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## On Louis the Younger's war expedition in 869. Against the Obodrites or the Sorbs?

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In the second half of 869, the East Frankish ruler Louis, known as “the German”, decided to go to war against his Slavic opponents. According to the Annals of Fulda, in August he divided the assembled troops into three armies: the first, under Louis the Younger, together with the Thuringians and Saxons, was to crush the Sorbs; the second, consisting of Bavarians, was to support Carloman against Sviatopolk; the third, consisting of Franks and Swabians and led by the king himself, was to set off against Rostislav. After describing the havoc wrought in Moravia by Carloman and Charles, the youngest son of Louis the German, who took over command of the army in place of his ailing father, the chronicler turns to the achievements of Louis the Younger. Many Sorbs fell in the battle and the same fate befell many of those who fled the battlefield, including some mercenaries from Bohemia. Impressed by the defeat, the rest of the Sorbs were forced into submission.<sup>1</sup> The second and last source providing information on the

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<sup>1</sup> *Annales Fuldenses*, hrsg. v. G.H. Pertz, F. Kurze, in: SRG, Bd. 7, Hannover 1891, under year 869, pp. 68–69: “Mense vero Augusto rex Hludowicus collectis copiis in tres partes divisit exercitum: nam aequivocum suum cum Thuringiis et Saxonibus ad comprimendam Sorabum audaciam destinavit, Baioarios vero Carlmanno in aditorium fore praecepit contra Zuentibaldum nepotem Rastizi dimicare volenti, ipse autem Francos et Alamannos secum retinuit adversum Rastizen

activities of Louis the Younger are the Annals of Saint Bertin,<sup>2</sup> from which we learn that the son of Louis the German leading the Saxons waged war against the Wends<sup>3</sup> living in the vicinity of Saxony. Despite the heavy casualties suffered on both sides of the conflict, victory ultimately fell to Louis the Younger, who returned happily to his homeland.<sup>4</sup>

As can be seen from the above, the main difference between the two aforementioned sources lies in the determination of the scale of Louis the Younger's victory. The Annals of Fulda emphasise the devastating defeat of the Slavs, while the accounts of the Annals of Saint Bertin show that the success of the East Frankish forces brought significant losses. It is also worth noting that the opponents in the 869 campaign are identified. The first of the sources mentioned states unequivocally that they were Sorbs. However, the remark of the Annals of Saint Bertin that Louis the Younger set out against the Slavs living around Saxony seems to point to the Obodrites,<sup>5</sup> since for geographical reasons such a location

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pugnaturus. Cumque iam proficiscendum esset, aegrotare coepit; unde necessitate compulsus Karolum filiorum suorum ultimum eidem exercitui praefecit Domino exitum rei commendans. [...] Interea Hludowicus frater illorum cum Sorabis manum conserens primo quidem quibusdam occisis hostes terga vertere coegit; deinde vero non modica ex eis multitudine prostrata et Behemis, qui a Sorabis mercede conducti fuerant, partim occisis partim turpiter ad sua redeuntibus ceteros in deditonem accepit."

<sup>2</sup> *Annales Xantenses*, hrsg. v. B. von Simson, in: SRG, Bd. 12, Hannover–Leipzig 1909, under year 870, p. 28, gives only the news of Louis the German sending Carloman and Charles against Sviatopolk.

<sup>3</sup> On the name Wends in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography, see C. Lübke, *Slaven zwischen Elbe/Saale und Oder: Wenden-Polaben-Elbsslaven?*, "Jahrbuch für Geschichte Mittel- Und Ostdeutschlands" 1993, Bd. 41, pp. 17–43. See also E. Mühle, *Słowianie. Rzeczywistość i fikcja wspólnoty. VI–XV wiek*, tłum. J. Janicka, Warszawa 2020, p. 285.

<sup>4</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, hrsg. v. G. Waitz, in: SRG, Bd. 5, Hannover 1883, under year 869, p. 106: "Hludowicus, Hludowici regis Germaniae filius, cum Saxonibus contra Winidos, qui in regionibus Saxonum sunt, bellum committens, cum multa strage hominum ex utraque parte quoquo modo victoriam est adeptus indeque prospere reversus."

<sup>5</sup> Regarding the year 869, J. Strzelczyk first writes that the revolt was raised by unspecified Slavs, and then, relying on records from the Annals of Fulda of the same year, argues in favour of the Sorbs, adding at the same time that the Slavic attacks of 869 were a reaction to the expedition of Louis the German in 858 – J. Strzelczyk, "Męczennicy Ebstorfscy." *Dzieje kształtowania się jednej legendy zachodniosłowiańskiej*, "Slavia Occidentalis" 1971, t. 28/29, p. 234; *idem*, *Die Legende von den Ebstorfer Märtyrern als Zeugnis über die politischen und ethnischen*

fits them more than the Sorbs.<sup>6</sup> Despite this, there is a widespread view in historiography that only the Sorbs could have been the target of Louis the Younger's expedition in 869.<sup>7</sup> In order to solve this question, it seems advisable to characterise the picture found in the two sources mentioned above of the Slavs living in areas to the east of the Carolingian state.

The Royal Frankish Annals end at 829. Their continuation in the area of the West Frankish state was precisely the Annals of Saint Bertin. The first part of these, covering the years 830–835, was written by an unknown author, while the second, covering the years 835–861, was written by the Spanish bishop Prudentius of Troyes. The last section, starting with information on the death of Prudentius in 861 and running until 882, was created from 845 by the Archbishop of Reims Hincmar, who was closely associated with Emperor Louis the Pious and King Charles the Bald.<sup>8</sup>

The author of the first part either knew little about relations on the eastern fringes of the empire, or simply did not have the

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*schen Verhältnisse in Nordostdeutschland im Mittelalter*. "Lětopis. Jahresschrift des Instituts für sorbische Volksforschung" 1971, series B: *Geschichte*, Bd. 18(1), p. 72.

<sup>6</sup> The Veleti do not come into play not only because they did not directly border the East Frankish state, but also because in the 9th century they were last mentioned in the sources in 839, cf. J. Sochacki, *Zwiazek Lucicki – między Polską a cesarstwem do 1002 roku*, "Slavia Antiqua" 2006, nr 47, p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, E. Dümmler, *Geschichte des ostfränkischen Reiches*, Bd. 2: *Ludwik der Deutsche. Vom Koblenzer Frieden bis zu seinem Tode (860–876)*, Darmstadt 1960, pp. 276–278; W. Hartmann, *Ludwig der Deutsche*, Darmstadt 2002, p. 112. S. Epperlein, K. Wachowski, A. Turasiewicz, J. Strzelczyk and P. Babij, when writing about the Obodrites, do not mention anything about the expedition of 869, or, as it should be assumed, they consider it as directed only against the Sorbs; J. Šolta, in turn, concludes the history of the Sorbs in the 9th century (858) – S. Epperlein, *Fränkische Eroberungspolitik, feudale deutsche Ostexpansion und der Unabhängigkeitskampf der slawischen Stämme bis zum 11. Jahrhundert*, in: *Die Slawen in Deutschland*, hrsg. v. J. Hermann, Berlin 1970, p. 270; K. Wachowski, *Słowiańszczyzna Zachodnia*, Poznań 2000, p. 73, see also p. 75; A. Turasiewicz, *Dzieje polityczne Obodryców. Od IX wieku do utraty niepodległości w latach 1160–1164*, Kraków 2004, p. 60; J. Strzelczyk, *Zapomniane narody Europy*, Wrocław 2006, pp. 229–271; P. Babij, *Wojskowość Słowian Polabskich*, t. 1, Wrocław 2017, p. 121; J. Šolta, *Zarys dziejów Serbotużyczan*, trans. E. Morcinek, Wrocław 1984, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> See W. Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter bis zur Mitte des dreizehnten Jahrhunderts*, Bd. 1, Berlin 1885, pp. 277 *et seq.* and *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte*, Tl. 2, hrsg. v. R. Rau, Berlin 1964 ("Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters", Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe, Bd. 6), pp. 1 *et seq.*

opportunity to demonstrate his knowledge due to the short period of time to which he devoted his attention. For, he wrote only vaguely about the Slavs. He first mentioned the arrival of their numerous messengers at Diedenhofen in 831, and in the following year reported that Louis the German intended to attack Swabia with the Slavs.<sup>9</sup>

Prudentius also used the term Slavs. The name first appears under 839 with the information that Louis the Pious appointed suitable men to defend the East Frankish state against their forays. The fact that this also served against the aggressive actions of the Danes indicates that these “Slavs” can actually describe the Obodrites. The Veleti and Sorbs cannot be ruled out either, as war expeditions were organised later that year against all three of these Polabian Slavs factions.<sup>10</sup> The accounts of the Slavs from 844 and 845 already refer only to the Obodrites,<sup>11</sup> while those from 846, 847, 848, 851, 855 and 856 refer to the Moravian state.<sup>12</sup> Although the name Slavs was also applied to the latter state formation in 853, let us point out they were earlier referred to as the Wends (*Guinedes*).<sup>13</sup> This name was used only once by Prudentius. As can be seen, the author of this section of the Annals of Saint Bertin used the name Slavs in a general sense to describe the peoples living to the east of the Carolingian state. However, this does not mean that he lacked information about their diversity. This is evidenced by the records of 838 and 839, where he mentioned the Obodrites three times and the Sorbs and the Veleti twice. On the other hand, the composition of these tribal associations was unknown to him, as he only once wrote about the Limones.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *An. Bert.*, under year 831, p. 3 and under year 832, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 839, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 844, p. 31 and under year 845, p. 32. The purpose of the 844 expedition is specified in *An. Fuld.*, p. 35, see also under year 845 on the same page, which contains information about the Danes' expedition to Hamburg, which justifies the conclusion that the Slavic stronghold they attacked must have belonged to the Obodrites. Generally on these events, see J. Sochacki, *Ludwik Niemiec a Obodryci i Duńczycy od traktatu w Verdun w 843 r.*, “Res Historica” 2021, nr 51, pp. 51 *et seq.*

<sup>12</sup> *An. Bert.*, under year 846, p. 34, under years 847 and 848, p. 35, under year 851, p. 41, under years 855 and 856, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 853, p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 838, p. 16 and under year 839, p. 22.

In the last part of the Annals of Saint Bertin, by Archbishop Hincmar, the Slavic neighbours of the East Frankish state are most often referred to as the Wends (*Winedos*). Almost without exception, the term refers to the Moravian state or its ruler (861, 862, 863, 865, 866, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873 and 876),<sup>15</sup> while the March of Wends is mentioned only once (866).<sup>16</sup> Regarding other Slavic peoples, the Obodrites are also mentioned only once under the year 867.<sup>17</sup> Hincmar's complete lack of orientation in the ethnic structure of the Polabian Slavs is evidenced by a note from 862, where an expedition against the Wends and their king is recorded. In this case, the Archbishop of Reims highlighted that this was not a military action by Louis the German against the Moravians, but against another Slavic political entity, which, however, was unknown to him since he left blank spaces in the text to be added later, once he received precise information about the purpose of the East Frankish king's expedition.<sup>18</sup> It is known from another source that Louis the German, perhaps together with his son Louis the Younger, attacked the Obodrites in 862.<sup>19</sup> In this context, it may be surprising that Hincmar did not complete his note – under the year 867 he specified exactly who was the aim of the army led by Louis the Younger and he did it without mentioning the Wends. This confirms his lack of knowledge of the ethnic complexities of the Slavic world and perhaps also his lack of interest in the subject.<sup>20</sup>

The Royal Frankish Annals also had their continuation in the East Frankish state in the form of the Annals of Fulda. The first part of the latter, covering the years 714–838, was written, as is generally assumed, by an anonymous Fulda monk, and the second part, covering the years 839–863, by another Fulda monk, Rudolf. The further continuation of the Annals of Fulda was undertaken by Meginhard, brought to Mainz by the local archbishop, Liutbert.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 861, p. 55, under year 862, p. 61, under year 863, p. 62, under year 865, p. 79, under year 866, p. 84, under year 869, pp. 101, 105ff, under year 870, p. 114, under year 871, p. 117, under year 872, p. 119, under year 873, p. 124 and under year 876, p. 134.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 866, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 867, p. 87.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 862, p. 59: "Hludowicus rex Germaniae Hlotharium, [...], apud Mogontiam accersiensi, petit, ut cum eo contra Winodos qui appellantur..., adversus regulum..., cum apparatu hostili pergat; [...]."

<sup>19</sup> *An. Fuld.*, under year 862, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup> *An. Xant.*, under year 863, p. 20, mention the Slavs only in a vague manner.

The former did not begin his work until 869 in Mainz, where he was already making regular records. Meginhard initially ended his part at 882, when his protector Liutbert lost his influence at the court of Charles II to Liutward of Vercelli. Sometime later, Meginhard made records for the years 882–887 and his work in this form is preserved in the Viennese manuscript. A copy of the Annals of Fulda up to 882 went to Regensburg, where further records were made. In this form, the work was continued in Altdach by various authors until 901.<sup>21</sup>

In the second part of the Annals of Fulda, Rudolf relatively rarely used the generic name Slavs. This term first occurs under 840, where they are also characterised as barbarians. Geographically, this must have referred to the Sorbs or one of their tribes, because, as Rudolf recorded, Louis the Pious pursued his son Louis the German through Thuringia to the borders of the barbarians, which forced the latter to return to Bavaria via the Slavic country.<sup>22</sup> In this section of the Annals of Fulda, the name Slavs occurs three more times: under the years 845,<sup>23</sup> 848<sup>24</sup> and 852.<sup>25</sup> In the other instances where this term occurs, Rudolf considered it necessary to specify whom he meant. Thus, under the year 846 he writes that Louis the German set out against the Slavs living by the Morava River,<sup>26</sup> under 849 he lists the Bohemians among the Slavic peoples,<sup>27</sup> under 855 he mentions the unsuccessful expedition of Louis the German against the Moravian Slavs and their prince Rostislav,<sup>28</sup> under 858 he writes that Carloman also set out

<sup>21</sup> See W. Wattenbach, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen...*, pp. 214 *et seq.* and *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte*, Tl. 3, hrsg. v. R. Rau, Berlin 1960, ("Ausgewählte Quellen zur deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters", Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe, Bd. 7), pp. 1 *et seq.*

<sup>22</sup> *An. Fuld.*, under year 840, pp. 30–31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 845, p. 35.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 848, p. 37.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 852, p. 42.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 846, p. 36. On the relations of the East Frankish state with the Moravian state, see K. Polek, *Państwo wielkomorawskie i jego sąsiedzi*, Kraków 1994, pp. 30 *et seq.*; K. Polek, *Północna i zachodnia granica państwa wielkomorawskiego w świetle badań historycznych*, in: *Śląsk i Czechy a kultura wielkomorawska*, red. K. Wachowski, Wrocław 1997, pp. 9 *et seq.*; I. Panic, *Ostatnie lata Wielkich Moraw*, Katowice 2003, pp. 18 *et seq.*

<sup>27</sup> *An. Fuld.*, under year 849, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 855, p. 45.

against the Moravian Slavs,<sup>29</sup> and under 863 he again mentions the Moravian Slavs.<sup>30</sup> Phrases like “Moravian Slavs” or “Slavic people” do not prove that Rudolf knew something more about the Slavs living south of the East Frankish state. Writing about the expedition of 846, he reports that, as a result, Louis the German made Rostislav (nephew of Mojmir I of Moravia) a prince, to whom one of the Bohemian princes Sklawitag fled in 857.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, Carloman's campaign of 858 was directed against the Slavs ruled by Rostislav, against whom Louis the German also fought in 863.

Other records by Rudolf also confirm his good understanding of the relations between the southern Slavs. He reported on Bohemia more often than just under the years 849 and 857. In 845, fourteen Bohemian princes appeared before Louis the German with a request to grant them the grace of baptism, which was accepted.<sup>32</sup> Despite this, the army of the East Frankish king returning from an expedition in 846 through Bohemia encountered considerable difficulties and suffered heavy losses,<sup>33</sup> and in 848 Louis the Younger went there with an expedition on his father's orders, eventually forcing the Bohemians to send envoys asking for peace and the surrender of hostages.<sup>34</sup> The last mention of Bohemia in this part of the Annals of Fulda concerns the years 856 and 857. The former refers to the return of the Frankish army through the Bohemian territories,<sup>35</sup> and the latter to the expedition organised against them as a result of which Sklawitag's brother, the son of Wiztrach, was elevated by Louis the German to the rank of prince.<sup>36</sup>

From the point of view of the issue under consideration, records about the eastern neighbours of the East Frankish state are of the

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 858, p. 49.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 863, p. 56.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 857, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 845, p. 35.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 846, p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 848, p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 856, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 857, p. 47. On the relations of the East Frankish state with the Bohemians between 845 and 857, see A. Paner, *Przemysłidzi. Od Borzywoja I do Przemysła II Otokara. Ludzie i wydarzenia w latach 872–1278*, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 31 *et seq.* and from the late 9th century onwards: M. Matla-Kozłowska, *Pierwsi Przemysłidzi i ich państwo (od X do połowy XI wieku)*, Poznań 2008, pp. 15 *et seq.*

greatest importance. In this regard, Rudolf reports on the expeditions undertaken against the Sorbs in 851 and 858<sup>37</sup> and about them joining the army of Louis the German in 856 and jointly defeating the Glomatians.<sup>38</sup> Rudolf also knew that the Sorbs had a number of princes, of whom he listed by name only Čestibor (857 and 858),<sup>39</sup> and that there was a Serbian march organised against them (849 and 858).<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, with regard to the Obodrites, this chronicler mentions three military expeditions organised against them in the years 844, 858 and 862. In the first one, under the personal command of Louis the German, Prince Gostomysl fell and power over the country was entrusted to the remaining princes;<sup>41</sup> the second, led by Louis the Younger, headed not only against the Obodrites but also the Limones;<sup>42</sup> and the last one, again commanded by the East Frankish king, set out against the Obodrite ruler Dobomysl, who was forced to obey and surrender hostages, including his own son.<sup>43</sup>

The last part of the Annals of Fulda, written by Meginhard and its *Niederaltaich* continuation, also uses the generic term Slavs. However, it only appears four times: under the years 877, 887, 888 and 889.<sup>44</sup> This name is used more often with a specification of the tribe in question or its geographical location. In the first case, this includes the Bohemians (869),<sup>45</sup> the Moravians (871 and 872),<sup>46</sup> the Limones (877)<sup>47</sup> and the Glomatians (880),<sup>48</sup> and in the second case, the Slavs living along the Saale River

<sup>37</sup> *An. Fuld.*, under year 851, p. 41 and under year 858, p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 856, p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 857, p. 47 and under year 858, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 849, p. 38 and under year 858, p. 51.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 844, p. 35. On the political innovation of the Obodrites introduced by Louis the German, see W.H. Fritze, *Probleme der abodritischen Stammes- und Reichverfassung und ihrer Entwicklung vom Stammesstaat zum Herrschaftsstaat*, in: *Siedlung und Verfassung der Slawen zwischen Elbe, Saale und Oder*, hrsg. v. H. Ludat, Gießen 1960, pp. 145ff; J. Sochacki, *Ludwik Niemiec a Obodrycy i Duńczycy...*, p. 52.

<sup>42</sup> *An. Fuld.*, under year 858, p. 49.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 862, p. 56.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 877, p. 90, under year 887, p. 106, under year 888, p. 116 and under year 889, p. 118.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 869, p. 67.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 871, pp. 73, 75 and under year 872, p. 75.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 877, p. 89.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 880, p. 94.



(880).<sup>49</sup> Regarding the Serbian linguistic group, Meginhard was aware of the existence of Sorbs in addition to the Glomatians, as well as the Suslovs (869, 874, 877, 880 and 897).<sup>50</sup> Meginhard and the authors of the *Niederaltaich* continuation, like Rudolf, focused their attention mainly on the relations of the East Frankish state with the Moravian state and Bohemia. In the former case, in addition to the term Moravian Slavs, the names Moravians or Moravia are used (872, 882, 891, 892, 894, 897, 899 and 900),<sup>51</sup> and most of the mentions concern Princes Rostislav and Sviatopolk (864, 865, 866, 869, 870, 871, 872, 884, 890 and 892).<sup>52</sup> In the second case, on the other hand, mentions are basically limited to citing only the Bohemians themselves (869, 871, 880 and 900),<sup>53</sup> with the exception of a note under the year 872, where their five princes are also mentioned by name.<sup>54</sup> The Obodrites received the least attention. We learn from the *Niederaltaich* continuation that in 889 Arnulf of Carinthia decided to set out against them,<sup>55</sup> and in 895 the same East Frankish ruler received their messenger in Salz proposing a peace treaty, which they obtained,<sup>56</sup> presumably in exchange for a commitment to pay tribute.<sup>57</sup>

In the records contained in the *Annals of Fulda*, the scant use of a generic name for the eastern and southern neighbours of the East Frankish state is notable. It is dominated by mentions detailing the individual Slavic peoples, focusing on the Moravian and

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 880, p. 95.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 869, pp. 67 *et seq.*, under year 874, p. 81, under year 877, p. 90, under year 880, p. 95 (here also a mention of the Serbian march) and under year 897, p. 131.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 872, p. 75, under year 882, p. 109, under year 891, p. 119, under year 892, p. 121, under year 894, p. 125, under year 897, p. 130, under year 899, p. 132 and under year 900, p. 134.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 864, p. 62, under year 865, p. 63, under year 866, p. 65, under year 869, pp. 67 *et seq.*, under year 870, p. 70, under year 871, p. 73, under year 872, p. 76, under year 884, p. 111, under year 890, p. 118 and under year 892, p. 121.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 869, p. 67, under year 871, p. 74, under year 880, p. 95 and under year 900, p. 134.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 872, p. 76.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 889, p. 118.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibidem*, under year 895, p. 126.

<sup>57</sup> On the issue of tributes, see H. Jäger, *Rechtliche Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse der östlichen Staaten vom Fränkisch-Deutschen Reich (Ende des 8. bis Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts)*, Gelnhausen 1960, p. 12, note 41 and I. Scheidning-Wulkopf, *Lehnsherrliche Beziehungen der fränkisch-deutschen Könige zu anderen Staaten vom 9. bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts*, Marburg 1948, pp. 19 *et seq.*

Bohemian states. The information relating to Sorbs and Obodrites is not equally extensive. In addition to the Obodrites, Rudolf knew of the existence of Limones and of their princes, namely Gostomysl and Dobomysl. In the case of the Sorbs, he did not report on the other tribes included in this ethnic group, but he knew that they had numerous princes, one of whom was called Čestibor. Meginhard wrote only about the Sorbs, Suslovs and Glomatians, without considering the systemic issues of these tribes. It is only the *Niederaltaich* continuation that mentions the Obodrites, but again without any information on the form of their government. Regarding the *Annals of Saint Bertin*, both Prudentius and Hincmar used a generic nomenclature for the eastern neighbours of the East Frankish state. While the former used the term Slavs, the latter used the name Wends, perhaps influenced by Prudentius, who also used it, although only once. Despite this shortcoming, the author of the second part of the *Annals of Saint Bertin* had some insight into the tribal structure of the Polabian Slavs. He was therefore aware of the existence of the Obodrites, Limones, Veleti and Sorbs. Hincmar was much less well informed. Although he provided a great deal of information about the Moravian state, he knew almost nothing about the rest of the Slavic world within the orbit of the East Frankish state. He wrote nothing at all about the Sorbs and about the Veleti. Regarding the latter, this is not that much surprising, as nothing had been written about them by Rudolf and Meginhard either. He only mentioned the Obodrites once under the year 867, while under the year 862 he ignored that it was against them that Louis the German's expedition was directed, but he was aware that they were not Moravians.

Under these circumstances, therefore, there can be no doubt that, according to the narrative of the *Annals of Fulda*, Louis the Younger in 869 set out against the Sorbs. However, one must still be puzzled by the difference hinted at above which concerns the description of this campaign in these annals and the *Annals of Saint Bertin*. This must also be prompted by the fact that Meginhard wrote nothing about the Obodrites, indicating his complete lack of interest in this direction of East Frankish state policy, and the fact that the 867 expedition against the Obodrites can only be learned from Hincmar, which in turn means that, despite his ignorance of the Slavs, he had some knowledge that cannot be overlooked. Consequently, it seems advisable to take a closer

look at the key information for 869 contained in the two annals mentioned above.

According to Hincmar, Charles the Bald learned in Senlis that Lothair II had died on 8 August 869. The West Frankish ruler then travelled to Attigny, where he met with deputies from Lorraine, sent by a number of mighty men and bishops, who asked him not to enter the late king's realm until his brother had returned from his expedition against the Wends. Although the men of Louis the German fought them frequently that year and the year before, not only did they fail to achieve any significant success, but they suffered heavy losses themselves. Many others, however, demanded that Charles II enter Metz as soon as possible, where they would welcome him. This demand met with a positive response and, via Verdun, the West Frankish king arrived in the city in question on 5 September. It is there that, two days later, in the presence of Hincmar, he was crowned king. Meanwhile, Louis the German had made peace with the Wends, and, in order to confirm it, he sent his sons along with the margraves of the area, while he himself was struck by illness in Regensburg. Despite this, he still sent a message to Charles reminding him of the agreements made between them and therefore the division of the kingdom after the late Lothair II.<sup>58</sup> Only now comes the information about the expedition of Louis the Younger reported above.<sup>59</sup>

From the Annals of Fulda, we can learn that the Bohemians attacked Bavaria at the beginning of 869. Louis the German sent forces to defend the area against them before he himself in due course took up arms against the invaders. In the battles against Rostislav, Carloman managed to defeat him twice and take considerable booty, which he informed his father about by letter. Also, the Sorbs and Suslovs with the Bohemians invaded Thuringia, where they wreaked much havoc. After the mention of the death of Lothair II, reference is made to the gathering of the army by Louis the German, who decided to divide it into three parts, as written above. As is well known, Louis the German did not take part in the fighting because he was lying ill in Regensburg. According

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<sup>58</sup> In 867 in Metz. See J. Sochacki, *Formowanie się wczesnośredniowiecznego państwa niemieckiego w latach 919–962*, Słupsk 2014, p. 55 and J.L. Nelson, *Karol II Łysy*, tłum. G. Smółka, Oświęcim 2017, p. 187.

<sup>59</sup> *An. Bert.*, under year 869, pp. 101–106.

to Meginhard, it was this very circumstance that would prompt Charles the Bald to enter Lorraine and crown himself king. The closing event of 869 was the triumphant return home of all the sons of King Louis, after they had brought all matters to a happy conclusion in various places and without loss among their soldiers.<sup>60</sup>

According to Meginhard, the reason for the entry of Charles the Bald into Lorraine was the illness of Louis the German. The wars with the Moravian state and the Sorbs are most probably irrelevant here, because in his opinion, contrary to Hincmar's view, they had a successful outcome. It is important, however, that the author of this part of the Annals of Fulda locates their conclusion, as in the case of the Annals of Saint Bertin, at a time after the coronation of the East Frankish king in Metz. It should also be stressed that the vague note about Louis the German's sons returning home, after bringing all matters to a happy conclusion, does not rule out some additional warfare undertaken by Louis the Younger.

The Annals of Saint Bertin show that Charles the Bald decided to enter Lorraine because he was tempted to do so by the offer of the local nobles promising him their support on his way to winning a new crown. A second reason for this, not explicitly stated, was Louis the German's involvement in the battles against the Wends, which were interrupted by the news of his brother's coronation in Metz, as well as Louis the Younger's war campaign also against the Wends taking place at the time. The fact that peace was made with some Wends at the behest of an ailing father by his sons, while a war was ongoing with others, means that this could not mean the same enemy. As we know, in the first case they were Moravians and in the second case some Slavs living in the Saxon area. The identification of the latter with the Obodrites may be supported by Hincmar's knowledge of the Slavic world. Since he referred to the Moravians and, though perhaps not entirely consciously, to the Obodrites by the name Wends, in this situation only the latter could have been the target of Louis the Younger's expedition. It is worth noting here that Louis the Younger must have ended his warfare around mid-September 869, because Hincmar recorded the death of Archbishop Rotland of Arles as the next event, which occurred on 19 September.

Hincmar's suggestion that the Obodrites were also the target of Louis the Younger's war effort in 869 seems at least plausible.

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<sup>60</sup> *An. Fuld.*, under year 869, pp. 67–70.

He was, after all, closely associated with Charles the Bald and participated with him in the invasion of Lorraine and attended his coronation in Metz, meaning that he may have possessed information unknown to Meginhard. Describing the events of 869, the Archbishop of Reims made it clear that the defeats suffered by Louis the German in the battles against the Slavs had prompted his brother to break the initial agreement. This does not seem to contradict the account of the Annals of Fulda about the ravaging of Thuringia by the Sorbs, Suslovs and Bohemian mercenaries and the attack of Bavaria by the Bohemians in early 869, where the East Frankish forces may have suffered significant losses despite Carloman's double victory over the troops of Rostislav. The victory achieved by Louis the Younger over the Sorbs is no longer consistent with Hincmar's narrative, but it is also likely that he did not know about it, just as the existence of this tribe was unknown to him. He knew, on the other hand, of his son Louis the German's defeat of the other Slavs, who could be the Obodrites. Perhaps in 869 the situation of 858 was repeated, when the East Frankish king sent three armies for the first time against Rostislav, the Obodrites and the Sorbs. In that case, a little over a decade later, news of an uproar among the southern Slavs may have led to a similar situation in the north. Alerted by this, Louis the Younger would have had to march against the Obodrites in haste after dealing with the Sorbs. The second expedition, and only with the Saxons, as Hincmar writes, had to face a battle-ready opponent, so although it ultimately ended in victory, it was bought with significant losses on both sides. It is this campaign that Hincmar seems to have described, although, with his lack of orientation in the structure of the Slavic world, he was unable to accurately identify Louis the Younger's opponent, as he did with Louis the German in 862.

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### Streszczenie

Wokół wyprawy wojennej Ludwika Młodszeo w 869 roku.  
Przeciw Obodrytom czy Serbom?

W 869 r. Ludwik Niemiec podjął zakrojone na szeroką skalę działania wojenne przeciw Słowianom. W operacji tej wzięli udział jego

synowie, w tym Ludwik Młodszy. W historiografii powszechnie przyjmuje się, że przeciwnikami Ludwika Młodszego byli Serbowie. O wydarzeniu tym informują jedynie roczniki z Fuldy i St. Bertin. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest próba znalezienia odpowiedzi na pytanie, czy faktycznie Ludwik Młodszy wyprawił się w 869 r. przeciw Serbom. W wyniku przeprowadzonego postępowania badawczego ustalono, że ta wyprawa faktycznie miała miejsce. Jednakże dopuszczalna jest hipoteza, że znalazła ona swą kontynuację w działaniach wojennych przeciw Obodrytom.