish hands on the earlier campaign were to be returned to the Franks, and the Danes recognized Louis's authority with tribute-laden embassies annually.⁵²⁰

The Frisian levy also experienced some success in containing Viking raids. By 873, the Viking prince Rudolf had been raiding Charles's kingdom for several years, and he sought to expand his enterprise eastward into Frisia, where he thought he might find the residents rather unprepared to resist him and exploit them for easy wealth.⁵²¹ His actions also indicate that he intended to resist his uncle Rorik's policy of allegiance with the Carolingians—Rorik had sworn fidelity to Louis the German at Aachen in May of the same year.⁵²² Rudolf sent messengers ahead demanding tribute and threatening to force it from the Frisians if they did not comply. His envoys were bluntly refused, as the Frisians under Albdag protested that they were loyally bound only to the eastern Carolingian royal line. Rudolf invaded rashly, bringing with him a small force of between 500 and 800

⁵¹⁷ See esp. Nithard III.7.

⁵¹⁸ *AB* 845, *AF* 845.

⁵¹⁹ *AB* 845.

⁵²⁰ *AF* 848 for an example.

⁵²¹ Probably since at least 863, *AB* 864 and Nelson, *Annals of St.-Bertin* 112 n.5.

⁵²² *AX* 873, *AF* 873.

raiders, swearing to kill all the men of the region and enslave the women and children. The Frisian general levy, however, offered strong resistance.⁵²³

They met the Northmen in rare open battle, maintained good order in the face of the Viking charge, and killed Rudolf very early in the clash. The Frisians flanked the remainder of the Viking force to prevent them returning to their ships and escaping with impunity, and the Vikings were forced to take refuge in some sort of building, where the *de facto* leader of the local levy—a converted Viking himself—convinced the Frisians not to attempt to annihilate the raiders within the building, but rather to force them to surrender hostages and a great deal of treasure to guarantee their safe departure. It was a smart move. The local levy was not at its best on the offensive side of siege warfare, considering that it was designed mostly to resist invasion by just the sort of refuge-seeking tactic that the raiders had just taken against it. Breaking into any sort of fortified place required some measure of rudimentary siege equipment, such as rams and ladders, which the Frisians would have to requisition before proceeding, since they certainly did not plan for a siege against mobile Viking raiders. The chosen tactic was very successful, however. The entrapped Vikings gave hostages, which the Frisians kept until the others delivered a massive amount of plunder from their ships, at which point all the raiders were allowed to return home under oath that they would never again return to Louis's kingdom, lest it be the last land on which they set foot, like their lord Rudolf.⁵²⁴

In 876, the Northmen once again attacked Frisia, in spite of the recent loyalty oaths and tribute payments that had been made to Louis in the preceding few years.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ *AF 873, AX 873.*

⁵²⁴ *AF 873, AB 873, AX 873.*

⁵²⁵ *AF 873, AB 873, AX 873.*

Once again, the Frisian general levy gathered to resist the incursion as they had against Rudolf in 873.⁵²⁶ In a repeat of the fate of that group of Viking raiders, the Frisian levy once again won a smashing victory over them, taking a great deal of treasure from the raiders, which they divided amongst themselves since the king was not there to claim the lion's share for the royal treasury.⁵²⁷ This was an excellent example of the principle of defense in depth. The raiders had already been plundering and were weighed down with booty before the levy cut them off and defeated them, reclaiming the treasure.⁵²⁸ It is reasonable to conclude that this raiding force must not have been a particularly large one, nor one that was led by prominent Viking leaders. As seen above, men like Horic and Rudolf usually did not escape the attention of Carolingian annalists, especially when they were killed on their raiding expeditions by Carolingian defenders, as in 873.

Moravia and Bohemia, 845-851

The most formidable and problematic eastern enemy was Moravia, against which Louis most frequently sent very large or multi-component armies. As this polity expanded, the rebellions of Moravia under Moimir, Rastislav, and Svatopluk posed a serious threat to Carolingian authority in the eastern marches, which the local levies and commanders proved inadequate to combat. These campaigns were Louis's primary experience with siege warfare, and much of it proved unsuccessful in the view of the

⁵²⁶ These were particularly the Frisians "called Westerners," *vocantur occidentales*

⁵²⁷ Plunder was comparatively rare in defensive warfare, which is part of the central argument of Reuter's *Plunder and Tribute*, and so the taking of this wealth must have been a great boon to the Frisians, who had now proven their mettle twice in three years in driving off the Vikings, whom Charles the Bald had struggled against with varying measures of success for decades.

⁵²⁸ *AF* 876, *Nordmanni plurima loca spoliando*.

annalists, owing to the strength of the enemy fortifications.⁵²⁹ Louis enjoyed the greatest measure of success against Moravia when he was able to put several armies into the field at once, in order that he might execute pincer movements against the enemy and employ widespread slash and burn tactics against the hinterlands of the great Moravian fortress cities, which he did not intend to take by storm—indubitably at great cost to his own forces.⁵³⁰ The leadership of his sons at the head of the separate detachments was indispensable to the success of such strategies, although the sons' own rebellions proved highly difficult as well. When his sons were loyal, their confident leadership, as well as the contributions of their own military households, helped to ensure that such expeditions were not compromised by leadership conflicts, since there was a strong Carolingian commander at the head of each contingent of the pincer forces.⁵³¹

Louis began planning his first Moravian campaign at the Paderborn assembly of 845, a fitting location, as he intended the Saxon expeditionary forces to serve as one of two main pincers in the assault; the second pincer would proceed to Moravia from Bavaria. Louis intended to remove Moimir, who had established himself as ruler of Moravia and had rebelled against Carolingian authority. In further preparation for the campaign, Louis made a large grant in January 846 of 100 manses on the Valchau to *dux* Pribina of Pannonia, to whom Louis had given control of that region after he had been

⁵²⁹ As in *AF* 855 *exercitu sine victoria rediit*, despite the fact that the army had ravaged enemy lands, taken a good deal of plunder, and captured several other small fortifications. The equating of victory with territorial conquest or complete suppression of the enemy ignores that territorial conquest was never Louis's trans-frontier grand strategic goal.

⁵³⁰ On the preferred grand strategy of keeping the Slavs and Moravians in a tributary relationship to the East Frankish king, see above, ch. 2.

⁵³¹ A prime example of which is in the very successful campaign of 869, discussed below. And cf. the leadership failures of 846 (*AB/AX*), 849 (*AF/AB*), and 872 (*AF*) for breakdowns in command when the king or a prince was not physically present to lead the army.

ousted from Moravia by Moimir. The Bavarian pincer would travel right through this territory en route to Moravia, and Pribina would bear the responsibility for their safe passage and logistical support through that region.⁵³²

The armies set out as planned in two parts, one from Bavaria and one from Saxony, the latter headed personally by Louis the German.⁵³³ Both armies traveled very long distances. From Magdeburg on the Elbe, the Saxon contingent would have had to travel over 600km southeast through Bohemia to reach the seats of Moravian power at Mikulčice or Staré Město in the Morava valley. From Regensburg, proceeding along the Danube, it was nearly 500km east to the Morava, then another 80km north to Mikulčice. The campaign managed to achieve its initial objective of quelling the rebellion that was being fomented by Moimir. It is unclear what happened to Moimir during the course of the campaign, but he was removed from office, and Louis the German replaced him with Rastislav, whom he intended to use as a loyal client to oversee the region. The biggest problem that the army encountered, however, was after the main objective of removing Moimir had been achieved. On the return march, the Saxons suffered grievously at the hands of the Bohemians, who, upon realizing that Louis the German was by no means coerced into not invading the east by the baptism of the fourteen Bohemian *duces*, reneged on the support that they had offered the previous year.⁵³⁴ The Bohemians harried Louis's countermarch, and the army suffered greatly from lack of provisions while marching through now-hostile territory, which the king had initially intended to support

⁵³² ULD I.45. Much more on the logistics of this campaign discussed below, chapter 5.

⁵³³ It is noteworthy that the king led the Saxon column personally, presumably because his Bavarian magnates could be trusted most firmly.

⁵³⁴ Třeštík, "The Baptism of the Czech Princes," 58-59, and see also the discussion in chapter 2 above.

the army logistically.⁵³⁵ Leadership suffered as well in the face of this hardship, and the commanders present argued destructively among themselves.⁵³⁶ What had started as a promising campaign, ended in serious difficulty.

The Bohemians would pay for their treachery. Louis sent an army against them in 847, which enjoyed a measure of success, supposedly recovering any losses of the year before.⁵³⁷ It is rather unclear what was lost (*ut, quod ante annum amiserat, reciperet*), other than lives and prestige, as the king had lost no territory despite the difficulties of the preceding campaign.⁵³⁸ Perhaps the recoveries, too, were abstract: Louis the German regained authority from those Bohemian rulers who had spurned it beforehand. It is likely that the Bohemians simply were restored to a tributary relationship, as was usual frontier practice, and that what was lost referred to the tributary status, as well as the tribute itself. The next year (848), Louis followed up this success by sending his namesake Louis the Younger against Bohemia, initiating him by fire into the difficult frontier warfare situation. Whatever success had been achieved in 847 must have been brief and was certainly abortive, as the Bohemians had rebelled anew.⁵³⁹ *AB* actually puts the impetus for the campaign upon a Bohemian attack on the Frankish kingdom rather than *vice versa*, but at any rate, Louis the Younger, as his father's general, was successful in his confrontation with the perennial enemy.⁵⁴⁰ The army that accompanied him, though it is not explicitly stated, probably was derived from Saxony and Thuringia, those portions of east Francia that would ultimately become Louis the Younger's kingdom. The

⁵³⁵ *AF* 846, *AB* 846, *AX* 846.

⁵³⁶ *AB* 846.

⁵³⁷ *AB* 847.

⁵³⁸ *AB* 847: "such that what he had lost the year before, he recovered."

⁵³⁹ *AF* 848.

⁵⁴⁰ *AB* 848.

Bohemians asked for peace through an embassy, which was presumably heard at the general assembly at Mainz in early October. Like Paderborn two years earlier, Louis also received ambassadors from the Danes and from his brothers, renewing the oaths of fidelity from both of those factions.⁵⁴¹

This effort, too, was insufficient to bring the Bohemians to heel, and “in their usual way” they rebelled the next year as well. Louis the German was unable to lead the army personally in 849 owing to illness.⁵⁴² In his stead, Louis sent Count Ernest,⁵⁴³ Thachulf, Count of the Sorbian March, and numerous other magistrates against the Bohemians, with a very large army (*cum exercitu copioso*).⁵⁴⁴ The initial thrust of the offensive was successful. The Carolingian army successfully assaulted and broke into (*inrumperet*) an entrenched camp (*vallum hostium*), and the Bohemians sued for peace, sending a legation and hostages (*obsides*) to Thachulf to ask for a cessation of hostilities.⁵⁴⁵ Similar to the Moravian campaign in 846, leadership conflicts ruined the initial success of the mission. Thachulf attempted to report the peace terms to the other military commanders, but they became enraged that he had spoken with the legates alone, fearing that Thachulf’s solo negotiation was an indicator that he wanted to obtain supreme power in that region for himself. As a result, the other commanders took their men and rashly charged the Bohemian camp without Thachulf and his soldiers, thinking that the theoretically defeated Bohemians would be unable to offer much resistance. The

⁵⁴¹ *AF* 848.

⁵⁴² *AB* 849, *AX* 849.

⁵⁴³ Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen*, 132-137.

⁵⁴⁴ *AF* 849.

⁵⁴⁵ *AF* 849. There is little indication exactly where in Bohemia this expedition proceeded, though it probably was not far across the borders of Thachulf’s Sorbian March, since the Bohemians seemed to be quite familiar with him as a man who knew about Slavic *leges et consuetudines* (laws and customs).

Bohemians, essentially cornered in their entrenchments, fought fiercely for their lives, and in a hideous reversal of fortunes, the disordered Frankish army was driven back to its own camp by the enemy that was previously suing for peace! A chaotic slaughter ensued. Numerous Franks were killed and the dead despoiled. The survivors gave hostages to the Bohemians—who had previously offered hostages for the peace—to be allowed to return home with their lives.⁵⁴⁶

AB rightly called the defeat disgraceful, summing up the encounter curtly as the direct result of Louis's absence.⁵⁴⁷ Louis launched no campaigns in the east in 850, in the wake of this disaster, but he was back in the saddle in 851, when the Sorbs crossed the Frankish border several times, raiding and burning. Louis raised an army and traveled via Thuringia and Thachulf's Sorbian March to deal with the problem. Louis ravaged the lands of the Sorbian rebels, ruining the harvests and causing them to suffer grievously from hunger, which cowed them without battle. It is likely that the hunger problem was compounded by the serious famine of 850, which rendered food stores limited in fortified places, to which the enemy usually retreated from the king's advancing army.⁵⁴⁸ Indeed, it seems plausible that the lack of food might have been the impetus for the Sorbian raids upon Carolingian territory in the first place, both in this year and in 873-874, when a very harsh winter once again caused a serious famine, and the Sorbs again raided across the frontier.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁶ *AF* 849, *AB* 849.

⁵⁴⁷ *AB* 849. ...*Qui turpiter profligatus, quid dispendii sibi absentia ducis intulerit, cadendo fugiendoque expertus est.*

⁵⁴⁸ *AF* 850. The seriousness of the famine might also have contributed to Louis's decision to wage no external warfare in 850, as food and fodder would have been in short supply.

⁵⁴⁹ More on weather, climate, and famine, as they relate to military affairs, are discussed below, in ch. 5.

Moravia, 855-858

In 855, Louis's supposed client *dux* Rastislav of Moravia launched a full-scale rebellion, showing that he would not, perhaps, be the cooperative local ruler that Louis had wanted when he installed him in place of his uncle Moimir.⁵⁵⁰ Rather than meet him in open battle, at which the Carolingian army almost certainly would have enjoyed the upper hand, Rastislav and the Moravians retreated into their stout fortifications. It is uncertain which fortification this was, though Mikulčice or Staré Město are both very likely candidates.⁵⁵¹ Regardless of which fortification Rastislav occupied, the route of march and progress of the campaign would have been essentially the same. Louis and his army proceeded eastward along the Danube, until they reached the confluence with the Morava River. There, they moored the rivercraft and continued on foot northward along the right (western) bank of the Morava, following its course northwards to the central Morava valley, where Mikulčice and Staré Město both lay.

Louis calculated that to take Moravian fortresses by storm would result in a greater loss of life than he was willing to endure, and as such, decided upon a different type of siege tactics. Louis utilized the strategy of ravaging the countryside in the surrounding regions in the hopes of starving out the enemy, or causing them to submit in order to spare the suffering of the residents. In this pursuit, he achieved a measure of success; the Moravians sent out a sortie to assault Louis's forces while they were encamped outside the walls, but this proved a horrible error, as the Carolingian army completely destroyed the force that attempted the assault. By no means was this a

⁵⁵⁰ *AF* 846.

⁵⁵¹ Louis successfully besieged Rastislav at the smaller fortress of Devín near the confluence of Danube and Morava Rivers in 864, so it is unlikely that he would have shied away from doing so on this expedition.

crippling blow to the Moravian forces. When Louis abandoned his siege late in the campaign season, Rastislav and his men followed the route of their countermarch—likely back along the Danube—to launch a raid into Carolingian territory, showing bluntly that they not only remained unbeaten, but also that they would not return peaceably and easily to their tributary relationship.⁵⁵²

To ensure the success of future endeavors against Moravia, Louis needed to make certain that there would be no repeat of the disastrous situation at the end of the 846 campaign, discussed above.⁵⁵³ Thus, he collected a Saxon expeditionary force, which proceeded across the Elbe through Sorbian lands, collecting support from local *duces*, and thence moved to crush the Daleminzi Slavs in battle. Having reduced them once more to tributary status, the king and his Saxon/Sorbian host pushed onward through Bohemia, where several *duces* submitted to his authority.⁵⁵⁴ Prior expeditions against Bohemian forces had been costly, and this one was no exception to the rule. Louis's army suffered numerous casualties, among which was the Saxon Count Bardo, who had been loyal to Louis since the days of the civil war.⁵⁵⁵ At the minimum, the king could take comfort in the fact that these men had died achieving an objective—the submission of Bohemia—rather than on a disastrous return march such as the 846 campaign.

⁵⁵² *AF* 855.

⁵⁵³ On which his army suffered greatly on the return march through Bohemia, due to the treachery of the recently baptized princes, who shirked their oaths of loyalty upon realizing that Louis would not cease his eastern campaigning as a result. *AF* 846.

⁵⁵⁴ *AF* 856, *AB* 856. Several Bohemian dukes having submitted to Louis still did not guarantee him entirely safe passage through the region, however, as the 846 episode had shown. Bohemia was relatively decentralized, with several unique tribes that largely self-governed, and as such, the loyalty of a few leaders did not equate necessarily to the loyalty of all. See again Dušan Třeštík, “The Baptism of the Czech Princes in 845 and the Christianization of the Slavs.”

⁵⁵⁵ He was the man who had brought news that the Saxon nobility had rejected Lothar's machinations and would remain loyal to Louis in 842. Nithard, III.7.

In 856, Louis gave his son Carloman the command of the eastern march.⁵⁵⁶ This delegation of authority to his son had the potential to benefit the king militarily in several ways. Firstly, by making Carloman responsible for a large portion of the eastern frontier, he ensured that a competent and well-trained military leader would be able to head the defense of that region against invasions, such as that which had occurred the previous year. Secondly, Carloman would be responsible for maintaining the security and logistical preparations for expeditions from Bavaria against Moravia. Thirdly, giving Carloman this command meant that the king's son could lead the Bavarian host—that which was most loyal to Louis—while freeing Louis to lead forces from Saxony, which would enable the easier use of pincer movement of two Carolingian armies against one common enemy, each led personally by well-trained Carolingian commander.⁵⁵⁷

Louis spent 857 preparing for the very involved campaign season that he planned for 858. He sent an expeditionary force to Bohemia under the leadership his Count of the Palace, Hruodolt, and Bishop Otgar of Eichstätt. Before the campaign season, Louis gave Eichstätt immunity and royal protection to cement Otgar's loyalty, position of power, and ability to raise troops in the future. The use of a bishop to head an expeditionary levy was somewhat unusual (though not unprecedented)⁵⁵⁸ for Louis, which is perhaps why

⁵⁵⁶ *AI* 856, “*Carolomanus terminum accepit procurandum, marchia orientalis [ei] comendatur*” (“Carloman accepted the administration of the border; the Eastern March was commended to him”). Note the general inconsistency in terminology between annalists when referring to the office that historians usually call the Prefect (= *praefectus*) of the Eastern March, as well as terms for “border” and “frontier” such as *limes*, *terminum*, *marca*. Cf. *AF* 863, where Carloman “*praelatus erat*,” (“was set over,” or “was the prefect [i.e., him set over]”) and Count Gundachar “*praefecturae dignitatem promeruit*,” (“deserved the office of prefect”).

⁵⁵⁷ *AI* 856. These annals also mention Carloman gathering a large army (*congregato exercitu*) to move against the enemy, but no campaign by him is mentioned elsewhere. It is possible that this refers to him assisting his father on the campaign against Bohemia, which is likely, or perhaps refers to Carloman making preparations for the expeditions of the next year.

⁵⁵⁸ *AF* 849, several unnamed abbots and counts helped Duke Ernest lead the disastrous campaign against the Bohemians; the Frankish leadership quarreled amongst themselves and led an ill-conceived attack

Hruodolt—as Count of the Palace, a high ranking secular official—served as co-commander of the expedition. This type of co-led expedition certainly had the potential for disaster, if the commanders did not agree with one another, as occurred in 846 and 849,⁵⁵⁹ but in this case, the expedition was conducted flawlessly. Otgar and Hruodolt besieged and occupied a certain Bohemian fortified city, which may have been Zabusany, in northwest Bohemia.⁵⁶⁰

The East Frankish army drove out Sclavitag, who had himself driven out his unnamed brother, after the death of his father Wiztrach, and seized the city for his own. Sclavitag fled to Moravia and took refuge with Rastislav, who gladly harbored this fugitive from his Carolingian nemesis. Sclavitag's brother, however, came to Louis in supplication, and Louis promoted him to *dux* over the city that Otgar and Hruodolt had just taken.⁵⁶¹ Otgar was duly rewarded for his efforts, receiving property from the king in Kinsingau, adjacent to Eichstätt's holdings.⁵⁶² Meanwhile, Louis's son Carloman, the newly-made prefect of the eastern march, went on what amounted to a plundering expedition just across the eastern frontier, probably with only his military household, as no large army is mentioned.⁵⁶³

against the Bohemians who were suing for peace. The Bohemians not only repulsed the attack but slew numerous Franks and looted their corpses of arms and armor.

⁵⁵⁹ *AB* 846, *AF* 849.

⁵⁶⁰ The suggestion of Zabusany, near Brüx-Duchchar in the northwest of Bohemia, about 250km north-northwest of Regensburg, was made by Jiří Slàma, "Civitas Witrachi ducis," *Historische Geographie. Beiträge zur Problematik der mittelalterlichen Siedlung und der Wege* 11 (1973), 3-30. Cf. also Reuter, *Annals of Fulda* p. 39 n. 7; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 246 n. 53.

⁵⁶¹ *AF* 857.

⁵⁶² *ULD* I.86.

⁵⁶³ *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* 857, p. 744. This campaign is mentioned nowhere else, which is what leads to the conclusion that it was only Carloman's military household that participated, as it seems rather an unsubstantial plundering raid, even if it did appear to gain a bit of treasure, *depredatur multa*.

A Diversion From the West: 858-859

In order to follow up the Bohemian success of the previous year, Louis organized a tripartite campaign for 858 from Frankfurt.⁵⁶⁴ Louis prepared three expeditionary forces, one under Carloman, who was to prove his mettle as prefect of the eastern marches in a campaign against Rastislav and Moravia, one under his namesake son against the Obodrites, and one under Thachulf, *dux* of the Sorbian march, against the Sorbs, who were in rebellion.⁵⁶⁵ Carloman, for his part, had managed to arrange a peace with Rastislav, but then these two theoretically opposed men began cooperating with one another against Louis the German.⁵⁶⁶ Notably, the king himself was not to lead any of these three armies, which would have been highly unusual if, indeed, that was the only military activity planned for that season. It seems, however, that Louis was preparing himself for an expedition of potentially far greater gravity in the west. A legation, led by Abbot Adalhard of St.-Bertin and Count Odo of Troyes, came from the western kingdom of Charles the Bald, asking Louis to come and take over from Charles.⁵⁶⁷ The legates complained that the nobility had lost faith in Charles, both due to his perceived ineptitude in combating the Viking threat, as well as charges of general tyranny and wickedness.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁴ The organization of the campaign at Frankfurt arouses some suspicion concerning Louis's motives; Regensburg would have been far more typical a muster spot for eastern campaigning.

⁵⁶⁵ *AF* 858.

⁵⁶⁶ *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* 858, p. 744.

⁵⁶⁷ *AF* 859.

⁵⁶⁸ *AB* 858 presents this legation as continuous with those of previous years, done under the auspices of Aquitaine. This legation, however, in truth came from much further up, as it was led by Abbot Adalhard of St.-Bertin and Odo, Count of Troyes. See especially Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 171-181, who shows that these rebels were not the same Aquitainians who had invited Louis to invade in 853; cf. Nelson, *Annals of St.-Bertin* 88, n. 13; *AF* 858.

Louis set out in mid-August from Worms with an expeditionary force, traveling through Alsace, where he could count on at least some measure of support.⁵⁶⁹ What he found was another detachment for the army. Men flocked to him as he passed through Alsace, and when he reached the *villa* of Ponthion, about 200km east of Paris, a large portion of the western nobility came to welcome him, save for those men whom Charles had with his army at the island of Oissel in the Seine, fighting against yet another Viking incursion.⁵⁷⁰ When Charles received word that Louis had invaded his kingdom at the head of a large eastern army, however, he broke off his siege of the Vikings, who had entrenched themselves on the island, and immediately turned his own army towards his brother. The forces maneuvered around one another for three days after their initial contact near Queudes (120km east-southeast of Paris) and exchange of envoys. On November twelfth, near Brienne, the brother kings actually drew up their armies for battle, in a grim showdown like that at Fontenoy, but this time, they were on opposite sides.⁵⁷¹

Charles's situation was terrible, with many of his magnates already among Louis's very large army (*multitudine orientalium*). Charles quickly calculated that he could not hope to fight this battle, let alone win it, without losing a huge number of men (*sine grande periculo suorum*) owing to the overwhelming force (*copiae fratris in acie*) which Louis had fielded.⁵⁷² Morale failed in Charles's army, and his men began to desert and join Louis's forces. With the situation growing increasingly dire, Charles took his

⁵⁶⁹ See for example ULD I.75.

⁵⁷⁰ *AF* 858 has Charles fighting the Northmen beyond the Loire (*super Ligurem fluvium*), *AB* 858 provides the more precise detail concerning the location of this island siege. Cf. Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 186-187.

⁵⁷¹ *AF* and *AB* 858

⁵⁷² *AF* 858.

military household and snuck away (*cum paucis latenter abscessit*), retreating south into Burgundy. Still more of Charles's men, whom he had abandoned on the field, went over to Louis, who declined to pursue his retreating brother, although there was some sentiment within the army that he ought to.⁵⁷³

Had Louis steadfastly planned on keeping hold of the western kingdom and deposing his brother, he probably ought not to have dismissed his eastern expeditionary force, but he did. Louis did not intend to pursue his brother into Burgundy. Charles had established himself at Auxerre, where he rallied his supporters. Louis was unwilling to besiege him there, in a substantial *civitas* so near to the battlefield at Fontenoy.⁵⁷⁴ This, coupled with the fact that Louis's armies would be in a very tenuous position, deep in his brother's kingdom, amidst new supporters of questionable loyalty—after all, they had just betrayed their old king for him—was too uncertain and risky a prospect. Instead, Louis attempted to consolidate the potential gains of the invasion diplomatically; he took up with the prominent members of the Welf family of Count Conrad of Auxerre, the lay abbot of St.-Germain and Charles's maternal uncle, who seems to have been prominent among those who induced Louis to come in the first place.⁵⁷⁵ Conrad's shifting loyalty returned to Charles, however. When Louis sent Conrad's sons to reconnoiter Charles's activities, they instead reported to Charles that Louis had dismissed the bulk of the army,

⁵⁷³ *AF* 858. This is an obvious parallel to the circumstances surrounding the aftermath of the Battle of Fontenoy, when Louis and Charles disbanded their very large army and went to deal with affairs in their respective kingdoms rather than pursuing their defeated elder brother Lothar I. For Nithard's possible criticism of that action see above and esp. B. and D. Bachrach, "Nithard as a Military Historian," 41-45.

⁵⁷⁴ Auxerre is the old Roman *civitas* of Autisiodorum along the *Via Agrippa* and was by then a bishopric. See Jill Harries, "Church and State in the *Notitia Galliarum*," *Journal of Roman Studies* 68 (1978), 26-43. Text of the *Notitia* is included therein, as an appendix on p. 39; Theodor Mommsen ed., *Notitia Galliarum*, in *MGH Scriptores Auctores Antiquissimi* I.9 p. 552. On *Via Agrippa*, Victor von Hagen, *The Roads that Led to Rome* (London, 1967), 192-215.

⁵⁷⁵ Reuter, *Annals of Fulda*, p. 43 n. 18; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 256-257; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 177-191.

and they began scheming with Charles how to best drive his brother back to his own kingdom.⁵⁷⁶ This, of course, would not have been news to Charles; his scouts could not have failed to note that Louis's large army had departed the western kingdom.

A lengthy rule for Louis in the west was not to be. Eastern affairs took care of the problem for Charles and brought Louis back home, though he had initially intended to spend the winter in the west. Louis received intelligence that a serious Sorbian rebellion was underway. They had killed the *dux* Zistibor, who supported Louis faithfully. Apparently, Thachulf's planned campaign of 858 had either been ineffective or had never happened.⁵⁷⁷ Louis returned, purportedly to deal with the rebels, but in doing so, he also evaded the trap that Charles and Conrad were attempting to set for him. This, combined with the objections of Charles's bishops, under the leadership of Hincmar of Rheims, to Louis's invasion, was probably closer to the real reason for his evacuation from the west.⁵⁷⁸ After all, it was December when Louis received intelligence of the rebellion, which was much too late in the year to make any real type of effort against the Sorbian rebels until the next campaign season brought warmer temperatures, clearer roads, and increased fodder for traveling and logistical support.⁵⁷⁹ Louis clung to his western aspirations until the early spring, when travel was more convenient, but he then returned

⁵⁷⁶ This probably did not surprise Louis in the least, as he had already been in the process of removing members of this family from power in his eastern kingdom; see the account in Goldberg, 256-257.

⁵⁷⁷ *AF* 858.

⁵⁷⁸ *AB* has Charles attacking Louis's small force in early January, but this seems unlikely as the king did not return to east Francia until early spring. *AB* 859 *AF* 859.

⁵⁷⁹ This bit was probably inserted by *AF* simply by way of apology for the failure of the campaign; the rebellion provided a face-saving way to write off Louis's return home.

in April to Worms to administer his own kingdom. Thus, with his brother out of the way, Charles began to retake and consolidate his power once again.⁵⁸⁰

Louis's failings in the invasion of the western kingdom were not so much military as they were political. Charles dared not face his older half-brother in open battle, particularly when it seemed that so many of his magnates were undecided in the struggle or would have preferred that Louis be their king. Louis's initial invasion was successful, but once the occupying force had established its presence in Charles's kingdom, it was rather more difficult to sway the prominent churchmen of the west, led by Hincmar of Rheims.⁵⁸¹ Hence, unwilling to besiege Charles at Auxerre during the winter, unable to continue to keep his large expeditionary force in the field indefinitely in potentially hostile territory, and unable to get Hincmar to cross over from Charles to support him, Louis was unable to follow up his initial success. He had little choice but to abort the expedition and send his men home to the eastern kingdom to overwinter.⁵⁸² Western

⁵⁸⁰ *AF* 858. The timing is strange, since Louis apparently remained in West Francia until April despite having been driven out supposedly (*AB* 859), but Charles the Bald claimed that January 15th was the day upon which he recovered his kingdom *Recueil des Actes Charles le Chauve*, 246-247; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 189-193.

⁵⁸¹ Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 187-191; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 257-262.

⁵⁸² Having rooted Louis out of West Francia, Hincmar and the western bishops attempted to force Louis into admitting fault for the entire debacle, which included doing public penance to obtain the goodwill of the bishops and his brothers, on pain of possible excommunication if he did not comply. Now it was Hincmar's turn to be frustrated: he attempted to bring these demands before Louis personally at Frankfurt, before the entire court and council. Louis got wind of the plan and opted to meet the delegation halfway, taking them by surprise at Worms. There, Hincmar presented the list of demands, and Louis made the excuse that he had only brought a few advisers with him and therefore could not properly transact court business, which would require the presence of his whole council, on whose behalf and with whose advice he had done everything in the first place. Louis managed to stave off the threat of excommunication by sending Thioto, Abbot of Fulda, to Louis of Italy and perhaps more importantly to Pope Nicholas. Having been granted an audience by the pope and king of Italy, Thioto explained clearly the reasons behind Louis's invasion, which he likely imbued with the same gloss as the *AF* (and less so *AB*) had expressed: he had been invited by the western nobility and therefore felt obliged to rescue them from Charles's tyranny. Though the invasion had not turned out that way, this line of reasoning could at least explain the motive behind his coming in the first place. *AF* 859. Indeed, this same reasoning had been presented to Hincmar through the letters that Louis and Hincmar had exchanged, as summarized by Flodoard: Louis had an interest in protecting the holdings and rights of the western church and nobility from tyranny from within and the Viking threat from without. Flodoard, *Historia Rhemensis Ecclesiae*, III.20.

churchmen had proven more difficult to win over to the idea of royal transition than some of their secular counterparts, and without church sanction for his coup, Louis knew that he would be unable to solidify his power in the west in the long term. Louis had wanted to depose his brother through overwhelming force, both militarily and politically. In the former case, he was successful; Charles retreated from the field of battle in the face of a large army. Politically, however, Louis was unable to sway enough men to his cause to win a long-term, bloodless victory. Ultimately, Louis's invasion was doomed to failure more by the reluctance of highly prominent western clerics than the resistance of his brother's armies, which Charles had been unwilling to commit to battle.⁵⁸³

Rebellions and the Return to Moravia 862-866

By the end of 862, Louis received intelligence that Carloman had returned to open rebellion in cooperation with Rastislav in spite of his oaths of loyalty during his earlier visit to Regensburg in the spring of the same year.⁵⁸⁴ An enraged Louis swore passionately and publicly (*frequentia populi sui*) that his rebel son would never again hold power as long as he was on the throne.⁵⁸⁵ Carloman had already begun another journey to Regensburg to negotiate with his father, but when he heard of this oath, he

⁵⁸³ The early Carolingians, then mayors of the palace, were deeply concerned with the papal sanction for their overthrow of the reigning Merovingian dynasty for the same reason: it turned a coup d'état from a violent seizure of power into a legitimate political act with God's backing. See Josef Semmler, *Der Dynastiewechsel von 751 und die fränkische Königssalbung* (Düsseldorf, Droste Verlag, 2003), and the voluminous secondary material cited therein for a good overview.

⁵⁸⁴ Also during that year the first Hungarian incursion upon Carolingian territory was recorded, *AB* 862. Goldberg (269) postulates that the Hungarians were essentially mercenaries hired by Carloman and Rastislav to attack the kingdom. There is no evidence for this claim other than likelihood, but it certainly makes sense that they could have been, since similar tactics of stirring up the eastern frontier had been pursued by Lothar (*AB* 841).

⁵⁸⁵ *AF* 863. Reuter construes this as a formal oath, *Annals of Fulda* p.49 n. 2; on which see F.L. Ganshof, "Charlemagne's Use of the Oath," in *Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy* 111-124. Regardless of the nature of the oath or profession (see Nelson, "Hincmar of Rheims: Kingship, Law, and Liturgy," in *Politics and Ritual*, particularly pp.152-155, with the literature cited there), the "oath" was not upheld, and Carloman would indeed hold the prefecture again as soon as he resumed loyalty to his father.

turned right around for Carinthia to weather the storm. Louis brought the storm to him. He made an alliance with the Bulgarians through their Khan Boris, and at the same time he raised a large army of his own, making it known that he planned to crush Rastislav by catching him in a pincer between the Bulgarian force and the East Frankish one.⁵⁸⁶ This alliance with the Bulgars never really came to fruition, as a combined Bulgarian and East-Frankish expedition never materialized. Rastislav had raised the stakes against Louis and the Bulgarians by attempting to ally himself with Byzantium. He had asked the emperor if he might send a teacher to explain Christianity to the Moravians in Slavic, so that they could better understand it. Emperor Michael sent the brothers Constantine and Methodius.⁵⁸⁷

Louis, purportedly wary of the nascent Moravian-Byzantine alliance,⁵⁸⁸ set out with his army from Regensburg along the Danube route eastward.⁵⁸⁹ By the time of the campaign, which departed in late August, the deceitful Rastislav had abandoned Carloman.⁵⁹⁰ Whether this passage should be taken to mean that Rastislav had withdrawn Moravian troops, panicked when he heard that Louis had launched a campaign in his direction, dropped the allegiance entirely, or forsaken Carloman in favor of throwing in

⁵⁸⁶ *AF* 863 reports that “*auxilio Bulgarorum ab oriente venientium, ut fama fuit*” (“assistance of the Bulgars was coming from the east, as was the rumor”).

⁵⁸⁷ *The Vita of Constantine; the Vita of Methodius*, Marvin Kantor and Richard White, trans. (University of Michigan Press, 1976), 43-49, 75. The need for explanation in Slavic pointed up the shortcomings of the Frankish missionaries that had been proselytizing to the Slavs up until this point; the linguistic barrier had meant that they could accept Christianity on a superficial basis but not truly understand. Constantine did one better than teach the gospel in Slavic, he wrote it down, developing a Slavic script based on Greek. See the summary of this complex geopolitical situation in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 269-273; Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 140-152.

⁵⁸⁸ As Goldberg explains in *Struggle for Empire* 272, Louis definitely knew of the potential for the alliance, and the role it played in the papal contest with the Byzantine church for the conversion of the Slavs to their respective faiths. He had contacted the pope through a legation led by Bishop Solomon of Constance.

⁵⁸⁹ *ULD* 113; the king was at Regensburg August 20.

⁵⁹⁰ *AB* 863.

his lot with the new Byzantine alliance that he was busily forging, is not certain. At any rate, changing allegiance to fit the current circumstances certainly fell well within the purview of Rastislav's usual pattern of behavior.⁵⁹¹ Just before heading out with the army, Louis sent a message to his brother Charles, asking that if his son Carloman should flee to the western kingdom—as Count Ernest's nephews had when Louis removed them from power in the wake of Ernest's defection⁵⁹²—that Charles would not harbor him.⁵⁹³

This message to Charles revealed the true objective of Louis's 863 campaign.

Louis marched east upon the Danube, purportedly toward Moravia, but instead of turning north at the Morava, he diverted the expedition south into Carantania.⁵⁹⁴ Carloman was

⁵⁹¹ Rastislav would ally with Louis's sons against him very soon indeed, *AB* 866.

⁵⁹² *AF* 861, *AB* 861.

⁵⁹³ *AB* 863.

⁵⁹⁴ This work assumes that Moravia was located in the modern, more traditional northern location, contra the work of Boba and Bowlus, who believed that it lay further to the south than usually believed, southeast of Carloman's Carinthian marcher lands. Bowlus's (128-133) general idea concerning the campaign of 863 is that, if Moravia were indeed located in the northern zone, it would have made more sense logistically for Louis to have dealt with Rastislav first, before turning to Carloman, since it would have cut Rastislav off from Carinthia and Carloman's reinforcements entirely. The necessity of dealing first with Carloman, for Bowlus, came from the hypothesis that Rastislav's realm was blockaded from East Francia by Carloman's holdings. What Bowlus's thoughtful and deeply researched analysis fails to take into account, however, is that Louis did not intend to conquer Moravia and Carloman as a single unit, or treat them as if they were going to be career allies. Louis knew full well that he would need to use every tool available to him to defeat Moravia, and if he could bring Carloman back onto his own side, he would prove a very useful asset, as a high-order military commander who could lead a branch of the army in the favored Carolingian pincer movement. Not only, however, was Louis determined to use Carloman to his best advantage, it was an affront to his royal *dignitas* to have his son allied with his nemesis Rastislav. Louis wanted to bring Carloman back into order to ensure the health of the Carolingian royal line after his death, and it was much more pressing to him personally to quell his rebel son than to deal with an enemy that had opposed him on and off for nearly two decades. Additionally, Louis needed to regain the control of those marcher nobles that felt personal loyalty to Carloman, and the quickest way to do that, aside from making donations to those still loyal to him as a check against his son's rising power (which he did from 859 to 863, *ULD* 96, 98-102, 109; as discussed above and in Bowlus 133-140), was to coerce the loyalty of Carloman, and these men would follow his lead. Bowlus's idea is that these donations were made to secure solidly the middle Danube region, in order to gain access to the Sava and Drava rivers, leading to Moravia. The contention of this work is that those regions would have been just as useful to *any* campaign involving the eastern marches, whether against Moravia or not, and it would of course help to secure the position of Salzburg most notably and other important monasteries in the region, whose supplies not only of the eponymous salt but of other supplies and as a waypoint were invaluable to armies on the long march across the frontier. Nonetheless, see also Constantin Bejanaru, *Minor Fortifications in the Balkan-Danubian Area from Diocletian to Justinian* (Cluj-Napoca, 2010), 25-26, for the Roman roads into the Balkans which might have supported a southern route.

not taken by surprise, however, as he knew that his father was furious with him due to Louis's proclamation earlier that year that Carloman would never hold benefices again.⁵⁹⁵ Louis's approach route took him from the Danube basin, through the Semmering pass and over the Schwarza River, which Carloman had put under the guard of Count Gundachar of Carantania.⁵⁹⁶ Carloman had thrown the full support of his armies behind the defense of this crossing into Carantania. This was a sensible maneuver, considering that his father's army would be much larger, and a narrow, mountainous pass and river crossing would be the best possible place to offer resistance. What Carloman did not count on, however, was the treachery of his count in the face of Louis's bribery and large army. The king had only to offer Gundachar the office of prefect, in Carloman's place, to entice Gundachar to abandon Carloman and give all of his men over to Louis's army. Carloman, with the vast bulk of his forces now adjoined to his father's, surrendered without battle and came to his father willingly. Louis made his rebellious son swear solemnly to abandon such ways in the future. Gundachar's tenure as prefect proved very short, because as soon as Carloman swore loyalty, Louis the German restored his son to his former position.⁵⁹⁷

With Carloman back in the office of Prefect of the Eastern March, Louis turned his attention once again towards Moravia. In August 864, he crossed the Danube north

⁵⁹⁵ *AF* 863 report that Carloman had been on the way to Regensburg to meet with Louis when he heard of his father's enraged oath, and he decided that he had better return to Carantania to give Louis's wrath time to abate somewhat.

⁵⁹⁶ *AF* 863; *ULD* 113.

⁵⁹⁷ *AF* 863, *AB* 863. *AF* is very sympathetic to Carloman throughout this episode, proclaiming him innocent of the charges of treachery. It is possible that this sentiment arose from the shades of Louis's own situation vis a vis Louis the Pious as he aged and sought authority of his own. After all, at Carloman's age, Louis had long been an independent king in Bavaria, so the idea that Carloman would want the same thing is totally reasonable. Gundachar would later abandon the Carolingians entirely and ally himself with Rastislav, *AF* 869, in which situation he was killed in battle "like Catiline" (*more Catilino*) while fighting Carloman's armies.

near the Morava with a large army (*cum manu valida*) and outmaneuvered Rastislav, who must have been on a plundering raid or perhaps attempting an appeal to Carloman.⁵⁹⁸ When the king's armies approached along the Danube, Rastislav, with an inadequate complement of men to offer battle to the large Carolingian force, fled to the fortress of Dowina (Devín), near the confluence of the Danube and the Morava Rivers, to take refuge inside of its walls.⁵⁹⁹ The site of the fortress was problematic for Rastislav, however, as it was perched high on a hill. The hill was very difficult to access for a besieging army, but it was also difficult to resupply for those within it. Thus, Louis, though he did not attempt to storm the fortification, easily surrounded Devín with his men and cut off resupply routes upon the river systems, which Louis was already using for logistical support, as was often his practice.⁶⁰⁰ This tactic played to Louis's strengths; his large expeditionary force could keep the fortress thoroughly surrounded, and it was almost sure to defeat any attempt at sortie from within or attack by a relieving force, since Rastislav "did not dare to engage" the East Frankish forces.⁶⁰¹ Rastislav's only advantage in the scenario was the fact that the hilltop fortification was much easier to defend than to attack, and as such, Louis negated this advantage by avoiding such a course of action. Rastislav, without much recourse, swore an oath of loyalty to Louis and

⁵⁹⁸ This was the campaign upon which the Bulgar khan ought to have accompanied Louis, on which refer to *AB* 864; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 272-273; and Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars* 140-152.

⁵⁹⁹ Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 140-152, offers a different interpretation of the campaign, which questions whether Devín was even the fortification in question. His idea is that the identification of Devín as a *Fluchtburg* ("flight fortress") does not warrant the use of the word *civitas* by *AF* 864. I rather think the inexactness of terminology often encountered in these annals does not discount a substantial fortification from being called *civitas*, when indeed, it makes good sense that a *civitas* was a thing which one would expect the king to besiege (*obsidet*).

⁶⁰⁰ On which see the detailed logistical discussions below, ch. 5.

⁶⁰¹ *AF* 864, "*congregi non auderet.*"

gave hostages to ensure it, but as the *AF* report tellingly, he abandoned it as soon as the king turned his back and left the region for Regensburg once more.⁶⁰²

Ideally, Louis hoped that in future, Rastislav and his troublesome raids and rebellions could fall under the purview of Carloman's jurisdiction as prefect of the eastern marches. This great responsibility for containing a man who had been a thorn in his father's side for nearly two decades, as well as having recently abandoned an alliance with Carloman himself, suited Carloman well. The command of this region, while not a kingship as Carloman of course would have preferred, was of crucial and indispensable importance to the safety of East Francia's Bavarian core. Louis needed to be able to trust that Carloman would not be ill-advised against his father's will, by magnates seeking to squeeze out some local authority from their Carolingian overlords, in order that they might exercise power with greater independence. To that end, Louis formally tried Count Werner of Pannonia, formerly one of his staunchest supporters since the 830s but a relative of those men purged in 861, for having incited Rastislav's most recent bout of rebellion. Werner was convicted, and Louis revoked all of his benefices as a result.⁶⁰³

Rastislav's next action against the Carolingian family was again the responsibility of one of Louis's sons, but this time it was Louis the Younger and not Carloman who allied himself with Rastislav in defiance of his father. In 866, with his sons and himself aging, and with Carloman loyal once more, Louis had set up a succession plan that

⁶⁰² *AF* 864, *licet illud minime servaverit*. The lack of real conquest, coupled with the Bulgar Khan Boris's lack of participation (which might have led to a more realistic attempt at conquest, though it is difficult to say that would have been the objective regardless rather than restoration of tributary status) has led Bowlus to deem the campaign a failure, which, just as contra *AB* 862, it was not, because conquest was not the objective.

⁶⁰³ *AF* 865. Mitterauer, *Karolingische Markgrafen*, 125-131; cf. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 267-269.

delineated the territories that each son was to receive upon the king's death.⁶⁰⁴ Louis the Younger probably supposed that he would receive a larger share in light of Carloman's recent disappointments to his father, but Louis the German restored Carloman's inheritance to him fully, angering his own namesake son. Louis the Younger responded by appealing to anyone in Saxony and Thuringia who would listen against his father. This list of enemies included Uto and Berengar, the deposed counts from earlier in the decade, as well as more recently dispossessed Count Werner, and of course Rastislav, who proved willing as ever to play the Carolingians against one another in the hopes of weakening their overall position and thereby strengthening his own.⁶⁰⁵

Louis the German acted swiftly in crushing this rebellion. This time, he boasted Carloman as an important asset rather than an enemy, and Louis invested his son with a great deal of trust straight away. Louis left Carloman in charge in Bavaria, ordering him to guard against the ever-present threat of raids by Rastislav's Moravians. It was an important gesture. Bavaria would be Carloman's kingdom upon Louis's death, and trusting Carloman to do this job showed his father's good faith in the veracity of his oath of fidelity. Carloman proved his worth immediately, leading a stout resistance against Rastislav that kept Moravian armies out of Carolingian territory, even while Louis the Younger had attempted to entice them.⁶⁰⁶

⁶⁰⁴ The details of the succession plan can be found in *Adonis Continuatio Prima*, in MGH Scriptorum SS 2, 324-325, and Notker's *Continuatio* in *ibid.*, 329.

⁶⁰⁵ *AF* 866 *AB* 866. Incidentally, this is a good window into Moravian grand strategy, which entailed the use of defense in depth and exploiting the diplomatic and political situations to keep the Carolingian hold over Moravia as weak as possible.

⁶⁰⁶ *AB* 866.

Louis, himself, moved to Frankfurt and summoned the army. Apparently the kingdom had rather tired of the pattern of rebellion of the last few years, and Louis's muster was wildly successful. The show of support resulted in a very large force (*tanta multitudo*), such that it rendered battle unnecessary to quell the rebellion, except for two local challenges, both of which resulted in disaster for the perpetrators. The first confrontation was a local revolt of one Guntbold against Carloman, whose challenge Carloman crushed easily, resulting in the nearly complete loss of Guntbold's forces.⁶⁰⁷ The second was a revolt at Mainz, but Archbishop Liutbert's military household put it down without much assistance, though several of their number were killed. The surviving perpetrators were punished brutally with hangings or mutilations.⁶⁰⁸ King Louis took his large army and moved quickly to the border with Moravia, where the royal presence was enough to snuff the remnants of his namesake son's revolt and allegiance with Rastislav.⁶⁰⁹ Louis summoned his namesake son to Worms in November, where they made peace.⁶¹⁰

Multiple Army Campaigns, 869-873

In 869, with all of his sons restored to loyalty, Louis judged it time to bring concerted war to Moravia. This year, in particular, showcased the effectiveness and also weaknesses of the marcher system, based upon the principle of defense in depth.

⁶⁰⁷ Guntbold, as Reuter notes in his edition of *The Annals of Fulda* p. 55 n.7, may have been related to one of the counts whom Carloman deposed in 861. Reuter also posits that the annalist might have meant Gundachar, which seems relatively unlikely, since he got Gundachar's name right in 863 and again in 869. The site of the battle is unlikely to be ascertained, though it was almost certainly somewhere in the east of Bavaria or Pannonia.

⁶⁰⁸ *AF* 866.

⁶⁰⁹ *AB* 866.

⁶¹⁰ On the heels of this most recent rebellion, Pope Nicholas supposedly sent letters to each of Louis's sons, admonishing them for recent actions and advising them to respect their father. *AF* 867.

Bohemian raiders had crossed into Bavaria, where they burned and plundered in the usual pattern. Very little damage was sustained, however, as the frontier commanders marshalled the local levies and drove out the raiders. Later in the year, a contingent of Bohemian mercenaries joined with the Sorbs and Siusli and raided across the Sorbian march into Thuringia, where they had more success. They not only plundered, but they defeated a local levy that tried to oppose them in open battle.⁶¹¹

Royal expeditionary forces were deployed to deal with Rastislav. Early in the campaign season, Carloman's men fought two skirmishes against Rastislav, apparently in open battle, contra the typical Moravian strategy of retreating to a fortress to wait out the campaign season, when the Frankish armies would return home with little gain having been made. In the field, the Franks could show the superiority wrought by their training and varied troop composition over the Moravian armies, who excelled more at fast moving cavalry raids. While wily Rastislav escaped, Carloman won a good deal of plunder for the royal treasury. He managed to slay his traitorous vassal Gundachar, who had not only betrayed Carloman to Louis the German at the Semmering Pass in 863, but had gone over to Rastislav when Carloman resumed loyalty to his father and regained the Carinthian command.⁶¹²

The real thrust of the 869 campaign came in August. Louis mustered a huge and well-equipped, tripartite army to deal with the various enemies that had intruded upon Carolingian lands that year. Louis the Younger led a contingent of Thuringians and Saxons against the Sorbian raiders who had been raiding across the Elbe and violating

⁶¹¹ *AF* 869, *AB* 869. Open battle was not the strong suit of the general levy; see below, ch. 4.

⁶¹² *AF* 869.

Thuringia. Carloman led the Bavarian host against Rastislav's nephew Svatopluk. Louis, himself, intended to lead a contingent derived from Alemannia and Franconia against Rastislav. This command was not to be, however, as Louis became seriously ill before the armies set out. Confined to his bed at Regensburg, Louis placed the command of the third force into the hands of his youngest son Charles (the Fat).⁶¹³ These were important commands for each of his sons, as they led armies derived from what would become their respective portions of the kingdom upon Louis's death in 876.⁶¹⁴

Charles got a good taste of frontier warfare and the reason that the Moravians were such a difficult enemy. Upon the approach of the two Carolingian armies under Carloman and Charles, Rastislav occupied Mikulčice, while Svatopluk defended Staré Město, both of which are located along the western (right) bank of the Morava.⁶¹⁵ The former is about 80km from the confluence of the Morava and the Danube, while the latter is about 120km from the Danube, 40km further upriver than Mikulčice. Both featured stone-fronted fortifications, built in a combination of wood, earth, and stone, and that at Mikulčice was 3 meters in width and at least 5 meters high.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹³ *AF* 869, *AB* 869.

⁶¹⁴ For this *divisio* refer to *AF* 873.

⁶¹⁵ Most likely this was the *urbs antiqua Rastizi* that Svatopluk occupied, as he did in 871, since the name "Staré Město" means "urbs antiqua," i.e., "old city;" *AF* 871. As Goldberg notes *Struggle for Empire* 284 n. 83, some scholars including Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions among the Slavs* (New Brunswick, 1970), 91, favor Nitra as the location for Svatopluk's principality. Staré Město site also makes sense in light of the idea supported by Bowlus *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars* 161, that Carloman and Charles "operated in the same theater," to which the *AF* 869 attest in stating that the two armies devastated *omni regione* and then joined together for the return march, since the two fortresses were only about twenty miles apart.

⁶¹⁶ Josef Poulík, "Mikulčice: capital of the lords of Great Moravia," in Rupert Bruce-Mitford, ed. *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Europe* (London, 1975), 1-31; Jiri Machacek, "Great Moravian Central Places and their Practical Function, Social Significance, and Symbolic Meaning," in *Zentrale Orte und Zentrale Räume des Frühmittelalters in Süddeutschland* (Mainz, 2013), 235-248; Hajnalka Herold, "Fortified Settlements of the 9th and 10th Centuries AD in Central Europe: Structure, Function and Symbolism." *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012): 60-84. The walls at Mikulčice were built in caisson style, that is, a wooden framework filled with earth and stones, which was fronted with stones during the latter half of the 9th century.

A direct attack on large and well-defended fortifications deep in dangerous enemy territory (at least 80km to 120km from the logistical support ships upon the Danube) was not something that the king's sons wished to undertake, but these circumstances were ideal for the dual armies anyway. Already divided, they could cause the most possible damage to enemy land. Since the campaign departed in late August, as usual, it was an ideal time of year for the Carolingian forces to utilize the Moravian crops and pasturelands for food and fodder, in order to keep the men and horses fed on grain other than their rations while depriving the enemy's forces and horses of the same. Charles did manage to besiege, subjugate, and burn several unnamed smaller Moravian fortifications—*Fluchtburgen*—in the Morava valley.⁶¹⁷

The two armies of Charles and Carloman combined for the return march home, giving them an added measure of safety in great numbers, should Rastislav or Svatopluk opt to pursue and attack them on the countermarch, which they did not. Louis the Younger, for his part, led the Saxons and Thuringians against the Sorbians, who had not left off raiding. Though the skirmish caused his men heavy casualties as well, the Sorbians suffered worse in the fighting, and they were routed and forced to return home.⁶¹⁸ The Bohemians, in contrition for the acts of those mercenaries who had partnered with the Sorbs, asked for a restoration of peace from Carloman and paid tribute, although it had been Louis the Younger who had defeated them. This was done perhaps

⁶¹⁷ Attesting to the presence of at least some siege machinery in the Carolingian forces. It is impossible to ascertain which fortifications these were, but there are numerous possibilities scattered throughout the valley, for which see Hajnalka, "Fortified Settlements," 60-84; Machacek, "Great Moravian Central Places," 235-248.

⁶¹⁸ *AF* 869, *AB* 869.

in deference to Carloman's loftier position as prefect and because he was the elder brother.⁶¹⁹

The 869 Moravian campaigns had been highly successful, resulting in a substantial amount of plunder with very few Carolingian casualties. The large Carolingian armies sweeping unchallenged through the Moravian landscape, taking fortifications, burning, and plundering, seriously damaged the reputation of Rastislav among his own people. As a result, the very next year, Svatopluk betrayed his uncle and entered into an alliance with Carloman. Rastislav attempted to assassinate his nephew for his treachery, but instead, Svatopluk's men captured Rastislav and delivered him up to Carloman. Carloman sent Rastislav to Bavaria, to await justice from Louis the German, while Carloman acted quickly to secure Rastislav's erstwhile kingdom.⁶²⁰ Raising an army, he marched throughout the Morava valley, without facing any concerted enemy resistance, taking a great deal of plunder and securing as many cities and fortifications (*civitates et castella*) as he could. He set garrisons of his own loyal men in the fortifications, including Counts Engelschalk and William. Strategically, this temporary garrisoning of the Moravian fortifications with East Frankish forces was as close as Louis the German and his sons would ever come to attempting any sort of territorial conquest in Moravia.⁶²¹

Almost immediately after this triumph, however, Carloman heard whisperings that he was being betrayed by Svatopluk, who supposedly defected as soon as his uncle was out of the way. The Carolingian alliance had played the role that Svatopluk intended

⁶¹⁹ *AF* 869.

⁶²⁰ *AF* 870. Rastislav was condemned to death, but Louis only had him blinded; *AF* 871.

⁶²¹ *AF* 870.

it to, and now he had no further use for it, intending instead to rule his and his uncle's lands independent of Carolingian overlords. Carloman had Svatopluk imprisoned and tried, but there was not definitive proof that he had perpetrated any of the offenses of which he had been accused. The Moravians, however, thought that Carloman had killed Svatopluk, and they promoted a relative of Svatopluk named Sclagamar to serve as *dux* in his place. Sclagamar immediately brought an army to avenge Svatopluk against the frontier commanders Engelschalk and William, who had garrisoned Moravian cities, but their forces resisted determinedly, driving the Moravians back.⁶²²

Carloman received intelligence of these attacks at Svatopluk's unsuccessful trial. The acquitted Svatopluk protested that he required an army to drive out this Sclagamar, who had wrongfully taken up the reins of power in his absence, promising fidelity if Carloman would give him men to drive out the pretender. Foolishly, Carloman trusted his Moravian ally despite the accusations levied against him earlier in the year, entrusting Svatopluk with a Bavarian force to retake his kingdom.⁶²³ Svatopluk ordered the Bavarians to pitch camp outside the walls of a *civitas*, but he himself entered the city, probably Staré Město,⁶²⁴ purportedly to negotiate. Once inside, Svatopluk immediately dropped the pretense of allegiance with the Carolingians. He rallied the Moravian defenders, who welcomed him openly (as, indeed, they had thought Svatopluk dead, rather than Sclagamar having seized power in a coup, as Carloman had been led to believe). This force sallied forth to attack the Bavarian camp, which was improperly and

⁶²² *AF* 871.

⁶²³ The judgment of foolishness is not my own, but rather that of *AF*, which calls the decision *incautus*.

⁶²⁴ Again, the *AF* 871 call this place the *urbs antiqua Rastizi*, and as Staré Město means "old city," it is a reasonable conclusion. Still, it is also quite possible that Engelschalk and William had installed themselves at Mikulčice or any other Moravian *civitas*.

carelessly defended, as they expected Svatopluk to return with negotiation terms rather than troops. The slaughter was enormous; many were captured or killed, including several march commanders, who likely included Engelschalk and William.⁶²⁵

Carloman was forced to send back all of the Moravian hostages he had taken for the return of the Bavarian captives, but the remnants of the ill-fated expeditionary army were either killed or perished on the journey home, save for the reportedly lone, bedraggled survivor who staggered back, barely alive.⁶²⁶ What gains the Carolingians had made against Rastislav in the banner years of 869-870 were disastrously reversed in the next by his nephew Svatopluk. There was one very minor saving grace, in that some of the frontier commanders managed to ambush a Moravian force that was returning with a Bohemian duke's daughter, who was betrothed to a Moravian prince. The frontier commanders Arn of Würzburg and Count Ruodolt (successor to the deposed Ernest)⁶²⁷ managed to entrap the escort guards in a narrow fortified place that the Bohemians had constructed against the Carolingians, about which the Moravians were unaware. The fleeing Moravians abandoned everything they had with them in an attempt to escape with their lives, and the Carolingian attackers plundered nearly 650 horses and shields.⁶²⁸

Louis's plans for the campaign season of 872 proved very complicated thanks to alterations in his inheritance plans. He continued to attempt to secure Italy and the

⁶²⁵ *AF* 871, *AB* 871 *AX* 872 (sic, 871).

⁶²⁶ *AF* 871. The last man standing is probably a heavy exaggeration but serves well to drive home the point that Svatopluk had annihilated the Carolingian army and that the hostages he did return to Bavaria were in very poor condition indeed.

⁶²⁷ See above and *AF* 861; for Ruodolt, Mitterauer, *Karoligische Markgrafen*, 169-175.

⁶²⁸ Presumably, these were part of a baggage train related to a dowry or campaign army, otherwise it makes little sense why the fleeing force would abandon their horses, which would obviously have given them a faster mode of travel. *AF* 871. Presumably, the Moravians and the daughter of the *dux* got away, since no mention is made of captives or ransoms.

imperial title for Carloman. Louis also planned to strike back at Moravia for the bitter defeats and heavy losses of 871. First, Louis held an assembly at Forcheim in March, in order that he might reconcile his sons formally and have them swear oaths of loyalty to him in exchange for a firm agreement on the division of the realm.⁶²⁹ What he really needed was their military leadership. Louis wanted them to lead detachments of the expeditionary forces against Moravia. Given the recent rebellion of the other brothers in protest against Louis's perceived favoritism for Carloman, however, it is easy to understand why they were unwilling to do so, regardless of the grudging loyalty oaths that they had taken under duress.⁶³⁰ These oaths were taken very publicly, however, in front of all the military households present, to give the appearance of royal cooperation and unanimity in East Francia.⁶³¹

Regardless of Charles and Louis the Younger's ultimate refusal to cooperate in the king's plans,⁶³² Louis the German sent four separate expeditionary forces into the field in 872, all related to the plans for the Moravian invasion. Carloman led one very large army (*hostem quam magnam potuit*), comprised of Franks and Bavarians, along the easterly route via the Danube, while another force of Thuringians and Saxons proceeded southeast through Bohemia, in the hopes of repeating the successful pincer invasion of 869.⁶³³ This would have been the force led by Louis the Younger and Charles, had they

⁶²⁹ *AF* 872.

⁶³⁰ *AB* 872. Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 304-309.

⁶³¹ *AF* 872: "*in conspectu totius exercitus*" ("in sight of the whole army"). This would have been only military households in March, as troops would not have assembled for campaign until at least May, as indeed the Thuringians and Saxons did in the same year. Cf. the account of these oaths in *AB* 872, which calls them *dolose*, "deceitful."

⁶³² *AB* 872.

⁶³³ This is the Saxony-to-Moravia route that Louis had been attempting to secure since the campaign of 846 met such trouble in that region; see above and the logistical discussion in ch. 5.

participated. Instead, Louis the German entrusted this force to the leadership of the region's *duces*, and the result was a disaster. With royal leadership absent (*quoniam regem secum non habebant*), the army's leaders quarreled among themselves concerning tactics, and the disagreements among the leadership wore down the army's morale. Though he was not mentioned by name, it is extremely likely that Thachulf, the commander of the Sorbian march, would have had a hand in leading this campaign, and it was a repeat of the enormous failure of 849.⁶³⁴

As a result of the leadership failures, rather than fighting as one for a clear objective, the divided army was routed easily by local defense forces. The East Franks ruthlessly mocked the returning forces with the rumor that women had knocked the leaders off of their horses and beat them to the ground.⁶³⁵ It is unclear if this army actually made it to Moravia, which seems unlikely, since Carloman's did, and they were unable to join one another. What is more likely is that this Saxon/Thuringian pincer was defeated again, as in 846, by Bohemians, through whose lands they traveled. As such, Archbishop Liutbert of Mainz was sent with another army to atone for this incompetence and punish the Bohemians, while another force of Franks was sent under Bishop Arn of Würzburg and Abbot Sigihard of Fulda, to render assistance to Carloman. Under Liutbert's strong leadership, his expeditionary force routed a large army (*magna multitudine*), under five or six Bohemian *duces* who had rebelled and probably beaten back the Saxon/Thuringian host.⁶³⁶ The Carolingian force pinned the Bohemian one

⁶³⁴ *AF* 849 and above for details.

⁶³⁵ *AF* 872: "...comites in illa expeditione fugientes a mulierculis illius regionis verberati et de equis in terram fustibus deiecti referantur" ("It was reported that the fleeing counts in that expedition were beaten by the little women of those regions with clubs, and were thrown from their horses to the ground").

⁶³⁶ *AF* names them all: Zuentislan, Witislan, Heriman, Spoitimar, Moyslan. As Reuter notes in *Annals of Fulda* 68 n. 5, and Kurze in *AF* 872 p. 76 n. 2, one manuscript appends an additional name,

against the Vltava River; trapped in this compromising position, the Bohemians fought for their lives, but they eventually routed. Numerous men were killed, either by Carolingian swords or by drowning in the river, while the men who did manage to escape fled to fortified places.⁶³⁷

The forces of Carloman, Arn, and Sigihard did indeed make it to Moravia. It is unclear whether or not the two forces actually managed to meet up with one another and make a joint effort at one objective, or whether Arn and Sigihard were driven back before they could rendezvous with Carloman's force. Carloman had successfully invested a heavily fortified city (*civitas munitissima*), probably either Mikulčice or Staré Město, with a siege, and Svatopluk led the defense of that fortress.⁶³⁸ Mikulčice seems more likely, for logistical reasons. In order to facilitate quick travel, the East Frankish army had left a good deal of their supplies on rivercraft upon the Danube for logistical support, where supply lines could easily be maintained up the Morava, to the army besieging Mikulčice. Had the army been at Staré Město, however, suppliers would have had to pass Mikulčice en route, which would have been dangerous, but not necessarily impossible. A detachment of Bavarians was left at the Danube to guard the ships under Bishop Embricho of Regensburg. Svatopluk sent a detachment of his own south, where they ambushed the Bavarian defenders, who met a similar fate as the Bohemians that Liutbert had defeated. Many Bavarians were killed, many drowned, and others were taken captive. There is no mention of what the Moravians did with the ships; most likely they were

Goriwei/Boriwoi to the list of Bohemian *duces* provided. Reuter believes him to be a legitimate addition, based upon the literature he cites there.

⁶³⁷ *AF* 872.

⁶³⁸ *AX* 872: "*Ibique obsessi diu grande dampnum sustinuerunt*" ("And there, they were besieged for a long time and sustained great property loss"). Svatopluk had used Staré Město as his base of operation while Rastislav held Mikulčice in the 869 campaign, but by now Svatopluk could have fled to either city.

captured or plundered and destroyed. Bishop Embricho and a few of his men managed to escape with their lives. Carloman's force made it back safely regardless, and they even took a bit of plunder with them, but that was enough to raise the siege for that season.⁶³⁹

Two scenarios are possible for the forces of Arn and Sigihard. The first is that, although Arn and Sigihard fought determinedly with the enemy in an attempt to meet Carloman's army and join the siege, their own forces suffered heavy casualties from skirmishes with Moravian local defenders who had not taken refuge with Svatopluk's army inside the fortress.⁶⁴⁰ The other possibility is that Arn and Sigihard were left in charge of the siege, while Carloman's men ravaged the countryside on horseback in a proper *chevauchée*.⁶⁴¹ Certainly, Carloman's men inflicted a great deal of damage, as he inflicted "slaughter and fire"⁶⁴² upon the countryside, and the Moravians "sustained great property loss."⁶⁴³ Arn and Sigihard's forces reportedly returned from Moravia with great difficulty (*cum magna difficultate regressi sunt*).⁶⁴⁴ One cannot help but think that the loss of the ships upon the Danube must have contributed to their difficulties returning home, particularly if—though such is not stated explicitly—Carloman led the mounted troops back from their *chevauchée* separately, once the supply train was compromised.

⁶³⁹ *AF* 872, *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus Antiquis Excerpti* 872.

⁶⁴⁰ The *AF* stress the bravery of the Carolingian force and the difficulties they caused for the Moravians, but this could all be face-saving for Sigihard of Fulda (since the author of *AF* at this point was most probably Meginhard of Fulda), under whose partial leadership the expedition fought. On authorship see Reuter's introduction to *Annals of Fulda*, 1-9.

⁶⁴¹ Certainly, the siege was maintained by someone while Carloman pillaged and burned—whether it was Arn and Sigihard or simply the better part of the Bavarian force that Carloman had brought.

⁶⁴² *AF* 872, "*caedes et incendia exercuisset*."

⁶⁴³ *AX* 872, "*grande dampnum sustinueret*."

⁶⁴⁴ *AF* 872.

In August of 873, the important *dux* Thachulf of the Sorbian March died. His personal influence was feared by his colleagues and enemies alike.⁶⁴⁵ The peoples over whom he had watched on the other side of the march, the Sorbs and Siusli, rebelled immediately as a direct result of his death, seeking to exploit the void of power to gain a measure of independence from Carolinian authority.⁶⁴⁶ Louis sent an expeditionary force under the command of Thachulf's able successor Ratolf and Archbishop Liutbert of Mainz to deal with them. The winter of 873-874 was savage by all accounts, so cold, in fact, that rivers as large as the Rhine and Main froze solid and could be crossed on foot.⁶⁴⁷ So, while the cold undoubtedly caused problems in terms of the necessity of keeping men and animals warm, it also simplified river crossings. In January, the expeditionary force that Louis dispatched under Ratolf and Liutbert crossed over the frozen Saale and burned several Sorbian fortifications, which was enough to cause the rebels to sue for peace. The rebellion tested the mettle of the new commander of the march, but his energetic response soon convinced the Sorbs that their previous status was acceptable after all.⁶⁴⁸

Conclusions

Campaign strategy is in general dictated by grand strategy, since different forces, tactics, and operations are better suited to different types of grand strategic objectives.

The whole of Louis the German's reign illustrates this very well, as he tailored his armies

⁶⁴⁵ *AF* 849 shows the deference he received from enemies, as well as the fear and suspicion he aroused in his comrades, who were wary of his influence.

⁶⁴⁶ *AF* 873.

⁶⁴⁷ *AF*, *AB*, and *AX* 873-874 all report it as unusually cold and snowy. *AF* provides the detail about the frozen rivers being able to be crossed on foot.

⁶⁴⁸ *AF* 873.

and tactics to different grand strategic aims in different theaters and under different circumstances. Early on, his tactics and operations were constrained by the small size of his Bavarian kingdom, relative to that of the emperors Louis the Pious and Lothar I. As such, he aimed to operate from positions which were easily defensible, such as garrisoning fortifications and waiting for the opposition to make the first move, or trying to catch the enemy in a compromising situation like a river crossing. This strategy is exemplified by his actions against his father in 838-839 and the campaigns against Lothar and the new emperor's *dux* Adalbert of Metz in 840-841, before the Battle of Fontenoy. It was highly successful against Adalbert, whose army Louis crushed at the Battle of the Ries; Adalbert himself numbered among the dead.

The Battle of Fontenoy in 841 enabled Louis to solidify his claim to the entirety of East Francia against Lothar, who had attempted to claim the whole realm for himself. The civil war continued for two years, until the *divisio* was finalized in the Treaty of Verdun in 843. After the treaty ensured his claim to the whole of East Francia, Louis could trust in his ability to raise much larger expeditionary forces, derived from not only Bavaria and Pannonia, but Saxony, Franconia, Alemannia, and Thuringia as well. The possibility for larger forces led Louis to exhibit a strong preference for campaign strategies that were well established by Carolingian precedent. Against strong enemies like the Moravians in the 860s or his half-brother Charles in 858, Louis favored fielding very large armies. The intent of these large armies was to avoid open battle by fielding a force so overwhelming that the enemy surrendered in the face of hopeless odds. The desire for battle avoidance was fully justified by the slaughter at Fontenoy, when two of these very large Carolingian forces met on the battlefield and inflicted enormous

casualties upon one another. Louis often deployed his armies in several parts to execute pincer movements, in order to lessen the logistical burden of marching the whole force together. This was especially true in his campaigns across the eastern frontier. Multiple large armies had been a hallmark of Charlemagne's campaigns, and Louis continued in this mold.

Louis also preferred large armies and vallation to direct assault when conducting trans-frontier sieges. It was far less deadly to surround a well-fortified and heavily defended Moravian fortress, while sending mounted troops to ravage the countryside, than it was to storm the walls and take the place by force. A successful assault upon a well-defended fortification required the attackers to outnumber the defenders by a ratio of at least 4:1 or 5:1, and even with such overwhelming odds, the attacking force would expect to suffer substantial casualties. It is also notable that Louis did not put much stock in taking these eastern enemy *civitates*, since his grand strategic aim—to restore the Moravians to tributary status rather than to conquer their territory and incorporate it into the East Frankish kingdom—once again dictated campaign strategy. These eastern expeditions, the largest of which were conducted against Moravian fortifications such as Devín, Mikulčice, or Staré Město, were usually supported logistically by supply lines that were anchored by rivercraft upon the Danube.

Louis did not need quite the same number of men to put down smaller uprisings, such as those by the Obodrites and Sorbs, which occurred frequently but did little lasting damage in East Francia. The limited scope of the damage inflicted by raiders owed to the march system of defense in depth, as well as Louis's efforts to quell the rebellions. Typically, when local resistance was insufficient, Louis could send march commanders

such as his son Carloman or Counts Ernest, Werner, and Thachulf, with locally-derived expeditionary forces to deal with these rebels. Louis also led expeditions across the frontier personally to crush larger uprisings, such as that by the Obodrite “King” Goztomuizli in 844. Once restored to tributary status, ambassadors from the subject peoples across the frontier were expected to bring gifts to the royal assemblies, through which they confirmed their loyalty to Louis.

As Fried has noted, Louis the German was not an innovator.⁶⁴⁹ In essence, he is certainly correct. The pejorative intent of the statement, however, is misguided. Louis looked to Carolingian precedent for campaign strategy, building upon the wealth of knowledge and experience amassed by his predecessors and the institutional memory accrued by the palace staffs. Innovation and change were not necessarily concepts which were deeply valued in this context. Rather, if such strategies had worked for Charlemagne, often held up contemporarily and later as the greatest of Carolingian monarchs, they would work in the middle and late ninth century as well. For the most part, this thinking was correct. Certainly, the ninth century brought new enemies like Moravia and different circumstances like the divided kingdom, which required adaptation. The core strategies that undergirded Charlemagne’s military forces, however, continued to be utilized to great effect, as Louis kept his kingdom intact and even expanded it after the death of Lothar II in 869.

⁶⁴⁹ Fried, “The Frankish Kingdoms, 817-911: East and Middle Kingdoms,” *NCMH* 2, 142-168.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FIGHTING FORCE

How was the Carolingian military organized? How large were later Carolingian armies? What sorts of troops did they feature, and what training did these men receive? What kinds of tactics did they typically utilize? Traditional scholarship, as discussed above, claims that later Carolingian military forces were quite small and comprised primarily of cavalry. Heinrich Brunner believed that Charles Martel's contact with Muslim cavalry at the 732 Battle of Poitiers/Tours convinced Martel of the value of cavalry and prompted a rapid reorganization of the military as a cavalry force. This has since been shown to be demonstrably false.⁶⁵⁰

Observations of Carolingian campaigns show that to achieve widespread military success in very varied conditions, the Carolingians needed to be capable of mixed forces, comprised of infantry, cavalry, and siege equipment. A cavalry-dominated force, as Brunner suggested, would have encountered a great deal of difficulty conducting successful sieges, which the Carolingians executed on numerous occasions. The primary value of mounted troops is mobility, and in a siege, their usefulness is restricted to

⁶⁵⁰ Heinrich Brunner, "Die Reiterdienst und die Anfänge des Lehnwesens," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte. Germanistische Abteilung* (1887), 1-38; Building on Brunner's theory, Lynn White in *Medieval Technology and Social Change* (London: 1962), postulated that it was, in fact, the advent of the stirrup in the west that caused both a dramatic restructuring of society to facilitate fielding of cavalry, and a shift in military tactics, once warriors realized that the stirrup enabled a rider to couch a heavy lance beneath his arm while rising in the stirrups to deliver a powerful blow to an opponent without falling off of his horse. Thus, according to both scholars, by the Battle of the Dyle in 891, the Franks had become "unaccustomed to fighting on foot" (derived from the Latin *pedetemptim*). This technologically deterministic approach has since been widely discredited, primarily by Bachrach, who showed that Carolingian forces were not typically equipped with stirrups (except perhaps occasionally as an aid for the mounting of a horse), since they were not mentioned in Charlemagne's inventories and capitularies. Additionally, Brunner's understanding of the word *pedetemptim* was flawed—the term does not mean fighting on foot as an infantry force, but rather step-by-step, in a creeping fashion, as would have been necessitated by the very swampy terrain upon which the Battle of the Dyle took place. Bachrach, "Charles Martel, Mounted Shock Combat, the Stirrup, and Feudalism." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 7 (1970), 49-75. An excellent synopsis of the entire stirrup debate can be found in Contamine, 179-184.

combating sortie attempts by the besieged force, scouting, and foraging. A successful siege, whether one chooses to storm fortifications or starve the defenders, requires a very large force of infantry and siege equipment.⁶⁵¹ Louis the German's armies successfully besieged Slavic fortifications on several occasions, though he typically preferred to set up a system of vallations, cut off supply, and starve or intimidate the enemy into submission rather than directly storming the walls.⁶⁵² Such a strategy has its benefits and disadvantages. Storming walls directly could be quick and decisive, but it often resulted in massive casualties for the besieging force. Louis was unwilling to risk such casualties far across his eastern frontier, since a large reduction in his forces would have left him vulnerable to counterattack. The cost of establishing and carrying out a protracted siege, however, is that it could last a very long time, often an entire campaign season.⁶⁵³

As discussed above, the preferred Carolingian campaign strategy was to deploy overwhelming force against the enemy, who, ideally would submit without bloodshed. Just what order of magnitude, however, constituted overwhelming? The exact size of large east Frankish armies under Louis the German is still a matter for debate. To estimate the size of Louis's full expeditionary host, Goldberg works from the high-end estimate of Carolingian army size established by Karl Ferdinand Werner at around 100,000 potential effectives. Werner's number is based on Charlemagne's armies, which could be mustered from the entirety of the Carolingian realm. Goldberg then simply divides this roughly by three to account for Louis's reduced kingdom size, arriving at a

⁶⁵¹ Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* 28-38. Also see Bachrach's evidence for the limited usefulness of cavalry in Charlemagne's Slavic sieges in "Charlemagne's Cavalry: Myth and Reality." *Military Affairs* 47/4 (Dec. 1983), 181-187.

⁶⁵² An excellent example was the 864 siege of Dowina/Devín, where Louis's army surrounded Rastislav's force and cut off resupply to the fortifications, forcing Rastislav to sue for peace. *AF* 864 and above, ch. 3.

⁶⁵³ See, for example, the *AF*, 855.

high end possibility of around 30,000 men.⁶⁵⁴ He cautions, however, that this is the number of effectives that the realm could provide at a maximum, that is, if all possible troops were mustered from all territories at once. This was a rarity, because Louis tended to muster troops from the closest regions to the intended destination of the campaign, which made logistical sense, since he wanted to subject them to the shortest possible marching distances, thus reducing the burdens of supply for himself and exertion for his men.

Though different campaigns required different size armies and different types of troops, Goldberg believes that Louis's expeditionary forces typically numbered in the range of 2,000 to 12,000 men, with around 10,000 being most common.⁶⁵⁵ The figure seems entirely reasonable in light of the available sources willing to postulate exact figures on army size. Agnellus of Ravenna numbers the casualties of the combined armies of Lothar and Pippin at 40,000 men at Fontenoy.⁶⁵⁶ Regino of Prum claims that in 876, Charles the Bald brought an army of 50,000 men against his nephew Louis the Younger.⁶⁵⁷ Both of these figures are likely exaggerated to a degree, but even if one reduces those orders of magnitude substantially, a very high end estimate for an East Frankish campaign army of 30,000 is not out of the realm of plausibility.

⁶⁵⁴ This is methodologically simple but effective, given the fact that the brother kings attempted to partition the realm evenly into three sections in the pre-Verdun survey of the kingdom. Nithard IV.1; *AF* 842-843, *AB* 842-843.

⁶⁵⁵ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 125-126. That is to say, it is unlikely that a force of 30,000 men would have been necessary—or even desirable, given the increased logistical burden—for a mission like putting down a frontier rebellion, and as such, Louis would have employed a smaller and more manageable force.

⁶⁵⁶ Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, 174.

⁶⁵⁷ Even Regino was suspicious of the number he provided, however, caveating this number with “as they say,” *ut ferunt*. Regino, *Chronicon*, 873.

Regarding tactics and organization, Bernard Bachrach has shown that the Carolingians, particularly Charlemagne, possessed an impressive apparatus of intelligence gathering and military advisors—to which he refers as the “Carolingian General Staff”⁶⁵⁸—as well as a thoroughgoing concern for logistical preparedness and training. The Carolingians greatly appreciated the role of tactics, planning, and logistics in military education, for which they drew upon medieval editions of Vegetius’ *De Re Militari*, particularly, for Louis the German, that produced by Rabanus Maurus.⁶⁵⁹ The careful training of troops enabled infantry to execute the maneuvers necessary to successfully fight in rank-and-file formations like the phalanx, while cavalry were rigorously drilled in the execution of complex maneuvers like the feigned retreat.⁶⁶⁰

While phalanxes and feigned retreats were drilled in preparation for pitched battles, siege techniques were also practiced, as sieges were a more common form of medieval military encounter than open battle. Vegetius also contains a wealth of information on Roman siege techniques and apparatus, which were certainly known to the warriors and engineers of the Middle Ages as well. Jim Bradbury, stressing continuity with Late Antiquity,⁶⁶¹ has shown that Carolingian armies certainly retained the tactical and engineering knowledge, as well as the logistical capability, that enabled them to

⁶⁵⁸ Bachrach, “Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff,” *Journal of Military History* Vol. 66 No. 2 (April 2002), 313-357; *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 202-206.

⁶⁵⁹ Raban, *De procinctu Romanae militiae*. Ernst Dümmler, ed. *Zeitschrift für deutsches Alterthum*, 15 (1872):443-51; Vegetius, *Epitoma rei Militaris*, Carl Lang, ed. (Leipzig, 1869); N.P. Milner, trans., *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science* (Liverpool, 1993).

⁶⁶⁰ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 86-101, 119-130; Bachrach, “The Practical Uses of Vegetius’ *De Re Militari* in the Early Middle Ages.” *Historian* No. 47 (1985), 239-255. Some scholars disagree with Bachrach on the use of Vegetius and the continuity of forms like the phalanx, see for example John France, Review of Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (October, 2001), 1079-1080.

⁶⁶¹ Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 1992), xiii.

execute successful sieges, such as that undertaken by Louis the Pious in 800-801 in Barcelona.⁶⁶²

Louis the German and his brothers received their military training at the court of their father, Louis the Pious, who had in turn received his from Charlemagne's advisers in Aquitaine. As such, Louis's forces were very well trained in typical Carolingian military maneuvers. All forces were drilled extensively to maintain proper military discipline. They were taught to march in formation, use their weapons appropriately, conduct sieges and handle siege equipment, cross rivers and other obstacles, and to reconnoiter extensively. Louis's court possessed a copy of Vegetius' late Roman military manual, from which it is likely that Louis worked.⁶⁶³ Expeditionary infantry were trained in the use of the sword, spear, shield, and bow, some of which skills were valuable in hunting as well, a very popular pastime among the Carolingian nobility and one which Louis himself enjoyed very much.⁶⁶⁴ Cavalry were typically drawn from the ranks of the wealthy, men who could afford to own several costly warhorses. Cavalry training, usually begun at a young age, included everything from the use of the lance on horseback to the execution of complex maneuvers in formation like the feigned retreat. They could also dismount to fight on foot if necessary.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶² Bradbury, 28-35, 280; Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 103-119.

⁶⁶³ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 39-42; Bachrach, "The Practical Use of Vegetius' *De Re Militari* during the Early Middle Ages." *Historian*, Vol. 47 (1985), 239-255.

⁶⁶⁴ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 87-119; on hunting see Goldberg, "Louis the Pious and the Hunt," *Speculum* 88 (2013), 613-643; idem, *Struggle for Empire*, 42.

⁶⁶⁵ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 119-130. "Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare," in Chickering, ed., *The Study of Chivalry, Resources and Approaches* (Kalamazoo, 1988), 173-211; Jurg Gassmann, "Combat Training for Horse and Rider in the Early Middle Ages," *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 6.1 (2018), 63-98.

Louis employed many of the military tactics and campaign strategies that Bachrach identifies as typically Carolingian.⁶⁶⁶ His armies were organized with the goal of deploying overwhelming force. He also executed pincer movements, marching two separate forces against a single foe in the hope of encircling them.⁶⁶⁷ This was a very effective way of forcing an enemy to submit without giving battle; trapped between the encircling forces and unable to maneuver effectively, the enemy would be forced to surrender rather than be annihilated.

Louis and his sons and magnates proved capable leaders and tacticians on numerous occasions. Their extensive training and discipline of their forces proved highly important, as armies retained discipline and order during the execution of long marches, difficult river crossings, protracted sieges, and close combat in pitched battles. Louis even was esteemed as particularly adept among his relatives, both in the civil war atmosphere of the late 830s and early 840s, and later in his reign in contests against his brother Charles the Bald, a fact which did not go unnoticed by contemporary chroniclers.⁶⁶⁸

Military Organization

The early Carolingians utilized a tripartite military structure, each part of which could be utilized for different types of operations.⁶⁶⁹ The basic format of this structure

⁶⁶⁶ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, esp. 160-242.

⁶⁶⁷ *AF* 869-70, in which Louis, assisted by his son Carloman in the command of the other detachment, fielded separate forces against Moravia. J.F. Verbruggen, "L'Armée et la Stratégie de Charlemagne," in Braunfels and Beumann, eds., *Karl Der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, Vol 1. (Düsseldorf, 1965), 420-436.

⁶⁶⁸ See eg. Regino, *Chronicon* 876, and Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II.1.

⁶⁶⁹ Bernard Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare: Prelude to Empire* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 51-57; and idem, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns: a Diplomatic and Military Analysis*, (Leiden, Brill, 2013), 5-7. The tripartite military organization continued even further than the

continued through the ninth century, although Louis the German and his brethren kings adapted it to suit their concurrent grand strategic aims—which were growing more defensively oriented relative to the time of Charlemagne—and it allowed the Carolingian forces a great deal of flexibility in the raising and training of different types of hosts. As explained above, Louis the German’s long term strategy changed over the course of his reign, but the classic Carolingian military structure enabled him and the other late Carolingian kings to be flexible with the raising of armies each year, so that they might deploy forces appropriately composed and equipped to suit the campaign strategy for that season.

Louis the German, like his Carolingian predecessors to whom he looked back for examples—particularly his father Louis the Pious and grandfather Charlemagne—frequently fielded large armies designed around the doctrine of overwhelming force. He much preferred that the enemy should surrender without giving battle, overawed by the sheer size and equipment of the Carolingian host before them.⁶⁷⁰ This flies in the face of much of the classical scholarship that claimed that the ninth century Carolingian host, as well as the Ottonian armies that followed, had devolved into very small forces comprised primarily of elite cavalymen.⁶⁷¹ Rather, the large armies model established by the early

ninth century in the East Frankish realm, extending into the tenth century, when the Ottonian kings deliberately built upon the Carolingian precedent to organize and muster their own armies. See David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge, 2012), 70-101.

⁶⁷⁰ See esp. Notker, II.17. Although his account of Charlemagne’s siege of Pavia is seriously over-romanticized, the image he paints of Charlemagne’s well equipped and massive army is exactly the sort of impression that the Franks wished to present to the enemy. See also the work of J.F. Verbruggen, and K.F. Werner, who have shown beyond reasonable doubt that the Carolingian host far outstripped a few thousand effectives. J.F. Verbruggen, “L’armée et la stratégie de Charlemagne,” in *Karl der Große, Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, Vol. 1 (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1965), 420-436. Karl Ferdinand Werner, “Heersorganisation und Kriegsführung im deutschen Königreich des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts,” *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano sull’alto Medioevo* 15 (Spoleto, 1968), 791-843.

⁶⁷¹ Sir Charles Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages, AD 378-1485* (London, 1924); Hans Delbrück, *History of the Art of War Within the Framework of Political History, Volume III, The Middle Ages*,

Carolingians has been shown to continue through to the Ottonian period, and Louis the German was no exception to this paradigm.⁶⁷² His forces were composed of varied troop types, in order that they might be flexible and adapt to any sorts of military operations. The three main arms of the tripartite military machine, from largest to smallest, were the general levy of all able bodied males, the expeditionary—or select—levy of those men of sufficient economic means to equip themselves for offensive campaigning, and the *obsequia*, the military households of any large landholders, including counts, dukes, bishops, abbots, and most importantly, the king.⁶⁷³

Annals and chronicle sources make clear the differentiation between these types of forces. In 838, for example, the *AF* reports that Louis the German, when his father deprived him of his kingdom, brought his military household (*cum suis*, signifying only his men, i.e., his retinue) with him to Frankfurt in an attempt to negotiate with his father. Louis the Pious, by contrast, made a show of force against his son, arriving at Mainz with a large expeditionary army (*adversantem cum exercitu*) in order to drive him from the territory.⁶⁷⁴ Though Louis the Pious did not attack him directly, choosing instead to bide his time and celebrate Christmas at Mainz, in early 839, Louis the German had no choice but to fall back into Bavaria, where he could count on loyal support and a substantial

translated by Walter J. Renfroe Jr., (Westport, CT, 1982) 21-24; F.L. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions Under Charlemagne*, translated by Bryce and Mary Lyon (Providence, RI, Brown University Press, 1968), Ferdinand Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au moyen âge en Europe et dans le Proche Orient* (Paris, Payot, 1946). For a fundamental debunking of Delbrück's methodology and circular argumentation, which posit that small armies were a result of a late Roman and early medieval shift to a barter economy, see Bachrach, "Early Medieval Military Demography: Some Observations on the Methods of Hans Delbrück," in Donald Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon, eds., *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History* (Woodbridge, Boydell, 1999), 3-20.

⁶⁷² D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 70-101.

⁶⁷³ Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 5-7; idem, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 51-83; D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* 70-101.

⁶⁷⁴ *AF* 838.

network of fortified places to defend. *AF* presents this as an act of contrition, claiming that Louis retreated because it was unconscionable that a son should make war against his father, but good sense shows that overwhelming force had prevailed: Louis had no chance against his father's large army with only his military household to aid him.⁶⁷⁵ Louis the German could only attempt to take advantage of his father's army in a compromised position; he attempted to stop them from crossing the Rhine.⁶⁷⁶ When this measure was unsuccessful, however, he averted disaster by retreating into Bavaria, thereby avoiding open conflict with the superior force.

Infantry necessarily comprised the bulk of both the local levy and the expeditionary fighting force. Far less expensive to arm and supply than cavalymen, they also required less hauling for the baggage train, which in Carolingian times was notoriously cumbersome.⁶⁷⁷ An infantryman could carry his own arms on the march and required substantially less food than the horses ridden by mounted troops. Additionally, infantry provided the army with a great deal more tactical flexibility, both on an open battlefield and during sieges. In the field, the combination of infantry and cavalry typically was far superior to either by itself. The infantry formation—drawn up in the mold of the phalanx or Anglo-Saxon shieldwall—acted as the anvil upon which the fast

⁶⁷⁵ *AF* 839.

⁶⁷⁶ *AB* 839.

⁶⁷⁷ The baggage train was an attractive target for attack if inadequately defended; not only was it slow moving and vulnerable, but it carried the bulk of available plunder, as befell Charlemagne's forces crossing the Pyrenees in 778, immortalized in the infamous *Song of Roland*; see Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* c.9, p. 12; *ARF* 778; Isabel Butler, ed. and trans., *The Song of Roland* (Boston, 1904). Bachrach recently has argued that this work should be read as an anti-French, Norman satire, intended to portray Roland—supposedly the best the French had to offer as a commander—mockingly as a military bungler. Regardless of Roland's execution of the charge of commanding the rearguard that ought to have protected the baggage, the fact that his failure as a commander and the Roncevalles disaster warranted satire in the first place only serves to point up the extraordinary measures taken to defend the train. Bachrach, "Is the *Song of Roland*'s Roncevalles a Military Satire?" in *Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society: Studies in Honor of Richard W. Kaeuper* (Leiden, Brill, 2017), 15-35.

moving cavalry hammer attempt to break the enemy force. The presence of a solid infantry formation reduced enemy maneuverability while cavalry attempted flanking or encircling maneuvers. This forced the enemy not only to account for the infantry mass that engaged the front of their formation, but also to defend their flanks against the charging horsemen attempting to hem them in and attack from the rear. While this strategy generally held true for pitched battles, the same could not be said for sieges, when cavalry were at the nadir of their usefulness. Since many Carolingian campaigns involved—and often, were dominated by—sieges, infantry were both highly desirable and absolutely necessary. Hence, it was of the utmost importance that campaigns be carefully planned, provisioned, and equipped to ensure that the force fielded would be appropriately capable of executing the sorts of operations that the campaign required.

The importance of fielding an appropriate force cannot be overstated; for example, a force comprised primarily of mounted troops would have been of little use in sieges, and the logistical problem of feeding many horses, whose use was limited, remained. On the other side of the coin, a long and cumbersome baggage train that carried a large amount of siege impedimenta would be highly undesirable in an expedition against Slavic or Viking raiding parties, whose speed rendered engaging them problematic enough, even for an army with minimal encumbrance. A force that included swift moving cavalry, however, would be ideally suited for such a campaign. Most of the time, however, the Carolingian expeditionary forces set out equipped with all of the above: forces of infantry, cavalry, and siege implements and the engineers required to utilize them properly.

The General Levy

The first of the three parts of the Carolingian military was the general levy of all able bodied males, meaning those of a suitable fitness level and age (roughly, around fifteen to fifty-five) to do military service. This general levy included men of all economic statuses, including unfree peoples and non-Franks. The general levy was not an expeditionary force; rather, it was intended for local defense. All able bodied males were responsible for assisting in the local defense of the places in which they lived against invasion, or *lantweri/Landwehr*.⁶⁷⁸ In the ninth century, evidence for the continuity of this universal military obligation comes from the 847 capitulary proclamation at Meerssen, where the three brother kings Charles the Bald, Louis the German, and Lothar I met to renew oaths of cooperation. The fact that the three were present in support of one another, and that Charles explicitly said that men from any part of the Carolingian realm should give *lantweri* service, indicates quite clearly that this obligation was universal and applied to the East Frankish kingdom as well.⁶⁷⁹ Charles the Bald's famous Edict of Pîtres further shows that defending cities and the marcher fortifications was a duty shared

⁶⁷⁸ Walter Goffart, "'Defensio Patriae' as a Carolingian Military Obligation," *Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte* 43 (2016), 21-40, argues *contra* B. and D. Bachrach, Delbrück, Reuter, and Coupland, that the supposedly "ancient tradition" of Frankish military service in defense of the realm did not exist. Instead, he postulates that poorer freemen were just as liable to the obligation for expeditionary levy service as their wealthier counterparts. For the traditional view Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte des Kriegskunst im Rahmen der Politische Geschichte* (Berlin, 1907), esp. 3-18; Simon Coupland, "The Carolingian Army and the Struggle Against the Vikings," *Viator* 35 (2004), 49-79; Timothy Reuter, "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," in Peter Godman and Roger Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Rein of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990); Bernard and David Bachrach "Early Saxon Frontier Warfare. Henry I, Otto I, and Carolingian Military Institutions," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 10 (2012), 17-60; though this is the Bachrach work cited by Goffart, B. Bachrach's earlier work *Early Carolingian Warfare*, esp. 52-54, better established his viewpoint. See also Bachrach's critique of Delbrück "Early Military Demography: Some Observations on the Methods of Hans Delbrück," in Donald Kagay and L. J. Andrew Villalon *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 1999), 3-20.

⁶⁷⁹ MGH *Capitularia* II.204, p. 71.

by all, explicitly those who did not meet the property requirements for service in the expeditionary levies.⁶⁸⁰

Given the focus on local defense, the entire general levy typically would not have been called up simultaneously.⁶⁸¹ Only those portions of the kingdom which were facing an immediate threat would have been mobilized. The early Carolingians and Charlemagne rarely had need to call upon this universal military obligation, since their armies were largely characterized by expeditionary forces geared towards conquest of additional territory to expand the *regnum Francorum*.⁶⁸² In the ninth century, however, extensive conquest had largely ground to a halt, and defensive warfare became far more prominent in military operations. The number of threats, both internal and external, speaks well to this change; between Vikings, Slavs, Spanish Muslims, rebellious magnates, Saxons, and rival Carolingian kings, *et al.*, the later Carolingian monarchs were often hard pressed to defend their territories.⁶⁸³ As a result, the local, general levies played a somewhat larger role than they had during the earlier period of the expansion of the Carolingian empire.

The general levy was not intended as the first and last line of defense against determined enemy invasion, but rather, it was a fundamental tool in the system of defense in depth. The general levy was led by whatever prominent landholders and their *obsequia*

⁶⁸⁰ *Edictum Pistenses* in MGH Capitularia II.273, c. 27; *in civitate atque in marca wactas faciant: ad defensionem patriae omnes sine ulla excusatione veniant.*

⁶⁸¹ Certainly the 847 Meerssen proclamations made provision for the calling up of the levies of the whole kingdom against concerted foreign invasion, but such an invasion of that scale never materialized during the lifetimes of the three kings—Lothar I, Charles the Bald, and Louis the German—present at the Meerssen meeting.

⁶⁸² Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 50-54.

⁶⁸³ In some years, kings were forced to deal with several of these threats in the same campaign season, and they leaned heavily on the local levies to hold fortifications until they could lead a larger force in to deal with invasion more fully. See, for example, *AF* 869.

were present in the region under duress, but much of the rank and file was comprised of regular folk, given rudimentary training in the use of arms, in order that they might defend the areas in which they lived until a more professional or highly trained military force could be mustered to deal with the problem if necessary. As such, the general levy was comprised primarily of infantry troops. Common citizens were extremely unlikely to own a horse that was fit for battle; warhorses and draught horses typically used in agricultural work were very different beasts, and the former were far more expensive to buy, feed, and train.⁶⁸⁴

Of course, more professional soldiers—local lords and their retainers—were required to muster for the general levy as well, and so the general levies could expect to field some number of cavalry troops under most circumstances. Cavalry, however, played only a small role in the usual types of operations faced by the general levy, since this type of force was usually utilized in the defense of fortified places. Infantrymen were far more useful than mounted warriors on both sides of a siege, as they could, among other things, man battering rams, blockade gates against assault, fire missile weapons, operate siege machines, or scale or topple ladders. The main siege function of cavalry consisted of making or countering a sortie: that is, riding out of the fortification in an attempt to attack the camp of the besieging force and thus break the siege. Still, the professional soldiers who comprised the Carolingian cavalry could—and would be expected to—dismount and

⁶⁸⁴ Bachrach, “Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare,” in Chickering and Seiler, eds., *The Story of Chivalry* (Kalamazoo, 1988), 173-211.

fight on foot when defending fortifications against a siege; it was the horse, not the man, whose use was limited.⁶⁸⁵

Oftentimes, the presence of a local levy within a fortification was enough to ensure self-preservation. Raiders who might have killed members of the local populace peacefully working the fields and plundered their territory were faced with a very different prospect when these same men moved within the walls of a fortified place and took up arms.⁶⁸⁶ Louis the German's kingdom included a large number of fortified places of various origins, a combination of royal palaces, large cities, and more rural late Roman⁶⁸⁷ and earlier medieval fortresses often called *Fluchtburgen*, to which the local populace would flee when faced with foreign invasions or raids.⁶⁸⁸ Most of the time, this was enough to preserve their lives, and eastern, primarily Slavic raiders were content to go home with whatever plunder they had been able to gain rather than risk establishing

⁶⁸⁵ The characterization of a particular soldier as an infantry- or cavalryman here should be understood to address only the way in which he fought during a particular encounter. It matters not how he got to the battlefield, whether mounted or on foot. Typically, of course, wealthier, nobler men who could afford to do so would ride rather than march. Conditions of the battlefield and the nature of the fighting to be undertaken—siege versus pitched battle—would do more to dictate how each soldier fought in each confrontation. The attempt to characterize soldiers who usually fought on horseback as “dismounted cavalry” when they fought on foot, or foot soldiers who rode while on the march as “mounted infantry,” is unnecessary and anachronistic. See the treatment of the matter in Stephen Morillo, “The ‘Age of Cavalry’ Revisited,” in Donald J. Kagay and L.J. Andrew Villalon, eds., *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History* (Woodbridge, Boydell, 1999), 45-58, esp. 47. Morillo's essay suffers from some of the problems typical of overgeneralization, as is to be expected, when attempting to tackle a chronological scope of some 1200 years from the fourth century to the sixteenth, in fourteen short pages, but the clarity of his definitions upon the outset is meritorious.

⁶⁸⁶ On the complexity and difficulty of executing a successful siege, see especially Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, Boydell Press, 1992); Bernard Bachrach, “Medieval Siege Warfare, A Reconnaissance.” *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 58 (1994), 119-133.

⁶⁸⁷ The late Roman use of defense in depth is covered in E.N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press 1976), 127-190.

⁶⁸⁸ Lit., “flight fortresses,” see esp. Paul Grimm, “Der Burghagen bei Reifenstein: Zur Funktion frühgeschichtlicher Befestigungen,” *Ausgrabungen und Funde* 15 (1970), 285-291; idem, “Zu Burgenproblem des 8.-10. Jh. westliche der Saale,” *Zeitschrift für Archäologie* 16 (1982), 203-210; Günther Binding, *Deutsch Königspfalzen von Karl dem Großen bis Friedrich II (765-1240)* (Darmstadt: Primus, 1996); Johnny de Meulemeester, “Comment s'est défendu au IXe siècle?” *Acta Archaeologica Lovaniensia* 8 (1995), 371-385.

sieges. The local levy, as its members were not all professional or even necessarily experienced soldiers, could prove very weak when they ventured outside fortified places. In 869, Bohemian raiders crossed into Louis's kingdom, burning several villages and making off with a number of women captives. When a number of enraged men of the local levy collected themselves to meet the raiders in open battle, the result was disastrous, as they were all killed and the raiding continued. Louis was forced to send marcher lords and their retainers against the Bohemians to defend the countryside until such time as he could deal with them personally.⁶⁸⁹

The effectiveness of Louis the German's general levies is attested by the particularly notable events of 873. In June of that year, the Viking prince Rudolf, who had made a habit of raiding Charles the Bald's kingdom frequently, sailed a fleet into Louis's realm to plunder Frisia. Rudolf demanded that the inhabitants pay him tribute, which they refused, claiming that they would only pay tribute to Louis the German or his sons. Infuriated, Rudolf decided to invade Frisia, vowing to kill the men, capture the women and children, and plunder all of the kingdom's wealth. The Frisian local levy, however, resisted fiercely, killing Rudolf and somewhere in the neighborhood of 500 to 800 of his men. The levy then cut off access to the Viking warships, trapping the survivors within a fortified building that they surrounded. Judging themselves incapable of besieging the Vikings without substantial bloodshed, the levy set terms: they would let the survivors depart so long as the Vikings paid an enormous ransom and gave hostages

⁶⁸⁹ *AF* 869.

to ensure payment. Wounded and beaten, the raiders agreed and swore an oath never again to return to Louis's kingdom.⁶⁹⁰

Under particularly extraordinary circumstances, it seems that the general levy could be called upon for offensive campaigning, which was usually more consistent with the function of the expeditionary levy, addressed below. In 832, Louis the German, angry that his own kingdom had been reduced to include Charles the Bald in Louis the Pious' inheritance plans, raised an army of all Bavarians—free and unfree alike—and many Slavs as well. He planned to attack Charles's kingdom, which Louis hoped to plunder and absorb into his own, and then continue to attack his father, in which effort he had been advised that all the eastern Franks and the Saxons would ultimately join him. Louis the Pious crushed this effort by crossing the Rhine with a large force to oppose his son, who was forced to retreat back to Bavaria and disband the army.⁶⁹¹ It is conceivable that Louis the German could have construed the reduction of his kingdom as an act of aggression, and, therefore, he summoned the general levy to defend against it. Regardless of the justification, the execution of the campaign was undoubtedly offensive in nature and, therefore, provides an important exception to the general levy's normal usage. It is also highly likely that Louis the German retreated quickly in the face of his father's resistance, because he did not believe that the Bavarian general levy would stand a chance in open battle against his father's expeditionary forces, composed of battle-hardened troops from throughout the western portion of the empire.

⁶⁹⁰ *AF* and *AB*, 873. It was a banner year for Carolingian resistance to the Vikings. While the Frisians killed Rudolf and many of his men, Charles the Bald besieged the Vikings who had established themselves at Angers, setting up a strong system of vallations and holding another force in reserve to prevent anyone getting in or out via crossing of the Mayenne River. *AB* 873.

⁶⁹¹ *AB* 832.

The forces of the marcher lords, combined with the local levy or militia forces, were far and away the most likely to be used in the general levy capacity of universal military obligation for the defense of one's home territory. March commanders were also very likely to lead offensive campaigns on their own in the absence of the king while he tended to other matters, since their territories were usually some of the furthest from the central bases of East Carolingian power at Frankfurt and Regensburg. Thachulf, Louis's embattled dux of the Sorbian march, dealt with numerous rebellions by the namesake peoples bordering on his territory, and he led a disastrous campaign that would have been successful, had not his own fellow commanders grown jealous of his influence and started an ill-advised skirmish with an already beaten enemy that ended in a reversal of fortunes brought on by their extreme incompetence.⁶⁹²

The Expeditionary Levy

The second type of force was the expeditionary or select levy, the main intent of which was offensive. This force consisted of those men who possessed suitable economic means to equip themselves reasonably for offensive military operations. Under Charlemagne, at the bare minimum, this meant a spear or sword and shield, a bow and quiver of arrows, and some form of defensive armor.⁶⁹³ The earlier Carolingians utilized this type of force extensively, and during the ninth century, it remained highly prominent,

⁶⁹² *AF* 849, *AB* 849.

⁶⁹³ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 54-57

in spite of the already noted shift towards defensive warfare, rather than offensive conquest. This was the sort of force frequently employed in the Carolingian civil wars, as well as in campaigns against the Slavs across Louis the German's eastern frontier. Much like the general levy, these troops were not usually raised from all parts of the kingdom at once, but ideally from areas near the intended sites of campaign, or wherever a king could expect to derive a large contingent of loyal men. The loyalty factor was increasingly important in the ninth century, particularly during the civil wars, since any magnate who might defect to a rival king and bring a substantial body of men with him was likely to prove more a hindrance than a help.⁶⁹⁴

For Louis the German, this sort of large, loyal force was to be found primarily in his Bavarian heartland, the first region over which he was given authority by Louis the Pious in the *ordinatio imperii* of 817, and the only region which he controlled consistently throughout the entire course of the civil conflicts.⁶⁹⁵ Even when he was theoretically dispossessed of the region by his father, Louis the German could count on Bavarian support when he moved against his father to stake his claim to his kingdom.⁶⁹⁶ In 839, when Louis the Pious reconciled with his sons, he restored to Louis the German only Bavaria, which was a substantially reduced kingdom as a punishment for his infidelity, but it left plenty of room for future military maneuvering and capability on Louis the German's part: even with only Bavaria, he could raise a substantial number of

⁶⁹⁴ See for example the circumstances surrounding the negotiations at the "Field of Lies," where Louis the Pious saw some less-satisfied magnates defect to his sons, having been won over by promises of *honores* and *beneficia*. *AB*, 833, Nithard, I.4; Louis the German's own son Carloman caused him similar difficulties several times: *AF* 861-863, *AB* 861-863; and in the same circumstances, Louis deprived several very notable men who turned traitor of their benefices: Counts Ernest, Uto, Berengar, Sigihard, Abbot Waldo, *AF* 861; Prince Carloman, *AF* 863; Count Werner, *AF* 865.

⁶⁹⁵ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 29-32

⁶⁹⁶ *AF* 839, *AB* 834, 839.

troops.⁶⁹⁷ To complement the Bavarian force that comprised much of Louis the German's expeditionary forces on most campaigns, the king attempted to raise troops from regions convenient to the places he intended to campaign. In 856, for example, Louis raised a core force in Bavaria, whence he proceeded through Sorbian lands, picking up several Sorbian *duces* and their forces along the way, and proceeded farther east with this combined army to subjugate the Daleminzi Slavs. The return march proceeded along a route that took him through Bohemian lands, where several Bohemian *duces* surrendered to him as well.⁶⁹⁸

Early in his reign, as noted above, Louis the German needed to rely primarily upon Bavarian troops to fill the ranks of the select levies. In the civil war era of the 830s until 843, Bavaria was the only portion of East Francia that remained consistently loyal to Louis the German. Hence, the Bavarians typically formed the core of the East Frankish expeditionary levy. Other regions were equally responsible for supplying troops to the expeditionary host, but Louis the German could not entirely rely upon their loyalty until after 843, when the division of the kingdom was settled by the Treaty of Verdun. Indeed, before his father's death in 840, Louis the German was only a sub king under his father the emperor, and in theory if not always in practice, his kingdom bore equal responsibility to muster for his father's expeditionary levy if called upon to do so. Certainly, Bavaria never would take the emperor's side against his son, who was the king who was physically present in the region and who commanded a good deal of personal

⁶⁹⁷ *AF* 839, *AB* 839, *NH* 839.

⁶⁹⁸ *AF* 856.

loyalty from the men with whom he had associated most frequently since first establishing himself in Bavaria around 825 to rule in person.⁶⁹⁹

The Saxons, however, were entirely another matter. Later in his reign, Louis the German frequently employed Saxon forces in the expeditionary levy to good effect, but in the early struggle against his father and brothers, he could not be sure of Saxon loyalty. In 832, the Saxons made good on the fact that they ultimately owed their loyalty to the emperor, at that time Louis the Pious. When Louis the German desperately summoned the whole of his Bavarian general levy and a complement of Slavs to challenge the above-mentioned creation of a kingdom for Charles the Bald, Louis the Pious called upon the Saxons to assist him in opposing his son, and they obeyed.⁷⁰⁰

The situation would soon change, however, with the death of Louis the Pious in 840. Though Lothar would get the imperial title and regalia, Saxony fell to Louis the German, and the Saxons provided him with a hugely important supplement to the expeditionary forces. The Saxons, from the time of Charlemagne, had established a reputation for military excellence, and as such, it was very important to Charlemagne that they fight for the Franks rather than against them. Charlemagne spent year after year subjugating and attempting to convert and “Frankify” the Saxons, even issuing them special capitularies and laws to ensure that they would remain strictly and firmly under Frankish legislative control.⁷⁰¹ The fact that it took Charlemagne, the greatest of Frankish military commanders by the assessment of contemporaries and historians alike, so long to

⁶⁹⁹ *ARF* 825, after the Brittany campaign mentioned in *ARF* 824.

⁷⁰⁰ *AB* 832.

⁷⁰¹ *Capitulatio de Partibus Saxoniae*, MGH *Capitularia regum Francorum* 1.26; *Capitulare Saxonicum* 1.27; *Leges Saxonum*, MGH *Leges* 5, p. 1-102.

pacify the Saxons attests to the strength of their armies and determination of their resistance.⁷⁰² In the ninth century, Nithard, himself a soldier of the highest order, reported that the Saxons were both noble and very warlike (*bella promptissimi*), and, indeed, they proved it through frequent service in Louis the German's armies.⁷⁰³

Based on administrative structure, it is roughly estimated that the Saxon region boasted from around 35,000 to 70,000 males of eligible age and fitness for military service.⁷⁰⁴ Of course, not all of these men would have been summoned to expeditionary duty at the same time, nor would the entirety of Saxony be likely to participate in the general levy at once in case of attack; rather, only the most threatened regions would have countered incursions. Still, the number of militarily eligible males is very useful in estimating the size of the expeditionary forces that Louis the German might be able to draw from the region. Based upon the above estimate, if even a tenth to a quarter of the Saxon population were summoned to action, the king could expect to derive some 3,500 to 17,500 troops for the expeditionary levy from that region alone. The upper bound of that estimate (one quarter of 70,000) seems rather high, but even 3,500 fighting men—fewer even than the 4,500 fielded by Widukind and executed by Charlemagne in one day in 782 at Verden—would substantially bolster the expeditionary levy's magnitude. The military strength of the region certainly must have been far more substantial than 4,500

⁷⁰² On Charlemagne's protracted conflict with the Saxons, see Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 193-245, 427-468, 510-630.

⁷⁰³ Nithard, IV.2. Nithard's assertion is only one small piece of evidence to refute Karl Leyser's thesis that the Saxons lacked mounted fighting men and were undisciplined, ineffective soldiers until Henry I instituted a military revolution in the tenth century that reformed the Saxons into a force of knightly warriors that would comprise the core of Ottonian military forces. See Leyser, "Henry I and the Beginnings of the Saxon Empire," *The English Historical Review* 83 (1968), 1-32; idem, *Medieval Germany and its Neighbours*, esp 11-42. Leyser's theses are convincingly and thoroughly refuted in Bernard and David Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution, 912-973?: Myth and Reality," *Early Medieval History* 15 (2007), 186-222.

⁷⁰⁴ Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 209-210.

on the whole, as indeed, the rebel Widukind continued to harass Charlemagne until 785, even after losing some 4,500 effectives.⁷⁰⁵

The aftermath of Fontenoy and the Saxon *Stellinga* rebellion marked an important turning point in Saxon loyalty toward Louis the German. Though he had been defeated at Fontenoy (841), Lothar stubbornly refused to meet his brothers' requests for peace talks, continuing to resist them through military skirmishes and tricky diplomacy. While Louis and Charles encamped their expeditionary forces together against his own, Lothar attempted to foment rebellion in Saxony and among the Northmen, in order to stir up discontent and instability in Louis's kingdom. Lothar two-facedly supported the *Stellinga* rebels of the lower class while attempting to curry the favor of the Saxon nobles into support for his cause. Louis's army included a substantial Saxon component, and he feared that Lothar's machinations could have disastrous consequences, both in Saxony and possibly among the Saxon contingent currently encamped with him.⁷⁰⁶

While the army engaged in wargames to keep fit and disciplined, boost morale, and entertain themselves, welcome news soon came into the camp from two separate sources.⁷⁰⁷ First, Louis's son, Prince Carloman, arrived with a very large contingent of reinforcements from Bavaria and Alemannia. Second, Count Bardo returned from an envoy mission in Saxony with the news that the rest of the Saxon nobles had rejected Lothar's diplomatic maneuverings, and they awaited orders from Louis. Both arrivals would have been an enormous boon for the morale of the beleaguered expeditionary

⁷⁰⁵ *ARF* 782 for the executions and 783-785 for the continued Saxon rebellions in the wake of the "massacre at Verden."

⁷⁰⁶ *AF* and *AB*, 841-42.

⁷⁰⁷ More on the wargames below, in the section on training.

forces. Equally important, however, is the evidence that, even after the enormous number of men that had been committed to Fontenoy, which was probably somewhere in the tens of thousands,⁷⁰⁸ Louis the German's kingdom could still manage to summon forth another massive army (*ingenti exercitu Baioariorum et Alamannorum*) of reinforcements.⁷⁰⁹ Later in the reign, this would prove very important, as Louis would field several expeditionary forces simultaneously.⁷¹⁰

The fielding of several expeditionary forces at once was a hallmark of Carolingian military history. Charlemagne had been fond of the pincer movement, sending two armies at a time out on divergent routes of march around an enemy force or fortification, cutting off logistical support and encircling the enemy in a hopeless and immobile position. Louis the German continued the tradition of fielding multiple expeditionary forces. The year 858 provides an excellent example. From his court at Frankfurt, Louis ordered that three armies be deployed at once to the frontiers of his kingdom. His sons Carloman and Louis the Younger would lead forces against the Moravians under Rastislav and the Obodrites, respectively, while dux Thachulf would command the third force, which was to march against the Sorbs.⁷¹¹

⁷⁰⁸ Agnellus of Ravenna reports that 40,000 men died in the armies of Lothar and Pippin alone. Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis*, MGH Scriptores Rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum p. 390. The number is a clear exaggeration, but even if the actual number of dead was a tenth of that—a very low-end estimate considering Andrew of Bergamo's claim that "many thousands" had died at Fontenoy—the casualties would have been quite large. Given that the victory obviously was not decisive, as Lothar was able to drag on the civil war for two more years, his army must have had a substantial number of troops alive and still in fighting shape. Nowhere is it mentioned that either force was outnumbered, and so the total number of troops that Lothar/Pippin and Louis/Charles were able to muster should be reckoned at least relatively even. If even a very low estimate of 4,000 deaths is accepted, the army must have numbered in the tens of thousands; since losing nearly half of a force would certainly have produced a decisive victory.

⁷⁰⁹ Nithard, III.6-7.

⁷¹⁰ As in, for example, *AF* 858 and 869.

⁷¹¹ *AF* 858.

Though these armies were all assembled, complications arose that derailed the plans to deal with the frontier issues. An embassy arrived from the west, asking Louis to come and establish control over his brother Charles' kingdom, ostensibly because his policies of paying tributes to the Vikings rather than challenging them directly were shameful and bankrupting the treasuries.⁷¹² Louis and his advisers considered their options before coming to the conclusion that they must give aid to their fellow Franks against the threats they faced. At least, that was what was reported in the annals. Far more likely is that Louis was only too eager to achieve a huge shift in magnate support by proving that his forces were up to the task that Charles's were not.⁷¹³ He diverted his army west to Ponthion, where a number of Charles's magnates rallied to his support. Charles abandoned a siege against the Vikings, hurrying to challenge Louis's daring move into the western kingdom. The eastern army under Louis enjoyed superior numbers, however, and Charles realized that he could not hope to challenge it without disaster. His army did as well, apparently, abandoning him and joining with Louis's expeditionary forces. Once this had happened, Louis—foolishly, according to the Annals of Fulda—sent home a number of his eastern soldiers, trusting in the newfound support from the deserters. Ultimately, Louis's maneuverings came to nothing, as the Sorbs rebelled, killing the Carolingian client dux Zistibor and forcing Louis to hurry home to deal with the problem.⁷¹⁴

⁷¹² On which see Simon Coupland, "The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and their Consequences," *Francia* 26.1 (1999), 59-75; Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 21-41.

⁷¹³ Which Regino believed, as in *Chronicon* 866 (sic, 858), when he says that Louis invaded because *animi regum avidi et semper inexplebiles sunt*: "the spirits of kings are greedy and always insatiable."

⁷¹⁴ *AF* 858, *AB* 858.

The year 869 also saw numerous expeditionary forces in the field at once, and it was a particularly active year for all the branches of Louis's military. The campaign season began with bands of Bohemians, Sorbs, and Siusli raiding across the border into Thuringia. Some of the local populace banded together to attack the raiders, rather than heading into the nearest *Fluchtburg*, as they ought to have done. The expedition was a disaster, and the raiders killed all of the locals who had attempted to challenge them. Louis sent the frontier commanders against the raiders to stall for time until he could send a substantial complement of men out to deal with the raiders and pacify the region. In August, Louis at Regensburg issued a massive army summons, for a force that would be divided in three ways. Louis the Younger led a contingent of Thuringians and Saxons against the rebellious Sorbian raiders. Carloman took the loyal Bavarian host against Zwentibald, Rastislav's nephew. Louis planned to lead the Franks and Alemannians against Rastislav himself, but illness forced Louis to entrust the leadership of his force to his youngest son Charles while the king remained home to convalesce.⁷¹⁵

These three expeditionary forces each achieved a measure of success. Louis the Younger engaged the Sorbs in a bloody clash that resulted in heavy casualties to both forces, but in the end, Louis was able to conclude a truce and drive the Sorbs and their Bohemian mercenaries home, with substantial losses and hostages. Carloman and Charles set out for Moravia, where Carloman ravaged Zwentibald's territories; Charles besieged a substantial Moravian fortification, possibly Staré Město, and although he did not attempt to take that particular fortress by force, he did succeed in ravaging much of the countryside and taking several smaller fortifications in the region. Following their mutual

⁷¹⁵ *AF* 869.

successes, the brothers Charles and Louis brought their forces together for the return march, in order to discourage a possible counterattack.⁷¹⁶

The 869 campaign season also exemplified the practice of raising an expeditionary force, whenever possible, from a region of close geographical proximity to the place that they were intended to campaign. This served several purposes. First, the soldiers would have less physical distance to travel to the site of battle, which meant a significant reduction in logistical requirements. A shorter route of march meant that the troops would arrive fresher and would need to transport less food, clothing, horses, carts, and other necessary materials. Second, the leaders of the expeditionary force, were they derived from the magnates nearest the intended campaign region, could be expected to possess relatively more information and intelligence than the counts of farther off regions, on account of their more frequent day to day experience on the ground. Indeed, leaders from adjacent regions might well have participated directly in gathering information for the royal court regarding the possible routes of march, fortresses in the region, political situation amongst the enemy, and the collection of logistical resources.⁷¹⁷ As such, it made good sense that Louis the Younger should lead a cohort of Thuringians and Saxons against the Sorbian raiders who had been making incursions into Thuringia. The fact that the raids were led into their homeland provided yet further impetus for the Thuringian troops to be preferred over troops from another region; it would be easy for a

⁷¹⁶ *AF* 869; *AX* confirms the success of the three force campaign, though mislabeling it as 870. *AB* is less charitable, stressing the casualties incurred by Louis the Younger's forces despite the ultimately positive outcome.

⁷¹⁷ Charter evidence confirms the breadth of knowledge that local men brought to the royal court regarding their respective regions, as per Carolingian tradition. See the discussion below and McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*, 77-126.

competent leader to stir up a firm desire for vengeance in such men, since the raiders had plundered their lands and killed their neighbors.

Meanwhile, Louis would entrust his most loyal and proven forces from Bavaria to his son Carloman, while he himself led the Franks and Alemanni against Moravia. The proven nature of the soldiers was the most important facet of this mission. Expeditions against Moravia were notoriously difficult, given the long march, the persistence and military skill of the enemy, and the impenetrability of the fortresses. In terms of the length of prolonged conflict, the refusal of the enemy to submit to Carolingian dominance, and the necessity of repeated royal campaigns into a frontier region, parallels easily may be drawn between Louis the German's wars against the Moravians and Charlemagne's Saxon wars.⁷¹⁸ Much like the Saxons had done in the previous century, the Moravians had presented serious problems of frequent rebellion and border raids into Carolingian territory since the mid-840s, when Louis hoped to combat the problem by appointing Rastislav as dux over the region.⁷¹⁹ This measure, of course, did not succeed even remotely, as Rastislav, intended to be a Carolingian puppet, instead stepped right into a leadership role of the Moravian rebellions, orchestrating and organizing them frequently. Even rather late in his life, Louis the German preferred to lead the momentous Moravian campaigns against his troublesome duke in person, as his grandfather had done against the Avars and Saxons, although on this particular occasion, serious illness, such that his doctors believed his death imminent, prevented him from carrying out that plan.

⁷¹⁸ On Charlemagne and the Saxons, see H. Mayr-Harting, "Charlemagne, the Saxons, and the Imperial Coronation of 800," *English Historical Review* 111 (Nov 1996), 1113-1133 and the literature cited therein, as well as Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 193-245, 427-468, 510-630.

⁷¹⁹ *AF*, 846.

His two sons Carloman and Charles, however, carried out their duties admirably in his stead, executing arguably one of the most successful Moravian campaigns on record. The effectiveness of the Carolingian pincer strategy had been proven once again.⁷²⁰

The burden for raising the expeditionary levy rested upon the shoulders of the major government officials of the realm: dukes, counts, and those bishops and abbots of major monasteries who held immunities. The count was the man responsible on the most local level for ensuring that those men of his *pagus* who were eligible for military service actually showed up for the muster.⁷²¹ The obligation to do military service in the general levy was shared by all able bodied men, but expeditionary service required substantially more training and wealth to undertake. Therefore, such service was required of only those men who could reasonably afford it and who had the physical abilities necessary for training and military service. A number of Charlemagne's capitularies spell out the general ratios for land ownership to the concomitant requirements for expeditionary service. Men who owned three or four manses, or held a benefice from the king, were required to render military service to the king.⁷²² Those smaller property owners who did not meet the minimum requirements were required to join together with other men of similar means, in order that together, they might provide a soldier to the expeditionary levies.⁷²³

⁷²⁰ *AF* 869.

⁷²¹ *MGH Capitularia* I.50, particularly c. 1, which stipulates that any man who met the property qualifications should proceed to the army with the count of his region, or go to the army with his lord—i.e., if he were to accompany a lord other than the local count as part of the lord's military household. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 57-59. On the military origins of counts in the late Roman and early Carolingian periods, see 213-15.

⁷²² *MGH Capitularia* I.48, c. 1 and 2.

⁷²³ *MGH Capitularia* I.48 c. 2, I.50 c. 1.

Certainly, the military households of the major landowning nobility comprised a very professional arm of the expeditionary levy in person, but clerics and other less-soldierly landowners also shared the obligation to provide soldiers for the king's host. Every monastery in the realm was subject to an annual tax to support the expeditionary levy in the field, which required that they provide the king with the kits to fully support two mounted soldiers, warhorses and all.⁷²⁴ This relatively small tax, of course, was collected in addition to the number of soldiers that monasteries and other large landholders were expected to provide for the expeditionary host based upon the size of their holdings: i.e., between one manse and three manses or the equivalent income equated to providing one lightly armed fighting man. Holders of more than 12 mansi were required to provide a heavily armed, mounted soldier (plus lighter armed soldiers for each manse in excess of 12). Service could be performed in person, or via a substitute, as was necessarily the case for old men, the sick, weak, or women landowners like abbesses.⁷²⁵

In return for these royal taxation and expeditionary force requirements, major monasteries were often granted royal immunity from other forms of taxation on the local level and from public justice.⁷²⁶ Numerous royal charters show that tax collectors, members of the judiciary, and even counts and dukes were to keep out of monastic lands and business by order of the king.⁷²⁷ In return, the monks were expected to pray diligently for the souls of the royal family, including the departed, and for the general

⁷²⁴ ULD I.70.

⁷²⁵ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 54-57.

⁷²⁶ On immunity generally, see Barbara Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space*, esp. 1-24 and 99-114 for the Carolingian period particularly.

⁷²⁷ Numerous examples suffice to show this, but I.70, I.75, and I.80 provide good examples of the general formulae that the royal chancery used to express immunity.

health and success of the Carolingian realm. The royal protection of immunity granted the monasteries a good degree of independence from temporal power, giving the brothers or sisters the right to elect their own abbots or abbesses, to settle their own judicial complaints, and to use the land given to them as they saw fit for their own sustenance and utility.

The important exception to this exemption from worldly affairs was the provision for the royal expeditionary force, which included not only the weapons and horses for two soldiers, but also the obligation to provide for the army as it passed through their territories. Counts, dukes, royal tax collectors, and the like were forbidden to demand lodgings or make preparations for their travels or forces at the monasteries, but this prohibition granted by royal immunity by no means extended to the king and his levies.⁷²⁸ The essential point regarding the royal immunities on a military level, is that they were not evidentiary of the king giving away his authority or showing weakness. This was delegation.⁷²⁹ By granting royal protection and immunity, formalized in a royal charter sealed with the king's signet ring, Louis the German emphasized the importance of certain places and respect for the important work, both spiritually and logistically, that monasteries did to provide for the souls of the royal family and kingdom and to support the raising of the royal host. This delegated responsibility had an important symbolic effect for the receiver, in that it emphasized their importance and *Königsnähe*, as well as a very pragmatic one in the form of royal protection. In return, the king derived the important twofold benefit of ensuring the beneficiary's loyalty and also delegating to

⁷²⁸ *Nullus iudex publicus... mansiones vel paratas faciendas... ingredi audeat* is the usual formula (I.70, p 110 for example) but the king's armies were not subject to the same prohibition.

⁷²⁹ D. Bachrach, "Immunity," esp. 8-19 for the Carolingians.

them a portion of the important responsibility of government administration: provisioning, and indeed manning—depending on size of holdings in the standard Carolingian fashion—the expeditionary forces.

Starting in 851, Louis began issuing a series of charters that allowed landholders to conduct land transactions with local nobility. At first glance, this privilege might not seem highly significant, at least not when compared to the prestige and economic value that accompanies receiving a grant of land or tax exemptions from the king.⁷³⁰ Its function, however, was of great importance to military and logistical preparation and consolidation. Were a man such as Liudpram of Salzburg permitted to buy and sell land of his own accord, he operated with a certain measure of autonomy, to be sure, which again might seem at first glance like a relaxing or weakening of royal authority.⁷³¹ Realistically though, its function was all about delegation. Louis issued numerous charters granting the privilege of exchanging certain lands to various parties who wished to do so.⁷³²

The reason for their exchanges was usually convenience; one man might exchange a village far afield from his main estate for something that another man owned a bit closer, preferably adjoining. Diversification of estates could be another explanation; perhaps one party might wish to exchange an abundance of pasture for some woodland or arable fields. Regardless, however, these types of exchanges amounted to a good deal of business for the royal chancery that only tangentially related to the holdings of the king. Usually, regardless of ownership, the king could expect the same amount of revenue from

⁷³⁰ ULD I.59, I.60, I.62. Another had been issued in 848, I.47, for Lorsch.

⁷³¹ ULD I.60.

⁷³² ULD I.6, I.16, I.35, I.39 for example.

the same lands—barring something highly unusual like a transaction with someone who later rebelled or went over to one of Louis’s brothers. By granting the exchange privilege, Louis put the onus for recording these transactions on the recipients themselves, without the necessity for issuing separate charters confirming the exchanges. The other important function was that these men were then free to consolidate their own estates to the greatest possible convenience, which in turn rendered them more capable of providing unified, cohesive, and accessible support to the king’s armies, while also making the consolidated territories easier for general levies to defend in the event of enemy raids. For regions like Salzburg, located well to the east of the kingdom, towards the frontier, this ability to defend coherent areas and draw supplies from the same was of especial importance.

Louis continued the pattern of charter issuance in 852, a year of which he spent the bulk not on campaign, but settling court cases regarding landholdings. It is possible that the lack of a royal campaign could owe something to serious famine, which would have constrained the kingdom’s capacity for feeding expeditionary forces.⁷³³ On the first of October, Louis convened at Mainz a synod of all the bishops of his kingdom, under the leadership of Archbishop Raban of Mainz. The synod doubled as a royal assembly for that year, and while the bishops sorted out church concerns, Louis and his nobles dealt with secular matters, which included receiving the annual Slavic ambassadors, who came bearing their assigned tribute. The king and council also settled a number of disputes there, which was customary at royal assemblies, but such mundane business did not often garner specific mention from an annalist.⁷³⁴

⁷³³ AX 852.

⁷³⁴ AF 852.

Apparently, the administrative and judicial burden was rather extensive that year, because after heading for Cologne to meet with several of Lothar's magnates, Louis turned for Saxony, where he heard numerous judicial cases personally. Local judges supposedly had been lazy and neglectful, letting cases drag on without attending to them. Many of these cases concerned land ownership as well. Royal lands, either held in benefice or not, had been usurped from the king or their holders, which had the potential to threaten the king's ability to raise troops and requisition supplies from the region of Saxony, which had become very important to the expeditionary forces and the general levies that would resist the most likely routes of Viking invasions, should any be forthcoming, as they had in 845, when the Saxon levy had successfully fended off an attack.⁷³⁵ Louis convened another assembly in Minden, where he settled private judicial cases and restored rightfully royal lands to himself or to their beneficiaries. He took a circuitous route through Saxony to Thuringia, settling more disputes and ultimately holding another assembly at Erfurt, where he attempted to stem apparently rampant corruption with a decree that no lord or inquisitor should serve as an advocate in a case in his own district. The return to Regensburg for Christmas must have been a welcome respite.⁷³⁶

Military Households

The third and smallest type of force was the *obsequium*, or military household.⁷³⁷ This consisted of a king or magnate and his loyal retainers who surrounded him at nearly all times at his court. Such a force accompanied Louis the German on every journey he

⁷³⁵ AF 845, AX 845.

⁷³⁶ AF 852.

⁷³⁷ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 65-71.

made, acting as bodyguards to ensure the king's safety from bandits and raiding parties, as well as providing a small but very highly skilled and professional military presence for lesser conflicts, like small-scale rebellions.⁷³⁸ Like the king, each would have been highly trained in riding and military techniques from a young age, and they also would have practiced these skills constantly, whether through battle maneuvers or hunting, a common passion among many of the Frankish nobles, particularly Louis the German.⁷³⁹

The military households of the king and the assembled magnates comprised a very important part of the expeditionary levy as well. These were the bulk of the expeditionary cavalry forces, and they were the sort of crack troops who could be expected to do much of the heavy fighting on the battlefield: highly trained veterans who were inured to the psychological demands of hand-to-hand combat.⁷⁴⁰ They would be expected to possess several horses, as well as substantial armor and weaponry, which would enable them to fight as cavalry or as infantry as the situation demanded.⁷⁴¹ The fact that these forces included the king and nobles accounts for some of the misguided idea that most of the Carolingian host in the ninth century consisted of cavalry. Annalists typically stressed the deeds of the king and the preeminent men of the realm. The rank and file infantry melee did not seem nearly as exciting by comparison.

⁷³⁸ *AB* and *AF* 866, when Louis led his military household against Moravia, leaving the rest of the army only partially mobilized, and snuffed out a rebellion without need for additional troops.

⁷³⁹ Raban, *De procinctu Romanae militiae* Ch. IV, Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 40-42. On the importance of hunting in the Carolingian world, see Eric Goldberg, "Louis the Pious and the Hunt," *Speculum* 88.3, (614-643).

⁷⁴⁰ On the psychology of combat, see the classic study by John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York, Penguin, 1978), especially the section concerning the circumstances of the Battle of Agincourt, 86-116; A.K. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War, 100BC-AD200* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1996), 248-250.

⁷⁴¹ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 121-130.

Military households provided a good deal of flexibility. These men were professional soldiers; they had no other job but warfare and militarily related operations, and they had been trained from an early age to execute the duties of a soldier with precision and skill. Having practiced horseback riding from childhood, they fought well while mounted, but they certainly would have been just as adept at fighting on foot, which Raban makes clear.⁷⁴² A very poignant example of such tactics took place at the famous Battle of the Dyle (891), in which Arnulf ordered the Frankish army to dismount and fight on foot, owing to the swampy conditions that would render their horses useless.⁷⁴³ Additionally, men of military households were skilled with all sorts of armaments, including most often but not limited to the bow, the spear, the shield, the sword, which would allow them to execute various duties on the battlefield as different situations demanded. When the horse, lance, and sword proved useless during a siege in which direct attempts to seize the fortress by force were not intended, the bow could prove far more useful at attempting to pick off defenders atop the walls. Indeed, nobles and their military households were usually well-practiced archers, owing to the Frankish propensity for hunting.⁷⁴⁴

Additional flexibility could be attained through the method of deployment. The *obsequium* could be capable of small operations on its own, such as putting down smaller rebellions or protecting the king or noble during a hunting expedition, on a march to

⁷⁴² Raban, *De procinctu Romanae militiae* XII.

⁷⁴³ *AF* 891, Regino, *Chronicon*, 891. Though the Battle of the Dyle occurred after Louis the German's death in 876, it is highly unlikely that the military situation or methods of training, which Raban explains, had changed appreciably within 15 years. See also Bachrach, "Charles Martel, Mounted Shock Combat, the Stirrup, and Feudalism," esp. pp. 50-53.

⁷⁴⁴ It is for just this tactical flexibility that Charlemagne decreed specifically that all horsemen ought to bring a bow and quiver of arrows to the army and know how to use them, *Karoli ad Fulradum Abbatem Epistola* (804-811), 75. Goldberg, "Louis the Pious and the Hunt," 613-643.

attend an assembly, or to travel between palaces or fortified places. Militarily, however, it was as a complement to the expeditionary levy that the *obsequia* truly shined. They provided a core of battle-hardened and experienced troops, as well as theoretically competent leadership in the form of the magnates or the king, who would lead the combined force of the assembled military households and expeditionary levies personally. The larger forces, combined with the siege equipment that accompanied the expeditionary forces but not the *obsequium* alone, lent a far greater degree of flexibility to the military household and expeditionary levy combination forces.

Larger forces bring up another important issue. The military household was not intended to challenge forces with numerical superiority, no matter how far superior in military skill the individual members of the *obsequium* were to individual soldiers of an opposing force. Even if a superior force could be defeated, the victory was likely to be costly, since the military household was likely to suffer casualties, and each individual man's value was far greater than that of a less skilled soldier, because the investment in his training was far less replaceable. Additionally, overwhelming force was a far easier and more cost-effective way of winning, so long as the numerically superior force could make the smaller one surrender without offering battle. It was the preferred method of Carolingian kings and mayors of the palace from the time of Pippin II and Charles Martel onwards,⁷⁴⁵ and it helped to preserve material and human resources to fight another day. As such, it was somewhat of a self-fulfilling prophecy: by ensuring that the administrative machinery necessary to field overwhelmingly large numbers of soldiers

⁷⁴⁵ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 51-83, 243-246, and idem, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 649-653.

was in place, the Carolingians in turn preserved men and resources by avoiding direct combat whenever possible while still achieving victories. Were an enemy to offer battle to a sizable Carolingian expeditionary force, of course, they did so at great peril and risk of enormous casualties.⁷⁴⁶

Louis the German acted shrewdly in utilizing his own military household, careful to avoid deploying them without support against overwhelming enemy forces. When his father Louis the Pious moved against Louis the German's military household with a full scale expeditionary force in 838 and 839, all he and his *obsequium* could hope to do was to block his passage over the Rhine, where the larger force would be in a compromised position during the river crossing. When this measure failed however, and Louis the Pious crossed the river successfully, the thoroughly outnumbered Louis the German and his men had no choice but to fall back to Bavaria and bide their time for more favorable circumstances or summon more men. Given his father's advanced age, it is perhaps unsurprising that Louis the German chose the former option, conserving his kingdom's resources for the nearly inevitable clash with his brothers that he feared would ensue upon his father's death.⁷⁴⁷

Leadership

Under most circumstances, Louis the German led his expeditionary levies personally. His strong, confident generalship inspired confidence in his men. Having deliberately cultivated his image as a king who epitomized the classical Frankish warrior ethos, Louis developed a reputation for military prowess, both in combat himself and as a

⁷⁴⁶ Notably, see the fate of Goztomuizli and the Obodrites in *AF* 844.

⁷⁴⁷ *AF* 838-839, *AB* 838-839.

skilled field commander.⁷⁴⁸ The latter was certainly the position that he and his brothers took most frequently. Carolingian kings typically did not charge into the thick of the fray in the mold attributed to Alexander the Great. Simply put, they were too valuable as leaders, and conversely, as possible hostages or targets for the enemy, to risk being killed or captured. At times, the kings must have done some actual fighting, as the sources stress the number of men that the king himself killed, or state that the king led the vanguard into the fray.⁷⁴⁹ Even so, such statements must be understood to bear some exaggeration, and if the king himself did go into combat, he was definitely surrounded densely by his military household to prevent a catastrophe.

Instead, Louis the German played the far more important role of campaign planner and field general in the mold of Roman military commanders. Certainly, his prowess in combat was not in doubt, a fact which his men must have respected, but even the very best soldier could only kill so many men. What was entirely more valuable, however, was a general who had an excellent grasp of tactics, could ensure that discipline and formation was retained, and make certain that every unit was in the correct place on the battlefield at the right time. The king was most certainly not a Tacitean, Germanic

⁷⁴⁸ Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II.1. Nithard's idealized portrait stresses martial prowess as a cornerstone of masculinity; in actual practice, the king would never have participated personally in battlefield combat. Rather, a king acted as military commander, in which position he was far more valuable than any personal, martial contribution that he might have been able to make in combat. Regino of Prum, *Chronicon*, 876, attributes these same qualities to Louis the Younger, the son of Louis the German, comparing him favorably to his father as having a sharp mind and artful cunning in a military context, *animi subtilitatem artiumque ingenia*. See also Goldberg, Eric J. "More Devoted to the Equipment of Battle Than the Splendor of Banquets": Frontier Kingship, Military Ritual, and Early Knighthood at the Court of Louis the German." *Viator* 30 (1999), 41-78.

⁷⁴⁹ As did Louis and Lothar at Fontenoy, Nithard, II.10; Agnellus, *Liber Pontificalis*, chs. 173-4.

warrior or a ring-giver of the mold of the *Beowulf* epic, who led the men into battle personally.⁷⁵⁰

The value of the leadership of Louis or his sons was eminently valuable and easily proven. When magnates were left behind with portions of the army to defend or garrison important places such as river crossings or key fortresses, it was typically easy for an army under the leadership of an opposing king to overrun them.⁷⁵¹ This could be due to several factors. First, a king was likely to be leading a full, well-rounded expeditionary force against a portion of the enemy army; second, the morale boost afforded by the physical presence of the monarch lent confidence to the army; third, the king usually proved a superior general tactically to the magnates that were under him. The final reason owed simply to the fact that a Carolingian prince, as a youth at the palace court, would have received indubitably superior training in all facets of strategy and tactics. The full bulk of the royal library was available to him, which would have included not only military manuals like Vegetius and its abridgment by Raban and Frontinus's

⁷⁵⁰ The idea of Carolingian kings as representatives of some kind of Tacitean Germanic warrior aristocracy or ring-givers in the mold of legends like *Beowulf* must be rejected as completely unrealistic if not ridiculous. As Bachrach puts it humorously, "The use of romantic warrior fantasies such as *Beowulf* to understand Charlemagne at war is tantamount to using the Rambo films to understand General Eisenhower as commander of the Allied forces during World War II." Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns* 103-104, and the literature cited there. Cf. Reuter, "Plunder and Tribute" for the counterpoint that Carolingian society might have better resembled *Beowulf* and Icelandic saga material than the orderly administration set out by men like Einhard. Asserting that this was just the sort of thing that Charlemagne went in for by citing his proclivity for the "old, barbarous songs," Reuter neglects to realize the value of such epics not as a strict portrayal of reality but as *fun*, highly romantic accounts that any contemporary reader would have valued as entertainment, since it was dramatic and enjoyable. They should not be taken to represent reality by us, nor were they construed as such by contemporary readers, any more than Chretien de Troyes should be considered an accurate representation of crusader warfare. Reuter's additional claim that the life of a Carolingian *dux* or *comes* involved mostly itinerancy, fighting, feasting and drinking is oversimplified. Participation in feasts and extensive traveling certainly did not preclude participation in administrative apparatus both of which functions occurred prominently at the assembly. One's job and one's entertainment, as ever, need not be one and the same.

⁷⁵¹ *AF, AB*, 841, Nithard, II.1, for maneuverings across rivers and ease of a king defeating a river garrison.

Strategemata, but also a large number of maps of roads, cities, and river networks.⁷⁵² In addition to the available written material, Carolingian princes also benefitted from the teachings and advice of the best military minds of the age, of whom the preeminent one was their father the king, whose wide range of practical campaign experience provided invaluable tutelage in the managing of troops in battle and logistics.⁷⁵³

Indeed, the practical value that Louis the German would have gleaned from the tutelage of his father Louis the Pious probably outstripped anything that he could have read in a book. Louis the Pious had led an army on campaign personally in nearly every year of his reign, and he had achieved military successes in nearly every type of military operation, from sieges, to defensive operations, to large-scale invasions, to tricky diplomatic maneuverings against his sons. The latter were probably the most complex, and his father's handling of the civil war taught many lessons to Louis the German. Louis the Pious had to negotiate a difficult quandary indeed, in which he had to make a significant enough display of force against his sons to show beyond a doubt his preeminent authority, but simultaneously, he was loath to commit Christian Franks to battle against Christian Franks, when ultimately, his overarching goal was a successful passing of the empire as a whole to his sons, with Lothar at the helm as emperor.⁷⁵⁴ Louis and Charles especially learned a great deal from their father's treatment of the civil war;

⁷⁵² Though Charlemagne's substantial corpus of maps do not survive, mapping, including large table maps, was a substantial portion of the duties of the general staff. See Bachrach "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," esp pp. 328-338

⁷⁵³ Particularly, the 801 siege of Barcelona showed Louis the Pious to have been an adept military commander. *ARF* 801; Astronomer, 13; Rutger Kramer, *Rethinking Authority in the Carolingian Empire* (Amsterdam: 2019), 31-33. Also see Thomas F.X. Noble, "Louis the Pious and the Frontiers of the Frankish Realm," in Godman and Collins, *Charlemagne's Heir*, 333-347.

⁷⁵⁴ Nithard I.2. F.L. Ganshof, "Some observations on the *Ordinatio imperii* of 817," in Ganshof, *Carolingians and the Frankish Monarchy*, 273-288; K.F. Werner, "*Hludovicus Augustus*. Gouverner l'empire chrétien, idées et réalités," in Godman and Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir*, 1-123; Janet Nelson, "The Last Years of Louis the Pious," in *Charlemagne's Heir*, pp. 147-159;

both brothers exhibited the same tendencies in their diplomatic relations with Lothar, following their father's death. Louis and Charles went to great lengths to bring their rather more intractable elder brother to the table for peace talks, preferring any possible diplomatic solution, even at the expense of their own treasuries, to outright war with Lothar.⁷⁵⁵ The annalistic sources repeatedly declare that both kings viewed Frank against Frank, brother against brother combat as wicked and to be avoided at all costs. Lothar, however, left his younger brothers little choice in the matter, as he stubbornly refused to negotiate on any terms but those that he set for himself, believing instead in his military superiority and his God-given right to rule the empire.⁷⁵⁶

Louis the Pious' persistent avoidance of Frank versus Frank combat was vindicated entirely when the brothers ultimately clashed at Fontenoy; this battle's effect on leadership across the realm cannot be overstated. Following the disastrous loss of life and resources, the kings prudently avoided committing themselves and their men to a similar engagement in the future. It seems that they took this position not only of their own accords, but at least in part under considerable pressure from the nobility, who had incurred much of the cost of provisioning the army and supplying troops and horses, not to mention spending a huge amount of time personally participating in the long and grueling campaigns rather than in the comfort of their manor homes.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁵ Nithard II.9.

⁷⁵⁶ At least, this is the highly partisan portrait advanced by Nithard II.1-10, and III.Prologue, wherein Nithard himself condemned Fontenoy. See Elina Screen, "Remembering and Forgetting Lothar I," in Elina Screen and Charles West, eds., *Writing the Early Medieval West: Studies in Honor of Rosamond McKitterick* (Cambridge, 2018), 248-260, for the selective "pruning of the Carolingian family tree" by which Charles the Bald and Louis the German cast Lothar as the villain of the civil war period; Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. 84-155.

⁷⁵⁷ Nithard IV. 6. Cf. *AF* and *AB* 841 and 842 for numerous nobles becoming fed up and deserting Lothar.

Moreover, Louis the German remained aware of the impact that the mere threat of invasion could have. When Charles moved to seize Aachen in 870, Louis threatened to make total war on him, and Charles immediately acquiesced to his brother's wishes and withdrew from the city.⁷⁵⁸ Louis, apparently, was not a man given to trifling and false promises, and his brother was obliged to respect that reputation and Louis's generalship. Without a doubt, the memory of Fontenoy loomed large in Charles' mind when he ultimately decided to forgo the claim he had recently made to Charlemagne's capital and all of its symbolic value: open war against Louis could result in crippling damage to his armies, the loss of Aachen, and perhaps the risk of some of his nobles deserting to his brother, thereby creating further complications and possibly reducing the size of Charles' kingdom. He prudently decided that, at least for now, Aachen would have to wait.⁷⁵⁹

When Louis was otherwise engaged or physically unable to lead the army in person, he had a wide and well-established network of men who were also capable of leading troops. Later in his reign, from the late 840s onwards, he could send his sons Louis the Younger, Carloman, or Charles (later "the Fat") at the head of the army, trusting full well in their military capacities, since he himself had instilled the values and training in them in much the same way that he had learned similar lessons from Louis the Pious. Having his sons as usually reliable commanders imbued a great deal of strategic flexibility to Louis's armies. As discussed above, one of the hallmarks of Carolingian warfare under Charlemagne and his predecessors was the pincer movement: separating the army into several parts, which would march different routes and attempt to surround

⁷⁵⁸ AB 870.

⁷⁵⁹ AB and AF 870; Nelson, *Charles the Bald*, 223-226.

the enemy, forcing them into an unfavorable position in which they were unable to maneuver and had no choice but to surrender. Louis the German could lead one pincer in person, while trusting that whichever son he put at the helm of the other held similarly reliable capacity for generalship and command.⁷⁶⁰

In addition to his sons, Louis's command structure in East Francia featured several tiers of leadership. First was the king, followed by his sons. Next were the realm's major landholders, who would contribute large numbers of troops to the royal host and sometimes were expected to lead their own troops into battle. Churchmen were no exceptions; in 872, Archbishop Liutbert of Mainz led an army in person, while Bishop Arn of Würzburg and Abbot Sigihard of Fulda led another force that Louis sent to aid his son Carloman.⁷⁶¹ Secular lords like counts and dukes always led their forces on campaign, and became an integral part of the command structure once joined to the royal host. In marcher regions, prefects (*praefecti*) were set over other counts (*comites*) to coordinate the efforts of the frontier defenses. The most prominent prefects under Louis the German were Ernest of Bavaria (whom Louis ultimately deposed in 861) and Carloman (made prefect of the eastern march in 856). Dukes (*duces*), such as Thachulf of the Sorbian March or Pribina of Pannonia, also fulfilled the duties of prominent frontier commands. In fact, the terms *dux* and *praefectus* seemed to have been used interchangeably, or at the very least inconsistently on the frontier, though the essential military functions of the offices remained the same.⁷⁶²

⁷⁶⁰ *AF* and *AB* 869.

⁷⁶¹ *AF* 872.

⁷⁶² Goldberg classifies dukes and prefects as "super counts" to stress the essential similarities in function and duty among the various strata of officers; *Struggle for Empire*, 217. See also the reconstruction of the frontier command in Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 113.

Even though Louis the German must have felt that he could trust his subordinate commanders' competence, since he did allow others to command the army in his stead, the annals make clear that the army suffered for lack of his leadership when he was not physically present. In 849, Louis sent Ernest with a number of other counts and abbots to deal with a budding Bohemian rebellion. The Frankish force captured a Bohemian fortification, forcing the Bohemians to send legates to Thachulf, the *dux* of the Sorbian march, asking for peace and promising to give hostages. He forwarded their terms on to the Frankish commanders, who, instead of accepting the surrender of the already beaten enemy, instead decided that the real problem was that Thachulf was growing too influential, and therefore, they feared that he would use his situation to gain primacy over the other commanders. In a stunning display of ineptitude, Thachulf's rivals began an unplanned attack against the Bohemians, who now, instead of surrendering, resisted the unexpected Frankish onslaught and routed them! The Bohemians drove the Franks back to their camps, where they slaughtered large numbers of them and stripped their armor and weapons. One cannot help but think that, had the king been present, he would have crushed the squabble among his inferiors and never allowed such a foolish attack on a surrendering enemy to occur.⁷⁶³

A similar situation occurred in 872, when Louis sent a host composed of Saxons and Thuringians against the Moravians. Neither the king nor his sons were present to lead the expedition, and as a result, the Moravians were able to rout the Carolingian force, due explicitly to failings in leadership "because they did not have the king with them and

⁷⁶³ AF 849.

were unable to agree among themselves.”⁷⁶⁴ In fairness to the beleaguered commanders, however, the Moravians had been a serious problem for decades by this point, and they were a notoriously difficult enemy with their own system of defense in depth, boasting numerous well-fortified cities. The Frankish commanders were unable to agree on a proper course of action, and as a result the Moravians drove them back with numerous casualties. Later in the campaign season, to atone for the earlier failing, Louis raised a very large army from all parts of the realm and placed one half of it under the command of Archbishop Liutbert of Mainz and the other half under his son Carloman, Bishop Arn of Würzburg, and Sigihart, Abbot of Fulda. Liutbert enjoyed considerable success, routing an army led by several Moravian *duces* who were killed in combat or drowned in the Vlatava River while trying to flee. Liutbert and his force proceeded to ravage much of the province and return home with the army intact and considerable booty.⁷⁶⁵

Carloman’s force, however, experienced greater difficulty. Leaving a garrison force under Embricho, the bishop of Regensburg, to guard the boats on the Danube, Carloman led the army against Duke Zwentibald’s men. The Moravians prudently refused to give open battle, retreating instead to a large fortress, which is likely to have been Staré Město. Carloman invested the fortress, but he apparently became bogged down due to the difficulty of the terrain and concerted enemy resistance. His forces were forced to retreat despite having ravaged some of the enemy’s territory. Adding insult to injury, Zwentibald sent a detachment secretly to the Danube, which slaughtered the detachment guarding the boats. This measure slowed down the already difficult return

⁷⁶⁴ *AF* 872, “quoniam regem secum non habebant et inter se concordēs esse nolēbant.”

⁷⁶⁵ *AF* 872.

march, and the Moravians pursued the retreating Franks and inflicted further casualties.⁷⁶⁶

It is quite clear that Louis's contemporaries particularly valued his personal leadership. When he was absent, the army sorely missed his guidance, and his magnates sometimes struggled to arrive at a common purpose when he was not there to manage them. He was a general of very high order, who knew when to commit troops and when to reserve them for another campaign when he saw that the situation demanded more expenditure of time, men, and resources than was prudent to give. Given the wide variety of threats that his kingdom faced year after year, he did an admirable job fending them off and holding it intact, while simultaneously managing the ambitions of his brother kings. It is highly appropriate that Notker remembered Louis to his son Charles the Fat as a man who "was adept in anticipating and overcoming all the attacks of his enemies, concluding the quarrels of his subjects, and...grew more and more terrifying to all the peoples surrounding his realm than his ancestors had been up to that time." This was high praise indeed, particularly considering that it was given to Louis the German in a *vita* of Charlemagne.⁷⁶⁷

Military Intelligence

Overcoming exterior threats and settling the affairs and quarrels of his subjects required Louis the German to obtain a great deal of practical knowledge about all regions of his kingdom, from the Bavarian core to the turbulent eastern marches. The main Carolingian apparatus for intelligence gathering was the assembly, typically annual or

⁷⁶⁶ AF 872.

⁷⁶⁷ Notker, *Gesta Karoli*, II.11. Translation from Noble, *Charlemagne and Louis the Pious*, 102.

biannual meetings conducted in the winter and early spring, before the beginning of the campaign season, that were attended by the king and many important magnates and officials, both lay and clerical.⁷⁶⁸ In addition to the enormous amount of administrative and judicial business transacted, the assembly also functioned as a council of war. With the leading men in attendance necessarily came a great deal of important military information, concerning the availability of resources from and the threats faced by their respective regions, over the course of time since the last assembly. Attendees often were expected to be prepared to set off directly from the spring assembly on military campaign, which meant bringing all of the requisite supplies with them.⁷⁶⁹

The assembly was the time at which the king and his leading advisors did the bulk of the planning for the coming campaign season in spring, and debriefed about what had been successful or failed over the course of the one just concluded in the fall. In order to plan a campaign properly, the king had to be kept abreast of a staggering amount of information. First, he needed an accurate appraisal of the threats that required his immediate attention, in order to establish an idea of where campaigns would be required, either under his own leadership, his sons', or that of a capable magnate.⁷⁷⁰ Next, he

⁷⁶⁸ Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii* 29-30. Ganshof, *Frankish Institutions under Charlemagne*, 9-22; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 226-230; Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 202-207; idem, "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," *Journal of Military History* 66.2 (2002), 313-357. The latter work, particularly 318 and n. 19, shows that "assembly" is rather a fraught term, which Carolingian sources and scholars use inconsistently. Hincmar lays out that two assembly gatherings were the ideal, one larger one with many attendees from all over the kingdom, and one smaller one used exclusively by the king and his closest advisers for military planning and the administration of justice. This ideal was far from the case every year, although Louis the German did call numerous smaller gatherings, or *colloquia*, of the type prescribed by Hincmar on several occasions, which Goldberg shows in *Struggle for Empire* 226-227. The *colloquia*, he notes, were typically regional in character.

⁷⁶⁹ See, for example, Charlemagne's summons to Abbot Fulrad, in MGH *Capitularia Regum Francorum* I.75, p 168. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 202-207; idem, "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," *Journal of Military History* 66.2 (2002), 313-357.

⁷⁷⁰ Hincmar, *De ordine palatii*, 36.

would decide whence to recruit troops and who would lead them. He would then need to plot the routes of march and obtain a very accurate idea of the resources that would be available to the armies along those routes, including roads, rivers, fortifications, places to encamp, and much more. Finally, he would ensure that the army would be adequately equipped and provisioned for the coming operations, which included everything from food for the men and horses, to siege engines and ladders, to the carts upon which all of the supplies would be carried and the animals necessary to pull them.⁷⁷¹ In order to obtain all of this varied information from across the realm, the king relied heavily on his subordinates. As Hincmar—and by his abridgement, Adalhard—makes clear, attendees of the assembly would be personally interviewed by the king, in order to ascertain the state of affairs in their respective portions of the kingdom.⁷⁷²

It is quite clear that the king would require a great deal of help to obtain an accurate picture and create a plan of action. This assistance came in the form of the *magistratus*, which consisted of the king and his expert military advisors or *consilarii*, whose primary concern was the planning for and execution of wars. Thankfully, the Carolingians were excellent record-keepers. Charlemagne had taken great pains to ensure that he had access to the minutest of information concerning the resources of the realm, all of which he put to excellent use militarily. The royal palace kept a detailed inventory of what was present at each estate that the king and his predecessors had granted, so that they could be assessed properly for taxation purposes and for the military obligations of the landholder—i.e., how many and what types of men he was expected to provide for the

⁷⁷¹ Logistical concerns and preparations are discussed in detail below, ch. 5.

⁷⁷² Hincmar, *De ordine Palatii*, 36.

expeditionary host should he be called upon to do so. Additionally, the various polyptychs which survive from the ninth century ascertain the extremely deep level of detail into which kings and landowners were expected to know, and to confirm in writing, concerning their holdings.⁷⁷³

No capitularies survive from Louis the German's court, save for those which were issued jointly with his brothers and nephews, in which Louis very importantly confirmed that the capitulary legislation of his predecessors remained valid, and, therefore, it must be obeyed by all in the contemporary context.⁷⁷⁴ The depth of record keeping is easy to ascertain through the charter evidence—the king knew what resources each of the estates in his kingdom possessed, what sort of production capacity each had, even the names of the slaves currently living on them, and he knew what physical geographic features bounded them.⁷⁷⁵ In this regard, Louis's best example was undoubtedly Charlemagne; one need look no further than the depth of inventory that Charlemagne required from each of his estates in the famous *Capitulare de Villis* to ascertain the enormity of Carolingian information gathering throughout the realm.⁷⁷⁶ The fact that Louis the

⁷⁷³ See especially David Bachrach, "The Written Word in Carolingian-Style Fiscal Administration under Henry I, 919-936," *German History* 28 (2010), 399-423; Bachrach, "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," 313-357. Janet L. Nelson, 'Literacy in Carolingian Government', in Rosamond McKitterick, ed., *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1990), 258-96; Jean-Pierre Devroey, "Les méthodes d'analyse démographique des polyptyques du haut moyen âge," *Acta Historica Bruxellensia*, 4 (1981), 71-88; Jean Durliat, "La polyptyque d'Irminon pour l'Armée," *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 141 (1983), 183-208.

⁷⁷⁴ MGH *Capitularia* II.242; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 229.

⁷⁷⁵ One can look at nearly any of Louis's charters to ascertain the depth of knowledge concerning the estates; the 830 confirmation of an earlier grant by Charlemagne provides an excellent example; *ULD*, I.2, p. 2.

⁷⁷⁶ *Capitulare de Villis*, MGH *Capitularia regum Francorum* 1.32, p. 82. See Darryl Campbell, "The Capitulary de Villis, the *Brevium Exempla*, and the Carolingian Court at Aachen," *Early Medieval Europe* 18 (2010), 243-264, and the historiographical discussion therein. Historiography concerning *De Villis* is also treated extensively in David Bachrach, "Written Word," 402-407, in which he explains the German historiography, particularly Brühl in *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis*, 81, and Wolfgang Metz in *Das karolingische Reichsgut: Eine Verfassungs- und Verwaltungsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Berlin, 1960), that proves that such capitularies extended to the entirety of the Carolingian empire, not just to Aquitaine,

German possessed a comparable depth of information attests not only to his familiarity with the military resources of the kingdom specifically, but also generally to the continuity of high quality record keeping by the Carolingian central government in the 9th century.⁷⁷⁷

Louis the German issued over 160 surviving royal charters, couched in similar language to those issued by his predecessors, in a clear emulation of their style. It has been argued that counts and other authority figures did not necessarily need to pay much attention to these documents, and that they were merely a formality and a shadow of power that may once have existed under the more capable administration of Charlemagne—if, indeed, it even existed then.⁷⁷⁸ This, however, is demonstrably false. Louis the German, on numerous recorded occasions—and likely other less-prominent ones⁷⁷⁹—settled frictions between his faithful men over border disputes, tax privileges, royal immunities, and usurpations of power, through the use of royal charters.⁷⁸⁰ These were not mere, ephemeral pieces of parchment that the counts could choose to ignore.

Louis the German also relied upon another Carolingian standby, the *missi dominici*, to ensure that his will was enforced and to obtain an appreciably accurate picture of what was actually going on in the regions under question, since the king could

as Alfons Dopsch once argued in *Die Wirtschaftsentwicklung der Karolingerzeit vornehmlich in Deutschland* (Weimar, 1912), on which see Wolfgang Metz, *Das karolingische Reichsgut*, 18-72; Bernard Bachrach, “‘Are they not like us?’ Charlemagne’s Fisc in Military Perspective,” in Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz, eds., *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies* (New York, 2007), 319-343.

⁷⁷⁷ Bernard and David Bachrach, “Continuity of Written Administration in the Late Carolingian East: c. 887-911: the Royal Fisc.”

⁷⁷⁸ The two positions are briefly and conveniently summarized in Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400-1000* (London, Penguin, 2009), 389-391.

⁷⁷⁹ Certainly, not every settling of differences would have warranted an official royal charter to record and solidify it.

⁷⁸⁰ For several, but not all examples, *ULD* I.66, I.69, I.71, I.72, I.85, I.92.

not be expected reasonably to travel to the site of every dispute to ascertain the situation for himself.⁷⁸¹ These delegates were the men who provided the king with much of the vast array of information that he required for effective administration, military intelligence, and, therefore, provisioning of military forces, for which much of this information was necessary. As further proof of their continued effectiveness, these men were even endowed with the power to remove landholders and local officials from their possessions in the event that the king became displeased with them, over treachery, infidelity, or similar offense.⁷⁸²

The depth of knowledge that Carolingian kings maintained and the methods by which it was obtained are shown clearly in the negotiations following the Battle of Fontenoy. In order that they might divide the realm between themselves as equitably as possible, Lothar, Charles, and Louis the German established a surveying corps of representatives from each of their realms to inventory the kingdom as minutely as they were able. The simple fact that each king had a number of knowledgeable candidates to put forward for the royal survey team attests to the fact that the sort of depth of knowledge and documentary evidence that they sought was not only readily available, but was available in all the parts of Charlemagne's old, unified kingdom. The general staff's methods had been successful, and not only were they successful in Charlemagne's day, they continued for the entire length of Carolingian rule. Men maintained the skills necessary to survey, map, and thoroughly understand the resources of the kingdom, and this knowledge enabled a fair division.⁷⁸³ The only difference, as Nithard notes, was that

⁷⁸¹ *ULD* I.92, p 133-134.

⁷⁸² *ULD* I.113, p. 161-162.

⁷⁸³ *AF, AB* 843.

no one man could be found who was familiar with the entirety of the empire, since Lothar had not allowed Charles' and Louis's representatives to encroach upon his territory.⁷⁸⁴ Still, it speaks volumes that the kings were very annoyed that none of their *missi* had already been traveling about and surveying while negotiations with Lothar were ongoing. It attests to the fact kings expected a great deal of information to accompany attendees to the assembly and to councils of war, especially during such trying and important times.⁷⁸⁵

Louis the German's dealings with Moravia, and the eastern frontier generally, also attest to the high level of intelligence gathering and knowledge base that the king and his general staff collected. Louis's court created a catalog of the trans-frontier peoples and their fortifications, the *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, which would provide a basic outline of potential enemies and strength of fortifications.⁷⁸⁶ When he installed Rastislav as *dux* over the Moravians in 846, Louis the German began a process of attempting to solidify his hegemony over a region about which he must have known much less than he did about the core of eastern Francia.⁷⁸⁷ In addition to the new, presumably loyal duke he installed—Rastislav would of course rebel frequently against Louis until he was deposed and blinded in 870—Louis the German made extensive new grants of land to the Pannonian *dux* Pribina, whose seat of power was the fortress Moosburg on Lake Balaton. Louis intended to utilize Pribina and his

⁷⁸⁴ Indeed, this did not differ markedly from Charlemagne's time, since as Hincmar made clear in *De Ordine Palatii* 36, local information was gleaned from local authorities and compiled by the central administration.

⁷⁸⁵ Nithard, IV.5.

⁷⁸⁶ *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, ed. Erwin Herrmann, in *Slawisch-germanische Beziehungen im südostdeutschen Raum von der Spätantike bis zum Ungarnsturm: Ein Quellenbuch mit Erläuterungen*, (Munich, 1965), 212-222.

⁷⁸⁷ *AF*, 846.

holdings as an important logistical aid in his campaigns into Moravia proper, should that need arise, just as the king rightly assumed that it would.⁷⁸⁸

Louis the German's campaign to install Rastislav confirmed the need for more thorough military intelligence. After achieving its primary objective, the army returned home through Bohemian lands, where it was harassed on the return march and suffered large numbers of casualties.⁷⁸⁹ More reliable routes had to be established, and the process was only beginning. A similarly unsuccessful campaign was undertaken in 855 when Rastislav rebelled; Louis was unwilling to establish a long siege deep in very precarious enemy territory, and he had to return home after only ravaging the Moravian countryside.⁷⁹⁰ This army suffered on the return march, and the implication was obvious: if he wanted to succeed in Moravia, Louis would need to establish stronger ties and more secure logistical routes through it. The war council set right to it. By studying the topography of the region, Louis and his advisors determined that transport would be most easily managed if they could establish control of the river networks in the region, and they set about doing just that through strategic land grants over the course of the late 850s and early 860s.⁷⁹¹

Tactics

Ninth century Carolingian military tactics were governed primarily by the preferred Carolingian campaign strategy of deploying overwhelming force.⁷⁹² Goldberg

⁷⁸⁸ ULD I.45. See also the logistical discussion below, ch. 5.

⁷⁸⁹ *AF, AX*, 846.

⁷⁹⁰ *AF*, 855.

⁷⁹¹ Bowlus, *Franks Moravians, and Magyars*, 115-152.

⁷⁹² Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 83, 243-246.

states that medieval rulers preferred “negotiated settlements” to pitched battles,⁷⁹³ and the Carolingians were no exception, as discussed above in the discussion of the circumstances surrounding the Battle of Fontenoy (841). Marshalling overwhelming force, that is, showing up to the field with such a massive, well-equipped force that the enemy would surrender without a fight, was an excellent way for a commander to force the hand of the enemy into a less-than favorable negotiation.⁷⁹⁴ Tactics and training, however, were still of paramount importance in large armies, arguably even more so, since a large body of troops that marches sloppily or cannot maintain formation will quickly become an unwieldy, useless mass.⁷⁹⁵

Louis the German’s armies were rigorously drilled in military tactics of various kinds. The varied nature of the military training that men received enabled them to adapt their tactics to whatever circumstances they might have encountered over the course of extended campaigns in different theaters of operations. Louis the German undertook campaign operations that required his armies to be equally capable in pitched battle, in direct assaults on enemy fortifications, and in more extended siege operations that involved essentially starving the enemy into capitulation. Of course, not every division of the army had the same role to play in each situation, and as such, specialized training was necessarily adapted for each particular body of troops. Infantry versus cavalry was the most obvious dividing line over which the appropriate training methods were applied.

⁷⁹³ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 96.

⁷⁹⁴ See especially the accounts of the post-Fontenoy circumstances in *AF*, *AB*, and *NH*, 842, in which Lothar’s forces are insufficient to resist his brothers Charles and Louis, forcing him to sue for peace, and ultimately leading to the treaty of Verdun.

⁷⁹⁵ Raban, *De procinctu Romanae militiae* Ch. I, V, and cf. Nithard, I.5. Bachrach, “Armies as Mobs in the Early Middle Ages,” in Nancy van Deusen and Leonard Michael Koff, eds., *Mobs: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry* (Leiden, 2012), 63-78.

Though it has been established that Carolingian and Ottonian cavalrymen could and did dismount to fight on foot as infantry when necessary, and as a result, would have also received training in this tactical capacity, this tactical transition did not operate in the opposite direction. That is to say, cavalry could fight as infantry, but infantry never would have been expected to fight as cavalry, as for economic reasons, they did not possess the requisite equipment, especially the horse.

Training and discipline were especially important for cavalry to fight as an effective unit. The members of the Carolingian aristocracy and their *obsequia* who largely comprised the cavalry units had trained in horsemanship and warfare from a very young age.⁷⁹⁶ Young boys of prominent, wealthy families trained constantly with their horses, learning to ride fully armed, attack from horseback, and leap armed from the horse into an infantry deployment.⁷⁹⁷ This extensive training was paramount to the success of cavalry in combat, as men had to be capable of controlling their mounts while riding in formation on the battlefield, which was no small task, particularly in the era before the high pommel and cantle saddle, which drastically improved balance for mounted warriors.⁷⁹⁸

Louis the German and Charles the Bald both took great pains to ensure that their cavalry could operate at a very high level of skill, enabling them to execute complex maneuvers like the feigned retreat. The infantry were also drilled to execute such

⁷⁹⁶ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 119-130. "Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare," in Chickering, ed., *The Study of Chivalry, Resources and Approaches* (Kalamazoo, 1988), 173-211; Jurg Gassmann, "Combat Training for Horse and Rider in the Early Middle Ages," *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 6.1 (2018), 63-98.

⁷⁹⁷ Raban, *de procinctu Romanae militiae*, XII.

⁷⁹⁸ Kelly DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology*, 44-47.

maneuvers. Nithard gives an excellent description of tactical practice in Book III.6.

While the combined armies of Louis and Charles were waiting for the return of the emissaries that they had sent to Lothar, the brothers often (*saepe*) arranged war games to practice and showcase the skill and discipline of their military units.

With the whole crowd standing on either side, Saxons, Gascons, Austrasians, and Bretons in teams of equal numbers first rushed forth from both sides and raced at full speed against each other as if they were going to attack. Then one side would turn back, pretending that they wished to escape from their pursuers to their companions under the protection of their shields. But then they would turn round again and try to pursue those from whom they had been fleeing until finally both kings and all the young men with immense clamor rushed forward, swinging their lances and spurring on their horses, pursuing by turns whoever took flight. It was a show worth seeing because of its excellent execution and discipline; not one in such a large crowd and among such different peoples dared to hurt or abuse another, as often happens even when the opponents are few and familiar to each other.⁷⁹⁹

Nithard's account highlights both execution and discipline among forces of varied origins. This successful cooperation indicates that they had all received significant training and had undergone substantial amounts of practice in order to achieve such a high level of discipline, since these units would not have been able to fight with one another except when serving as a part of the royal expeditionary host. In fact, these wargames (*ludos*) were organized not only as a spectacle, the way that the gathered masses enjoyed them, but also as a form of training in and of themselves.

The more that the army could practice holding formation during feigned retreat, the more effective the tactic would prove, since they would already be formed and ready

⁷⁹⁹ Nithard, III.6; translation from Bernhard Walter Scholtz, *Carolingian Chronicles: The Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard's Histories* (Ann Arbor: 1970), 164.

for combat when they wheeled and turned to attack the pursuing enemy. In theory, the tactic sounds simple: pretend to be routing and in flight, then turn suddenly and attack. In practice, however, a number of maneuvers went into its successful execution. First, the unit had to feign a believable flight, throwing their shields over their shoulders to protect their backs from projectile attacks while they ran away from the enemy. Next, unit commanders had to gauge the proper moment to give the order to reform, once the enemy had overcommitted to the pursuit and compromised their own formations. Upon the receipt of this order, the unit had to perform a synchronized about-face, wheeling around into battle formation while bringing their shields and weapons to bear upon the enemy. Ideally, they would then charge straight away into the broken formation of the enemy, before the pursuers had time to realize what had happened and reform themselves.⁸⁰⁰

Nithard also highlights the excellent discipline of the cavalry forces. They pursued whichever unit was fleeing at that time; when the pursued infantry forces reached their comrades and rebuilt their formation, and the other side fled, the cavalry wheeled around in formation and chased the other body of infantrymen instead. Nithard's account of the wargames also unintentionally highlights several important aspects of combat between infantry and cavalry. Part of the effectiveness of a cavalry force was the terror that they inspired on the charge. The "immense clamor" of clanging armor, shields, lances, and horses' hooves may have been a great spectacle during a war game, but on the battlefield, all that thunderous racket inspired terror in foes, often causing them to break formation and flee, which was precisely the wrong course of action if they wished to

⁸⁰⁰ Jurg Gassmann, "Combat Training for Horse and Rider in the Early Middle Ages," *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 6.1 (2018), 63-98; Bachrach, "The Feigned Retreat at Hastings," *Medieval Studies* 33 (1971): 344-347; idem, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 124-130.

survive. Pursuit is one of the strong suits of cavalry; they caused most of their casualties against fleeing, routed enemies. If an infantry force could maintain discipline in the face of such a terrifying charge, hold formation, and bring their weapons to bear against the cavalry, it would be nearly impossible and generally ineffective for the cavalry forces to make their horses charge headlong into a hedge of pikes.⁸⁰¹ Hence, it is appropriate that Louis's and Charles' cavalry would pursue the fleeing infantry in turn; if they wanted to inflict the maximum number of battlefield casualties in actual combat, they would have done the same. Ensuring that a fleeing unit was completely driven from the field of battle, without giving them a chance to rally and reform, was a main function of cavalry.⁸⁰²

Ninth century infantry tactics were governed by the necessity of maintaining formation. This meant fighting essentially as a phalanx. It is important to note that this was not the close-order Spartan phalanx of the Peloponnesian War era, nor was it precisely the manipular legionary formations prescribed by the Roman imperial period. Rather, the form of the ninth century phalanx formation can be approximated by tracing the very gradual pattern of transformation in infantry units over time. The Roman legion of the late imperial period fought in much looser order, with far more varied armaments, than its republican predecessor, particularly on the turbulent frontier.⁸⁰³ Having incorporated many barbarian peoples, along with their armaments and tactics, as

⁸⁰¹ Hence the effectiveness, for perhaps the most famous example, of King Harold Godwinson's shield wall atop Senlac ridge at the Battle of Hastings; so long as the shield wall held formation, William the Conqueror could not take the hill, and it was only a feigned retreat that was able to dislodge them, since they overcommitted to the pursuit of the falsely fleeing cavalry. C. Warren Hollister, ed. *The Impact of the Norman Conquest*, (New York and London, John Wiley & Sons, 1969); Stephen Morillo, ed., *The Battle of Hastings, Sources and Interpretations* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 1996); M.K Lawson, *The Battle of Hastings, 1066* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing, 2002); Bachrach, "The Feigned Retreat at Hastings," *Medieval Studies* 33 (1971), 344-347.

⁸⁰² Nithard, III.6. See also *ARF* 782 for the disaster that could befall a cavalry unit that charged an infantry formation that held good order.

⁸⁰³ E.N. Luttwak, *Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire*, 174-190.

limitanei, the frontier legions began to adopt these changes as well, opening the ranks to allow for fighting with weapons that were longer than the classic gladius and with fewer men per legion, while still covering a comparable amount of territory. The general shape of the formation continued into the early Carolingian period, when Charles Martel's infantry phalanxes so famously overcame Abd al-Rahman's forces at Poitiers in 732. It is very likely that Carolingian forces were capable of closing or opening ranks to adapt to the circumstances they faced on the battlefield; Charles Martel's phalanx, for example, clearly closed ranks and stood tight together in order to successfully fend off the Muslim onslaught.⁸⁰⁴

However tightly packed together men fought, and there is no way of knowing that with absolute certainty, it is clear that ninth century Carolingian armies were rigorously drilled to maintain formation and order at all times. Raban's Vegetius abridgement, certainly present at Louis the German's court, stresses the necessity of keeping step while on the march, while executing maneuvers, and during charges. By advancing together, the infantry would come upon the enemy as one mass, and he also makes clear they should be taught to break into a run during the final charge, so that their impetus and momentum might be frightening to the enemy force. Keeping formation not only lent a terrifying quality to the infantry's advance and attack, it was absolutely essential to the successful use of infantry in the field, and indeed, to their very survival, since a disorganized force faced "most grave peril."⁸⁰⁵ Nithard, a soldier himself and a veteran of the civil war, makes clear the disaster that could befall a disorganized force. Lothar had a

⁸⁰⁴ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 87-95.

⁸⁰⁵ Raban, *de proninctu Romanae militiae*, V.

small detachment of his partisans posted in the Breton March in 834, and Louis the Pious dispatched a massive army composed of “all the men between the Seine and the Loire” to excise them. Despite the massive disadvantage in manpower, Lothar’s men emerged victorious, killing several counts in the process, because they kept formation and moved in unison, in contrast to the enemy, which was “disorganized and quarrelsome.”⁸⁰⁶

Defensive Tactics

Louis the German’s plan for defending the realm against invasion and raiding closely resembled that utilized by the later Roman Empire.⁸⁰⁷ It hinged upon the principle of defense in depth, which entailed a system of mutually reinforcing fortified cities and lesser fortifications into which the local population could flee to hunker down within the powerful walls while a suitable force could be mustered to contend with the invading army. The local, general levies were of the utmost importance to this strategy, since every fortification needed to be capable of holding out on the defensive long enough for the king or a magnate to bring his forces to bear upon the enemy. This also meant that the frontiers themselves were somewhat more fluid than rigid, since Louis did not so much attempt to defend a border and prevent the loss of fortresses, monasteries, and the like. In fact, Louis utilized the knowledge of his realm and the enemy’s comparative ignorance of the same to his advantage, a detriment which he himself had experienced early in his

⁸⁰⁶ Nithard, I.5. Morillo uses the lack of state sponsored, professional infantry forces to explain the prominence of cavalry during the medieval period, calling the “age of cavalry” instead “really the age of bad infantry.” Like most generalizations concerning medieval warfare, this sweeping claim does not hold water when scrutinized with regard to particular ages and places—the main problems with the feudalism debate come readily to mind and suffer the same faults. Carolingian infantry, while not a state-maintained and equipped professional force, certainly were state mandated through the capitularies, did receive training in use of arms, and could and did prove their worth on the battlefield or, most commonly, in siege encounters. See Stephen Morillo, “The ‘Age of Cavalry’ Revisited,” in Kagay and Villalon, eds., *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages*, 45-58.

⁸⁰⁷ Luttwak, 127-190.

reign.⁸⁰⁸ An invading force would be very vulnerable while foraging for food and even more so if they stopped to loot, which would further encumber them. A force laden with booty that attempted to return whence it came was also a prime target for harassment or an all-out counter attack.⁸⁰⁹

Louis's enemies also utilized systems of defense in depth. When the king campaigned against the Slavs across the eastern frontier, especially Moravia, the local populace and Moravian professional soldiery were usually loathe to avoid open battle with his forces. Instead, they retreated to any number of large and famously well-built fortress cities—of which Staré Město and Mikulčice were the two most famous examples—to hunker down for a siege. Usually, deep in enemy territory and faced with the daunting prospect of besieging a nearly impregnable city, Louis would decline to establish a siege and instead resort to ravaging the countryside, taking plunder and destroying crops and *villae*. The local populace, in theory, might hesitate to support another later rebellion by Rastislav and his family when faced with the consequences of rebuilding razed buildings and losing harvests. In reality, however, it seems that support for Rastislav and other, local leaders usually outstripped the consequences of not supporting the nominal, Carolingian overlord. It is easy to see how the populace might have viewed the king as a vicious leader who demanded tribute and ravaged the local

⁸⁰⁸ *AF* 840. Reuter, *Annals of Fulda*, 17 n 5., believes that Louis the German could count on the support of the Slavs when making his way through their lands “with great difficulty,” a point that is difficult to believe given their continued hostilities against the East Frankish king, cf. *AF* 846, which uses similar language to show that the Slavs harried Louis's retreating army causing severe casualties. Rather, the Slavs themselves should be construed to cause the great difficulties, in addition to the unfamiliar terrain, since the latter problem could be alleviated by scouting.

⁸⁰⁹ *AF* 871, 873.

landscape to support the core of the Carolingian kingdom, while concomitantly seeing Rastislav and others as local heroes who resisted Carolingian authority.

So much focus on defense in depth on both sides of the eastern frontier meant that most direct military encounters took the form of sieges, immensely complex situations that required numerous calculations by both sides.⁸¹⁰ Once the populace had fled into a fortification, the invading force had a very simple choice to make: attempt to besiege it, or not. Establishing a siege did not usually mean attempting to storm a fortification. Rather, Louis usually had his armies cut off resupply routes through vallation while ravaging the countryside around the besieged location. This tactic could prove very effective, but if the king proved unequal to establishing a siege or taking a fortification, more rebellions would undoubtedly crop up in the next year or so.⁸¹¹

Sieges could only be undertaken if several prerequisite conditions had been met prior to the beginning of the campaign. First, the likelihood of a siege had to be anticipated. This meant that the baggage train had to be equipped with all the necessities for siege warfare, including a great deal of food, deconstructed, prefabricated siege ladders or towers, heavy missile throwers, bows and arrows, and of course, the usual necessities for setting up camp for a long period of time. Second, the campaign needed experts in the function of siege equipment. Even the successful deployment of the most rudimentary siege technology, such as rams and ladders, required a great deal of calculation to use properly, and more complicated *impedimenta*, such as catapults or

⁸¹⁰ Jim Bradbury's masterful *The Medieval Siege* is the best starting point to consult for a thoroughly researched and explained work on siege warfare.

⁸¹¹ *AF* 848 and 849, for merely one example, in this case of the Bohemians rebelling again nearly as soon as the king had turned his back.

ballistae, needed a very practiced hand to set up and operate with any sort of effectiveness.⁸¹²

To set up a siege, the first order of business was to cut off the enemy fortification from resupply to the greatest possible degree. To do so most effectively, the besieging force needed to set up a system of circumvallation and, perhaps, countervallation, concentric rings consisting of some sort of earthwork ditch and wall surrounding the fortification, between which the besieging force would pitch camp. The countervallation was the interior ring, which would face the enemy, and would be tasked with preventing a sortie against the besieging force's camp. The circumvallation was the outer ring, placed outside the camp and tasked with preventing incursions or resupply from the outside, as well as serving as the first line of defense against an attempt to relieve the siege by an outside force.⁸¹³

Following the establishment of the siege, determination had to be made about whether or not to attempt to take the fortress by storm or to simply starve the defenders into submission. Taking the fortress by storm necessitated an enormous numerical advantage on the part of the attacking force; it has been suggested that a ratio of 4:1 or 5:1 at minimum was sufficient to take a fortress in the premodern world.⁸¹⁴ An attack on

⁸¹² There is no doubt whatsoever that the Carolingian host possessed a sort of corps of engineers to assemble and operate siege engines. See especially *Annals of St.-Vaast* 885, and Abbo's account of the Viking siege of Paris, wherein missile-throwing siege engines were used by both the Viking invaders and the defenders atop the walls; Nirmal Dass, ed., *Viking Attacks on Paris: the Bella Parisiaca Urbis of Abbo of St.-Germain-des-Prés* (Paris, Peeters, 2007).

⁸¹³ Bachrach, "Imperial Walled cities in the West: an examination of their early medieval Nachleben," in James Tracy, ed., *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2000), 192-218; idem, "Later Roman Grand Strategy: The Fortification of the *urbes* of Gaul," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 15 (2017), 3-35.

⁸¹⁴ Bernard Bachrach and Rutherford Aris, "Military Technology and Garrison Organization: Some Observations on Anglo-Saxon Military Thinking in Light of the Burghal Hideage," *Technology and Culture* 31 (1990), 1-17.

a fortification involved calculating the height of the wall, building ladders of an appropriate height to allow attackers to leap over the parapet, but not so high that the leap would be excessively long or the angle at which the soldiers climbed was too severe or too straight upwards (lest the defenders be too readily able to shove the ladders over). All of this had to be done while under a hail of heavy fire from defenders atop the wall, as well as whatever other unpleasant substances—boiling oil, clay pots filled with incendiaries, stones, etc.—the defenders might deign to rain upon the unfortunate heads of the attackers. This meant that most approaches to the wall, attempts to undermine it, or ascents of a ladder had to be done under the cover of one's shield or another defensive armament, perhaps a wooden structure covered with hides to make it more fire-retardant.⁸¹⁵

Infantry Equipment

Easily the best and most thorough written evidence for Carolingian arms and armor dates from the reign of Charlemagne. The Aachen Capitulary stipulated that every soldier ought to be equipped with a lance, shield, and bow with at least twelve arrows and a spare bowstring,⁸¹⁶ and it also added that infantrymen should carry a bow rather than a club.⁸¹⁷ This provision undoubtedly would have been even more widely applicable in the ninth century than it was in Charlemagne's own time, given the increased use of the local levies. These bodies were far more likely than the expeditionary forces to be composed of poorer men, who would utilize whatever tools and weapons they had available in defense

⁸¹⁵ Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, IV.30. B. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare* 103-107; D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 151-154.

⁸¹⁶ *Capitulare Aquisgranense* ch. 9. MGH *Capitularia* 1.77, p. 170-172.

⁸¹⁷ *Capitulare Aquisgranense* ch. 17.

of their homelands. A rudimentary cudgel would have been affordable, requiring little craftsmanship to manufacture, but it would not have been particularly effective as a weapon for defending against a siege. A basic bow, however, was easy to learn to use well (though difficult to master), already familiar to hunters, relatively inexpensive, and was one of the most useful defensive weapons possible, for obvious reasons.⁸¹⁸ An archer atop a wall, even one of minimal skill and military training, could fire arrows at a mass of besieging enemies and realistically hope to inflict casualties. The man who showed up with a cudgel, however, could do little else than wait for a gate or wall to be breached by the enemy in order to use his rather clumsy weapon.

Even given the careful prescriptions that soldiers should all be equipped with bows, by far the most widely utilized of weapons among the Franks was the spear (*lancea*). In the ninth century context, this was certainly a heavy thrusting spear rather than a missile weapon or javelin.⁸¹⁹ The advantages of the weapon were numerous. Firstly, it was inexpensive to manufacture, consisting in its most basic form of a wooden staff and a metal, pointed head. Certainly, embellishments could be added, including wings or barbs, a second point at the base, bindings, or even banners, but the weapon could function quite well without any of them. Second, the lance had a good, long reach. One could thrust at an enemy armed with a shorter weapon before he even had a chance to close to striking range. Third, the lance was acceptable for use against both infantry and cavalry, largely due to its length. A charging horse could be kept at bay if the spear-wielding infantry formation merely stood its ground and presented numerous points to the

⁸¹⁸ Raban, *De procinctu romanae militiae*, IX. On hunting Goldberg, "Louis the Pious and the Hunt," *Speculum* 88 (2013), 613-643.

⁸¹⁹ Simon Coupland, "Carolingian Arms and Armor in the Ninth Century," *Viator* 21 (1990), 29-50.

animal. Finally, the lance was very easy to use effectively. Infantry could be trained very quickly in the basic, competent use of the weapon, enabling them to fight as a unified unit whose organization was based on the phalanx model of ancient warfare: protect oneself as much as possible with the shield while using the spear to strike at the enemy from a position of relative safety.⁸²⁰ That is not to suggest that the Frankish armies of the ninth century fought like Spartans in a perfect phalanx, with shields protecting themselves and the man to their immediate left. Rather, Frankish formations were generally composed in looser order than the classical Greek phalanx, allowing more room for individual maneuvering and the use of an axe or sword, for those warriors wealthy enough to possess this coveted piece of equipment.

The shield was an indispensable companion to the lance, so much so that the price of the two items was listed together by both the seventh century *Lex Ribuarica*⁸²¹ and an 850 donation to a church at Utrecht.⁸²² As Coupland has noted, this *waffenpaar* constituted the cheapest available form of infantry weaponry; the *Lex Ribuarica* appraises the two together at two *solidi*, which apparently rose to five *solidi* by the ninth century, likely indicating inflation rather than an inherent rise in the value or scarcity of the items. The shield was the most basic form of defensive armament, and one whose low cost and heavy use rendered it a rather disposable, replaceable item. Generally, the Frankish shield was around 0.8 meter in diameter, composed mainly of wood with an iron rim, boss, and fittings. The wooden construction would be strong enough to protect the wielder from

⁸²⁰ Kelly DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology*, 9-13

⁸²¹ *Lex Ribuarica* 40.11, in Franz Beyerle and Rudolf Buchner, eds., *MGH Leges Nationum Germanicarum* 3.2, p. 94.

⁸²² L.A.J.W. Sloet, ed., *Oorkondenboek der grafschappen Gelre en Zutfen, tot op den slag van Woeringen, 5 juni 1288*, (The Hague, 1872-1876), no. 41, 42-44. Coupland (here, p. 36) identifies this document as a “Lotharingian charter;” and the gift came from one Baldric.

arrows and blows of swords and spears, but it was also likely to be ruined over the course of heavy fighting. As a result, there are accounts of shield sellers following Carolingian armies on campaign, so that soldiers might purchase replacements for their heavily battered or completely destroyed shields.⁸²³ Additionally, Charlemagne prescribed that shields, lances, quivers, and bows be carried on the baggage carts that traveled with the armies on the march.⁸²⁴ Louis the German continued to supervise personally the supply of shields for his armies. In an 854 charter issued for the monastery of St.-Gall, Louis stipulated that the monastery—just as was the case for other monasteries⁸²⁵—should provide horsemen, shields, and spears (again, one was hardly ever discussed without the other) for the host as part of their yearly payment.⁸²⁶

Raban's abridgement of Vegetius indicates that he was at least somewhat familiar with the military armament of the day. He knew full well that Carolingian armies did not use oblong, rectangular shields of the Roman legionary type, instead stipulating that recruits should be trained with round shields.⁸²⁷ One word that he retained without alteration, however, was *gladius*.⁸²⁸ In Roman times, this was the short, broad-bladed stabbing sword that comprised the ubiquitous offensive armament of the infantry of the legion. Raban's retention of the word indicates one of two things: either he believed that this was the ideal weapon for infantry combat—entirely reasonable given the tendency to

⁸²³ Simon Coupland, "Carolingian Arms and Armor in the Ninth Century," 29-50.

⁸²⁴ *Capitulare de Villis* ch. 45 and 64, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum 1.32, p. 89. Presumably this was to provide for the armaments of the men who guarded the baggage train.

⁸²⁵ *sicut de ceteris monasteriis, id est caballi duo cum scutis et lanceis.*

⁸²⁶ ULD I.70. For the use of lance and shield as a pair, D. Hüpper-Dröge, *Schild und Speer: Waffen und Ihre Bezeichnungen im frühen Mittelalter* (Frankfurt, 1983).

⁸²⁷ "scuti rotunda," Raban, *De procinctu Romanae militiae*, ch. VI. See also Walter Horn and Ernest Born, *The Plan of St. Gall* (Berkeley: 1979), I.347-348 for shield-makers at the monastery.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*

look back to Roman military might for examples—or he knew that Frankish armies utilized the short sword heavily, and as such, ought to be trained with it. The short sword, however, was ideally suited for use as a stabbing weapon, and therefore, was perfect for close-order infantry combat. The quickness of the stabbing motion, relative to the slash, meant that the swordsman exposed himself to counterattack for less time, returning quickly to the protection of his shield. Raban also sensibly indicates that the rounded nature of the slashing stroke meant that more of the right flank—the sword arm side—was necessarily exposed to make such an attack. Furthermore, the stabbing stroke had a better chance of penetrating a *lorica* than a slash, since so much force was concentrated behind the tiny surface area of the point, lending such a strike substantially more penetrating power.⁸²⁹

Short swords, though certainly more expensive than a spear, were certainly more affordable than the lavish *spatha* of the Frankish aristocracy. The *sax*, *scramasax*, *gladius*, or *semispatha*, was cheaper and easier to manufacture, given that it was composed of less and lower-quality steel, and was usually far less lavishly decorated on the hilt and pommel. It was also lighter and easier to wield effectively than its longer cousin. In fact, the *spatha* was a slashing weapon more likely to be used from horseback, as the momentum of the horse added to the force of the blow, necessitating less force from the swordsman himself. Indeed, horsemen already fought in looser ordered formations, since horses require more room to maneuver than men owing simply to the

⁸²⁹ Raban, *de procinctu Romanae militiae*, VII.

great difference in size, the slashing stroke could be used more readily without fear of accidentally hacking the next man in the formation in addition to the enemy.⁸³⁰

Infantry weapons training consisted of learning to strike by planting a six-foot post in the ground and, armed with a wooden club and shield, attacking it as if it were an enemy soldier. The armaments utilized in this exercise were to be double the weight of the actual arms used in combat to build strength and speed. If the recruit grew accustomed to strike and defend himself with heavy armaments in training, his real, battle weaponry would seem light and quick by comparison, making him all the more deadly and better protected in actual combat. His sword strokes would be quicker and more powerful, and his shield arm would grow strong, in order that the shield might not sag in long periods of combat. Double weight arms would also account for the additional encumbrance of the weight of any armor that the soldier might wear into battle. The recruit, as noted above, was trained primarily to utilize the stabbing stroke, which he learned to deliver to all parts of the enemy's body. His training post exercise consisted of leaping forward and back, in and out of range of his enemy's weaponry, keeping himself protected with his double weight shield while delivering sword strokes to areas representing the head, face, stomach, flank, knees, and legs. Whether one's primary offensive armament was the short sword or the much longer lance, the exercise would have been equally valuable, as regardless of the length of the weapon, the important part

⁸³⁰ Simon Coupland, "Carolingian Arms and Armor in the Ninth Century," 29-50. DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology* 20-25; Wilfried Menghin, *Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter: chronologische-typologischen Gräbern des 5. bis 7. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1983).

was that one was trained to reliably introduce the point end to the enemy with the quickest and surest possible stroke.⁸³¹

Cavalry Equipment

In addition to the lance, shield, and bow, cavalry under Charlemagne were expected to be equipped with a longsword (*spatha*) and a shortsword or seax (*semispatha*). They were also supposed to supply themselves with some form of armor, as well as the obviously requisite horses.⁸³² The primary weapon for cavalry was still the lance, the one which would enable the horseman to strike his enemies from the greatest possible distance.⁸³³ The sword usually would be drawn once the lance was lost in combat, the likelihood of which was rather high, given that cavalymen had to wield a shield and spear while simultaneously guiding his horse.⁸³⁴

It is a certainty that Louis the German's cavalry forces utilized the lance in battle. It is of particular importance, however, that one does not misconstrue the use of the lance as the couched lance of the high medieval period. Frankish cavalry of the ninth century did not possess the requisite equipment to enable them to fight in this style. Couching the lance under the arm, often with the butt fixed into a socket on one's armor, enabled a rider to channel the momentum of his charging horse into his blow, rendering it very powerful. In order for the rider, himself, to be able to withstand the force of such a blow and not fall backward off of his horse, however, he needed two key pieces of equipment.

⁸³¹ Raban, *de procinctu Romanae militiae*, VI.

⁸³² *Capitulare Missorum* c.4, MGH *Capitularia regum Francorum* 1.24, p. 67.

⁸³³ Hence the prescription in ULD I.70 that horsemen ought to be provided with spear and shield.

⁸³⁴ Jurg Gassmann, "Combat Training for Horse and Rider in the Early Middle Ages," *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 6.1 (2018), 63-98.

The first is the stirrup, enabling him to fix his feet firmly as he struck his opponent. The second, and even more important, piece of technology was the high-pommel, high-cantle saddle. This gave the rider fixed support in the front and back, such that the blow would not unhorse him. Given the absence of such technology in the ninth century, the Franks could not practice the couched lance style of cavalry combat. Rather, the cavalry, much like their counterparts in the infantry, wielded the lance as a thrusting weapon, striking powerfully downwards at the enemy from atop the horse. Such a method is not without its advantages over high medieval, armored shock cavalry tactics. The likelihood of losing or sundering one's lance is somewhat less, meaning that repeated blows could be struck without either replacing the weapon or wheeling and charging again.⁸³⁵

Quite interestingly, the capitulary evidence suggests that both infantry and cavalry forces should be equipped with bows. Could ninth century Frankish cavalry forces be expected to function as highly mobile horse archers? Certainly, the Carolingians had encountered such enemies before in the Avars, whose military featured both light cavalry armed with recurve bows and heavy cavalry with lance and sword.⁸³⁶ It is plausible that such mounted archery tactics would have been appreciated by Charlemagne and passed on into the military training of his own and his Carolingian successors' cavalry divisions. The essential idea behind mounted archer tactics is to keep consistently out of range of close combat weapons while showering the enemy with arrows. This sort of fighting,

⁸³⁵ See in particular Bachrach, "Charles Martel, Mounted Shock Combat, the Stirrup and Feudalism" *Medieval and Renaissance History* 7 (1970), 49-75. Kelly DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology*, 44-47, 95-122.

⁸³⁶ *Royal Frankish Annals 791-796* for Charlemagne's campaigns against the Avars; cf. *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy*, George T. Dennis, ed. and trans. (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984), esp. 11-35. On horse archers in Late Antiquity, refer to Ilkka Syväntie, *The Age of Hippotoxotai: art of war in Roman military revival and disaster (491-636)* (Tampere, 2004).

however, requires a great deal of training to acquire the necessary horsemanship to enable the rider to fire his bow while steering his horse and not losing his seat. Given the difficulty of the training required, as well as the paucity of evidence for such tactics in the written sources, it seems much more likely that Frankish cavalry were required to possess bows so that they could utilize them in situations where their horses' mobility was of limited use, especially in siege operations. Having a bow would enable the cavalryman to dismount and fire arrows at the defenders. If a sortie was attempted, or if a relief force arrived to try and break the siege, he could then mount his horse and help to drive off the attack.⁸³⁷

Ninth century cavalry armor was far less cumbersome than the heavy plate armor of the later medieval period. Were the plate-clad knight unhorsed, he would tire out very quickly in combat on foot, due to the extreme weight of his armor. This is because the late medieval knight in full plate was designed as a hyper-specialist who excelled at one thing: the mounted shock cavalry charge, as replicated less dangerously in the highly popular jousting tournament. The Carolingian cavalryman, however, could realistically expect to draw his sword and go on fighting as a foot soldier in his scale or chain armor and helmet, just as the capitularies mandated that he be able to do. The wealthier cavalrymen were expected to muster for the host with a *lorica*, greaves, and a helmet, probably most often a very simple, conical *Spangenhelm*. Failing to show up for the host inadequately armored meant a loss of benefices.⁸³⁸

⁸³⁷ Bernard Bachrach, "A Picture of Avar-Frankish Warfare From a Carolingian Psalter of the Early Ninth Century in Light of the *Strategicon*," *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 4 (1984): 5-27.

⁸³⁸ *Capitulare Missorum in Theodonis Villa Datum Secundum, Generale* c.6, MGH *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, 1.44, p. 122.

Siege Equipment

Carolingian armies had traditionally been adept in siege warfare during wars of offensive conquest. Save for annalistic accounts of ravaging the enemy's countryside by fire and sword, there is precious little evidence for the way in which ninth century Carolingian sieges actually progressed. The lack of detail relating to siege tactics and equipment in the written sources probably owes more to authorial ignorance (or willful ignorance, owing to the lack of drama involved in long periods of waiting) concerning such matters than it does to any perceived absence of sieges and the requisite equipment. Armies had to carry siege equipment during most offensive campaigns; without it, they stood little hope of actually causing any fortification to submit. Were there no possibility of breaching or scaling any walls, defenders of fortifications could hold out for a very long time indeed, so long as the food lasted; this would certainly have been long enough to wait out the typical Carolingian campaign season, at the end of which the king's army would inevitably depart.

There is enough evidence in written sources to conclude that this bleak scenario was highly unlikely. East Frankish armies forced the submission of fortifications on several occasions, for which they would have needed to be well equipped with the requisite siege engines that would enable them to make a successful attack (or at the bare minimum, the defenders had to believe that the besieging army was capable of doing so). In 849, Duke Thachulf of the Sorbian march led a campaign against Bohemia. At first, the East Frankish forces enjoyed a large measure of success. Thachulf led his forces in a siege of a Bohemian fortification, in which the Franks breached the enemy defenses in a direct assault. Thachulf was wounded by an arrow, but the Bohemians within the

fortification capitulated.⁸³⁹ In 857, another expeditionary force under Bishop Otgar of Eichstätt and *dux* Ernest's namesake son managed to occupy a Bohemian fortified city defended by the rebel Sclavitag. Though there are no details given, one would presume that the Franks besieged the city successfully, although it is highly possible that the defenders surrendered without much of a fight in the face of overwhelming force.⁸⁴⁰

In 864, Louis the German forced Rastislav to capitulate in the siege of Devin. Rastislav “discerned that places to flee had been denied to him,” that is, Louis had fully surrounded the city with vallations.⁸⁴¹ Rastislav clearly did not believe that he could defend the city against a direct assault by the large Carolingian army, and, therefore, he surrendered and gave hostages. This indicates the presence of at least some siege technology, for without it, Louis's army would not have been able plausibly to threaten an attack by storm. Charles the Fat enjoyed similar success in sieges against Moravia in 869. Though it seems that he was unable to take Staré Město, Charles did manage to take many of the surrounding smaller fortifications, the walls of which he “burned with fire,” indicating that these must have been less stoutly reinforced with wooden palisades and earthworks, rather than extensive stonework.⁸⁴² It is worth noting that *AF* uses the word *incendio*—which could also mean “burning projectile” rather than *igne*. Therefore, it is possible, though by no means certain, that this passage indicates the use of siege

⁸³⁹ The expedition was ultimately disastrous, due to the other commanders launching an unplanned offensive against the fort, which had already capitulated; the Bohemians then rallied, routed the attackers, and drove the Franks back to their camp with great slaughter, *AF* 849.

⁸⁴⁰ *AF* 857.

⁸⁴¹ *AF* 864, *loca sibi effugiendi denegata cerneret*.

⁸⁴² *AF* 869, *omnia moenia regionis illius cremavit incendio*; *AB* 869, *AX* 870 (sic, 869).

technology which hurled non-gunpowder incendiaries at the defenders; certainly, this would have been well within the realm of technological possibility.⁸⁴³

Given the paucity of details recorded concerning the actual progress of East Frankish sieges, a comparative approach with the western kingdom can be helpful. This rests upon the assumption that, given the same sorts of training in warfare, the Carolingian kings would have possessed at least comparable knowledge of how to conduct such operations and utilize the necessary engines. In 852, *AB* records some details of a siege conducted by Lothar's son Louis at the city of Bari in Benevento. The Carolingian attackers successfully established a siege of the city, and they succeeded in breaching a portion of the walls. It is impossible that this sort of operation could be carried out without the use of at least some rather sophisticated siege equipment. The account does not mention the breaching of a gate—a typical weak point that could be compromised by rams—but rather the wall itself. The most likely method of accomplishing the breaching of a wall could involve the use of stone throwers or undermining it, or a combination of the two. With the city all but taken, all that remained was for the attackers to rush through the breach, but Louis's advisers counseled him to wait until the next day, so that the king could better organize the plundering operation, lest the royal treasury not get the lion's share of the spoils. Overnight, however, the Moorish defenders repaired the wall with massive amounts of timber and probably the rubble from the breach. Rather than attempt to break through again, the Carolingians broke camp and returned home.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴³ See DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology*, 127-137.

⁸⁴⁴ *AB* 852.

Regino of Prum records numerous details of the progress of the siege of Angers in 873, which had been occupied by Viking raiders. Of great interest is the statement that the Franks, led by Charles the Bald, having established proper vallations⁸⁴⁵ and cut off the city from resupply or reinforcement, brought “new and exquisite siege engines” to bear upon the city.⁸⁴⁶ Even with these new engines, which some scholars have suggested to be evidence of an early form of the trebuchet, the fortifications of the city held strongly. The Northmen finally surrendered to Charles when his army began to dig a massive trench to divert the course of the Mayenne River in such a way as to enable them to attack the Northmen’s ships moored upstream, which would have stranded the invaders deep in Frankish territory. The Northmen utilized the same sort of policy that Charles often employed against them: they bought their way out of the city by paying Charles a massive ransom.⁸⁴⁷

Morale

Morale is incredibly important to any army, and the 9th century Carolingians took the morale of their soldiers and sub-commanders very seriously indeed. Poor morale, often inspired by the belief that a commander’s power and situation was untenable in the face of overwhelming odds, could cause bad performance on the battlefield or worse, disastrous defections. In 833, Louis the Pious experienced this firsthand at the Field of

⁸⁴⁵ *AB* 873 specifically mentions the building of a strong palisade to encircle the city and protect the Frankish encampments from sortie, *sepe fortissimo circumdedit*.

⁸⁴⁶ Regino, *Chronicon*, 873: *nova et exquisita machinamentorum*. For a summary discussion of the possible presence of the trebuchet, see Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege*, 36, and the literature cited therein, most importantly Pierre Riché, *Daily Life in the World of Charlemagne* (Liverpool, 1978); DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology*, 133-137.

⁸⁴⁷ Regino, *Chronicon*, 873. Regino also mentions that the Franks wished to utilize siege engines, *machinis*, against Viking raiders who had occupied a stone church in 867 (sic, 866), though the siege was called off when Count Robert the Strong of Angers was killed and the army deserted.

Lies. His troops, seeing the overwhelming force that the emperor's rebel sons had brought to bear against him, saw no possible route to victory, and they instead began to defect. Louis was forced to dismiss the rest and allow himself to be taken prisoner.⁸⁴⁸

In the aftermath of the Battle of Fontenoy, morale became a serious problem for both the victorious army under Louis the German and Charles the Bald, and the defeated one under Lothar and Pippin. In spite of the substantial victory, Louis and Charles had not obtained a decisive result; Lothar and his supporters were not militarily crippled and could continue the struggle. Louis and Charles's own leading supporters grew weary of the extended conflict and the limited results. Certainly, Louis and Charles had gained a good deal of plunder after the battle, which they passed on to their noble supporters as reward for their loyalty. Thus, the leading supporters had received a good deal of material reward in the immediate aftermath of the battle, which bolstered morale temporarily, but this effect only served to assuage the wounds of having lost so many men and only lasted so long. When the realities of the conflict began to reemerge, that no real, decisive settlement had been reached, dissension crept in amongst the ranks. Louis's troops in particular had been on active campaign for nearly a year, and they had fought two serious battles at the Reis and at Fontenoy. With exhaustion having set in, the magnates made their displeasure known to the kings, conveying the morale problems amongst the soldiers.⁸⁴⁹ Lothar's men too were terribly frustrated after the defeat, and Lothar had a great deal of trouble preventing them from venting the frustration in acts of savagery and plunder.⁸⁵⁰

⁸⁴⁸ *AB* and *AF* 833.

⁸⁴⁹ Nithard IV.6.

⁸⁵⁰ *AB* 841.

Something had to be done to remedy the morale problem. Louis and Charles met with one another and decided on a course of action. The result was the taking of the bilingual Strasbourg Oaths in 842. Louis and Charles sealed their alliance publicly, before the assembled host of both armies, so that all of the troops would be reassured that the brothers' support for one another in the conflict against Lothar was staunch and unwavering. Louis swore his oath in Romance for Charles' soldiers, and Charles repeated a similar oath in the Germanic, Frankish tongue to Louis's supporters, thus ensuring that all assembled there understood exactly what was being sworn, following which, Nithard recorded the ceremony in Latin.⁸⁵¹

The oaths served the purpose of temporarily reassuring the troops of the kings' devotion to the cause, but the common problem remained. The battle's enormous casualties weighed heavily on everyone who had participated. The men and nobles did not want to fight another battle of that scale, and the kings did not want to risk the deaths of so many soldiers. Indeed, Nithard himself, who had taken a very active role in the combat, stated that he was outright ashamed of Fontenoy, classifying it as an evil occurrence (*sinistrum*), which pained him to hear about, let alone report in his history.⁸⁵² Lothar's supporters mirrored the sentiment.⁸⁵³ Louis and Charles also endeavored to buoy morale through the very practical exercise of wargames, which functioned doubly as training and entertainment for the soldiers. The marching back and forth, maneuvering to seek or avoid battle after Fontenoy was grueling, tiring, and, although the stakes were

⁸⁵¹ Nithard, III.5 contains the exact terms of the oaths.

⁸⁵² Nithard, III, preface. *Quoniam sinistrum me quiddam ex genere nostro ut audiam pudet, referre praesertim quam maxime piget.* AX also refers to the site of the battle as a painful place.

⁸⁵³ Nithard III.4 notes that Lothar's men were completely exhausted after continually marching back and forth in pursuit of Charles and Louis in the aftermath of Fontenoy, and AB 842 notes that Lothar had to hand out large and valuable bribes in order to prevent his men from deserting, which they did anyway.

still very high, boring. Such games provided a welcome break from the monotony of the cycle of marches and setting up and breaking down camps.⁸⁵⁴

It is an old military cliché that the army marches on its stomach. As such, proper logistical supply was of the utmost importance to ensure that the army's morale remained high. The army had to be provisioned with plenty of food and fodder and usually marched along rivers, from which plenty of potable water could be accessed for men and beasts. Charlemagne had taken great pains to ensure that his armies were properly provisioned for the march, regardless of where he saw a need to deploy them. Moreover, he attempted to ensure that landholders supplied the troops that were sent to the royal host in predictable ways that the king himself stipulated. Charlemagne required that troops be supplied with food for three months campaigning, and men were frequently sent to forage for or buy fresh vegetables and fruits to supplement the food that was prepared in advance. In addition, he also mandated that supply carts should accompany the troops, heavily furnished with any necessities for establishing encampments on campaign, such as hammers, shovels, planks, axes, and any other necessary implements.⁸⁵⁵

Though similar capitulary evidence does not survive from Louis the German's court, it is nonetheless clear that he continued Charlemagne's policy of overseeing army supply tightly from the pattern of his charter legislation. Seven extant charters specifically mention salt or saltworks, which provided an essential mineral for marching soldiers, who would lose a great deal of sodium through sweating.⁸⁵⁶ Salt was also

⁸⁵⁴ Nithard III.6.

⁸⁵⁵ *Karoli ad Fulradum Abbatem Epistola*, in *MGH Capitularia* I.75.

⁸⁵⁶ ULD I.24, 29, 36, 69, 90, 92, and 116.

necessary for the preservation of any sorts of dried meats or fish, a valuable source of protein that was lighter and denser, and therefore easier to carry more of, than unsalted meat, which also would have been likely to spoil quickly, making it unsuitable for carrying on campaign. In addition—as discussed in greater detail in the following chapter—Louis usually prepared for campaigns by confirming or granting benefices along the planned routes of march, in order that he might further ease the burden of supply through delegation.⁸⁵⁷

Another very important contribution to army morale was provided by the church. It mattered deeply to many soldiers to believe that they were fighting with the support of the Christian church, through which their various campaigns acquired the essence of divine sanction. Louis the German, a deeply religious man himself, understood the importance of religion to morale.⁸⁵⁸ As such, he took great pains to ensure that the church within his realm was provided with adequate lands and resources to bear the burden of army supply and provisioning, but also to keep bishops and abbots of major monasteries happy and behind his cause.⁸⁵⁹ Important churchmen like bishops and abbots also accompanied armies on campaigns, as did priests and royal chaplains. In some cases, Louis utilized bishops and abbots to lead military campaigns in the absence of the king,

⁸⁵⁷ Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 18-32.

⁸⁵⁸ On Louis the German's personal piety see Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 32-37.

⁸⁵⁹ The burden of supply and provisioning of expeditionary forces as well as the king's military household and palace staff was a poignant issue among ninth-century churchmen. See Nelson, "Charles the Bald and the Church," in *Politics and Ritual* 75-90; idem, "The Church's Military Service in the Ninth Century: a Contemporary Comparative View?" in *ibid*, 117-132; Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis*; David Bachrach, "Immunities," esp. 9-12.

princes, or other major secular *duces*.⁸⁶⁰ The presence of prominent churchmen, such as Archbishop Liutbert of Mainz, could not fail to make a strong impression on the soldiers.

Bishops played an indispensable role in navigating spiritual crises brought on by the Battle of Fontenoy. In addition to the morale problems brought on by several years of maneuvering in a frustrating civil war, the issue of Christian Franks killing one another lay heavily upon the minds of many participants, from kings to soldiers. Numerous bishops accompanied the army of Louis and Charles, saying masses for the assembled armies and exhorting the kings to diplomatic solutions, in order that they might leave the “church of God and all the Christian people at peace.”⁸⁶¹ Nonetheless, once battle was deemed the only solution, according to Nithard, it had to be a fair fight. Only then could the participants ensure that it was because of “God’s judgment”⁸⁶² that the issue would be decided. Nithard clearly believed that his detachment of the army fought “with God’s help.”⁸⁶³ After the slaughter, it was the bishops who were responsible for presiding over the masses for the burials of the innumerable dead the day after the conflict.⁸⁶⁴

The assembled bishops also held council after the battle, to assuage the severely troubled consciences of all the participants.⁸⁶⁵ The episcopal solution was to acquit the armies of Louis and Charles of all guilt, claiming that their armies had “fought only for justice and equity...and because of this, each man ought to be held an immune [i.e., guiltless] minister of God in this business, as much the adviser [commander] as the doer

⁸⁶⁰ On which see above, 255-257.

⁸⁶¹ Nithard II.10, “*sineret ecclesiam Dei et universum populum Christianum pacem habere.*”

⁸⁶² AF 841, “*Deo iudicio.*”

⁸⁶³ Nithard II.10, “*Domino auxiliante.*”

⁸⁶⁴ AB 841.

⁸⁶⁵ Nithard III.1, “*reges populi...popoloque Christiano dolentes.*”

[soldier].”⁸⁶⁶ For the further remission of sins, particularly those of the dead, who had not received last rites, the bishops presided over a three-day fast. Additionally, they arranged secret confessions for those men who believed they had acted out of “anger, hate, or vain glory” during the campaign.⁸⁶⁷

Conclusion

By deliberately continuing and building upon the tripartite military structure established by his Carolingian and Merovingian predecessors, Louis the German fielded well-rounded, well-equipped, and well-trained military forces year after year. The first part was the general levy, which was the universal obligation of all men, free or slave, to defend the areas in which they lived against invasion (*lantweri*). The second was the expeditionary levy, comprised of men of sufficient wealth to properly equip themselves for offensive campaigning. The third and most professional were the soldiers who comprised the military households (*obsequia*) of nobles and large landholders.

The heterogeneity and various capabilities—that is, infantry, cavalry, siege engines and engineers—of Louis the German’s troops enabled the king to respond successfully to a wide array of threats faced by his kingdom. These including the ambitions of his brothers—who fielded very similar armies—raids and rebellions from various peoples across his very long eastern frontier, and occasional Viking attacks. Utilizing a system of defense in depth, Louis the German maintained his kingdom’s borders in the face of these multiple enemies, establishing what was arguably the most

⁸⁶⁶ Nithard III.1, “*sola iusticia et aequitate decertaverint...ac per hoc inmundis omnis Dei minister in hoc negotio haberi, tam suasor quam et effector, deberetur.*”

⁸⁶⁷ Nithard III.I, “*ira aut odio aut vana gloria.*”

stable of the successor kingdoms to the unified empire of Charlemagne and Louis the Pious. This system owed a great deal to the physical infrastructure left by the late Roman Empire, including a network of roads, fortified cities, and rural fortresses.

Training similarly built upon a late Roman imperial model in a very literal sense, since the Carolingian kings indirectly modeled their training after the military manual of Vegetius, filtered, in part, through an abridgement by Rabanus Maurus. The command of the system rested upon the capable shoulders of Louis the German, his sons, and the leading magnates of the kingdom, whose careful planning and execution of campaigns lead to repeated success in the field, which established for Louis a reputation as a high-order military commander and shrewd diplomat among his contemporaries.

CHAPTER FIVE: TAKING THE FIELD—LOGISTICS AND TRAVEL

The simultaneity of the military and political issues facing ninth-century East Francia necessitated an enormous amount of travel for Louis the German, who often moved distances of 500 kilometers or more from one frontier of the realm to the other in the same campaign season, responding to the challenges of attack, rebellion and dynastic conflict.⁸⁶⁸ The nature of this “itinerant kingship” meant that over the course of the average year, Carolingian kings often spent more time on the road than they did at any particular royal residence.⁸⁶⁹ So much travel meant that kings necessarily had to be concerned with logistics, the successful supply and provisioning of armies on the march.

Logistical considerations were of paramount importance to Louis’s campaigns across the eastern frontier. When campaigning in the west against other Carolingian forces, the army typically mustered at Frankfurt and marched through relatively friendly and familiar territory that was firmly under Louis’s control.⁸⁷⁰ The king and army could obtain food rather easily on these marches, since the lands that they traversed were agriculturally productive and closer to the Carolingian heartland. This meant that they could be depended on to resupply the army with provisions as they traveled. In the East,

⁸⁶⁸ The route east along the Danube and north up the Morava from Regensburg to Mikulčice was over 550km, and from Regensburg to Frankfurt was about 330km.

⁸⁶⁹ On itinerant kingship generally, see John Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge, 1993); Carlrichard Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis*, 2 vols. (Köln, 1968), esp. 33-39; the appendices, housed in volume 2 of this work, also contain useful folding maps with statistics concerning number of royal stays at particular places. For Louis the German’s itinerary in particular, Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 223-226. Cf. also the account in Hincmar, *De ordine palatii*, 23, of the palace officers charged with preparing local administrators for the visits of the itinerant court, which, of course, might include an army, and always included the royal military household (*obsequium*).

⁸⁷⁰ For examples of the muster at Frankfurt, see the preparations for the campaigns of 834 against Lothar I, and that of 870 against Charles the Bald. The latter featured no actual fighting and was settled diplomatically after Louis had summoned the army at Frankfurt and sent messengers to his brother that he would attack immediately if Charles did not remove himself from Aachen. See *AB* 834 and 870, *AF* 870, *AX* 834 and 870; and cf. the account in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 72-75.

the Bavarian contingents of Louis's armies usually mustered at Regensburg, around which city Louis enjoyed a great deal of noble support.⁸⁷¹ Men and resources could be moved readily from one of these capital cities to the other; the journey of roughly 330 kilometers between the two could be made in less than a week by a very mobile force under extreme circumstances, though two weeks was probably much more common.⁸⁷²

From these two main capital cities, Louis built upon the foundational network of Roman roads and the European river systems to ensure that his armies could travel safely and with adequate supply throughout the kingdom.⁸⁷³ Both cities were positioned ideally to serve as royal palaces and muster points. Frankfurt lay at the confluence of the Rhine and Main, and Regensburg was situated at the northernmost bend of the Danube. Both cities also boasted Roman roads that followed the course of the river networks and crossed between them.⁸⁷⁴ Overlaid upon the roads and rivers were the constructed networks of cities, fortified *castra*, and monasteries, which served as important waypoints and stockpiles of supplies, particularly along difficult routes of march.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷¹ See the events of 844 and 846, both of which featured campaigns across the eastern frontier which departed from the royal palace at Regensburg, *AF*, *AB*, and *AX*, 844 and 846; the departures from Regensburg are confirmed by charters in *ULD* 35-37, 44-45; and cf. Goldberg, 132-134. On Regensburg generally, Peter Schmid, *Regensburg: Stadt der Könige und Herzöge im Mittelalter* (Kallmünz, 1977); Carlrichard Brühl, *Palatium et Civitas: Studien zur Profantopographie spätantiker Civitates vom 3. bis 13. Jahrhundert* v.2 (Cologne, 1990), 219-255.

⁸⁷² Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 225, who notes also that a messenger in an emergency could traverse the distance in around five days if provided with fresh horses along the route.

⁸⁷³ For the Carolingian kings' itineraries which required use of the roads from Regensburg particularly, see Schmid, *Regensburg*, 4-17, and see also the useful table of the journeys of Louis the German to and from Regensburg, in the appendix at 458-461.

⁸⁷⁴ Raymond Chevallier, *Roman Roads*, trans. N.H. Field (Berkeley, 1976), 170-177.

⁸⁷⁵ On the role of the monastic establishments in offsetting logistical difficulties and facilitating communications, particularly in the difficult Alpine passes, see Wilhelm Störmer, "Zur Frage der Funktionen des kirchlichen Fernbesitzes im Gebiet der Ostalpen vom 8. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert," in Helmut Beumann and Werner Schröder, eds., *Die Transalpinen Verbindungen der Bayern, Alemannen und Franken bis zum 10. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen, 1987), 379-404; idem, "Fernstrasse und Kloster: Zur Verkehrs- und Herrschaftsstruktur des westlichen Altbayern im frühen Mittelalter," in *Zeitschrift für*

As the army traveled eastward, however, it gradually passed through far more hostile territory, in which Louis and his soldiers were required to be constantly on guard against surprise attacks.⁸⁷⁶ Travel across the eastern frontier meant that the king needed to expend substantial effort on the gathering of intelligence before planning campaigns, and to utilize scouts heavily while on the march. Clearly, Louis was concerned with developing the fullest possible understanding of the capabilities of the enemies he faced across the frontier. In this regard, the intelligence brought to the royal assembly by attendees, whom the king could debrief, would have been of the utmost importance. This attention to detail falls firmly within the Carolingian tradition of intelligence gathering that Charlemagne had made common practice.⁸⁷⁷ Intelligence gathered at assemblies was recorded in *descriptio* documents like the “Catalogue of Fortresses,” which Goldberg believes was probably composed at the Paderborn assembly of 845.⁸⁷⁸ Indeed, Louis the German was said to have been especially concerned with ensuring that the lands granted by himself and his Carolingian ancestors remained under the control of their rightful owners, not only because this was an important royal judicial function, but also because he needed to know what lands and resources were available to his armies at all times.⁸⁷⁹

Bayerische Landesgeschichte 29 (1966), 299-343. Cf. also Donald Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, 1978), 40-41.

⁸⁷⁶ AF 855.

⁸⁷⁷ On Louis’s assemblies see Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 226-230. For earlier Carolingian precedent, see esp. Bachrach “Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff,” *The Journal of Military History* 66.2 (2002), 313-357; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 214-233, particularly regarding the function of a royal assembly as a method of gathering intelligence from all parts of the empire, through interviewing the attendees, who were required to gather knowledge about their particular portion of the realm.

⁸⁷⁸ *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, ed. Erwin Herrmann, in *Slawisch-germanische Beziehungen im südostdeutschen Raum von der Spätantike bis zum Ungarnsturm: Ein Quellenbuch mit Erläuterungen*, (Munich, 1965), 212-222; Maddalena Betti, “La *Descriptio civitatum et regionem ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*. Lo spazio oltre il “*limes*” nel IX secolo.” *Melanges de l’ecole francaise de Rome* 125.1 (2013). Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 135-137.

⁸⁷⁹ “...causae ad se ipsum specialiter aspicientes, possessiones videlicet ab avita vel paterna proprietate iure hereditario sibi derelictae, quas oportuit ab iniquis pervasoribus iusta repetitione legitimo domino

Given the absence of extant East Frankish capitularies, the primary methodology to be employed in the study of logistics must be based around the study of the surviving annals and charter evidence. The king did not operate alone to supply his armies. The great institutions and landholders of the East Frankish kingdom—monasteries, abbeys, counts, bishops—shouldered much of the burden for provisioning. Louis relied heavily on the logistical support of nobles and monasteries during campaign, and he was careful to cultivate such support through the issuing of charters to important landholders when he knew that his campaign itinerary would take him near or through their respective territories.⁸⁸⁰ This was especially true during eastern campaigns. When preparing for war against Moravia in the early 860s, for example, Louis took great pains to issue charters in regions that would ensure his access to the middle Danube region.⁸⁸¹ Access to rivers was of paramount importance, as transport of substantial amounts of equipment and food for the army and its horses was far easier on the water than overland.⁸⁸²

restitui”: “cases regarding him particularly, namely possessions which came to him by hereditary property law from his father and grandfather, which should be restored from wrongful thieves to the legitimate lord by just petition”; *AF* 852. Note that this probably refers to lands which the king had granted in benefice, and these landholding privileges were not being respected by the *iniquis pervasoribus*, rather than that the *iniquis pervasoribus* had usurped royal landholdings directly, which would have been daring indeed.

⁸⁸⁰ Störmer, Wilhelm. “Zur Frage der Funktionen des kirchlichen Fernbesitzes im Gebiet der Ostalpen vom 8. bis zum 10. Jahrhundert,” in Beumann and Schröder, eds., *Die Transalpinen Verbindungen der Bayern, Alemannen, und Franken bis zum 10. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), 379-403.

⁸⁸¹ *ULD* 96, 98-102, and see esp. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars* 133-140. Regardless of whether or not one accepts the southern location of Moravia thesis to which Bowlus ascribes in this work, the firm control of the middle Danube would have been very important logistically. More on this below, in the subsection “Logistics in the East.”

⁸⁸² Concerning the difficulties associated with overland logistical transport in a low technology environment, see the essential study by Donald Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978); Bachrach, “Logistics in Pre-Crusade Europe,” in John Lynn, ed., *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boulder, 1993), 57-78; idem, “Animals and Warfare in Early Medieval Europe,” *SS Spoleto* 30 (1985), 707-764; idem, “The Crusader March from Dorylaion to Herakleia, 4 July-ca. 2 September, 1097,” in Ruthy Gertwagen and Elizabeth Jeffreys, eds., *Shipping, Trade, and Crusade in the Medieval Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of John Pryor* (Farnham, 2012), 231-254.

As shown above, Louis the German frequently utilized very large expeditionary forces numbering several thousand men in a single army, often levied from several different regions at once.⁸⁸³ Such large armies, of course, required concomitantly large supplies of food, water, horses, fodder, weaponry, and all manner of other supplies to keep them in the field and enable them to achieve success against the enemy. In order to satisfy the massive logistical demands year after year, Louis the German built upon the infrastructure left by the later Roman empire and the massive third century fortification campaigns, as well as the rejuvenation and expansion of that system under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious.⁸⁸⁴ The networks of rivers and roads served to facilitate travel and transportation of supply.

Nutritional Requirements of Men and Animals

Each soldier on the march ideally required on average about 3,000 calories a day in order to maintain his strength and keep him fit for the often grueling demands of marching dozens of kilometers in daily succession.⁸⁸⁵ A soldier's diet probably was

⁸⁸³ Esp. see above, Ch. 4; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 124-126; and cf. also B. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare* 51-83, which illustrates the earlier Carolingian precedent upon which Louis based his own military organization; D. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 70-101, which establishes the essential continuity of the Carolingian military form, with some notable modifications under Henry I and Otto I, straight through the Ottonian period.

⁸⁸⁴ For the Roman fortifications, Bachrach, "Late Roman Grand Strategy: Fortification of the urbes of Gaul," *Journal of Medieval Military History*, XV (2017), 3-34; E.N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire: From the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore, 1976), 159-182. For the Carolingians, Matthias Hardt, "Linien und Säume. Zonen und Räume an der Ostgrenze des Reiches im frühen und hohen Mittelalter," in Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, eds., *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2000), 39-56; idem, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," 219-232; Joachim Henning, "Civilization versus Barbarians? Fortification techniques and politics in Carolingian and Ottonian Borderlands," in F. Curta, ed., *Borders, Barriers, and Ethnogenesis: Frontiers in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2005), 23-34.

⁸⁸⁵ Jonathan Roth, *The Logistics of the Roman Army at War (264B.C.-A.D. 235)* (Leiden, 1999), 7-14. Roth makes clear that this is the requirement necessary to sustain strength and fighting fitness, rather than to sustain life, under which desperate conditions rations could be reduced considerably while the body utilized its own fat stores in addition to short rations. By contrast, the modern US military prescribes that a full day's field rations consist of three MRE (meals, ready-to-eat), which contain an average of 1,250 calories

relatively repetitive and predictable, composed primarily of those items which could be preserved and transported conveniently. This included hardtack-type biscuit; bread, gruels, or porridges composed of milled grain, which the army could prepare in camp; and preserved meat or fish, which would be supplemented by whatever fresh produce could be bought or foraged locally.⁸⁸⁶ The daily ration probably amounted to about a kilogram of weight, which meant that an infantryman, who could be expected to carry perhaps 45 kilograms upon his back at a high-end estimate, could carry a substantial amount of food for himself, perhaps enough for three weeks, in addition to some weaponry.⁸⁸⁷ This practice of carrying one's own rations has been common throughout most of western military history; it was essential to the Macedonian armies of Philip and Alexander, and it was the prescribed method of the Roman legions as well, particularly after the military reforms of Gaius Marius.⁸⁸⁸

each, for a total of 3,750 calories. <https://www.goarmy.com/soldier-life/fitness-and-nutrition/components-of-nutrition/meals-ready-to-eat.html> (last accessed 1/23/20).

⁸⁸⁶ Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 44-53; Kathy L. Pearson, "Nutrition and the Early-Medieval Diet," *Speculum* 72 (1997), 1-32. Highly useful tables and ratios concerning nutrition content, and the loss of absorbable calories through processes such as milling and baking, can be found in Appendix 1 of Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 123-130.

⁸⁸⁷ Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 71-77. These carrying figures are entirely in keeping with recent findings that the modern US military might carry loads ranging from 40 to 60 kg on the march. Knapik, Joseph J., et al., "Soldier Load Carriage: Historical, Physiological, Biomechanical, and Medical Aspects," *Military Medicine* 169 (2004), 45-56; *Task Force Devil Combined Arms Assessment Team (Devil CAAT), "The Modern Warrior's Combat Load: Dismounted Operations in Afghanistan, April-May 2003" (U.S. Army Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2003)*. Marcus Junkelmann, *Die Legionen des Augustus: Der römische Soldat im archäologische Experiment* (Mainz, 1986) is a fascinating experimental study attempting to recreate the conditions of the Roman army on the march using "ordinary" (that is, untrained for such undertakings) German citizens to confirm the possibility of carrying a loaded pack of around 45kg for 500km through the Alps, averaging around 25km daily, esp. pp. 43-58, 200, as cited by Roth, 75 and n.47-48. Cf. also the classic work of S.L.A. Marshall, *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation* (Quantico, Marine Corps Association, 1950), esp. 24-27.

⁸⁸⁸ On Alexander, see Donald Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army* (Berkeley, 1978), especially 1-25 and the appendix at 123-130. For the Roman context, Plutarch, *Life of Marius*, 13, Loeb IX (London, 1920), 495-497; Frontinus, *Strategemata*, IV.I.6-7; Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 71-77; Franz Stolle, *Der Römische Legionär und sein Gepäck ('Mulus Marianus'): eine Abhandlung über den Mundvorrat, die Gepäcklast und den Tornister des römischen Legionärs* (Strasbourg, 1914).

Charlemagne, however, stipulated that Carolingian soldiers ought to muster for campaigns with enough food to last three months.⁸⁸⁹ By no stretch of the imagination would an individual, whether on horseback or on foot, be able to carry such allowances of rations himself, which ought to weigh somewhere around 90kg (nearly 200 pounds). The food in excess of that which could not be carried on soldiers' backs was either carried by pack animals or hauled by draft animals—horses, mules, or oxen—on carts or wagons. A packhorse could carry perhaps 100kg while a mule could carry about 75kg.⁸⁹⁰ The load carrying capacity of these vehicles is not entirely certain, though it was not more than around 500kg for carts and 600kg for wagons at a high-end estimate.⁸⁹¹ Each cart or wagon bearing such a load would require animals to pull it: either two oxen or two horses. The latter could move quicker while requiring less fodder than oxen, though the oxen had the advantage of providing beef on the hoof once their carts were emptied. Either type of these draft animals could be expendable under the ideal circumstances. Were a surplus available to replace those animals which became injured or overworked, those beasts, particularly oxen, could be slaughtered and consumed by the soldiery to add variety and additional protein to the often-repetitive carbohydrate based diet.

Under very difficult conditions, however, such as those which prevailed on Louis the German's journey from Bavaria to Fontenoy, the lack of draft animals to pull the requisite carts could turn into a very serious problem. The combination of a long march at a rapid pace (*tam itineris longitudine*) and the battle at the Reis (*quam proeliis variis*

⁸⁸⁹ *Karoli ad Fulradum Abbatem Epistola*, in *MGH Capitularia* I.75.

⁸⁹⁰ Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 202-208.

⁸⁹¹ Bachrach, "The Crusader March," 235. Carts generally were preferable, owing to their greater mobility on only two wheels.

difficultatibus), in which Louis's army defeated the forces of Adalbert of Metz, had caused the supply of horses for the army to grow dangerously thin (*maxime equorum inopia attriti*).⁸⁹² As Carroll Gillmor has shown, a very serious shortage of horses had the potential to ruin an entire campaign season. Admittedly, however, there is no evidence that Louis the German's serious shortage of horses after the Reis approached anything near to the seriousness of the equine epidemic of 791, which was reported to have killed up to 90% of the warhorses utilized by Charlemagne's expeditionary forces against the Avars in that year and the following one.⁸⁹³ With anything like a 90% death rate—or even a 50% one, for that matter—Louis's forces would not have been able to make such substantial contributions at Fontenoy.

Draft animals and warhorses alike also required extensive forage, supplemented by grain for the horses. Oxen could be fed with 20kg a day of soft fodder, that is, hay, grass, or the like. A horse would require 10kg daily, half of which ought to be grain, particularly oats, barley, or spelt.⁸⁹⁴ At least some of the fodder required for feeding the animals could be obtained through forage, allowing the animals to graze while the army pitched camp. This method, though it lessened the necessity for carrying food somewhat, was relatively inefficient in terms of time expended when compared with the common practice of stall feeding the animals. It would take a horse or ox quite some time to consume the requisite amount of calories and poundage through grazing, relative to the time expended to eat from a trough of readily provided foods like hay or oats.⁸⁹⁵ Still, for

⁸⁹² Nithard, II.10, and cf. Goldberg, 99-101.

⁸⁹³ Carroll Gillmor, "The 791 Equine Epidemic and its Impact on Charlemagne's Army," *Journal of Medieval Military History* III (2005), 23-45.

⁸⁹⁴ Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 62-65.

⁸⁹⁵ Bachrach "Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare," in Chickering and Seiler, eds., *The Story of Chivalry* (Kalamazoo, 1988), 173-211, who notes that if a horse was to obtain all of its soft fodder through

this reason, it behooved armies to travel through enemy territory in late summer, when such forage was plentiful and readily available.⁸⁹⁶

Preserved meats or fish provided hard-working soldiers with important sources of dietary protein. Preservation was done either through smoking, salting, or a combination of those processes, which points up another important consideration.⁸⁹⁷ Salt was a major necessity for both men and animals, and Louis the German attempted to regulate its supply closely.⁸⁹⁸ Goldberg postulates that Louis the German charged the abbots of the monastery of Kempten in southern Bavaria with the responsibility for providing his armies with salt.⁸⁹⁹ In order to facilitate this, Louis allowed the monastery to take salt from Reichenhall, around 20km southwest of Salzburg, in huge quantities and tax free.⁹⁰⁰ Accordingly, in 837, the monastery was allotted six wagonloads—perhaps 3,000kg—of tax-free salt annually.⁹⁰¹ Clearly, this was altogether more salt than was necessary for the reason put forth in the charter—“for the necessities of the brothers living there,”⁹⁰²

grazing, it would need to spend more time eating than on the march. This is not to suggest that stalls were constructed on the march, but merely that animals were provided with some easily accessible grain and hay rather than having to graze for all of their food.

⁸⁹⁶ This practice was common knowledge in the ancient world as well as the Carolingian one; see Caesar, *Gallic Wars* II.2; Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* III.3.

⁸⁹⁷ Kathy L. Pearson, “Nutrition and the Early-Medieval Diet,” *Speculum* 72 (1997), 1-32

⁸⁹⁸ Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 40-41.

⁸⁹⁹ At the time of the grants, this abbot was Bishop Erchanbert of Friesing, Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 140.

⁹⁰⁰ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire* 140. Salt and the transportation thereof was frequently taxed on the local level in East Francia, see for example *capitulum* 7 of the Raffelstetten toll ordinance, *Inquisitio de Theloneis Raffelstettensis*, in MGH *Capitularia* II.253.

⁹⁰¹ *ULD* 24.

⁹⁰² “*Ad necessaria fratrum in eodem monasterio degentium.*” For general salt consumption figures, Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 41 has 5g per day as the requirement for working soldiers; one might reduce this figure a small amount for the use of rather more sedentary monks (not to discount their agricultural labor, though I conjecture that this was somewhat less arduous than marching with a heavy pack and digging in encampments). Even at 5g per day, however, a monk would only consume 1.825 kg per year, and by no stretch of the imagination did Kempten ever support anywhere near the roughly 1643 monks that it would take to consume such a huge quantity of salt. When one adds the shiploads to the figure, which might each have carried up to 15 tons, the figure becomes large enough convincingly to support Goldberg’s thesis that Kempten was the crux of Louis the German’s military salt supply, or that, at the very least, it played a very large role.

particularly once Louis granted Kempten the further privilege of taking three shiploads of salt each year from the same springs at Reichenhall around 844.⁹⁰³ The carrying capacity of these ships could have been up to around 15 tons of cargo, which would have made the total amount of tax-free salt allotted to the monastery even more superfluous for the maintenance of the monks alone.⁹⁰⁴ For the support of large armies, however, the huge quantity—perhaps over 45 tons annually—makes a great deal more sense.

Utilizing the basic logistical models discussed above, it is possible to perform some basic calculations regarding the supply of a very large, East-Frankish campaign army. Using the essential calculations of Goldberg and Werner regarding army size, a very large force, perhaps the largest that the kingdom could produce, would have numbered around 30,000 men. Most of the time, a much smaller expeditionary force, derived from a few of the several major regions of East Francia, would have sufficed, and these forces probably numbered around 10,000. Perhaps a third of this force went to war on horseback; that is, they numbered among the retinues of major landholders: counts, dukes, prefects, bishops, abbots, and the king himself.⁹⁰⁵

⁹⁰³ ULD 36.

⁹⁰⁴ Aleydis Van de Moortel, “Medieval Boats and Ships of Germany, the Low Countries, and Northeast France: Archaeological Evidence for Shipbuilding Traditions, Timber Resources, Trade, and Communications,” in *Settlement and Coastal Research in the Lower North Sea Region* (Köthen, 2011), 67-105; Johannes Philipsen, “The Utrecht Ship,” *Mariner’s Mirror* 51 (1965), 35-46; Richard Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy, 600-1600* (London, 1980), esp. 60; and cf. Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 247-257. This huge amount of salt also explains the need for the monastery to obtain special salt-boiling cauldrons to remove the impurities, such as dirt, in the salt, as Goldberg identifies in a Friesing charter, 682; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 140.

⁹⁰⁵ For the purposes of this modeling exercise, I have estimated a third cavalry, as per the general ratios established by Karl Ferdinand Werner, “Heeresorganisation und Kriegsführung im deutschen Königreich des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts,” *SSCI*, 15 (Spoleto, 1968), 791–843. This one-third I believe to be higher than the likely actual figure, which was probably more like one-sixth, in keeping with the model of Bachrach in “The Crusader March,” 233-234. This is to show the enormity of the scale of necessary resources to support cavalry, and to account for those theses of the “small-armies men,” such as Reuter, Halsall, et al., who believe that small cavalry-dominated forces would have been easier to move and provision. In short, the horses were far more difficult to feed than the men, and therefore, provisioning even

Each man of the 10,000 required 1kg rations per day. Each of perhaps 3000 mounted troops probably brought with him at least two horses, probably three (one for war, one for riding, one pack or draft horse), which together would require between 60,000 and 90,000kg of fodder per day.⁹⁰⁶ Altogether then, the army would require between 70,000 and 100,000kg, or 35-50 metric tons of food each day. At perhaps 500kg carrying capacity per cart, this meant around 140-200 carts, which would have necessitated 280-400 horses to pull them, each of which required an additional 10kg feed (2800-4000kg total), adding another 5-8 cartloads and 10-16 horses, and so on. Therefore, we arrive at roughly 150-210 loaded carts pulled by 300-420 draft horses *per diem*. Three weeks on the march meant around 3150-4400 carts; three months 13,500-18,900 carts. Clearly, the upper bounds of this arithmetic exercise were unfeasible; nearly 40,000 draft animals is a ridiculous number—and would have required, of course, an equally absurd amount of provisions required to feed them—to support 10,000 men.⁹⁰⁷ Thankfully for Louis, there were numerous other factors at play to lessen the burden.

a small cavalry force would have been a highly difficult logistical undertaking. Timothy Reuter, "Recruitment of Armies in the Early Middle Ages: What can we Know?" in *Military Aspects of Scandinavian Society, in a European Perspective, 1-1300* (Copenhagen, 1997) 32-37; Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450-900* (London, Routledge, 2003), 119-133.

⁹⁰⁶ Here, for ease of calculation and to account for scenarios in which the army traveled when fodder was scarce, we shall assume that all of the horse rations were carried with the army. This certainly was not the case, as much of the soft fodder could be green: grass, clover, etc., eaten while the army pitched camp at the end of the day. Obviously, this would alleviate somewhat the logistical burden of feeding the animals. Note that warhorses and riding horses for cavalry would not have performed any sort of duty as draft animals, as those sorts of animals are explicitly different from one another, and repeated exercise pulling carts would have rendered those animals useless in battle. Bachrach, "Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare," 173-211.

⁹⁰⁷ As David Bachrach discusses in *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 127-128 young Carolingian commanders would have been trained to make these sorts of calculations as part of their basic military education through such texts as Alcuin's work *Propositiones ad acuendos juvenes*, in JP Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 101 (Paris, 1863), at col. 1143. Vegetius III.3 also stresses the importance of making all of these calculations accurately and thoroughly before the initiation of military campaigns.

An important caveat to this model is that any animals, especially oxen, whose carts had been emptied of food and fodder would become immediately redundant. They could be slaughtered and eaten by the soldiers to diversify their diets, could be sold or traded along the route, or they could be driven onwards as substitutes for animals which might get sick, injured, or die along the way.⁹⁰⁸ At any rate, they were redundant and therefore expendable, as were empty carts, which could be pulled along far more easily than loaded ones, taken apart and carried piecemeal, or burnt as firewood. A second caveat was the carrying capacity of each infantryman, perhaps 20 kg of food per man, in addition to his arms and armor, for a roughly 40kg kit at the upper estimate.⁹⁰⁹ Around 14,000kg carrying capacity for the infantry—assuming the cavalymen were of higher status, did not want to add to their riding horses' loads, and therefore did not carry their own packs—is a substantial reduction of the burden upon the carts, lessening the needs for them by around a quarter to a fifth.⁹¹⁰

Most important, however, was the river network. Any army of the premodern world, whenever possible, traveled overland on established roads, which almost without fail followed the routes of navigable rivers. The reason for this is easily understood, yet multifaceted. First, traveling along rivers meant that fresh water would be readily available for both men and beasts. Second, it meant that much of this burden could be

⁹⁰⁸ Beef bones are those most frequently discovered at excavations of Roman military camps; Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army*, 28-29. The eating of horses would also have been possible, though likely unpopular and done only under extreme circumstances, *ibid.*, 30-31.

⁹⁰⁹ Vegetius, in *Epitoma Rei Militaris* I.19, stipulated that the Roman army ought to be trained to carry 60 pound burdens in addition to any arms and armaments in order that they might grow accustomed to such practice, making it easier to do under real campaign conditions. He explicitly notes that this training would allow the army to carry grain and weapons at once during campaigns: “*in arduis expeditionibus necessitas imminet annonam pariter et arma portandi.*” See also the reconstruction of such a military kit in Junkelmann, *Die Legionen des Augustus*, esp. pp. 196-205.

⁹¹⁰ For comparable calculations in the Macedonian context, as well as the use of boats to offset the burden of overland carrying, refer to Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 11-34.

transferred to rivercraft, which required no feeding and could carry far more than draft animals.⁹¹¹ Third, the pairing of roads with rivers meant that the army could easily guard its valuable waterborne logistical support simply by marching along the road conveniently, appropriately, and deliberately located along the riverbanks.

Logistics in the West

At least when traveling in the Frankish kingdoms proper, Louis the German and his army could count on a predictable network of Roman roads upon which to march and haul the baggage train. Combined with the crisscrossing network of rivers that span Europe, this made logistics within the kingdom comparably easy under normal circumstances. Notker notes the commonplace nature of roads within the kingdom by comparison to lands beyond the frontier. When campaigning against the Northmen via an overland route, Charlemagne was beset with difficulties in traveling due to the lack of

⁹¹¹ Dieter Hägermann, "Karl der Grosse und die Schifffahrt," in Detlev Ellmers, ed., *Häfen-Schiffe Wasserwege: Zur Schifffahrt des Mittelalters* (Hamburg, 2002), 11–21; Konrad Elmshäuser, "Facit Navigium," in idem, 22–53. Detlev Ellmers, "Post-Roman Waterfront Installations on the Rhine," in Gustav Milne and Brian Hopley, eds., *Waterfront Archaeology in Britain and Northern Europe: A Review of Current Research in Waterfront Archaeology in Six European Countries Based on Papers Presented to the First International Conference on Waterfront Archaeology in Northern European Towns* (London, 1981), 88–95, where, as Bachrach notes in *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 71 and n.271, Ellmers finds that certain types of these riverboats were large enough to carry not only carts but also the requisite draft animals to pull them. For recent work on these rivercraft, the works of Aleydis Van de Moortel are of particular importance: "The Utrecht Type and the Hulk: Adaptation of an Inland Boatbuilding Tradition to Urbanization and Growing Maritime Contacts in Medieval Northern Europe," in R. Bockius, ed., *Between the Seas. Transfer and Exchange in Nautical Technology: Proceedings of the Eleventh International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology* (Mainz, 2006), 321–329; idem, "The Utrecht Ship Type: an Expanded Logboat Tradition in its Historical Context," in Bockius, ed., *Between the Seas*, 329–336; idem, "The medieval Utrecht Ship Type. Blending boatbuilding traditions in the cultural landscape of Europe's early medieval Migration Period," in Jerzy Gawronski et al., eds., *Ships and Maritime Landscapes: Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology* (Eelde, 2017), 296–303; and cf. Martijn Manders, "A coincidence? Two medieval boats (Vleuten 1 and 2) found during the construction of a housing development at Leidsche Rijn (the Netherlands)," in Gawronski, *Ships and Landscapes*, 466–471; Esther Jansma, "A dendrochronological reassessment of three Roman boats from Utrecht (the Netherlands): evidence of inland navigation between the lower-Scheldt region in *Gallia Belgica* and the *limes* of *Germania inferior*," *Journal of Archaeological Science* 50 (2014), 484–496.

roads.⁹¹² Much like the network of old Roman fortresses, many of which were stoutly built of stone or re-fortified during the massive third-century rebuilding campaign,⁹¹³ the Romans had built a very thorough network of roads throughout the empire. This roadbuilding campaign of course facilitated ease of travel, trade, and communication generally, but one of its main intents was to move one group specifically: the Roman army.⁹¹⁴ In order to maintain a troop presence throughout the far-flung empire, the Romans needed reliable routes of travel to ensure that their armies and all of their accompanying impedimenta—carts laden with supplies from food to massive, deconstructed siege engines⁹¹⁵—could get where they needed to be, along reliable and predictable routes, in order to avoid disasters when moving through relatively uncharted territory.⁹¹⁶

This military topography was readily exploitable by early medieval rulers from the Merovingians to the Ottonians. The network of Roman roads connected nearly all of the major and minor settlements within the Carolingian kingdoms west of the Rhine. Combined with the numerous readily navigable rivers, whose paths the roads often

⁹¹² Notker, *Gesta Karoli* II.13.

⁹¹³ Bernard Bachrach, “Imperial Walled cities in the West: an examination of their early medieval Nachleben,” in James Tracy, ed. *City Walls: The Urban Enceinte in Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2000), 192-218; idem, “Late Roman Grand Strategy: Fortification of the urbes of Gaul,” *Journal of Medieval Military History*, XV (2017), 3-34.

⁹¹⁴ Indeed, as Chevallier notes, the *cursus publicus*, initiated by Augustus, because more and more organized to resemble military organization, and soldiers were employed to ensure safe passage, particularly in more populated areas and around road junctions. Chevallier, *Roman Roads*, 181-184.

⁹¹⁵ On ancient artillery, the essential work is E.W. Marsden, *Greek and Roman Artillery: Historical Development* (Oxford, 1969).

⁹¹⁶ The Battle of the Teutoberg Forest comes readily to mind, in which the Roman army led by Varus, traveling through the heavily forested Teutoburgerwald in a narrow column due to the thinness of the trail, was ambushed by a huge number of barbarian troops who came pouring over an earthwork hill upon the helpless legions, who could not get into proper formation due to how strung out they were, and slaughtered three full legions of men. Peter Wells, *The Battle that Stopped Rome. Emperor Augustus, Arminius, and the Slaughter of the Legions in the Teutoberg Forest* (New York: 2003); Reinhard Wolters, *Die Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald: Arminius, Varus, und das römische Germanien* (Munich, 2008).

followed to utilize the advantages of amphibious transport, the roads made travel within the empire generally easier and more predictable than elsewhere. Though direct evidence from the east Frankish kingdom is scanty, owing to the lack of surviving capitularies, it is clear that ninth-century Carolingian kings took great pains to maintain roads, bridges, and fortifications. Charlemagne had mandated that all of his armies be equipped with the tools necessary to do road and bridge maintenance when necessary, as well as to establish fortified camps on the march to protect against attack.⁹¹⁷ The practice clearly had Roman precedent, as Vegetius shows.⁹¹⁸ As Steffen Patzold argues, these earlier imperial capitularies would have remained in effect well into the Ottonian period, in spite of the lack of surviving original ones from the East Frankish kingdom.⁹¹⁹

Charles the Bald's Edict of Pîtres attests to the fact that the ninth-century kings, in turn, modeled their infrastructural policies on "ancient custom,"⁹²⁰ that is, Roman—and by extension, earlier Carolingian—precedent.⁹²¹ Charles also shows that infrastructure was distinctly a military concern, since he mentions it in the context of military service. Indeed, working to maintain the kingdom's military infrastructure is explicitly noted to have been an alternative to army service for those men who could not serve in combat roles: those who either were unfit physically for the grueling demands of bearing arms against the enemy or possessed insufficient means to meet the property requirements.⁹²² On the latter point, Charles is very clear, quoting extensively from the earlier capitulary of his father Louis the Pious from 829, in which the emperor instructed his *missi* to take

⁹¹⁷ *Karoli ad Fulradum Abbatem Epistola*, in MGH *Capitularia* I.75.

⁹¹⁸ Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* I.21-25.

⁹¹⁹ Steffen Patzold, "Capitularies in the Ottonian Realm," *Early Medieval Europe* 27 (2019), 112-132.

⁹²⁰ "iuxta antiquam et aliarum gentium consuetudinem."

⁹²¹ *Edictum Pistense*, in MGH *Capitularia* II.273, c. 27.

⁹²² *Ibid.*, "qui in hostem pergere non potuerit."

inventory of the men from every region, in order that they might be assessed the proper obligation to provide men and equipment for military service.⁹²³ The edict is also quite explicit about the sort of work to be performed; maintenance was to be done on bridges, fortifications, and other difficult crossings through swampy areas (ensuring passable roads).⁹²⁴ Certainly, “civilians” were not the only ones employed in such service. The army would be expected to ensure that it could pass through difficult territory and be equipped to be able to repair the infrastructure that enabled it to do so, as enumerated by Charlemagne.⁹²⁵ Ideally, however, such structures and fortifications would have been repaired and in usable condition beforehand, that the army might make use of them when necessary—and often at a quick rate of march against highly mobile Viking raiders, which would have made road repair untimely and impractical.

Although no comparably detailed, original edict survives from the reign of Louis the German, it is highly likely that the practice of requiring citizens to perform similar infrastructural maintenance was not foreign to the East Frankish kingdom. Bernhardt, citing Störmer, calls attention to a 903 charter of Louis the Child, which refers to certain church dependents called “*sintmanni*” and “*hengstfuotri*,” which he notes were “people charged with specific services for the upkeep of roads.”⁹²⁶ Reading Störmer, however, it seems rather more likely that “*hengstfuotri*” connotes horse grooms or people responsible

⁹²³ *Capitula ab Episcopis in Placito Tractanda*, in MGH *Capitularia* II.186, c.7.

⁹²⁴ “*ad civitates novas et pontes ac transitus paludium operentur;*” another alternative was to man the system of defense in depth, by guarding cities and marcher fortifications, “*in civitate atque in marca wactas faciant: ad defensionem patriae omnes sine ulla excusatione veniant;*” which did not require campaigning directly via expeditionary service, but was more in line with general levy *lantweri* service, on which see above, c.4.

⁹²⁵ *Karoli ad Fulradum Abbatem Epistola*, in MGH *Capitularia* I.75.

⁹²⁶ *Die Urkunden Ludwigs des Kindes* 28, in MGH *Diplomata* 4, p. 139. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 57 and n. 63; Störmer, “Fernstrasse und Kloster,” 331-332.

for ensuring that horses had adequate provisions, and that fresh horses might be available for messengers—more along the lines of German *Hengstfütterer*—rather than specifically a road worker. Likewise, *sintmanni* probably functioned more as guides, porters, or messengers.⁹²⁷

Nonetheless, the functions of these offices still would be indispensable to travel and especially logistics, owing to the massive amount of food and fodder required for armies, and therefore, it still supports Bernhardt’s essential point concerning the responsibility of monasteries for maintaining the royal *obsequium* as it traveled throughout the kingdom, with or without an accompanying expeditionary force. Louis the German also mentions “*sintmanni*” in a similar context: among the dependents of an estate at Ingolstadt—roughly 70km southwest of Regensburg along the Danube—which Louis granted to Abbot Gauzbald of Niederaltaich in 841.⁹²⁸ Given the position of Ingolstadt along the river route from Regensburg to the southwest, which Louis the German usually took in traveling westward to Alemmania and Italy from Bavaria,⁹²⁹ the position of messenger, guide, or porter would be highly useful to facilitate travel, and perhaps assist in river crossings, at the confluence of the Danube and the Lech.⁹³⁰

Logistics in the East

⁹²⁷ Störmer, “Fernstrasse und Kloster,” 331-332; and for *sintmanni* cf. also the entry in J.F. Niermayer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden, 1976), 973, which also notes the relationship of the word *sindmannus* to *scaremannus*, p. 943, which bears the specific connotation of porter for an army.

⁹²⁸ *ULD* 30.

⁹²⁹ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 225 and n. 191.

⁹³⁰ Störmer, “Funktionen des Kirchlichen Fernbesitzes im Gebiet der Ostalpen,” 392-394; the eastern Alpine routes of this work would become even more important under Louis the German’s son Carloman, whose deeper concern with Italy meant that he needed to account more for projecting transalpine military force than had his father, *ibid.* 379-391.

To say that logistical supply was a serious consideration for Louis the German during his eastern campaigns is to understate the problem. These difficulties were unique at the time to his East Frankish kingdom, because without comparably long marcher regions and frontier zones in their own kingdoms, Louis the German's brothers needed not take notice of any of these problems in the same way that he did. Certainly, Carolingian intelligence of these types of trans-frontier campaigns already existed: Charlemagne and Louis the Pious had dealt with similar situations in their own campaigns against the Avars, Saxons, and Slavs. These earlier campaigns provided important precedent and knowledge upon which Louis could draw in his own logistical planning.⁹³¹

Venturing out beyond the eastern marches into enemy lands with which they were relatively unfamiliar meant serious danger for the East Frankish forces. As such, the value of intelligence gathering and proper scouting cannot be overstated. Certainly, the king was aware of the general state of the road and river network, as well as the location of enemy fortifications and cities, but it is easy to comprehend that enemies would have far more knowledge of their own, local territory. The best places to plan ambushes, the difficult roads and river crossings, the state of the crop yields that year, and other such important details would be intimately familiar to those residents of the area. Traveling through such territory in the face of enemy resistance was difficult at best, and a disaster at worst. Every medieval commander would have been familiar with stories like the fate

⁹³¹ Very in-depth analysis of Charlemagne's early Saxon campaigns can be had from Bachrach, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns*, 177-245, 427-472, 510-565. For Louis the Pious, the collection of Peter Godman and Roger Collins, eds., *Charlemagne's Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious* (Oxford, 1990) is very valuable; in this context particularly, refer to the contributions of Janet Nelson, "The Last Years of Louis the Pious," 147-160; Thomas F.X. Noble, "Louis the Pious and the Frontiers of the Frankish Realm," 333-348; and Timothy Reuter, "The End of Carolingian Military Expansion," 391-408.

of Varus and his legions during the catastrophic ambush in the Teutoberg forest (9 AD), or the attack on Charlemagne's baggage train in the Pyrenees (778), and as a result, they took great pains to ensure that similar disasters did not befall their own men.⁹³² Still, even in spite of the best efforts to obtain plentiful information prior to campaigns, to reconnoiter territory prior to moving through it, to ensure adequate supply for a march and countermarch, Louis and his forces were still troubled by the constraints of traveling through enemy lands with less than perfect information and with the enemy in pursuit.

Like much of medieval warfare generally, military campaigns across the eastern frontier of the Frankish kingdom usually entailed sieges. Louis was well aware of the number and type of the enemy's fortresses, thanks to the substantial intelligence gathering efforts undertaken at his command. Louis's court possessed catalogues of enemy fortifications, which indicate the number of enemy fortifications by region,⁹³³ and through the written sources do not describe much regarding size and type of fortifications, archaeology helps a great deal to endow the picture with greater clarity.⁹³⁴

⁹³² For Varus, Reinhard Wolters, *Die Schlacht im Teutoburger Wald: Arminius, Varus, und das römische Germanien* (Munich, 2008). For Charlemagne, Isabel Butler, ed. and trans., *The Song of Roland* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1904). Cf. the accounts in Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* c.9; *ARF* 778; and see Bachrach, "Is the *Song of Roland's* Roncevalles a Military Satire?" in *Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society: Studies in Honor of Richard W. Kaeuper* (Leiden, Brill, 2017), 15-35

⁹³³ *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*, ed. Erwin Herrmann, in *Slawisch-germanische Beziehungen im südostdeutschen Raum von der Spätantike bis zum Ungarnsturm: Ein Quellenbuch mit Erläuterungen*, (Munich, 1965), 212-222; Maddalena Betti, "La *Descriptio civitatum et regionem ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii*. Lo spazio oltre il "limes" nel IX secolo." *Melanges de l'école française de Rome* 125.1 (2013).

⁹³⁴ Most enemy fortifications were of two general types. Those in Bohemia and the northern regions across the eastern border from Saxony were hilltop fortifications, while the massive Moravian fortifications tended to be placed upon higher ground in the flood plains of rivers, in order that the swampy surrounding regions would slow down approaching forces intent upon laying siege to them. See Hajnalka Herold, "Fortified Settlements of the 9th and 10th Centuries AD in Central Europe: Structure, Function and Symbolism," *Medieval Archaeology* 56 (2012), 60-84. On Mikulčice in particular, see Josef Poulík, "Mikulčice: capital of the lords of Great Moravia," in Rupert Bruce-Mitford, ed. *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Europe* (London, 1975), 1-31; Lumír Poláček, "Great Moravia, the Power Centre at Mikulčice, and the Issue of the Socio-Economic Structure," in P. Velemínský and L. Poláček, eds., *Studien zum Burgwall von Mikulčice VIII* (Brno, 2008), 11-44.

The enemy were usually loathe to challenge Louis the German's massive armies in open battle, prudently preferring instead to utilize their fortifications to the fullest extent by retreating into them whenever the Carolingian host approached. This forced Louis the German into a logistically very difficult position. He could choose to establish a potentially lengthy siege deep in enemy territory and attempt to starve the fortresses into submission. He also might attempt to take the fortresses by storm, or employ slash and burn tactics and ravage the land surrounding them to try to force the enemy to capitulate without risking numerous casualties.⁹³⁵

Were the king to even entertain the possibility of taking enemy fortifications, as he most certainly did, as evidenced by the fact that his armies did successfully besiege Slavic fortifications on several occasions, the army needed to bring numerous siege *impedimenta* with it on the march.⁹³⁶ Even the simplest of siege devices—tall ladders up to 30 ft. high, protective coverings to protect ram gangs from projectiles, the rams themselves—were a lot to carry, even if transported disassembled. Like anything else, of course, they were far easier to carry by boat. Projectile devices such as catapults or *ballistae* only compounded the planning and transportation problem.⁹³⁷ The army would also require sufficient rations for men and beasts for however long the siege might last,⁹³⁸ as well as for the return march after the success or aborting of the operations, which

⁹³⁵ Several examples are presented in detail above, ch. 3. Storming a fortification was never Louis's preferred methodology, except against smaller fortifications which were poorly defended, as in the *AF* 869-870. Even with a heavy numerical advantage, storming a fortification directly would be very costly in terms of human and material resources.

⁹³⁶ *AF* 846, 849, 864, 869, 870, 872, 873.

⁹³⁷ Carroll Gillmor, "The Introduction of the Traction Trebuchet into the Latin West," *Viator* 12 (1981), 1-8; Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege*, (Woodbridge, 1992), 20-38.

⁹³⁸ Some of which, ideally, could be gleaned from the harvests of the enemy, hence the proclivity for engaging in cross-frontier siege warfare in late summer, when the harvest could be utilized by the Carolingian force. The use of the enemy's resources, in conjunction with the destruction wrought by slash-and-burn tactics, were hallmarks of Louis the German's eastern campaign strategy, as above, ch. 2 and 3.

required that supply lines be maintained or that sieges be terminated quickly. It is also noteworthy that many enemy fortifications, and cities, including notably Mikulčice, Staré Město, and Devín, all of which Louis's armies besieged, were located along rivers.⁹³⁹

Charter evidence provides a good deal of detail about the Louis's routes of march and his attempts to ensure adequate provisions for the army as it passed along into enemy territory. Examining the place from which the charter was issued shows where the campaign was likely to have originated, or at the very least, where the king had been engaged in planning it. The locations to which grants were made could often show where the king intended to march, because these estates were indispensable in provisioning the army on the march. Loyal supporters—with their military households and local levies—along the route also provided the army a greater measure of safety as it passed through their territories.

Excellent illustrations of the above principles can be found in the events of the year 846, during which Louis the German's armies suffered through one of their worst Moravian campaigns ever, in spite of some initial success. After putting down a Moravian rebellion in August and appointing Rastislav as a client *dux* over them, the army ran into problems of supply, morale, and leadership. The problems apparently stemmed from dissent between the king and the nobles leading the various units of the army. Louis was forced to march home through Bohemia, suffering substantial casualties from enemy harassment after the Bohemian allegiance he had attempted to forge

⁹³⁹ *AF* 864, 869, 871.

failed.⁹⁴⁰ These issues were likely to have been seriously exacerbated by logistical failings brought on by the Bohemian treachery.

In January of 846, Louis had initiated preparations for the late-summer campaign, which would feature two armies, one mobilized from Bavaria and one from Saxony, converging on Moravia in a pincer movement. Louis attempted to ensure that the Bavarian army would be well supplied along the route to Moravia by making a substantial gift of 100 manses to *dux* Pribina of Pannonia. The actual charter is no longer extant, but the donation is recorded in an 18th century catalogue.⁹⁴¹ The precise location of the donation is a matter for some debate, as “*iuxta fluvium Valchau*” has alternately been argued to refer to the Valpo in Croatia or the Austrian Wachau valley along the Danube. The latter interpretation is current, as the modern Croatian town of Osijek near the suggested territory on the Valpo lay outside Louis’s kingdom proper.⁹⁴²

Additionally, the Wachau Valley of the Danube makes very good sense logistically. Louis issued the charter from Regensburg, some 320km west of the Wachau along the Danube, which would have made an excellent route of march. The king’s Bavarian forces could depart from Regensburg, heading east, and follow the course of the river and the parallel, right-bank Roman road through Pribina’s newly-received territory in the Wachau Valley. Upon this route, the Bavarian army could utilize the Danube for water and transportation of supplies the whole way, and *en route* to Moravia, they could join up with Pribina and his men, who likely would mobilize around Pribina’s principal

⁹⁴⁰ Třeštík, “The Baptism of the Czech Princes,” 58-59, and ch.2 above.

⁹⁴¹ ULD 45.

⁹⁴² Certainly it might be construed linguistically that the lands lay *iuxta fluvium* (the Danube) in the Wachau, with the L elided and the ablative of place intended. ULD 1.45. For more see Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 139-140, esp n. 90 and the literature cited there.

Pannonian fortress at Moosburg, near the southwestern heel of Lake Balaton. The rendezvous point probably would have been located near Vienna, around 200km to the north of Moosburg.⁹⁴³ Pribina's new holdings would provide a convenient resupply source, allowing Pribina to stockpile plenty of provisions for his own men and the rest of Louis's army, thus serving as an effective waypoint and supply depot on a Moravian campaign.⁹⁴⁴ Louis must have been satisfied with the manner in which Pribina performed these new duties, for in October of 847, the king continued to favor Pribina by giving him ownership (as allods) over those lands, which he had previously held in benefice.⁹⁴⁵

The first part of Louis's supply plan proved successful. It was the second pincer force that encountered the real problems. Louis himself led the Saxon contingent southeast beyond the Elbe frontier, where he encountered some resistance from the Bohemians along the way.⁹⁴⁶ Goldberg, building upon the arguments of Třeštík, speculates that when Louis oversaw the baptism of fourteen Bohemian princes the year before, some militarily related demands were made by both sides. The Bohemians, Třeštík argues, likely submitted to Louis's authority and accepted Christian baptism, at least in part, to prevent the East Frankish king from invading their lands.⁹⁴⁷ Louis, in turn,

⁹⁴³ Moosburg was located at Zalavár, on the southwestern end of Lake Balaton, and was so named for its swampy location, which rendered it very difficult to besiege; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 84-85.

⁹⁴⁴ *AF, AB, AX*, 846. Cf. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 104-111, in which this evidence is deployed in support of the idea that Louis's armies marched southeast *through* Pannonia (*en route* to the purported southeastern Moravian kernel) rather than Pribina's armies north *from* Pannonia (towards the more northerly, modern locale).

⁹⁴⁵ *ULD* 46.

⁹⁴⁶ On defense in depth along the Elbe see Matthias Hardt, "Linien und Säume. Zonen und Räume an der Ostgrenze des Reiches im frühen und hohen Mittelalter," in Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, eds., *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna, 2000), 39-56; idem, "Hesse, Elbe, Saale and the Frontiers of the Carolingian Empire," 219-232; and for the evolution of which, and the new, Ottonian policy concerning the *limes Sorabicus*, refer to David Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany*, 23-27.

⁹⁴⁷ Třeštík, "The Baptism of the Czech Princes," 58-59.

probably exacted an agreement from these men to help supply his armies along the southeasterly route from Saxony to Moravia.⁹⁴⁸

Whatever their motivations for renegeing on the prior agreement, the fact that the Bohemians harassed his Saxon forces on the march quickly disabused Louis of any ideas that they would provide his forces with supplies *en route* to Moravia. The treachery of the Bohemians caused a serious problem of supply for Louis and the Saxon force. Although Louis and his men made it to Moravia, subdued Moravian resistance, removed the rebellious leader Moimir, and appointed Rastislav *dux* over that territory, the return march was disastrous. The army suffered from conflict amongst its leaders—this may, indeed, refer to or reflect the Bohemian treachery, if they were intended as an important logistical component as Goldberg posits—and lack of supplies. These difficulties led them to suffer numerous casualties, likely from a combination of enemy harassment, fatigue, disease, and starvation.⁹⁴⁹

The *Annales Hisdesheimenses* state more charitably that Louis ravaged the Bohemian lands on the return march. Some degree of ravaging is, indeed, probable, since the seriously compromised army likely had to resort to plundering fields and villages in order to prevent men and beasts from starving to death.⁹⁵⁰ The weather further exacerbated the problem of supply. Both of the past two winters had been particularly harsh, causing a great deal of damage to crops and vineyards. As such, it is likely that the

⁹⁴⁸ Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 138-142.

⁹⁴⁹ *AF* 846.

⁹⁵⁰ *AH*, 846. Since they were in enemy territory, the old injunction of Charlemagne that the army ought not to take anything other than fodder, wood, and water (“*herbam et ligna et aquam nichil de ceteris rebus tangere presumatis*”) while marching through Carolingian territory bore no weight, *Karoli ad Fulradum Abbatem Epistola*, in *MGH Capitularia* I.75

harvest was rather sparse, and the army probably suffered even more greatly as a result.⁹⁵¹ Naturally, low food rations, a militarily difficult campaign, and the dissent among the leaders wrought disastrous effects upon morale. Indeed, such problems might well have been just as responsible for the disagreements among the leadership as any military factors.⁹⁵²

The roughly half a decade from 859-864 saw Louis the German devote a great deal of attention to enforcing stout control over the southeastern marcher regions of Carantania and Pannonia. A good deal of information can be gleaned about the provision of armies very far from either Frankfurt or Regensburg from the extant charters of these years. It is suggested here that Louis the German's actions during this period are to be viewed as a complement to those that he undertook during the 846 campaign, discussed above. Thereby, through the organization of the southeastern marches, coupled with the security of the route through Bohemia, he could bring to bear the greatest possible weight of armies and resources against Moravia.

Thus, Saxon forces might proceed southeast through Bohemia, Pannonian forces northward, and Bavarians east. All of these might rendezvous with one another around Vienna on the Danube for the final push east, or perhaps nearer to the Moravian fortress of Dowina (Devín) at the confluence of the Danube and Morava Rivers, which Louis

⁹⁵¹ *AB*, 846.

⁹⁵² Ready parallels on a lesser scale can be drawn between this situation and the mutiny of Alexander the Great's men at the Beas in India, who had also dealt with savage weather during the monsoon season and formidable difficulties in supply in desert terrain of the Middle East, through which they had just marched and conquered. See Engels, *Alexander the Great and the Logistics of the Macedonian Army*, 106-110 and n.41. Caesar too experienced persistent difficulties with army supply in enemy territory; numerous examples are interspersed throughout his *Gallic Wars*, including I.39-40, III.18, VII.10-14, 17, 36, 55, VIII.35.

successfully besieged in 864.⁹⁵³ In accordance with the classic Carolingian campaign strategy of the multiple-army pincer movement, these forces would be able to be supplied through various safe and well-provisioned routes of march on the way to Moravia, spreading out the burden of supply for each one over the separate regions through which they proceeded. As discussed above, this plan fit very well within his overarching grand strategy in the 860s, which was to pacify Moravia to the greatest extent that he was able.⁹⁵⁴ Moreover, Louis the German already exercised stouter control over the regions immediately along the Danube route from Regensburg towards Moravia, than over the more distant Pannonian marches to the southeast. With the following grants, the king attempted to rectify that situation.

In May of 859, Louis redistributed lands at Tulln that he confiscated from Ratpot, who had been removed from power in 854 for fomenting conspiracy with Rastislav,⁹⁵⁵ to St.-Emmeram in Regensburg.⁹⁵⁶ This monastery already held a huge amount of land and royal privileges in Bavaria, and as such, Louis the German placed Ratpot's former lands in control of a monastic foundation upon which he knew he could rely.⁹⁵⁷ In September of the same year, Louis granted to Bishop Albrich of Passau lands ranging from around 60 km southeast of Vienna, to the area between the Vienna Woods (*Wienerwald*) and the Raba River, around 120km in the same direction.⁹⁵⁸ A week later, Louis gave thirteen

⁹⁵³ See above ch. 3; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 272-274; and for a contrary view of the location of Dowina, refer to Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 140-151.

⁹⁵⁴ Refer to ch. 2 above for the grand strategic considerations, and ch. 3 for the progress of the campaigns.

⁹⁵⁵ *Annales ex Annalibus Iuvavensibus*, 854.

⁹⁵⁶ *ULD* 96.

⁹⁵⁷ Josef Widemann, ed., *Die Traditionen des Hochstifts Regensburg und des Klosters S. Emmeram* (Munich, 1943); Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, passim, but especially 50, 80-81, 267; in which he shows that Ratpot had already been linked closely with St.-Emmeram during his prefecture, which made the monastery an apt recipient for the new confiscations.

⁹⁵⁸ *ULD* 98.

manses at the Admont Valley, around 100km south of the Danube at Linz, to Count Witagowo.⁹⁵⁹ In February 860, Louis confirmed a donation from Pribina to Niederaltaich of extensive lands to the north of Moosburg;⁹⁶⁰ in May of the same year, he gave the monastery at Mattsee twenty manses near the Spratzbach, around 90km south of Vienna.⁹⁶¹ Louis also made three grants to Salzburg, one from November of 860,⁹⁶² one from January 864,⁹⁶³ and one from October 864⁹⁶⁴ provided that region with territory at Szombathely (130km south of Vienna), Gurk (200km south of Linz), and Limbach (160km south of Vienna).⁹⁶⁵

As Bowlus notes, all of the above grants could have played an important role as waypoints for armies marching southeast from Bavaria, through Pannonia and Carantania in the southeast, which is certainly correct.⁹⁶⁶ The grants, however, would be equally useful to providing resources, depots, and waypoints for Pannonian and Carantanian armies marching north, in order to rendezvous with a Bavarian force heading east using the Danube for logistical support. There is no reason, simply put, why all of the force and resources of those southeastern regions could not be projected north and east towards and across the Danube, as opposed to south and east along the Sava and Drava Rivers. It was still a relatively long march—between 100 and 200km in most of the above cases, and

⁹⁵⁹ *ULD* 99.

⁹⁶⁰ *ULD* 100.

⁹⁶¹ *ULD* 101.

⁹⁶² *ULD* 102.

⁹⁶³ *ULD* 112.

⁹⁶⁴ *ULD* 115.

⁹⁶⁵ Although I disagree with Bowlus's central thesis regarding the location of Moravia, this portion of the present work is deeply indebted to his thorough and precise geographical research and assessment, for which refer to *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 133-151. Also see the account of the situation in Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 264-274.

⁹⁶⁶ Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 133-140.

over 200km from Moosburg—to the Danube, and these grants would help supply those Pannonian and Carantanian forces as they set out and marched in that direction.

The overarching southeast orientation of these charters cannot be questioned. This orientation, however, assumes that the donations were made in the interest of establishing waypoints on the route of march, which, indeed, was often the purpose of such grants. These particular donations, however, should be viewed not as evidence that Moravia lay further to the southeast, and that Louis the German intended to march his forces through the area, per Boba and Bowlus, but rather that the king was making a far greater effort to exploit the resources of every portion of the kingdom in his eventual assault upon Moravia.⁹⁶⁷ The grant to Pribina in 846, whose forces and lands were headquartered at the fortress of Moosburg at Lake Balaton, was of a similar nature. With the increased lands in the Wachau, Pribina could provide a supply depot for his own men along the northerly route towards Moravia across the Danube.⁹⁶⁸ These grants in the late 850s and early 860s would enable Louis to mobilize and supply pincers that would converge on Moravia from the south, while Saxon and Bavarian forces did so from the north and west, respectively.

The campaign of 869 supports this interpretation. Three armies were projected across the eastern frontier, though the Saxon and Thuringian contingent was not, in this case, brought to bear against Moravia. Instead, Louis the Younger led them against the rebellious Sorbs (who, indeed, were closer to Saxony anyway, so this disposition made

⁹⁶⁷ For these charters in particular see Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars* 133-140; for additional counterpoints Florin Curta, “The History and Archaeology of Great Moravia, an Introduction,” *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), 238-247; Herwig Wolfram, *Salzburg, Bayern, Österreich: Die Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum und die Quellen ihrer Zeit* (Vienna, 1995), 87-100.

⁹⁶⁸ ULD 45.

good sense). Carloman, with his prefecture restored after the 863 deposition,⁹⁶⁹ lead a contingent of Bavarians, Carantanians, and Pannonians, to Moravia. There, they were to rendezvous with an Alemmanian and Frankish contingent that the king, himself, planned to lead, but ultimately, owing to a serious illness, Louis was forced to surrender command of this latter force to his son Charles (the Fat). Nonetheless, all three armies, derived from all over East Francia, were deployed across the frontier. Those forces led by Charles and Carloman executed slash and burn tactics upon much of Moravia, causing extensive devastation and seriously weakening the political position of Rastislav: Svatopluk betrayed him to the Franks in the following year.⁹⁷⁰ There was no report of any logistical or tactical failings by any of these pincers, and such matters did not usually escape the attention of the Fulda annalist.⁹⁷¹

Logistics on the Water: River Crossings and Transportation

Crossing a river sounds simple. Numerous options spring to mind, including fording or swimming, small rivercraft propelled by poles or oars, or bridges either permanent or temporary.⁹⁷² The supposed simplicity of river crossings, however, is deeply deceptive. The reality for an army on the march is far more complicated. River crossings might need to be accomplished under duress or pursuit from an enemy, who might attempt to oppose the process of the crossing, placing the crossing force in a

⁹⁶⁹ *AF* 863.

⁹⁷⁰ *AF* 869-870; *AB* 869.

⁹⁷¹ Cf. especially the 846 account of the return through Bohemia.

⁹⁷² Or even crossing over a frozen river in extreme circumstances, such as may have happened in the winter of 406-407, on which see JF Drinkwater, "The Usurpers Constantine III (407-411) and Jovinus (411-413)." *Brittania* 29 (1998), 269-298; Michael Kulikowski, "Barbarians in Gaul, Usurpers in Britain," *Brittania* 31 (2000), 325-345; for a modern restatement of Gibbon's disaster paradigm of decline and fall at the hands of barbarian invaders; Bryan Ward-Perkins, *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization* (Oxford, 2005), 13-31.

severely compromised position. Written military sources, from Vegetius in the ancient world, to modern United States military field manuals, stress the care and planning that must be taken to execute river crossing maneuvers correctly and safely in order to prevent disaster.⁹⁷³

Vegetius, in a section that Raban included in his abridgement, prescribed that all recruits should be taught to swim. This was essential for soldiers; it might be necessary to swim when crossing rivers, since it was not always possible to use bridges or boats while maneuvering against an enemy force.⁹⁷⁴ He also notes that the legions carried hollow boats with them which they might link together to form a pontoon bridge, which practice was also undertaken by Carolingian forces.⁹⁷⁵ Such technologies sound like encumbrances that would further add to the baggage train's considerable burden, but realistically, the materials for making a pontoon bridge were readily available on the march. A crude floating bridge could be made *ad hoc* from empty barrels (already watertight, as they were intended to transport liquids) overlaid with planks, both of which would have been fundamentally necessary for the points along the march when the army was forced to move away from a river and therefore to carry its own water supply.⁹⁷⁶

Vegetius also lays out the ideal conditions and proper techniques and deployment for crossing a river in safety. If a fording was to be attempted, the cavalry should form two lines, between which the bulk of the army could cross in safety. The cavalry line that

⁹⁷³ See for example the military handbook *River Crossing Operations* (Washington, Dept. of Defense, Dept. of the Army Headquarters, 1978).

⁹⁷⁴ Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, I.10.

⁹⁷⁵ Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* II.25. For the Carolingian practice of pontoon bridges see Bachrach *Early Carolingian Warfare* 135-136, 256-257, and idem, *Charlemagne's Early Campaigns* 433, 501. The practice is recorded in Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, III.7.

⁹⁷⁶ See *Capitulare De Villis*, c. 68.

was situated relatively upstream would break up the flow of the water somewhat, allowing the draft animals, carts (which Charlemagne in *de Villis* had legislated must be watertight)⁹⁷⁷, and infantry the most stable crossing possible, while the line downstream would catch up anyone or anything that happened to be swept away in the current. Then the infantry and baggage train would pass between. Were the river too deep or too fast-moving, and, therefore, unable to be forded safely, Vegetius recommends either using empty barrels or dugouts overlaid with planks or tree trunks to make a pontoon bridge, or driving piles and laying planks over the top of them to form a more stable, more permanent bridge.⁹⁷⁸

During his Avar campaigns, Charlemagne definitely utilized portable pontoon bridges to facilitate river crossings on the Danube, Raab, and Enns. After a large huge number of horses were killed by an epidemic after the campaign of 791, the king's armies were somewhat hamstrung by the lack of available animals. The campaign had already achieved a main objective, however, in that it had driven the Avars away from fortifications in the region. Charlemagne, however was unable to follow up the success of this campaign and achieve a decisive victory by pursuing the retreating Avars, due to his lack of a sufficient mounted force, which were obviously the most affected by the epidemic.⁹⁷⁹ The king and his engineers, however, were far from idle. During the next two years, at the city of Regensburg, they fabricated pontoon bridges to be utilized in future campaigns, and they also devoted a huge amount of effort to connecting the

⁹⁷⁷ *Capitulare de Villis* c. 64.

⁹⁷⁸ Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, III.7. Charlemagne, for example, built several permanent bridges over the Elbe in the midst of campaigns; see *ARF*, 789.

⁹⁷⁹ Carroll Gillmor, "The 791 Equine Epidemic and its Impact on Charlemagne's Army," 23-45; Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 46-55.

Danube and Rhine via a very ambitious canal building project between the Rednitz and the Altmühl rivers, which was ultimately terminated unsuccessfully.⁹⁸⁰ Although there is no directly reported evidence for the use of pontoons during Louis the German's reign, the technology was doubtless available to him. It had been known since antiquity, and Charlemagne, ever an exemplar for the later Carolingians, had done so at Regensburg, Louis the German's capital city.⁹⁸¹

Regardless of the actual method a commander chose or was forced to adopt for getting his forces across the water, he needed to be sure that the army could do so without being attacked by the enemy with missile weapons, which would be disastrous. One of the most important aspects of a successful river crossing is scouting.⁹⁸² By ensuring that the opposite bank is free from enemy forces, or from the potential for an ambush by a force kept hidden in the surrounding region, thorough scouting ensured that the army would have sufficient time to execute the crossing maneuver. Raban, in his abridgement of Vegetius, adds a section on scouting to his discussion of marching training and discipline, in order that the army might reconnoiter enemy positions and occupy favorable ground before the enemy could do so.⁹⁸³ The converse is also true: by scouting sufficiently before executing a river crossing, commanders could ensure that their armies

⁹⁸⁰ Christoph Zielhofer et al., "Charlemagne's Summit Canal: an Early Medieval Hydro-engineering Project for Passing the Central European Watershed," *PLoS ONE* 9 (2014), 1-20; Robert Koch, "Fossa Carolina. Neue Erkenntnisse zum Schifffahrtskanal Karls des Grossen," in Detlev Ellmers, ed., *Häfen – Schiffe – Wasserwege. Zur Schifffahrt des Mittelalters* (Hamburg, 2002), 54-70; Hubert Hoffmann, "Fossa Carolina," in Heinrich Beumann, ed., *Karl der Große* (Dusseldorf, 1965), 437-53; Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 50-55.

⁹⁸¹ *ARF* 792.

⁹⁸² Lest the army encounter difficulties the likes of the Roman landing force in Britain in Caesar, *Gallic Wars*, IV.21-26.

⁹⁸³ Raban, *De procinctu romanae militiae* I.5.

were not caught on highly unfavorable ground, while engaged in crossing the water.⁹⁸⁴

When one considers that the army might be comprised of 10,000 or more troops, in addition to horses, oxen, carts, food, fodder, and equipment that needed to be kept dry, it was likely to take quite a bit of time to accomplish a safe river crossing, particularly if pontoon bridges or temporary bridges needed to be constructed or carts made watertight.⁹⁸⁵

Louis the German knew full well the difficulties that making river crossings entailed. He took pains to make them safely and from a strong position, and conversely, he attempted on several occasions to take advantage of enemy forces in the same perilous situation. In 838, for example, Louis the Pious deprived his namesake son of the greater part of his kingdoms, as a result of a disagreement about the emperor's endowment of Charles the Bald with a kingdom of his own. Louis the German was left with only Bavaria, from which he derived a large portion of the expeditionary forces and his own military household.⁹⁸⁶

Still, this force was too small to do anything productive in open battle against his father's armies, which Louis the Pious could muster from all over the empire. Despite his highly compromised position, Louis the German needed to make a show of resistance to

⁹⁸⁴ Scouts were used constantly, even though their activities were not always recorded, or recorded as such. The various exchanges of emissaries during the civil war period between Lothar and Louis and Lothar and Charles served the double function of providing their respective commanders with intelligence about the disposition of the enemy force. Scouts were undoubtedly the men who discovered usable rivercraft at Rouen for Charles the Bald's forces (below and Nithard II.6), after Lothar's men had destroyed the bridges of the region. Nithard II.7, recorded that Lothar utilized scouts to keep an eye on Charles before his armies moved against him in early 841. Scouting is discussed in Vegetius *Epitoma Rei Militaris*, III.6, particularly as regards passing through difficult territory. It is no accident that the chapter immediately following the discussion of traversing dangerous and difficult terrain is the one on river crossings, III.7, which was arguably the most dangerous terrain and maneuver possible.

⁹⁸⁵ *Capitulare de Villis*, c. 64.

⁹⁸⁶ As discussed above, ch. 4.

his father's decree, in order that he might not seem a weak and ineffectual monarch. Surveying his options, Louis decided that his best chance at concerted resistance was to force his father's potentially much larger armies to come to a negotiation by luring them into an encounter on disadvantageous terms. He made a very strong statement by gathering a force of Bavarians, Austrasians, Thuringians, and Alemanni to him, with which he occupied the royal fortress at Frankfurt in late November, where his father had intended to pass the winter at the palace. Furious, Louis the Pious summoned a huge expeditionary force together—highly unusual in winter conditions, attesting to the urgency with which the king viewed the situation—and marched to Mainz, on the opposite bank of the Rhine from Frankfurt.⁹⁸⁷

This was exactly the situation for which Louis the German had hoped. His forces were entrenched, and his father needed to attempt a complicated river crossing in very cold weather, rendering the frigid water dangerous to men and beasts. Louis the German garrisoned the opposite bank of the river thoroughly, keeping his father's army in check so long as they were unable to get across. Louis the Pious knew he needed to act quickly, since he could not afford to wait. The winter weather would continue to take a toll on the emperor's army, as long as they remained encamped near the riverbank. Hence, Louis the Pious snuck a smaller force of around 3,000 men downstream—it is uncertain how far, but far enough to evade being seen—while a large body of the army remained encamped outside Mainz as a decoy. There, he met Saxon reinforcements, and Louis the German's position was compromised. With the main plan of resistance dashed, the Thuringians, Alemanni, and Austrasians, fearing the emperor's wrath, began to desert in droves. With

⁹⁸⁷ *AF, AB* 838-839.

his already numerically inferior force rendered even smaller, Louis the German was forced to retreat with the remainder of his troops into Bavaria.⁹⁸⁸

More examples of river crossings and transportation during the Carolingian civil war period are present in Nithard's account of the period 841-843. When Charles and Louis were maneuvering for position against Lothar in 841, numerous river crossings were necessary. Lothar left a substantial garrison force on the right bank of the Seine—probably somewhere near Paris, and certainly somewhere from between Paris and Rouen—to prevent any attempt at a crossing that Charles and his army might make.⁹⁸⁹ Under normal circumstances, Charles might simply have tried to march his men to a different location and ford the river without being observed by the garrison, as his father had done against Louis the German at Mainz in 838-839.⁹⁹⁰

It was March, however, and heavy rains, probably coupled with springtime snow melt, had caused the river to flood and swell, rendering fording impossible. Acutely aware that Charles would be unable to get across the torrent without bridges or transports, since the freezing waters would kill his men and animals should they attempt to ford, the defenders had broken apart all of the boats and bridges that they could find in the region, ensuring that Charles was trapped temporarily. He sent out scouts to search for other alternatives. These scouts reported to Charles that the heavy currents of the swollen river

⁹⁸⁸ *AF* and *AB*, 838-839; Nithard I.6; and for more on the campaign see above, ch. 3, and Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 90.

⁹⁸⁹ Nithard II.6; *AB* 841. As Nelson notes in *Charles the Bald* p. 112-113, after crossing at Rouen in secret and then clearing Lothar's garrison from the bank, Charles first visited St.-Denis, before continuing southeast, showing that the garrison was likely located at Paris—which would have been easy to garrison owing to existing fortifications—and was definitely located at least in the range of the Seine between Paris and Rouen.

⁹⁹⁰ *AF* and *AB*, 838-839; Nithard I.6.

had caused a number of merchant ships to break free of their moorings and drift away down the river to Rouen. Charles marched his army west towards Rouen, where he found 28 serviceable ships, and he then began the process of boarding them with his forces. He sent messengers into the surrounding area to ensure those whose loyalty was in question that he would soon arrive with his army to enforce their loyalty to him over Lothar at the point of the sword. Those who pledged their loyalty to Charles were pardoned for their temporary error of supporting Lothar.⁹⁹¹

Charles encountered a very difficult problem in setting sail, however, one which is too frequently overlooked or underestimated in its level of difficulty. In Nithard's words, "the horses caused a delay in the crossing."⁹⁹² Horses are notoriously aquaphobic, and getting them to board ships and travel over water was a very difficult proposition that needed to be taken into account on any military campaign that necessitated waterborne transit.⁹⁹³ The cost efficiency of waterborne transit was such an advantage, however, that it was usually worthwhile to account for the difficulty of transporting the horses, but it was still a consideration. Proper aquatic transports for horses were outfitted with specially designed stalls and bindings that would keep the horse well confined and safe so that it could not injure itself or any other horses or crewmembers during the journey. Horse transports also required specific equipment and handling to properly board and disembark the horses without difficulty.⁹⁹⁴ Since the ships that Charles encountered were merchant ships, it is highly unlikely that these ships were outfitted with the proper sort of

⁹⁹¹ Nithard, II.6, and cf. *AB* 841.

⁹⁹² "*In traiciendo equi moram fecerant.*" Nithard II.6.

⁹⁹³ Upon which point see Bachrach, "On the Origins of William the Conqueror's Horse Transports," *Technology and Culture* 26.3 (1985), 505-531, and n. 18 and 22 on page 521.

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

equipment to serve as horse transports, which was responsible for the delays in travel, rendering him unable to pursue those who were attempting to go over to Lothar's side.⁹⁹⁵

The destruction of ships and bridges by Lothar's men in this episode also point to some significant information about the day to day operations of the Carolingian logistical systems on Europe's important networks of rivers. The early Carolingians did not maintain a proper, blue-water naval fleet, nor would it have been particularly logical for them to do so. Early Carolingian naval experience was not extensive, as Bachrach notes in the "Naval Assets" portion of his *Early Carolingian Warfare*. This portion of the work is relegated to an appendix, which is structurally appropriate for the relative attention paid to this asset of the military by the early Carolingians themselves. A professional, royal fleet was not maintained by the kings. Rather, they attempted to ensure that access to the rivers would be guaranteed by loyal vassals or merchants in the various localities through which they traveled with the army.⁹⁹⁶

This dearth of navy presented a serious problem in the face of the Viking invasions during the 9th century. Without sufficient ships or even necessary sailing experience, the Carolingians could do very little to obstruct or even locate the Vikings as they passed freely by sea into the various northern ports of the Carolingian kingdom; Dorestad, in particular, suffered greatly from frequent pillaging.⁹⁹⁷ Louis the Pious attempted to remedy this shortcoming in 837-838. The king had received word of Viking raids upon Dorestad, and he immediately brought his military household to the nearby

⁹⁹⁵ Nithard, II.6.

⁹⁹⁶ Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 247-257.

⁹⁹⁷ Charlemagne had made some effort to fortify the Elbe frontier against raiding by the Danes, as well as to force the Obodrites into tributary acknowledgment of Frankish overlordship; see *ARF* 808-814.

fortress of Nijmegen. Upon his approach, however, the raiders immediately took to sea with their plunder and retreated home, rendering the king's journey largely ineffective by refusing to give battle, as was their usual *modus operandi*. It was clear to Louis the Pious that coastal defenses were lacking, and this current manner of dealing with the seaborne raiders with land forces, even fast-moving mounted troops, proved insufficient.

Therefore, he summoned an assembly to overhaul coastal defenses, at which he ordered the initiation of a shipbuilding campaign, in order that the Frankish forces might be capable of pursuing the Vikings, either along the riverine routes or on the open water.⁹⁹⁸

Of particular importance to the 9th century system of defense against Viking raids were also fortified bridges and known, protected ford sites, such as the one that the large volume of rain rendered impassible to Charles' army in 841. Fortified bridge systems served a two-part function. First, as Simon Coupland and others have illustrated admirably, they served as a system of continental defense against Viking raiders.⁹⁹⁹

Secondly, their presence helped to ensure the army's continued mobility on the march, as royally supported fortified bridges were sites at which the kings could always count on being able to cross the river, which was an invaluable resource during troubled times.¹⁰⁰⁰

Another frequently utilized option was to conscript local merchants, nobles, and residents into lending the use of their own boats to the royal war effort. Ideally, these people would

⁹⁹⁸ *AB* 837-838, *AF* 838.

⁹⁹⁹ Simon Coupland, "The Carolingian Army and the Struggle Against the Vikings," *Viator*, Vol. 35 (2004), 49-70; idem, "The Frankish Tribute Payments to the Vikings and their Consequences," *Francia* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1999), 59-75; idem, "The Fortified Bridges of Charles the Bald," *Journal of Medieval History* Vol. 17 (1991), 1-12; Janet Nelson and Simon Coupland, "The Vikings on the Continent," *History Today*, Vol. 38, No. 12 (1988), 12-19; Janet Nelson, *Charles the Bald* (London, 1992), esp. 160-189; Carrol Gillmor, "The Logistics of Fortified Bridge Building on the Seine under Charles the Bald," In R. Allen Brown, ed., *Anglo-Norman Studies XI: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* (Suffolk, 1989) 87-106.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Hence their destruction by Lothar's men in Nithard II.6 and above.

have been informed of the royal army's intent well in advance, so that they could make the necessary preparations. In a difficult situation, however, as Charles' use of the merchant ships shows, the kings could be quite resourceful in cobbling together the materials necessary, though such accommodations could of course be less than ideal.¹⁰⁰¹

Most Carolingian naval activity took place on the river systems, where much more simple, shallow-draft vessels were required to navigate the rivers than those ships that would have been required for more open-water sailing.¹⁰⁰² Militarily oriented river travel was logistical in nature, rather than geared towards actual naval combat, in which the Carolingians never really engaged. Carolingian kings took pains to ensure that they always had the necessary resources to utilize the rivers for the transport of armies and the huge amount of supplies that accompanied them on the march. Cumbersome Carolingian baggage trains even became the stuff of legend after being infamously immortalized in the *Song of Roland*, in which Charlemagne's train was attacked and demolished during a very difficult Pyrenean crossing.¹⁰⁰³ The actual events described in the *Song of Roland* are largely fictionalized and may even satirize a display of gross military incompetence,¹⁰⁰⁴ but the kernel of truth upon which the legend is built is still very informative. Overland baggage trains were slow, often moving at a very slow speed of around ten miles a day, owing to the ponderous pace of the animals required to pull the

¹⁰⁰¹ Nithard II.6.

¹⁰⁰² Bachrach, *Early Carolingian Warfare*, 247-257.

¹⁰⁰³ Isabel Butler, ed. and trans., *The Song of Roland* (Boston, 1904). Cf. the accounts in Einhard, *Vita Karoli Magni* c.9; ARF 778.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Bachrach, "Is the *Song of Roland*'s Roncevalles a Military Satire?" in *Prowess, Piety, and Public Order in Medieval Society: Studies in Honor of Richard W. Kaeuper* (Leiden, Brill, 2017), 15-35.

supply-laden carts.¹⁰⁰⁵ They were also very vulnerable to attack, requiring separate detachments of the army to provide for their defense.¹⁰⁰⁶

In order to avoid the difficulties presented by excessively large baggage trains moving over land, the best alternative method was transportation on the water. Even the crudest of river crafts, such as a large raft or barge, could easily outstrip the cart-and-oxen or cart-and-horse methods of travel in terms of both speed and carrying capacity. Whenever possible, Carolingian kings marched their armies along the rivers to ensure that they could transport the bulk of the supplies on the water rather than overland, while the army marched alongside the riverbank. This type of amphibious operation allowed for not only the increased speed and traveling capacity of the river transports, but it also allowed the waterborne supplies to be protected from attack by the army marching alongside of it. The benefits of such an approach were well known since antiquity, and this method was frequently utilized by Alexander the Great—as well as Charlemagne—to allow his armies to move with that speed for which they became known, often arriving long before the enemy had anticipated and taking them entirely by surprise.¹⁰⁰⁷

Quite handily, if mounted troops could march along the bank while much of the supply was borne along by water, the rather thorny problem of getting horses comfortably and safely aboard ships could be avoided to the greatest degree possible, and the horses could move along far quicker, were they not encumbered by heavy loads of supplies. Perhaps most importantly from a logistical point of view, river craft did not need to

¹⁰⁰⁵ The figure here is for ox-drawn carts, per Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 15-16.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Hence Charlemagne's prescription in *De Villis* 64 that each cart should come with armaments—shield, spear, quiver, and bow, to provide weaponry to those men guarding the carts in case of surprise attack.

¹⁰⁰⁷ On which point see Engels, *Alexander the Great*, 54-63.

consume massive quantities of food and fodder to give them the energy to pull strongly, as did draft horses and oxen. Indeed, when one considers not only the price to purchase a horse, but the cost of upkeep on the march, relative to its comparatively small carrying capacity, it was far cheaper to utilize simple riverboats, which were by and large a one-time investment and could be laden far more heavily.¹⁰⁰⁸ Certainly, allowances must be made for the replacing of timbers due to use and rot, but the thick, 9th century European forests provided plentiful wood for a relatively affordable cost, particularly to kings, who could marshal such resources from across the realm.¹⁰⁰⁹

It is clear that the Carolingians drew on such traditions. Charlemagne's armies utilized the Danube in exactly this manner during the Avar campaigns of 791. The army left Regensburg in two parts, one northern and one southern contingent, which followed the respective banks of the Danube eastward into Avar territory. They were supported en route by rivercraft along the Danube, while the forces kept guard over both banks to prevent the baggage and supply from being attacked by surprise. Once he arrived in Avar territory, it was clear to the enemy that Charlemagne's supply line was sound, that he was prepared for a lengthy siege if necessary, and thus resistance would prove futile. The Avars scattered in flight upon the advance of the Carolingian army, and Charlemagne had

¹⁰⁰⁸ Relative values of draft horses, oxen, and warhorses, as provided by Frankish law codes, are discussed in Bachrach, "Caballus et Caballarius in Medieval Warfare," 173-211.

¹⁰⁰⁹ On care of royal forests see *de Villis* 36, 46; Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii* 17, 24; David Rollason, "Forests, Parks, Palaces, and the Power of Place in Early Medieval Kingship," *Early Medieval Europe* 20 (2012), 428-449; Goldberg, "Louis the Pious and the Hunt," *Speculum* 88 (2013), 613-643. Louis the German frequently mentions forests in his charters—the examples are too numerous to list them all—both as part of the generally formulaic indications of what was given as part of a holding, eg. "lands, forests, pastures, meadows,..." and geographic boundaries, eg. "up to the middle of the forest" both of which can be found in ULD 25, amongst many other examples. ULD 1 also contains the explicit order that no one ought to hunt in the forest that Louis gave to the monastery of St.-Michael at Mondsee.

completely overpowered resistance through the obvious use of overwhelming force and thoroughly well-maintained riverine supply.¹⁰¹⁰

Nithard reported that Louis the German, his son Carloman, and Charles the Bald did very much the same thing during the civil war period of the early 840s, and the results were quite similar to those achieved by Charlemagne against the Avars. In March of 842, following the taking of the Strasbourg oaths, the Louis the German and Charles the Bald had led their armies to Mainz, in order to rendezvous with Louis the German's son Carloman, who brought reinforcements from Bavaria. With these additional men, the kings set out in a three-part pincer movement to Koblenz, directed against Lothar's garrison forces ranged along the Moselle. Charles proceeded along the left bank of the Rhine, on the mountainous route through the Vosges, and Carloman went via the district of Einrichi, on the right bank of the Rhine.¹⁰¹¹ Thus, these two forces had the river guarded on both flanks between them. Louis the German led his men directly along the river, where they had the extremely important task of accompanying and guarding the supplies and the infantry aboard the rivercraft. Louis's men proceeded through Bingen, holding the left bank the whole way.¹⁰¹²

In this case, the speed of the advance seemed to have caught Lothar's garrisons by surprise. The armies traveled at a blisteringly fast rate of speed, which was only made possible by the fact that all of their supplies must have been borne along by the Rhenish riverboats. It is nearly 80km directly from Mainz to Koblenz along the Rhine, and the

¹⁰¹⁰ ARF 791; Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars*, 46-51.

¹⁰¹¹ Georg Pertz notes Einrichi to have been a *pagus* on the right bank of the Rhine, *Nithardi Historiarum Libri IIII* (Hannover, 1907) p. 39 n. 2.

¹⁰¹² *Lodhuvicus vero terra Renoque per Bingam...venerunt*. Nithard III.7.

armies made the march in under two days. It is possible that some men could have made this march along the Rhine on foot, though certainly not if accompanied by laden carts. At any rate, covering this distance of nearly two marathon races in a day and a half—the armies arrived at noon on the second day—certainly would have constituted a forced march; such a rate of speed could not have been sustained for a long stretch of time. Such, however, was the benefit of traveling along river routes within the Carolingian kingdoms proper.¹⁰¹³

When the three armies converged at Koblenz, at the confluence of Rhine and Moselle, led in great majesty by two kings and a prince crossing the Moselle aboard ships, Lothar's defenders fled before their advance.¹⁰¹⁴ Lothar himself fled the region in the face of this united resistance, reportedly retreating all the way to the Rhône River, nearly 700km from either Aachen or the site at Koblenz. Symbolically, Louis and Charles proceeded on to Aachen, where they took counsel about what ought to be done with Lothar's kingdom.¹⁰¹⁵ Lothar was not decisively defeated, however, and he rallied support at Lyons—notably, by sending messengers along the river systems¹⁰¹⁶—for nearly another full year of resistance before the Treaty of Verdun finally brought an end to hostilities.¹⁰¹⁷

¹⁰¹³ Nithard III.7.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Reges armati naves conscendunt et Mosellam otius traiciunt*, Nithard III.7.

¹⁰¹⁵ Nithard III.7.

¹⁰¹⁶ "*Lodharius autem, ut se supra ripam Rodani recepit, navigio eiusdem fluminis fretus inibi resedit; quo undique quos valuit sibi in subsidium adtraxit*" ("Lothar, however, when he had recovered upon the Rhône, encamped, relying on the ships upon that river; whence he attracted those who remained strong in their support of him"). Nithard IV.3.

¹⁰¹⁷ Nithard IV.3-6.

The use of both overland and waterborne transit, both in a military and civilian capacity, also is attested by Louis the German's charters. In 873, Louis confirmed the rights of the church at Strasbourg to travel and ship goods throughout the kingdom tax-free, whether on land—explicitly via draft horse and cart—or on the river systems.¹⁰¹⁸ Louis also elaborated upon what sorts of taxation this exemption included: taxes for roads, bridges, mills, fisheries, feed, monastic tributes, and lands. Notably, the list includes both secular and church taxes, indicating the extent to which taxation permeated the fabric of Carolingian society, from the central government, to the church, to very local interests, such as those of millers.¹⁰¹⁹

Of particular interest, in this context, is the fact that Louis the German names so many sorts of tolls, including those for roads, bridges, mills, and feed, all of which were inextricably linked to army supply, in the same breath as the *cenaticum*, a ration or a payment given to soldiers in lieu of food.¹⁰²⁰ Milling and fodder were essentials of supply for men and beasts. Raw grain was useful as animal feed certainly, but for human consumption as bread and porridge, some type of milling was necessary.¹⁰²¹ Local

¹⁰¹⁸ Important exemptions from this were goods intended for the markets at the emporia of Quentovic and Dorestad, for which the monastery would still have to pay the requisite taxes to utilize the markets. *ULD*, 148.

¹⁰¹⁹ Further confirmed by the c. 903-906 Raffelstetten tolls, on which see the discussion immediately following, below.

¹⁰²⁰ "*portaticum aut pontaticum aut salutaticum aut cespitaticum aut rotaticum aut cenaticum aut pastionem aut laudaticum aut trabaticum aut pulveraticum*," *ULD* 148. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus*, 164, conflates *cenaticum* and *cenagium* as one and the same, defining them as a toll for the right to fish. I am not entirely convinced of this meaning, and would substitute the typical meaning of *cenaticum* as relating to the feeding of soldiers, as in Lewis and Short *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879), 311, which definition is related to the *Annona militaris* and is derived from the *Codex Justinianus* 12.38 and *Codex Theodosianus* 7.4, both of which codices of Roman law remained relevant in the early medieval period.

¹⁰²¹ Roth, *Logistics of the Roman Army at War*, 44-53; owing to the frequency with which mills are mentioned throughout Louis the German's charters, I find it far more likely that the army utilized these facilities whenever possible to take care of their necessary milling, rather than the soldiers doing some of these tasks themselves in camp with portable hand mills.

taxation for roads and bridges took the form of tolls for those utilizing the infrastructure in question. Presumably, at least some of the revenue from such taxation would have been used for the maintenance of those structures,¹⁰²² since they would not be useful—and therefore would cease to be taxable—if they were in disrepair and inoperative. Since the rights of collecting these taxes extended to those local authorities in possession of the lands, those same men were the ones responsible for ensuring the maintenance of the infrastructure which supplied them their share of this tax revenue.

A fascinating document from the reign of Louis the Child (d. 911), the Raffelstetten toll ordinance, confirms the prolific use of tolls as a form of local taxation in East Francia.¹⁰²³ The ordinance was a royal inquest (*inquisitio*),¹⁰²⁴ which was carried out at the behest of some Bavarian subjects, who had complained to the royal court that the taxation exacted was excessively burdensome.¹⁰²⁵ Therefore, the king and court ordered that inquiry be made into the situation, “following the customs of our ancestor kings,”¹⁰²⁶

¹⁰²² As enumerated by the Edict of Pîtres, in MGH *Capitularia* II.273, c27. As the edict makes clear, it drew in principle from the legislation of Louis the Pious, and as such, I see no reason why the same general practice should not have been followed in the East Frankish kingdom, though obviously, there is no surviving capitulary evidence from Louis the German to attest directly to it. Owing to the linkage of this practice with *Landwehr*—attested to exist in the East Frankish kingdom as well during the Meersen meetings—I find it far more likely than not to have been the reality throughout the Carolingian realm.

¹⁰²³ *Inquisitio de Theloneis Raffelstettensis*, in MGH *Capitularia* II.253. Refer for more thorough discussion of the document in particular to Michael Mitterauer, “Wirtschaft und Verfassung in der Zollordnung der Raffelstetten,” *Mitteilungen des Oberösterreichischen Landesarchivs* 8 (1964), 344–373; Peter Johanek, “Die Raffelstettener Zollordnung und das Urkundenwesen der Karolingerzeit,” in Willibald Katzinger, ed., *Baiern, Ungarn, und Slawen im Donaauraum* (Linz, 1991), 211–229; K. Schiffman, “Die Zollurkunde von Raffelstetten,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 37 (1917), 479–488. For tolls generally, F.L. Ganshof, “A propos du tonlieu à l’époque carolingienne,” *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’alto Medioevo*, 6 (Spoleto, 1959), 485–508; Reinhold Kaiser, “*Teloneum Episcopi*: Du tonlieu royal au tonlieu épiscopal dans les *civitates* de la Gaule (VIe–XIIe siècle), in , in Werner Paravicini and Karl Ferdinand Werner, eds., *Histoire comparée de l’administration (IVe–XXVIIe siècles)* (Munich, 1980), 469–485.

¹⁰²⁴ On the practice of inquest, see David Bachrach, “Inquisitio as a Tool of Royal Governance under the Carolingian and Ottonian Kings,” *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte* 133 (2016), 1–80. The section concerning Raffelstetten can be found 34–36, and for the use of *inquisitio* under Louis the German, 13–18.

¹⁰²⁵ “*Iniusto theloneo et iniqua muta constrictos.*”

¹⁰²⁶ “*Secundum morem antecessorum regum.*”

explicitly including Louis the German, in order that the tolls might be restored to a more reasonable level.¹⁰²⁷ Not only does the Raffelstetten ordinance confirm the use of tolls for rivercraft under the reign of Louis the German, it also serves to indicate the essential strength and continuity of East Frankish central administrative authority, even during the vulnerable period of Louis the Child's minority government.¹⁰²⁸

The use of rivercraft to supply and transport Louis the German's East Frankish armies deep into enemy territory across the eastern frontier zone is explicitly attested by the *Annals of Fulda*, albeit in a rather unfortunate episode. East Frankish armies in 872 had taken the field against the Moravians under Svatopluk, experiencing rather varied degrees of dubious success. Louis the German's son Carloman was busily engaged in leading an army in ravaging the Moravian countryside, utilizing the typical slash and burn tactics that were often deployed against Moravia, owing to the strength of Moravian fortifications. A detachment was left under Bishop Embricho of Regensburg to guard the Carolingian ships, which remained moored on the Danube. Svatopluk snuck a force past Carolingian scouts and Carloman's army, and those Moravians attacked Embricho's men, killing nearly everyone and presumably destroying or capturing the Carolingian ships, though that is not explicitly mentioned.¹⁰²⁹ At the least, they must have been looted of

¹⁰²⁷ "*loca thelonio et modum theolonei, qualiter temporibus Hludowici,*" which Boretius notes on p. 50 n. 10 meant Louis the German and his son Louis.

¹⁰²⁸ As represented in the central argument of D. Bachrach in "Inquisitio as a Tool of Royal Governance," which is an apt correction to the idea that East Francia especially grew decentralized during the later Carolingian era, which tradition is represented by Timothy Reuter, "The Making of England and Germany: Points of Comparison and Difference," in Janet Nelson, ed., *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities* (Cambridge, 2006), 284-299; Hagen Keller, "Zum Charakter der 'Staatlichkeit' zwischen karolingischer Reichsreform und hochmittelalterlichem Herrschaftsausbau," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 23 (1989), 248-264. On administrative continuity, see also D. Bachrach, "Exercise of Royal Power in Medieval Europe: the Case of Otto the Great, 936-973," *Early Medieval Europe* 17 (2009), 389-419; B. and D. Bachrach, "Continuity of written administration in the Late Carolingian East, c.887-911: the Royal Fisc," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 42 (2008), 109-146.

¹⁰²⁹ *AF* 872.

any available provisions, supplies, or treasure that might have remained aboard. Were the ships destroyed, the Carolingian army would have experienced a great deal more difficulty traveling home on the return march, since their primary method of supply transportation had been ruined. Any remaining supplies would have had to be carried or jettisoned.

Weather, Climate, Famine, and Warfare

The very extensive travel necessary to respond to very diverse military threats meant that Louis the German had to be concerned with weather at specific times of year, climate in the long term, and famine, which was substantially affected by both the climate and the weather. All of these factors had the potential to seriously affect the ease with which his armies could move. Armies typically did not travel during the winter, particularly if the weather was bad that year, and for good reasons. Icy roads coupled with lack of vegetation for fodder complicated the problem of army supply to the point of making logistics nearly unfeasible, though not entirely impossible, particularly for small groups of soldiers.¹⁰³⁰

Thankfully, the various annalistic sources provide a good amount of detail on climate and weather. Although the annalists do not usually link the weather and climate to the movement of armies specifically,¹⁰³¹ connections between the two can be drawn.

¹⁰³⁰ Under the right circumstances, winter campaigns could provide the army the element of surprise. Charlemagne, for example, keenly aware that his rebellious Saxon enemies would not expect him during winter, boldly crossed the Weser in 797 in November—usually the time at which kings disbanded the army (if not before) and went home to celebrate Christmas—where he constructed fortified camps in Saxon territory and proceeded to spend the winter there; *AX* 797.

¹⁰³¹ This is rather to be expected, since extreme weather or famines were more likely to be linked to the wrath of God or heavenly signs than to be analyzed for their effects on possible military campaigns.

While the ninth-century Carolingians exhibited a healthy respect for the concerns imposed upon them by meteorological and climatic conditions, extremes of weather and climate did not cripple Carolingian armies under most circumstances, though there is some indication that very serious weather did hinder them.

Patterns can be identified to show that the later Carolingians often avoided undertaking substantial offensive campaigns during years in which the population suffered from famine resulting from savage winters or storms that damaged crops extensively. Under such conditions, the realm could not be expected to muster the usual degree of logistical support. The Carolingian administrative apparatus, brought to its zenith of sophistication under Charlemagne, was designed primarily to further the success of their military campaigns. The Carolingians devoted substantial effort to the gathering of intelligence at the royal assemblies that preceded the nearly annual muster of the army. In line with this tradition, ninth-century Carolingian monarchs ensured that they were as well informed as one could hope to be about the weather, climatic conditions, and state of agricultural production before setting off on campaign.¹⁰³²

Three of the four winters from 860-863 were bad,¹⁰³³ especially 860, which featured a great deal of snow and a hard freeze from November to April.¹⁰³⁴ Carolingian

¹⁰³² Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 226-230; Bachrach "Charlemagne and the Carolingian General Staff," *The Journal of Military History* 66.2 (2002), 313-357; McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 214-233; Janet Nelson, "Legislation and Consensus in the Reign of Charles the Bald," in Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London, 1986), 91-111; Hincmar, *De Ordine Palatii*, 30-36 (particularly 36, regarding intelligence gathering), in MGH *Capitularia* II, pp. 517-530.

¹⁰³³ AF, 860, "*Hibernum tempus asperum nimis et solito prolixius erat...nix quoque sanguinolenta in plerisque locis cecidisse reperta est. Mare etiam Ionium glaciali rigore ita constrictum est.*" AB, "*Hiems diutina et continuis nivibus ac gelu dira, a mense videlicet Novembri usque ad Aprilem.*" AX 861 "*Eo anno hiemps longissima,*" and 863, "*Eodem anno hiemps turbulenta, mutabilis et pluvialis valde, ut pene absque gelu omnino, ut in sequentibus patuit, in aecclesia sancte Victoris.*"

¹⁰³⁴ McCormick *et al.* postulate that this winter's excessive coldness and length, as well as the winter of 855-56, could have been caused in large part by volcanic activity. Michael McCormick, Paul Edward

military activity during these years was restricted largely to defensive operations against the Northmen, who continued to raid and pillage despite the weather. By 864, a flood year, the raiding had gotten out of hand, and Charles issued the famous Edict of Pîtres to provide for additional fortified bridge construction along the Seine. The construction took several years, and the bridges did not prove comprehensively effective, though they did stem the tide of Viking raids, and Charles again found himself buying off an invading force in 866, when the bridges were finally completed.¹⁰³⁵

Famine conditions resulting from extreme weather and poor harvests, under some circumstances, seem to have triggered raids into Carolingian territory by peoples across the eastern frontier. Weather took a turn for the worse throughout the 850's. The year 850 featured an excessively hot summer, which caused widespread harvest failure along the Rhine.¹⁰³⁶ Vikings and Moors alike resumed their incursions upon Carolingian territory, with the former sacking Dorestad and the latter attacking the port cities of Italy. Lothar I and Louis the German agreed to a temporary peace, so that they might deal with these issues.¹⁰³⁷ In 851, the harvest suffered again, although this appears to have had graver consequences for the Sorbs than for the Carolingians. Starving and desperate, they attempted a raid into Louis the German's territory, but Louis led an army against them

Dutton, and Paul A. Mayewski, "Volcanoes and the Climate Forcing of Carolingian Europe, A.D. 750-950," *Speculum* 82 (2007), 865-895, especially pp. 884-887.

¹⁰³⁵ *AB* and cf. *AX*, 864 and 866.

¹⁰³⁶ *AF*, 850, "*Eodem anno gravissima fames Germaniae populos oppressit, maxime circa Rhenum habitantes*"; and also *AX*, "*Et sequenti aestate calor nimium solis terram urebat.*"

¹⁰³⁷ *AX*, 850, "*Eodem anno inter duos fratres, Lotharium imperatorem et Ludewicum regem, tanta pax erat.*"

and crushed them easily, which comes as no surprise given their extremely compromised situation.¹⁰³⁸

The year 870 brought serious lightning storms, floods, and extreme heat to East Francia, but that did not deter Louis from sending Carloman on expeditions across the eastern frontier, where his armies successfully captured numerous Moravian fortifications with little resistance. This probably owed more to confusion among the Moravian leadership; Rastislav was betrayed by his nephew Svatopluk, who sent his uncle to Carloman as a captive. Carloman sent him back to Louis the German at Regensburg, where Rastislav was ultimately blinded. Nonetheless, the savagery of the summer heat did not prevent Carloman from marshalling enough of a military presence in Moravia that the garrisons of Moravian fortifications surrendered to him: the threat of Carolingian force was enough without Rastislav's determined leadership.¹⁰³⁹ Logistically, it seems that Carloman had been very successful, as despite the extreme heat, there are no reports that the armies suffered for lack of water supply.

Both the winter of 873-874 and the following summer brought particularly difficult conditions. Following a swarm of locusts which caused extensive crop damage,¹⁰⁴⁰ severe winter cold was coupled with massive snowfall, which covered the ground from November to April. The famine and pestilence that followed was reported—with great exaggeration—to have killed nearly a third of the population of Gaul.¹⁰⁴¹ To

¹⁰³⁸ AF, 851, “*Sorabi Francorum fines crebris incursionibus atque incendiis infestant. Unde rex commotus cum exercitu per Thuringiam iter faciens terram eorum ingressus gravi eos obsidione fatigavit; perditisque frugibus et omni spe victus adempta magis eos fame quam ferroperdomuit.*”

¹⁰³⁹ AF 870.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Attested to in AX AB and AF, 873.

¹⁰⁴¹ AF 874, “*Hiems aspera nimis et solito prolixior; nix quoque immensa a Kalendis Novembris usque in aequinoctium vernale sine intermissione cadens...non solum animalia, verum etiam homines plurimi*

complicate matters further, the brutal winter was followed by a very hot summer season, which caused further damage to crops and a very poor harvest.¹⁰⁴² Once again, as had happened in 851, suffering as a result of widespread harvest failures, the Sorbs attempted to raid Louis the German's territories for resources. The king again brought his armies to bear and drove them back into their own lands with little difficulty.¹⁰⁴³ It seems, on the whole, that Louis the German was able to manage weather and famine related crises better than his enemies.

Conclusion

Fielding very large armies centered upon the doctrine of overwhelming force was a central facet of Carolingian campaign strategy. Raising such large armies, however, with substantial complements of mounted troops, presented kings and commanders with the Herculean task of feeding, equipping, and supplying all of the men and beasts that they were able to muster. Louis the German, in particular, faced the additional complication of campaigning across his eastern frontier, where the territory was less thoroughly known and supplies were not as readily available as in the Carolingian realm proper. Lack of late Roman infrastructure meant that supplies were also more difficult to transport. Within the kingdom, travel was accomplished via the networks of the very extensive European river systems. The rivers were supplemented by physical infrastructure, much of which had roots in the Roman world, built upon and expanded by

frigore perirent. Sed et Rhenus et Moenus glaciali rigore constricti longo tempore se sub vestigiis incedentium calcabiles praebuerunt...Hoc anno fame et pestilentia per universam Galliam et Germaniam grassantibus pene tercia pars humani generis consumpta est." Cf. AB, "Hiems prolixa et fortis, et nix tanta fuit nimietate perfusa, quantam nemo se vidisse meminerint."

¹⁰⁴² AB 874, "Aestas longa siccitatem foeni et messium inopiam reddidit."

¹⁰⁴³ AF 874.

the Carolingian kings. Outside the kingdom, across the eastern frontier, travel still took place primarily along rivers to ensure a predictable water supply and carry supplies on rivercraft, but the availability of resources was rather less predictable across the marcher zones, and therefore greater care in preparation and the carrying of additional supplies was necessary.

Many of the realm's very large landholders were also situated along these typical lines of march. Monasteries, bishoprics, abbeys, and the large estates of secular landholders like counts and dukes were invaluable as waypoints and supply depots to armies on campaign. Commanders could plan itineraries which took them through these major sources of logistical support, and they could ensure that large stockpiles of grain and fodder were in place beforehand, to be utilized as the army approached. This, coupled with the use of rivercraft in transportation, went a very long way to lessen the burdens pulled by draft animals hitched to wagons and carts, which might otherwise have been even more cumbersome during long campaigns.

For their part, the Carolingian kings and their staffs of administrators and military planners did their best to remain as informed as possible about the state of the various counties within the kingdom. The royal assembly was the place at which campaigns were planned and information was gathered from attendees from all over the realm, in order that the king and his staff might attack the problem of logistical calculations as accurately as possible. At the assemblies, kings ascertained the state of the physical infrastructure and ensured that it was kept in good repair, as in the Edict of Pîtres. They calculated the amount of food and fodder that must be transported along particular routes, in order to support the soldiers required for that year's campaigning. They assessed military

obligations through demography, so that they might know how many men and what resources each county might be expected to provide.

In spite of the most careful planning possible, logistics still proved a very thorny problem, complicated by a number of unforeseeable factors. Bad harvests might reduce the available resources. Extreme heat, cold, flooding, or late thaws might complicate or slow travel. Raids from enemies outside the empire, whether Viking, Slav, or otherwise, required extremely quick reactions that would deviate from the planned campaign schedule. Nonetheless, the ninth century Carolingian kings proved up to the task. Their armies traveled hundreds of miles and were in the field year after year, ensuring the integrity of the kingdom's borders and responding to threats from within and without the empire.

CONCLUSION

Louis the German died August 28, 876 at his royal palace in Frankfurt. Louis's body was hardly cold when Charles the Bald initiated a campaign to invade the eastern kingdom. Although Louis had died, the armies and military institutions upon which he had relied continued to function effectively, now under the leadership of his sons. Charles's aim was to win for himself all of the portions of the late Lothar II's middle kingdom that Louis the German had obtained in 870—essentially the territory up to the Rhine. Charles sent legates to the aristocracy of the erstwhile middle kingdom, urging them to swear loyalty to him and threatening them with removal of their benefices if they did not acquiesce.¹⁰⁴⁴ The main opposition to this proposed attack was of course Louis the Younger, whose territory included those regions which Charles planned upon conquering.¹⁰⁴⁵ Louis summoned the expeditionary forces, going ahead with his military household and a few picked men to Andernach across the Rhine, where he awaited Charles's arrival. Louis sent *missi* on ahead, reminding Charles of the oaths of brotherly cooperation and allegiance that he had sworn to Louis the German—most importantly at Strasbourg in 842 and Koblenz in 860—and admonishing Charles for acting tyrannically in trying to dispossess Louis the German's sons of the kingdoms which they had lawfully inherited.¹⁰⁴⁶

Charles ignored the *missi*'s messages and pressed eastward. Louis still hoped that the issue could be settled without battle, but Charles was out for blood, hoping that he could take advantage of his nephew in the absence of his late father. Charles promised to

¹⁰⁴⁴ *AF* and *AB* 876.

¹⁰⁴⁵ On the *divisio*, see *AF* 873, of which the final form is detailed in Regino, *Chronicon*, 876.

¹⁰⁴⁶ *AF* 876.

exchange envoys again. Secretly, however, Charles plotted to capture and blind his nephew by arriving at the meeting with an army and catching Louis unprepared, while the East Frankish armies were dispersed and foraging. Bishop Willibert of Cologne caught wind of Charles's plot, however, and he was appalled that the western king would consider doing such things in an open act of aggression against his nephew, who did not want a battle with his uncle in the first place. Willibert divulged the plan to Louis.

In the face of such threats, Louis knew that battle was inevitable, and that Charles in no way intended to keep the promises he had made regarding peace talks, let alone those he had made of old to Louis the German. Still, portions of Louis the Younger's armies were dispersed, as Charles well knew when launching his plot, and Louis was left to resist with those men who remained with him, which were his contingents of Saxons and many of the Eastern Franks.¹⁰⁴⁷ The stage was set for a real clash of Frank versus Frank in a pitched battle, the first such occurrence since the slaughter at Fontenoy three and a half decades earlier. This was the first Battle of Andernach.¹⁰⁴⁸

On the morning of October 8, 876, Louis stationed the Saxon infantry front and center, in order that they might bear the brunt of Charles's impetus. He deployed the East Frankish contingents, including the bulk of his mounted troops, on the wings.¹⁰⁴⁹ Charles had threatened invasion with a massive army, and apparently he did not deceive regarding the number of his men. When the battle began, the Saxons were soon driven back by Charles's center, purportedly terrified by the sheer size of the opposing force.

¹⁰⁴⁷ *AF* 876.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Not to be confused with the Ottonian battle of the same name in 939.

¹⁰⁴⁹ This was classical Roman battle formation at its best, with the legions in the center to occupy enemy infantry while *alae* cavalry was stationed on the wings to enable them greater mobility, in order that they might execute flanking maneuvers and cause the enemy to rout, since he was hemmed in on three sides.

Louis's Saxon center gave way, but did not rout entirely, and as Charles's men pressed further in the center, Louis's East Franks managed to outflank and encircle the enemy. It is very possible that this Saxon weak center deployment was intentional, reminiscent of Hannibal's tactics at Cannae, since Louis knew that he would have to outmaneuver his uncle's larger army rather than simply fighting them toe-to-toe. The emperor's standard bearers fell before the East Frankish spears and swords, and Charles's forces routed, for fear of becoming fully encircled. Louis's army pursued them, causing a huge number of casualties, but eventually broke off and returned to loot the corpses of the dead and secure the enormous imperial treasure that Charles had been forced to leave upon the battlefield in the rout.¹⁰⁵⁰

Following the dramatic victory over his uncle, Louis pressed on to Aachen, where he arranged Lotharingian affairs and assured the magnates of the region that Charles would not be removing them from their benefices after all. After this important political and symbolic journey to enforce his authority over his great-grandfather's royal capital, Louis returned to Frankfurt and took the important step of issuing his first charter in his own name, having left little doubt as to the force of his authority and military prowess after crushing his uncle in open battle.¹⁰⁵¹

Afterwards, Louis met with his brother Charles and probably with Carloman in the Ries, the site of Louis the German's great victory in 841 just before Fontenoy. *AF* and *AB* are divided on the accounts of the meeting. *AF* has Carloman in attendance, while *AB* has him off in the east fighting against Moravia. Of these, the *AF* seems more plausible.

¹⁰⁵⁰ *AF* and *AB* 876.

¹⁰⁵¹ ULdJ, 1.

AF is usually well informed and highly interested regarding Moravian difficulties, and it does not mention any for this year. Svatopluk had recently agreed to tributary cooperation with Carloman personally,¹⁰⁵² which ought not to have been affected by Louis the German's death, but certainly it is possible that opportunistic raids took place. Carloman had been well in charge of this frontier for a decade and a half, however, and Louis had not participated in the Moravian campaigns save for once in 873 when he came to his son's aid.¹⁰⁵³ Moreover, this meeting happened in December, and Moravian campaigns were usually concluded by this point in the very late fall, since to be away fighting across the frontier when the snows hit might prove dire to the army on the return march. The result of the meeting was that the brothers agreed to hold to the division of the kingdom that their late father had proposed, taking an oath of brotherly cooperation among themselves.¹⁰⁵⁴

Herein, all aspects of Louis the German's military have been examined. The intent has been to debunk the historiographical tradition, discussed in chapter one, which posits a serious decline in royal authority and military power among Charlemagne's grandsons. The purported cause of this decline was that the central administration was too weak and fragmented to control the aspirations and greed of the overly powerful aristocracy, to the point that the king was not even able to force men to show up for the host if they did not wish to do so. Therefore, what resulted were very small armies, dominated by the mounted forces of the king and his closest retainers who made up the *obsequium*.

¹⁰⁵² *AF* 874.

¹⁰⁵³ *AB* 873.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *AF* 876.

A thorough examination of Louis the German's administration and military shows the above paradigm to be untenable. As shown in chapter two, Louis and his court exhibited a clearly defined grand-strategic intent. In essence, he aimed to retain undiminished the East Frankish kingdom, which was the portion of the *regnum Francorum* that had been initially granted to Louis by the *ordinatio imperii* of 817. The first phase of this struggle was the civil war period from roughly 833-843. Louis fought determinedly against his eldest brother, the emperor Lothar, to defend his inheritance. The struggle, which reached its highest point in 841, culminated with the battles at the Reis and at Fontenoy. These ultimately led to the Treaty of Verdun in 843, which firmly codified the extent of East Francia and brought a cessation to Carolingian civil struggles until Lothar I's death in 855.

Louis also maintained a coherent frontier strategy. He kept the Slavic polities across his very long eastern frontier under tributary relationships to the East Frankish crown, rather than attempting outright, territorial conquest in those regions. This meant that, among others, the Obodrites, Sorbs, Bohemians, and Moravians had to pay annual tribute to Louis in recognition of Frankish lordship, while still technically remaining independent. Still, Slavic rebellions took place repeatedly over the course of Louis's reign. He campaigned numerous times across the frontier to crush the rebellions and restore the Slavs to tributary status. By far the most prominent and troublesome of these enemies was Moravia. Louis's installation of Rastislav as *dux* in 846 did little to solve the problem, and may, indeed, have made it worse, since Rastislav kept the Moravians in a state of rather endemic rebellion up until he was captured and blinded in 869-70.

Louis also did not hesitate to attempt to gain lands in the western theaters at the expense of his Carolingian relatives, when opportunities presented themselves to him. At first, Louis wanted simply to defend the inheritance that he received from *ordinatio imperii* from Lothar's attempts to rule the entire kingdom as his own. Following the deaths of Lothar I in 855 and Lothar II in 869, Louis the German engaged in several conflicts with Charles the Bald. He was unsuccessful in invading Charles's kingdom in the late 850s, when a faction of dissatisfied magnates in Aquitaine invited Louis to invade and dethrone Charles. The initial invasion was successful, but diplomacy broke down, as Louis was unable to win over the powerful Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims, who spearheaded ecclesiastical resistance to his invasion. Louis returned to the east, having gained nothing. In 870, however, Louis opportunistically seized a portion of Lothar II's erstwhile kingdom for himself after driving Charles from Aachen. Louis and Charles divided up the lands of the middle kingdom between themselves. Still, these western gains arose through opportunism, and it would be too much to say that Louis's grand strategy was to unite the entirety of the *regnum Francorum* under his own rule, in the mold of the early Carolingians. He and his brothers were too evenly matched for realistic attempts at such a goal.

In conflicts both with his brothers and with enemies across the eastern frontier, Louis utilized several preferred campaign strategies, which were built upon well-established Carolingian precedent. The discussion in chapter three shows that Louis preferred to win victories through the use of overwhelming force, rather than through actual combat, whenever possible. He also employed pincer movements, dividing his armies into several contingent parts that could march separately along different routes to

converge upon the same territory. Much of his warfare beyond the frontier necessitated sieges, for which Louis's preferred methodology was to surround enemy fortifications and ravage the countryside, in order that the enemy might be forced to submit without a costly direct assault upon the fortress.

In order to deploy overwhelming force, Louis needed to field large armies. In this pursuit, he utilized the traditional Carolingian tripartite military organization addressed in chapter four, which allowed him to summon forces that were appropriate to the objective which he intended each campaign to achieve. This consisted of the general levy, or *lantweri*, intended to defend the realm against foreign invasions, the expeditionary levy for offensive campaigning, and the *obsequia*, or military households, of the king and other major administrators and landholders. The men were trained to run, march, maintain formation, swim, ride, and to leap on and off horses while armed. They were also taught tactics, including feigned and fighting retreats, encirclements, and charging weak points in enemy lines. Soldiers were trained to use the weaponry that they typically utilized, such as the sword, spear, shield, and bow.

Obligations to do military service were calculated in the same way they had been under Charlemagne and the early Carolingians, through property holdings. It was the responsibility of local administrators, the counts, to ensure that those property requirements were assessed properly and that those who were obligated to show up for the royal expeditionary levy did so. The king also granted immunities from local, comital justice and assessments to some large ecclesiastical properties such as the monasteries of Salzburg and Corvey. The immunity delegated the responsibility that usually fell to counts, such as raising and provisioning troops, to the monasteries, within their

landholdings. This avoided confusion of who was responsible for what, within regions that a count administered but which also contained a monastery.

Large armies required similarly large complements of supplies and provisions to keep them adequately fed and equipped. Logistical concerns, treated in chapter five, were highly important to Louis the German. Armies carried enormous amounts of resources overland via carts pulled by draft animals, packhorses, and on human backs. Whenever possible, the East Frankish armies utilized the river systems of Europe and the parallel Roman roads that ran along them. Logistics were particularly difficult and noteworthy across the eastern frontier, regions which lacked Roman infrastructure, save for the road along the southern bank of the Danube, which Louis utilized extensively. The Danube was the hub through which Louis supplied troops for campaigns into Moravia. By funneling resources from Bavaria and Pannonia onto the Danube, Louis could utilize rivercraft to lessen the logistical burden borne by carts, draft and pack animals, and the soldiers themselves. This enabled his forces to besiege Moravian fortifications, most of which were concentrated north of the Danube in the valley of the Morava River. The most successful of these sieges involved surrounding the fortification in question—whether large *civitates* like Mikulčice or Staré Město, or smaller *Fluchtburgen* like Devín—and sending out detachments to ravage the countryside. Ideally, with the campaign completed, the army would return whence it came by utilizing the rivercraft once more.

Louis the German's long reign was a study in the continuity of Carolingian military institutions. He was not an innovator, but he exercised and somewhat expanded the political, economic, demographic, and military apparatus left to him to ensure that the

realm would remain intact and protected for his progeny. When he died, the institutions that he safeguarded did not die with him. They continued to function under his sons and their descendants, and indeed, under those such as Arnulf of Carinthia who would take over the military institutions in name, but continue to look back to Charlemagne and his progeny for examples in spirit.

The continuity of military institutions lasted across the entirety of the Carolingian royal line, from the early innovators in Charles Martel and Pippin, who built upon the Merovingian institutions to expand and unify the *regnum Francorum* under their dominion, to the apex of Carolingian power and expansionism under Charlemagne, to his grandsons who carried on in his footsteps late into the ninth century. Indeed, this very military continuity paved the way for the Ottonian dynasty to build further upon their institutions, from a different base of power in Saxony, but with the same goal in mind and the same basic military means of achieving it. There was no great military or cavalry revolution, but rather, the Ottonians cultivated a military organization built upon Carolingian examples. Their expeditionary forces comprised of large, mostly infantry armies, led by mounted lords and their military households, which were capable of executed the sieges which characterized most medieval military encounters. At home, the Ottonians continued to be protected by the system of defense in depth, which they expanded significantly from the Carolingian foundation, and the general levy of able bodied men. The general military systems utilized by the Carolingians remained the defining features of western European medieval warfare.

MAPS

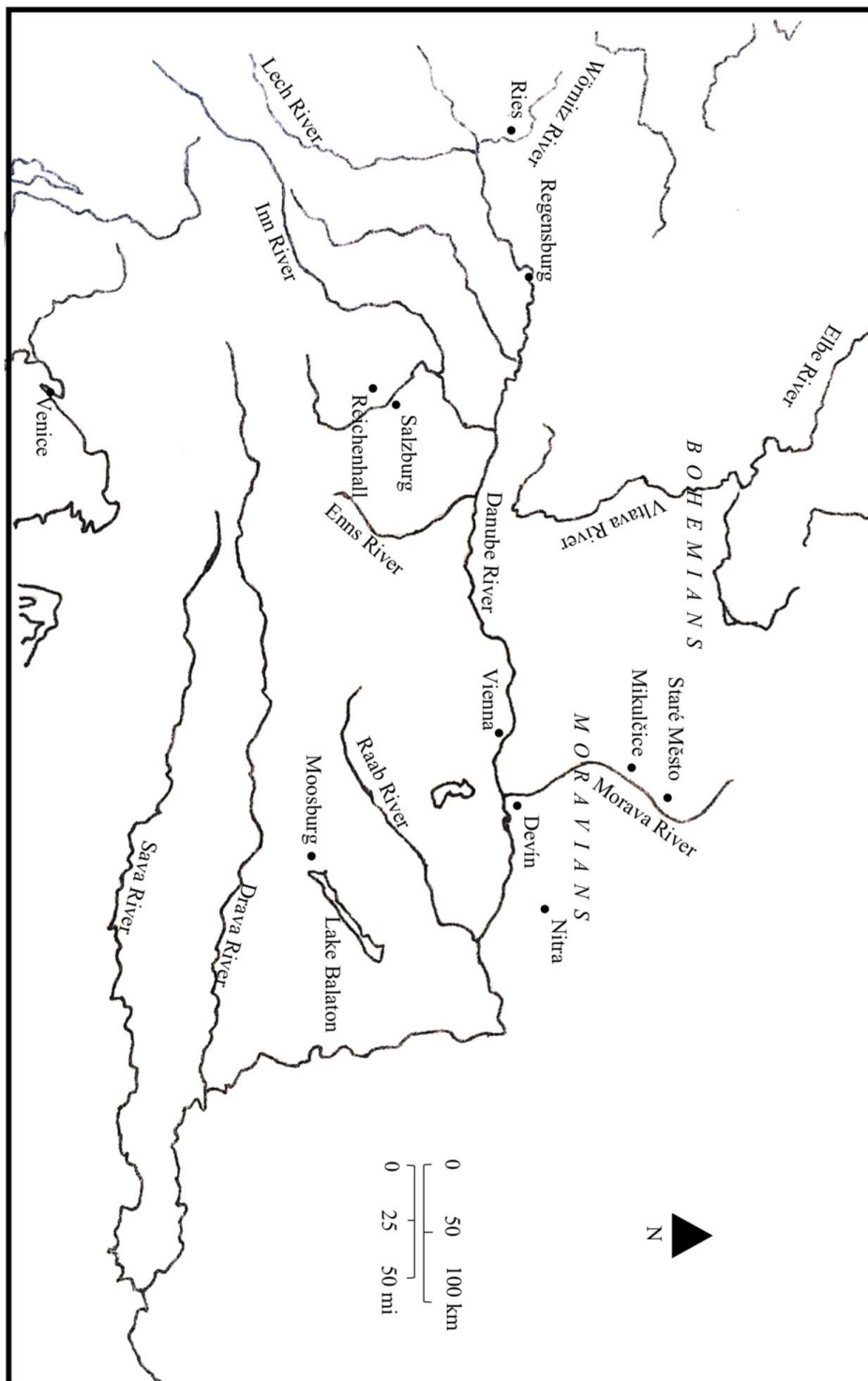


Figure 1: Campaigning on the Danube.
Adapted from Eric Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*, 352.



Figure 2: Treaty of Verdun and Partition of the Middle Kingdom at Meerssen.
 Public Domain. Adapted from Muir's Historical Atlas (1911), by Fordham University Internet
 Medieval Sourcebook, <https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/maps/844-870map.jpg>.

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