

in 801, was forced into what may have been a very unequal trial by battle when accused of treason by a Goth called Senila. Being defeated, Bera was condemned to death but subsequently exiled to Rouen.⁸⁹ His destitution opened the way for the re-establishment on the March of the sons of William of Toulouse, Gozhelm and later Bernard of Septimania.⁹⁰ Not surprisingly, Bera's son Willemund later appeared as an ally of the rebel Aizo.⁹¹ A more interesting association, though, is that of the accuser Senila with the beneficiaries of Bera's fall. Senila and Gozhelm fled from the March together after the collapse of Bernard's power at court, and were later captured by Lothar in Chalon-sur-Saône in 834, where they were both put to death.⁹² Senila's main offence in Lothar's eyes may have been his close association with this family, but it is also possible that resonances from the judicial destruction of Bera continued to ring fourteen years later.

If the family of Bernard had manipulated judicial processes to achieve a local predominance in 820, in 828 they were striking at larger game, and can only have achieved what they did as collaborators with a faction, best represented by the empress and her brothers, with a similar interest in dividing and discrediting the 'old guard' amongst Louis's advisers. However initially successful they were, the resulting strains were to prove fatal to the hopes of most of them and were to lead rapidly to civil war. For in dismissing his father-in-law the emperor deliberately offended Lothar, and in punishing the commanders of the Aquitanian army he also struck at Pippin, who had been given overall responsibility for the campaign, as well as having other ties to these aristocrats of the upper Loire valley.⁹³ This slighting of his two eldest sons, their relatives, and allies marks the public opening of the political conflicts of the second half of Louis's reign.

In such a light the events of the summer of 828 take on an ominous hue. In an assembly at Ingelheim in June Louis resolved to send Lothar and Pippin in person with Frankish and Aquitanian armies to the March. After a slow period of recruitment Lothar proceeded from Thionville to Lyons to rendezvous with Pippin. There at Lyons they remained, and there, as the annalist cryptically put it, 'they talked'.⁹⁴ Where, it is legitimate to wonder, was Agobard during these discussions? Contrary to the impression given by the *Royal Frankish Annals*, a Muslim army, led by the Amir in person, was campaigning in the

Ebro valley that year, even if it did not approach the March, and so the decision of the two Frankish rulers not to continue their advance but to disperse their forces and to return to Aachen and Aquitaine respectively looks somewhat surprising.⁹⁵ Their discussions in Lyons were conceivably the last they held before the coup against their father in the spring of 830. In 829 Lothar was relegated to Italy and Bernard arrived in Aachen, the reward perhaps not only for his military services in 827 but also for the outcome of the assembly of 828, with its ultimately fatal adjustment to the balance of rival factions.⁹⁶ The winter of 829/30 saw Hilduin, as arch-chancellor, still overseeing the addition of new entries to the court annals, but by early the following year he and the other survivors of the once dominant group of the emperor's advisers were ready to join an open revolt against their master.

In the coup against the emperor and his recently appointed chamberlain in the spring of 830 Pippin I seems to have played a leading role, at least until the arrival from Italy in May of his elder brother Lothar. The sequence of events is more or less clear, though certain grey areas exist. In February of 830 an assembly was held at which a campaign against Brittany was projected, apparently entirely at the persuasion of Bernard.⁹⁷ On 2 March the emperor left for the coast to begin preparations for the expedition, while his wife remained at Aachen. The whole undertaking, however, aroused growing disquiet and discontent, because of 'the difficulty of the journey', particularly amongst the nobility of western Neustria, the leading lights amongst whose number, Hugh and Matfrid, had so recently been disgraced.⁹⁸ The nucleus of the ensuing rebellion was centred on Orléans, and Pippin of Aquitaine appears to have been directly involved, joining the conspirators at their point of assembly. In the light of the speed with which he and his forces were able to arrive from Italy, it also seems likely that Lothar was involved in the planning from an early stage.⁹⁹ Indeed, so rapid was the sequence of events that it is hard not to suspect that some form of conspiracy had existed from an earlier date than the assembly of February 830, and that the Breton expedition provided a useful focus for the discontent rather than providing the cause of it. Though it must be admitted that so politically risky had military undertakings become since 827 that reluctance to take a lead in it on the part of counts and other office-holders is quite understandable.

The aims of the opposition were clear, at least in their first stages, and consisted of intentions to separate the emperor from his wife, limit if not end

⁸⁹ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 820, p. 152; for a fuller if perhaps over-dramatized account see Ermoldus, *Carmen in honorem Hludovici*, ll. 1806-73, ed. Faral, pp. 138-42. It is interesting that Ermoldus uses this episode as the end-point of book iii of his work, and cites Louis's 'clemency' to Bera in making a brief concluding appeal to Pippin, ll. 1874-5.

⁹⁰ Salrach, *El procés de formació*, pp. 39-50.

⁹¹ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 827, p. 172.

⁹² Nithard, *Histoire*, i. 5, ed. Lauer, p. 22.

⁹³ It is noteworthy that the dedicatee of Bishop Jonas of Orléans's other didactic treatise, the *De institutione laicali*, was Count Matfrid. Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 41, ed. Pertz, p. 630, states that Louis himself appointed Hugh and Matfrid and sent them as his missi.

⁹⁴ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 828, ed. Kurze, p. 175; cf. Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 42, Pertz, p. 631.

⁹⁵ E. Lévi-Provençal, *Histoire de l'Espagne musulmane*, 3 vols. (Paris and Leiden, 1950), i. 216-17, citing Ibn Hayyān. A marginal note in a 9th-cent. MS from Gerona may suggest that an Arab army raided the March in autumn 828: F. Avril et al., *Manuscrits enluminés de la Bibliothèque Nationale: Manuscrits de la péninsule ibérique* (Paris, 1982), no. 7.

⁹⁶ *Annales regni Francorum*, s.a. 829, ed. Kurze, p. 177.

⁹⁷ *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 830, ed. Grat, p. 1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* 2.

⁹⁹ Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 44, p. 633.

his personal authority, and kill Bernard.¹⁰⁰ The concentration of forces for the forthcoming campaign against the Bretons enabled the conspirators to assemble an overwhelming military force. The very direction chosen for the expedition, crossing western Neustria, played into their hands. Their fore-gathering at Paris in April seems to have brought the revolt into the open. No indication is given of any counter-moves that Louis did or could take, and Bernard seems to have fled immediately to the March, leaving one of his brothers to be blinded and exiled. Pippin and the leading Frankish conspirators met the emperor at Compiègne on 24 April and there imposed their terms, which had the backing of Lothar, still not arrived from Italy.¹⁰¹ According to the annalist, Louis was deprived of his power, though what that implies in practice and what constitutional means were applied remain unclear, and Judith and her brothers were imprisoned by forcible admission to monasteries. It is notable that in the case of Judith the house chosen was the principal Aquitanian convent of Sainte-Croix in Poitiers, making her the hostage of Pippin.¹⁰² On the arrival of Lothar the following month a *placitum* or trial was held, which led to the judicial blinding of Bernard's brother Herebert; the charges for which would be interesting to know.¹⁰³

The summer of 830, however, witnessed possibly the most dramatic realignment of factions and support in the whole troubled reign, and yet this is a process almost totally concealed from us in the sources. Both the *Annales of St Bertin* and the *Vita Hludovici* indicate the outcome: both are totally silent as to the details of how it was achieved.¹⁰⁴ In an assembly held in October at Noyon the emperor formally recovered the full exercise of his authority, and the leaders of the conspiracy in the spring, who under Lothar must have been wielding power in the mean time, were taken into custody and held for a future hearing at Aachen. Those arrested are named as the abbots Helisachar, Wala, and Hilduin, and Count Lantbert.¹⁰⁵ Hugh and Matfrid already seem to have made themselves scarce. At the same time the bishops and abbots there assembled declared the earlier judicial condemnation of Judith to be 'unjust and without law'.

The second stage of this 'counter-revolution' was delayed until the following spring, when at an assembly begun in February at Compiègne, the scene of the emperor's humiliation nearly a year previous, and then transferred to Noyon, the conspirators were sentenced. The death penalties there imposed were commuted by Louis to various forms of imprisonment.¹⁰⁶ There too the empress made her first reappearance and 'following the judgement of the

¹⁰⁰ *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 830, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, cf. also Thegan, *Vita Hludovici pii imperatoris*, ed. G. Pertz (MGH SS 2), p. 597.

¹⁰² *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 830, p. 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, also Nithard, i. 3, ed. Lauer, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 830, pp. 2-3; Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 45, p. 633.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*; *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 831, p. 3.

Franks' purged herself, probably by oath, of the charges that had been laid against her. These were the accusations of infidelity with Bernard, later to be given full rein in the *Epitaphium Arsenii*.¹⁰⁷ The final stage may be seen as having occurred at the third assembly of the year, held at Thionville, at which Bernard presented himself to take a similar oath.¹⁰⁸ He was not restored to office either at court or on the March. At the same time a reallocation of territories took place, in which Pippin of Aquitaine proved to be the main beneficiary, being immediately given the county of Anjou and the promise on his father's death of receiving all of western Neustria between the Seine and the Loire.¹⁰⁹

The reason for linking the decisions of the Thionville assembly with the series of events stretching back to the gathering at Noyon in October 830 is not just that the oath taken by Bernard ended a series of protracted judicial processes, but also because there are grounds for suspecting that the territorial redistribution represented the payment made for a crucial switch of support on the part of Pippin I in the summer of 830. The coup that had been carried out in the spring of that year was largely the work of the Neustrian nobility and the partisans of Lothar, aided by the active support of Pippin. Some resentment of their actions in other regions, notably Austrasia, was inevitable, but it is unlikely that this would have been strong enough or well enough orchestrated to have brought about by itself the dramatic *volte-face* of October 830. Nithard, however, provides the key to these events in his brief references to how the emperor, in the power of Lothar, was able to forge a secret alliance with his two younger sons Pippin and Louis the German, using as his intermediary a monk called Guntbald, who visited their courts ostensibly to discuss religious matters.¹¹⁰ The offer made to them was of territorial additions to their kingdoms. Although Nithard implies that this was enough in itself, their attitude cannot have failed to have been influenced by the predominance achieved by Lothar as a result of the events of April and May. He had secured control of their father, rule over all of the Frankish regions proper, and had relegated his brothers to Aquitaine and Bavaria.¹¹¹ In practice, the terms of the *Ordinatio* of 817 had been put into premature effect. This was a state of affairs that neither Pippin nor Louis the German had any interest in prolonging. The result was a change of alliance and the humiliation of Lothar at the Noyon assembly, when Louis not only recovered his authority but also obliged his eldest son to sit with him in judgement on his own former associates. At the same time a political compromise was clearly devised in that whilst the leading non-royal conspirators were punished, and this meant the final elimination of

¹⁰⁷ Paschasius Radbertus, *Epitaphium Arsenii*, ed. E. Dümmler (Berlin, 1900); see ch. 22 in this vol. by David Ganz.

¹⁰⁸ Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 46, p. 634; *Annales Bertiniani*, s.a. 831, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 46, p. 634.

¹¹⁰ Nithard, i. 3, ed. Lauer, p. 12.

¹¹¹ Anon., *Vita Hludovici*, ch. 45, p. 633.