The Invasion of Prince Louis of France to England, 1216–1217

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In the middle of the month of June 1215, an assembly of English barons, currently in revolt against King John of England, called "Lackland" met him in Runnymede between London and Windsor. They came up with a series of articles, limiting royal power and establishing boundaries between the king and his people. After few days of negotiations, King John finally agreed to put his royal seal on the document, which became one of the most famous not only in the history of British Isles but also in the history of whole world. On 19 June of 1215, Magna Carta was born.[1] The path to Runnymede was the beginning of serious civil war, which would tear England apart for almost two years, during which King John would be deposed and replaced by a man, who wouldn't be expected by many — an heir to the French throne, Prince Louis. What was the true purpose of Louis's invitation and how it eventually ended? We will try to reveal in following lines.

Before we can examine the story of "King Louis of England", it's necessary to look on the reasons for his English adventure. The reign of King John,[2] who succeeded his brother Richard in 1199, was in many ways troubled and full of conflicts. After he had settled his initial problems with succession, when he had to struggle against his nephew Arthur of Brittany (disappeared in 1203, probably killed by his uncle John)

1 One of the most acknowledged and fullest work about Magna Carta is J. C. HOLT, *The Magna Carta,* 2nd Ed., Cambridge 1992; more recent works include N. VINCENT, *Magna Carta: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2012; D. CARPENTER, *Magna Carta*, London 2015; G. HINDLEY, *A Brief History of the Magna Carta*, London 2008; more general work about the time of Magna Carta covering various topics of life and politics is J. GILLINGHAM — D. DANZIGER, *1215: The Year of Magna Carta*, New York 2005.

2 There are several studies of King John and his reign. Classic work about John is K. NORGATE, *King John,* London 1902; Kate Norgate was British historian of 19th century, author of many studies concerning Angevins, besides the biography of King John, she wrote also biographies of King Richard the Lionheart (1924) and King Henry III (1912). More recent works about King John are represented by W. L. WARREN, *King John*, 2nd Ed., New Haven 1997; R. V. TURNER, *King John: England's Evil King?*, 2nd Ed., Stroud 2005; most recent work is S. D. CHURCH, *King John: England, Magna Carta and the Making of a Tyrant*, London 2015; some new approaches to John's reign were published in S. D. CHURCH (Ed.), *King John: New Interpretations*, Woodbridge 1999.

and established his rule over England, he had to fight against King Philip II of France, who invaded Normandy and in two years beginning in 1202, he ripped John off his northern domains, when he conquered Normandy, Anjou and parts of Poitou.[3] Loss of Normandy was an initial step to eventual complete destruction of Angevin empire,[4] once one of the most formidable power of western Europe.

Another serious problem of King John's reign was his prolonged conflict with papacy concerning contested election of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Both King John and ecclesiastical dignitaries were eager to pick their own fitting candidate to the most important archbishopric in England. When Stephen Langton was introduced as new archbishop in 1207, supported by the pope, John refused to accept this decision. He fell in conflict with one the most powerful person of the Middle ages, Pope Innocent III. England was put under interdict and eventually John was excommunicated.[5] This was a real threat for all medieval rulers since subjects of excommunicated person were not bound by any previous attachment or oath of fealty and thus this person was threatened by abandonment of vassals. Even John realized this imminent danger and he eventually came to terms with Innocent, when he was at the same time facing a revolt of Welsh leaders and also of northern barons led by Robert fitzWalter and Eustace de Vesci.[6] Moreover, King Philip II of France was preparing a campaign against John and was just about to sail from France. His young son Louis was to be at the head of this invasion. In the spring of 1213, final agreement was established between King John and Roman pontiff. The kingdom of England became a fief of the Holy See with annual payment of 1,000 marks, which seemed a reasonable term for King John. French invasion of 1213 was called off, when the fleet was destroyed by John's navy in the port of Damme.

Now, King John decided to renew his power on continent and to bring lost dominions back under English control. He gathered allies, among them Otto of Brunswick, his nephew and the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, count of Flanders, Ferrand of Portugal, count of Boulogne, Rennaud of Dammartin and others. In February 1214, John sailed from Portsmouth and attacked positions in Poitou while John's half-brother William Longsword, earl of Salisbury led the army in the north of France.[7] John was faced with the army of Prince Louis of France, which defeated English forces near Roche-au-Moine. Main French victory was nevertheless fought out in the famous battle of Bouvines.[8] The allies of King John were dispersed and the dream to reconquer old realm of John's father in France faded away. John was compelled to agree with truce, signed in Chinon for five years and he returned to England to face his final and most serious revolt.

3 The fullest study about this matter is F. M. POWICKE, *The Loss of Normandy (1189–1204): Studies in the History of the Angevin Empire*, Manchester 1913.

4 The term was introduced by Kate Norgate in 19th century to describe vast estates of English kings, who were also counts of Anjou and Maine and dukes of Normandy and Aquitaine. Equally, the realm of Henry I (1100–1135) is sometimes called the Anglo-Norman empire.

5 Fore more information see TURNER, pp. 109–127; WARREN, pp. 154–174.

6 See J. C. HOLT, *The Northerners: A Study in the Reign of King John*, Oxford 1961.

7 A. L. POOLE, *From Domesday Book to Magna Carta*, Oxford 1991, pp. 466–467.

8 See G. DUBY, *Le dimanche de Bouvines*, Paris 1973.

The reign of King John was also filled with conflicts, which stemmed from his financial demands towards English nobility. When John demanded so-called scutage, or shield money to substitute the absence of certain nobles on his fatal French campaign, he met with strong opposition, which eventually resulted in signing Magna Carta. Financial needs of the Crown during John's reign were high, but Henry II's or Richard's were not much better. The defeat of John's army in battles of Roche-au-Moine and Bouvines in the summer of 1214 and the loss of majority of continental fiefs to king of France meant, that John's revenues were narrowing. John met with his opponents in London in January 1215 only to see them really angry, which was proven by the armour, worn by barons. John promised another meeting to be held in Northampton in April but he also began to seek for support. At the beginning of March, he took the Cross and thus became protected by the Church as a crusader.[9] It was very clever manoeuvre because John gained support of Innocent III, his liege lord and now also the protector. Innocent was smart enough to see, how difficult the situation in England could have become and even when he stated, that barons shouldn't have made leagues against the king, he also said, that John should listen to baronial demands if justified. When the impending meeting was scratched and when John's ambassadors returned from Rome with messages from pope in favour of John, the rebellion was almost inevitable. Barons, now gathered around Robert fitzWalter gained an important success, when London opened its gates to them in May 1215.[10] John saw, that the situation was becoming critical with the capital in hands of rebels and in June, he entered final stages of negotiations, mostly done by Stephen Langton.[11]

Magna Carta, this famous document, limited royal power and established laws and justice for whole land and various groups of inhabitants of the kingdom in its sixty-three articles. But while today, Magna Carta is taken as a symbol of freedom and cooperation between king and his subjects, in the summer of 1215, at least for John, it was only a manner to gain some time, to relieve the pressure and to prepare for next round. Certainly, most of barons were not so naive to believe, that this struggle is over and then King John would now submit to their terms. Upcoming events should prove this thinking.[12]

Magna Carta of 1215 was valid only for couple of months and King John did everything he could to prevent further spread of its values. And it was Innocent III and Prince Louis of France, who should have played an important part in upcom-

9 CHURCH, p. 217.

10 WARREN, p. 235; shortly before, barons officialy renounced their allegiance to King John. This information makes an opening line for events of 1215 in Coggeshall's chronicle (Ralph of COGGESHALL, *Chronicon Anglicanum*, ed. J. Stevenson, RS 66, London 1875, p. 171). It was a reaction to John's reluctance to meet barons and to accept their terms as well as his cooperation with Innocent III.

11 Stephen Langton was first appointed archbishop of Canterbury in 1207 with the support of Innocent III, but this decision was rejected by John and Stephen had to stay in exile, where he remained until 1213, when he finally took over his see. In 1215, he acted as a mediator between rebel barons and King John. It's suggested by some sources, that he was the chief author of Magna Carta, but it's more probable, that he was but one of the authors.

12 For more attitudes to Magna Carta see e.g. TURNER, pp.182–189; CHURCH, pp. 227–234; WARREN, pp. 236–240.

ing drama. At the beginning of September, Innocent's answer to John's complaints arrived.[13] Innocent stated, that Magna Carta is unlawful and audacious and he proclaimed it void and invalid.[14] Next stage of war was opened. One of the most famous siege of autumn campaign was that of Rochester,[15] strong castle held by rebels until the end of November. King John had several successes during this campaign and some rebel barons sought peace with him.

At this time, negotiations at French royal court were in progress. Barons turned to King Philip of France and they offered the throne of England to his eldest son and heir Louis.[16] They built their offer upon the fact, that Louis had certain claim on the throne of England but it was very remote and problematic. As part of peace treaty of Le Goulet, signed in May 1200, Louis married Blanche of Castile, John's niece, grand-daughter of King Henry II (Blanche's mother Eleanor had married Alfonso of Castile).[17] The claim of Louis was thus derived from that of his wife. It was her who was heir to the English throne. But she wasn't the only possible claimant of the throne in 1215. There was also Otto of Brunswick,[18] the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and son of John's another sister Matilda, who had married Duke Henry the Lion and then, certainly, children of other daughters of Henry II and also a sister of deceased Duke Arthur of Brittany Eleanor, kept in English custody.[19] Her brother was supposedly murdered by John in 1203[20] during the war leading to loss of Normandy. Otto of

13 TURNER, p. 190.

14 For full record of Innocent's letter, see T. RYMER (Ed.), *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Acta Publica*, Vol. 1, Part i–ii, London 1745, p. 68; Ch. BÉMONT (Ed.), *Chartes des libertés anglaises (1100–1305)*, Paris 1892, pp. 41–44.

15 Rochester in Kent is located in the town of the same name next to the cathedral. King John occupied the surroundings of castle, but it took him several weeks to break its defence. He undermined south tower and when it collapsed, the garrison surrendered.

16 Walter of COVENTRY, *Memoriale fratris Walteri de Coventria, ed. W. Stubbs, (RS 58, 2 Vols., London 1872–1873)*, Vol. 2, p. 225.

17 For full record of the treaty see *Foedera,* pp. 37–38; by this treaty, John was fully recognized as ruler of Angevin realm after he was reconciled with his nephew and rival claimant of English throne Arthur of Brittany.

18 Otto was raised in England and his uncle Richard the Lionheart gave him a county of Poitou in 1196. He was elected king of the Romans in 1198 against Philip of Swabia and after the latter's death, he was generally acknowledged and crowned Emperor in 1209. When he breached the promise given to the pope, he was excommunicated and eventually replaced by Frederick II of Hohenstaufen.

19 Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine had eight children and five of them had their own progeny. Geoffrey of Brittany had two children, Arthur, who disappeared in 1203 and Eleanor, who died in 1241, Eleanor, who married Alfonso VIII of Castile had, besides Blanche, five other children who lived in 1215 (Henry was the only surviving son and became a king of Castile in 1214, Eleanor became queen of Aragon in 1221, Constance was a nun, Urraca was queen of Portugal since 1212, Berengara was shortly queen of Castile and queen consort of Léon), Joan married first William II of Sicily and after his death in 1189, she was remarried to Raymond VI of Toulouse, they had a son, Count Raymond VII of Toulouse. All these people had possible claim to English throne due to their kinship to Henry II.

20 Arthur was captured in 1202 at Mirabeau when he was besieging the castle and he was transported first to the castle of Falaise and then to Rouen, where he was given to the cus-

Brunswick, whose claim was comparable to that of Arthur, only with one difference that Otto was a descendent of Henry II in female line, was at this time employed by the struggle with Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and thus he wasn't very good choice. Louis of France on the other hand was skilled military leader in his late twenties and he could also provide the rebellion with soldiers and other support. But the fact, that barons decided to choose Louis for their new master was also very sensitive topic for his father, King Philip II. In 1214, Philip had concluded a five years' truce with John after the battle of Bouvines and if he would openly support the adventure of his son, it could be considered as a violation of this truce.[21] And that really wasn't Philip's aim. Although he wanted to diminish English continental power and he had prepared the invasion to England before, he didn't want to disturb now functional peace. Moreover, since England was papal fief, an attack against King John would be also attack against Holy See and Philip certainly didn't want to exasperate Innocent III with whom he himself hadn't had only friendly relations.[22] On the other hand, the prospect of England under the rule of his son could sound well to him. Louis, apparently flattered by this proposal, promised his help and his own arrival to England as soon as possible. He sent some troops to help the rebellion.[23]

King John's campaign through England continued in following year and we cannot say that unsuccessfully. He divided his army and personally led operations in the North of the country. We have several accounts of this period, one of those which are more trustworthy comes from Ralph, abbot of Coggeshall, whose *Chronicon Anglicanum* is very good source for John's reign at all.[24] Another great and full account of the time of rebellion is so-called Barnwell chronicler.[25] Little less precise and sometimes

tody of William de Braose, possibly the last man who saw him alive. Arthur disappeared sometime in 1203, supposedly killed by his uncle John. Sources differ about this event so it's uncertain what exactly happened and where and if Arthur was buried.

21 See *Foedera*, pp. 63–64.

22 It particularly concerned Philip's marital policy. In 1193 Philip had married Ingeborg of Danemark but he immediately repudiated her. Three years later, he married Agnes of Meran, but Roman Curia didn't approve this marriage and insisted on return of Ingeborg to Philip's favour. An interdict was imposed on France to press Philip tu subdue. Some interesting circumstances of this affair are discussed in W. ULLMANN, *Arthur's Homage to King John*, in: The English Historical Review, Vol. 94, No. 371, 1979, pp. 356–364. For the reign of Philip II as a whole, see J. W. BALDWIN, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French Royal Power in the Middle Ages*, Oxford 1986; A. LUCHAIRE, *Philippe Auguste et son temps*, Paris 1980; J. BRADBURY, *Philip Augustus, King of France 1180–1223*, New York 1998; G. SIVÉRY, *Philippe Auguste*, Paris 1994.

23 COGGESHALL, p. 176.

24 Ralph Coggeshall was a monk and since 1207 an abbot of Coggeshall abbey in Essex. He began his own entries to the chrońicle around 1187. He died probably in 1226. His record of events concerning reign of King Richard, John and the minority of King Henry III is one of the best. He is less hostile to King John than Roger Wendover so his account can be considered more balanced.

25 The manuscript of this chronicle was kept in Barnwell priory near Cambridge. There is no printed edition of this chronicle, which is considered the best and most valuable record of King John's reign in words of J. C. Holt, but it's included in the edition of *Memoriale* of

biased is the work of Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*.[26] Although Wendover's account is very broad, he often exaggerated and strong displeasure toward King John is present in his chronicle. His description of John's campaign is full of blood and devilish torture from the side of king's army. We obviously have to take Wendover's description with the knowledge that he was genuinely hostile to King John and not everything in his chronicle is pure truth. Ralph of Coggeshall also mentions some atrocities of advancing royal army but in more moderate way. From French side, we can rely on the account of William le Breton, chaplain of King Philip II. He is an author of two significant works, *Gesta regis Philipi Augusti,* a continuation of Rigord, and *Philippide,* a poem intended to glorify Philip.[27]

While Prince Louis still remained in France preparing for full scale invasion, some of his troops were sent to England to enforce baronial contingents. Meanwhile, the mission of papal legate Gualo tried to persuade Louis not to invade England.[28] Gualo negotiated with King Philip and emphasized the position of King John as papal vassal and crusader. Final discussion took place in Melun near Paris. It was necessary to legitimise Louis's invasion in particular in the eyes of papal legate. King Philip, Prince Louis and the barons brought many arguments supporting Louis's claim and justifying his upcoming campaign. Very colourful account of this meeting comes from Wendover, other sources, mentioned above, as well as French author, William le Breton only mention it partially.[29] Concerning the question of England as papal fief, they opposed, that King John was not allowed to put England under the vassalage of the Holy See for he himself had been condemned by the assembly of peers in 1194 for his treason of King Richard, his brother and so he couldn't have been considered as true king.[30] The truth is, that John was reconciled with his brother through mediation of their mother.[31] It would be more appropri-

Walter of Coventry, late 13th century author, who incorporated the text of Barnwell annalist to his own work.

26 Roger Wendover was a monk of St. Albans Benedictine abbey, for some time, he was also a prior of Belvoir, but he was suspended on the grounds of his misuse of priory finance. His chronicle has three basic parts beginning with the arrival of Anglo-Saxons. His own accounts include the reign of King John and the minority of Henry III. Roger died in 1236. Matthew Paris continued in his work up to 1259.

27 William le Breton, native from Léon, Brittany, was very close to the court of King Philip II and thus he was an eye-witness of many events of his reign, including battle of Bouvines in 1214. He entered the service of King Philip around 1200. He continued in the work of another chronicler of Philip's court, Rigord from 1207 to 1224. He died some three years later. His work is important particularly because of his access to royal documents and treaties and his personal attendance in many crucial events. His chronicle, and much more his poem were intended as a glorification of Philip's successful reign in France.

28 ROGER OF WENDOVER, *Chronica sive Flores Historiarum*, ed. Henry O. Coxe, 4 Vols., London 1841–1844, Vol. 3, pp. 363–364.

29 COVENTRY, p. 229; F. DELABORDE (Ed.), *Gesta Philippi Augusti* (*Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton)*, Paris 1882, pp. 306–308.

30 WENDOVER, Vol. 3., p. 364.

31 We have an account of their rapprochement in the chronicle of Roger of Howden, one of the most trustworthy authors of late 12th century. John was summoned to explain his hos-

ate to use his unclear claim to English throne and his struggle with his nephew in 1199–1203 (with the exception of almost two years following treaty of Le Goulet) and so they truly did it. They argued that even if this condemnation proved void, he was still guilty of murder of his nephew Arthur in 1203 for which act he was judged in the court of French king in 1203.[32] This court in fact is not proven and there is no clear evidence in contemporary sources that it actually happened.[33] He was only summoned before French royal court in 1202 following a plea of the Lusignans, offended by John's misconduct regarding the marriage of Isabella of Angouleme.[34] His subsequent reluctance to appear in Paris made a pretext for French invasion to Normandy followed by its conquest in 1202–1204. In fact, it wasn't possible to judge John as king by French court because he was sovereign ruler in his kingdom and he was only the subject of King Philip for his continental possessions. The court of 1203 is not mentioned in contemporary sources up to this point. It is strange that such prolific authors like Ralph of Coggeshall or Rigord (French biographer of King Philip) didn't mention it. Moreover, the information about murder of Arthur in 1203 wasn't publicly spread immediately after it and that King Philip knew precisely what happened is also curious.

King Philip couldn't give his assent to his son's action openly but he agreed with it privately. Even for the pope, this whole affair was unpleasant for on the one side he was John's overlord and he should have protected him, all the more that John was also a crusader, but on the other, he didn't want to alienate French kings, who had proved very effective in protection of interests of Catholic Church. Prince Louis himself took part in suppression of Albigensian heresy in southern France, King Philip was one of prominent leaders of third crusade.[35] Besides statements, used to support Louis' claim and to justify his upcoming invasion in Melun, French side also sent letters straight to the pope and negotiators went to Rome.[36] As we can read in Barnwell chronicle, nor the providence of the king, nor letters of the pope and persuasion of the legate could stop Louis from his plans for invasion.[37]

tile behaviour during Richard's absence and imprisonment, but he refused to come to Nottingham and was threatened with forfeiture of his estates and disinheritance but he eventually came to terms with Richard.

32 WENDOVER, Vol. 3, p. 365.

33 See WARREN, p. 264.

34 For further information on this subject, see CHURCH, pp. 101–113; WARREN, pp. 64–76; Isabella was betrothed to Hugh IX of Lusignan, but in August 1200, John married her with no compensation to Lusignans. In 1201, they appealed to John's overlord, King Philip II. Isabella of Angouleme eventually became a wife of Hugh X of Lusignan, a son of her former fiancé.

35 Third crusade was a reaction to defeat of Christian army in the battle of Hattin in 1187 and following fall of Jerusalem to Muslim hands. Military operations of third crusade did not start until 1189, when Emperor Frederick Barbarossa left for the Holy Land only to die on the way. Philip II departed for the East in summer 1190 together with Richard the Lionheart. Due to their mutual dissensions, Philip returned back to France in 1191 only to begin plotting with Richard's brother John.

36 WENDOVER, Vol. 3, p. 367.

37 COVENTRY, p. 229.

Louis gathered impressive naval forces in the port of Calais and his campaign began. Although he met with some difficulties when his ships were hit by strong wind, on Saturday after the Ascension, which was 21 May, Louis stood on English soil in Sandwich. When King John saw French army, he, according to Coggeshall, fled frightened and with lamentations.[38] As we can read in other sources relative to this event, like Barnwell annalist or Wendover's *Flores*, John was also concerned about fidelity of his troops as they were mostly foreign mercenaries from France. John was aware of this fact and he was worried that they could have gone over to Louis[39]. John then made his way to Winchester, according to Barnwell chronicle, *"with dismayed mind and sadness on his face"*.[40] Louis, after he had disembarked, visited Canterbury and took control of it and then also *"all castles in Kent except well-fortified Dover"*.[41] He then reached London, where he was welcomed by its citizens and barons. Then, Louis received their homage and both Londoners and rebellious barons made oaths of fealty.

With London secured for French prince and fealty granted to him by oaths and with King John running westward away from him, it seemed that Louis would soon achieve his goal and became king of England. Was this really what English nobility wanted? For now, barons acted like loyal servants of their new overlord. When Louis initiated a campaign to conquer new positions farer from the centre of rebellion, several barons joined his cause and swore fealty. Among them also William, earl of Salisbury, called "Longsword", who was John's half-brother and recently, he was in charge of one part of John's army.[42] The country torn apart by this rebellion showed other curiosities. While William Marshal, earl of Pembroke was still loyal to John since he had been reliable servant of Henry II and Richard, his sons were part of rebellion. Alexander II, king of Scots, arrived to Canterbury together with certain northern barons to make homage to Louis.[43] Despite these proceedings, not everything was a success. The siege of Lincoln castle by Louis's allies met with failure due to activities of Nicola de la Hay, adherent of King John.[44] Dover, mighty castle guarding one of the entering gates to England, was also a tough one to conquer. Louis personally led siege from around 22 July, but after many fruitless efforts and many weeks of besieging without any significant progress, he was compelled to make truce with Hubert de Burgh, who was in charge in Dover, on 14 October. It was established that if John wouldn't have sent reinforcements to relieve the castle, the garrison would resign the castle to Louis.[45] England was basically divided among John, who held grip over western parts of his kingdom, and Louis, who was a master of south-east.

38 COGGESHALL, p. 181.

39 COVENTRY, pp. 229–230; WENDOVER, Vol. 3, p. 368.

40 COVENTRY, p. 230.

41 COGGESHALL, p. 181; Dover was one of key castles because it guarded the English shore and the port of Dover in very exposed place since it was the shortest way to cross the Channel between Calais and Dover with distance around 40 kilometres.

42 WARREN, p. 252.

43 D. CARPENTER, *The Struggle for Mastery: The Penguin History of Britain 1066–1284*, London 2004, p. 299.

44 COVENTRY, p. 230.

45 COGGESHALL, p. 182; WENDOVER, Vol. 3, p. 380.

Invasion of Prince Louis to England also moved Pope Innocent III and legate Gualo to action. Louis, together with his partisans, was excommunicated as expected. When Innocent died in July 1216 and was succeeded by Honorius III, adherents of Louis were in hope for change of attitude of Curia towards his master, but this proved misleading since papal support remained on the side of King John. Several members of insular clergy were adherents of Louis but many of them remained loyal to the king.[46]

With Louis' advance through the Isle, we can wonder, why there was never any mention about his coronation. I will later argue, that from the beginning, the aim of barons wasn't Louis as king, but just after his invasion, his coronation might have been seen as valid point since he was promised the crown of England. It would be a little difficult to arrange this ceremony after all. Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury and one of the key figure in negotiations between rebels and king in 1215, was summoned to Rome when he refused to carry out papal orders to excommunicate king's opponents and he returned to England after considerable time in 1218.[47] Archbishop of York, another possible figure capable to provide royal coronation, was Walter de Gray, partisan of King John. Coronation by another bishop, should have been considered precarious. Moreover, Louis was excommunicated, another good reason to take this whole act as unlawful by those who remained loyal to John.

In autumn 1216, John moved northward with his suit. He reached Lynn, where he was welcomed and he stayed here for several days. About this time, John was taken by an attack of dysentery. We can read in contemporary sources, that it happened because of king's insatiability. Wendover adds the information about worsening of king's illness by overeating and over drinking. John, according to St. Albans chronicler, ate too many peaches followed by cider.[48] When John arrived at Newark, he was already very sick. During the night of 18–19 October, King John died. Just before his death, he arranged his last will. He expressed a wish to be buried in the church of St. Wulfstan in Worcester. Executors of his will were also appointed in this order: Gualo, legate of the Holy See, Peter, bishop of Winchester, Richard, bishop of Chichester, Silvester, bishop of Worcester, William Marshal, earl of Pembroke, and several others.[49] His nine years old son Henry was declared heir of the Kingdom. King John was the only Angevin ruler to be buried in England and fourth since 1066 overall. He ruled for seventeen years and he was forty-eight.[50]

With the death of King John, situation in England should have dramatically changed. It was a crucial point in this war. *Casus belli* for most of rebel barons suddenly disappeared. Mind of many barons began to change soon. We can also note this change of situation in narrative sources of that period. Louis was now confronted

46 COVENTRY, pp. 230–231.

47 COVENTRY, p. 228; CHURCH, pp. 235, 241–242.

48 WENDOVER, Vol. 3, pp. 384–386; king's insatiability is also mentioned by Coggeshall (p. 183).

49 N. H. NICOLAS (Ed.), *Testamenta vetusta*, Vol. 1, London 1826, p. 5.

50 John's father Henry was buried in the abbey of Fontevraud in Anjou, as well as John's brother Richard the Lionheart. Other brothers of King John were buried in Rouen or in Paris, the eldest son of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine William, who died in his 3 years, was buried in Reading.

with legitimate heir of the throne. What started one year ago as a rebellion against King John, who was considered an unfitting ruler by many members of English nobility, now turned into confrontation of two claimants of English crown, one of whom possessed considerable advantage — Angevin blood.

Men, appointed by John as executors of his will resolved to arrange the coronation of Henry as soon as possible. In a week after John's death, a ceremony was held in Gloucester cathedral conducted by papal legate Gualo and Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester.[51] Crowned and anointed, Henry now posed serious danger for Louis and his cause. Because of Henry's tender age of nine, William Marshal, earl of Pembroke acted as regent for the new king. Among initial acts of Henry III's reign was that of reissuing Magna Carta. Assembly was held in Bristol for this occasion and on 12 November, the Charter of forty-two articles was issued. All parts concerning specifically King John were omitted. This was real first step to general acknowledgement of Magna Carta and also very important act, opening Henry III's fifty-six years long reign.[52]

When news of John's death reached Louis, he was, according to Wendover, very pleased. Wendover offers us a conversation between Louis and Hubert the Burgh in Dover. Accordingly, Louis said to Hubert, that now, when his king is dead, he should have joined his side. Louis also promised him an enrichment and high post among his advisers. To this, Hubert replied, that although John is dead, his progeny is still here to claim his throne. If this talk ever took place is uncertain (no other sources mention it), but it illustrates well the course of thinking of not only those who was connected with John until his death, but soon also the rest of nobility.[53] We are informed from other sources like Coggeshall and Barnwell annalist, that soon after John's sudden and unexpected death, an increasing number of barons changed their side and went over to the new king. Wendover describes more sieges of Louis and his allies but then, he also notes, that there were many wavering barons, hesitating to which lord they should have adhered. Wendover also mentions, that English barons were treated by the French very contemptuously and with no respect to their complaints and wishes.[54] Coggeshall opens his records for the year 1217 with following line: *"Louis sailed from England for substantial aid and meanwhile, many nobles, who had adhered to him before, now returned to the king on behalf of legate's and episcopate's suggestion."*[55] Also in Barnwell chronicle, we can find an information about decreasing support of Louis among the barons. It says, that even Louis now saw, that there were many of those, who didn't accept his presence in the kingdom.[56]

Now, it became more and more evident, that this rebellion was mostly a personal fight against King John, not against Angevin dynasty as a whole and that most of bar-

51 The coronation ceremony is well described by WENDOVER, Vol. 4, pp. 1–3.

52 M. POWICKE, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216–1307*, Oxford 1991, pp. 4–5; the text of this charter can be found in W. STUBBS (Ed.), *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, Oxford 1886, pp. 340–343.

53 WENDOVER, Vol. 4, pp. 3–4.

54 Ibidme, pp. 9–10.

55 COGGESHALL, p. 185.

56 COVENTRY, p. 232.

ons, who had made part of rebellion before the death of King John now saw, that there is no significant reason for continuing support of Prince Louis and for the struggle against King Henry. As stated by William le Breton, those who had struggled against John due to their hate to him, were now completely reconciled with Henry III and they abandoned Louis' party. Among them, William Longsword, earl of Salisbury is mentioned.[57] Certainly, there were also several barons, who didn't want to return to King Henry's obedience and according to Barnwell chronicle, they swore that they would never accept any of John's heirs.[58] But although the core of rebellion remained at least seemingly firm for now, in the winter of 1216/1217 the adventure of Capetian prince began to crumble. English episcopate was on Henry's side, implying that the Church was firm in his support to the king throughout its structure.[59]

At the end of 1216, Louis made truce with Henry's party till 13th January and gathered his forces in Cambridge. Royal party met in Oxford.[60] Peace negotiations was on the table at this time. Although they weren't prepared to conclude final peace, the truce was prolonged until Easter and it was established, that the status quo would be maintained for the period of truce.[61] At this time, papal legate threatened King Philip with excommunication. So, he asked his son to return home as soon as possible. According to William le Breton, Philip didn't send his son any help and he barely spoke to him since he was afraid of being excommunicated.[62] In spite of that, the main purpose of Louis' stay in France was to gather more forces and supplies because he still didn't want to abandon his ambiguous claim to England. The final stage of his English adventure should have soon begun.

Roger Wendover closes his narrative concerning truce and following departure of Louis back to France with the statement, that Louis would never experience such a good will of barons like before.[63] Louis obviously must have felt that the support of English nobility is lowering so as the backing of his own father. Philip was experienced and pragmatic ruler, who must have seen, that his son's position wasn't firm. Since Henry's coronation, Louis couldn't be seen as a saver of the kingdom fighting against hated King John, but as a usurper, trying to oust legitimate heir and king. But there is a possibility, that even when he had first arrived in England in May 1216, he hadn't been considered seriously as a possible new king of England. If we assume, that Louis was only one of all possible claimants to the throne and by all means not the best one, and furthermore, he was an heir to the French throne, it is easily acceptable, that the only real reason for his invitation was to make him a military leader of the opposition to King John with all consequences, especially financial. He could provide rebels with supplies and substantial financial aid.

We can wonder, and this question remains fully unanswerable due to circumstances, what would have been the proceedings of victorious barons after King John's

57 *Gesta*, p. 312.
58 COVENTRY, p. 233.
59 Ibidem, pp. 233–234.
60 Ibidem, p. 235.
61 WENDOVER, Vol. 4, pp. 11–12.
62 *Gesta*, p. 312.
63 WENDOVER, Vol. 4, p. 12.

theoretical defeat? Unexpected death of King John, the one thing which nobody could expect, changed a situation and as it soon showed, in favour of John's son Henry. But as we can see in contemporary sources, even when King John wasn't defeated, but he died in the middle of the war, most of barons successively found it better to give their allegiance to new king, Henry. It's understandable. Henry was only nine years old, without any scars in his life, available for baronial shaping. Louis, an adult man with many life experiences could be more difficult to handle. And it's also very plausible that in the case of his succession in England, his court would be more probably French, not English. It's true, that during his campaign, he was surrounded by men from both French and English nobility, but it's not certain, that this course would be maintained. Roger Wendover recorded one event, which, with respect to all limits of his narrative, doesn't have to be fully trustful, but even if it's partially based on real observation, it can show us, what we tried to express above. It's the story of deadly illness of viscount of Melun, who supposedly summoned certain barons, who resided in London and told them about the plans of Prince Louis to oust them from their land and to replace them with his own entourage.[64] There are some discrepancies in this account, since viscount of Melun died only after the end of the war in 1217 and Wendover mentions that barons began to think about return to King John, who died in October 1216. But it can be even partially illustrative of the situation in England during final stages of the war.

Louis returned to England in April 1217 with some reinforcements. He again laid siege to Dover and succeeded in conquest of some castles. His army then proceeded to Lincoln where Louis' allies were pressed by royalist forces during the siege of the castle, held by royal army. It was there, in the streets of the city of Lincoln, where Louis experienced first of two major defeats of this year. William Marshal, together with many others, loyal to King Henry, reinforced the garrison of the castle and together completely defeated rebels and about 300 knights were made prisoners. Some of the leaders of rebellion like Robert fitzWalter, were among those captured.[65] The battle of Lincoln on 20th May 1217 meant a disaster for Louis' cause. When Louis discovered, what happened in Lincoln, he raised the siege of Dover and returned to London. As Coggeshall states, *"expecting overseas reinforcements in vain"*.[66] Now, peace negotiations began again, but this time, the manoeuvring space of Prince Louis was very limited. Peace talks were terminated when Louis rejected the terms concerning the punishment of his four clerical supporters. So Louis resolved to wait for naval reinforcements and remained in this prolonged, yet vain fight.[67] The king's party began with preparations to face a new invasion. Royal forces were led by Hubert de Burgh, justiciar of King Henry. Eustace the Monk was in charge of French troops. Battle occurred near Sandwich, at the very place, where whole invasion of Prince Louis had started previous year, on 24th August. French navy was defeated by English royal forces and

64 WENDOVER, Vol. 3, pp. 383–384.

65 See POWICKE, *The Thirteenth Century*..., pp. 11–12; the fullest account of battle in Lincoln can be found in Wendover's chronicle (Vol. 4, pp. 18–24).

66 COGGESHALL, p. 185.

67 POWICKE, *The Thirteenth Century*..., p. 12.

that moment marked a definitive end of the war.[68] Now it was more than clear, that final peace is the only possible way. Negotiations took place in Kingston on Thames and on 12th September 1217, final treaty was concluded in Lambeth. Louis agreed to terms, similar to those discussed in June but with mild alterations, particularly regarding the question of clerics. It was agreed, that all possessions would be reinstated as before the war, all rebels would be absolved from excommunication and would be received into royal favour. Another clause concerned ransoms and payments, English cities including London, prisoners on both sides, etc...[69] Louis had to leave England together with all his companions and resign all his claims to English throne. He was paid 10,000 marks.[70] Remaining rebels paid homage to Henry III, rightful king of England. The first barons' war ended. In 1217, Magna Carta was reissued again in consequence with the peace treaty and England returned to the state of calm for now. Henry was recrowned in Westminster abbey with all honours three years after the end of the war. When King Philip II died in 1223, Louis succeeded him as the King of France.

The war of 1215–1217 was a trial of strength and viability for Angevin dynasty. It was one of the first serious revolts of English nobility against their king, resulting in an attempt to limit his power. The time wasn't however ripe for deeper changes like replacement of Angevin dynasty by Capetian prince. Magna Carta at last proved vital and enduring document and it was the first step on the path leading to establishment of parliament as the institution intended to cooperation with king. Unexpected death of King John in October 1216 turned out to be a crucial point in the rebellion and in relatively short time changed Louis' mission from aid to eliminate the king-tyrant to the usurpation. Plantagenets survived this threat and they ruled in England in various branches until 1485.[71]

THE INVASION OF PRINCE LOUIS OF FRANCE TO ENGLAND, 1216–1217

ABSTRACT

This article's main aim is to summarise the crucial period of the reign of King John of England during so-called first barons' war of 1215–1217 and through the examination of contemporary sources show possible attitudes to the invasion of Prince Louis of France in 1216, when he was invited by English barons to become their new king, which eventually turned to the usurpation when King John died and his son Henry became the King of England with support of those who had been adherents of Louis before. In June 1215, English barons persuaded King John to agree with terms of Magna Carta, limiting royal power in various branches of law. When Magna Carta was proclaimed null and unlawful by Pope Innocent III allowing John not to be bound by its terms, it meant open war with English

68 COGGESHALL, p. 185; COVENTRY, pp. 238–239; Eustace the Monk, leader of French naval forces, was executed by cutting his head off, Wendover tells us, that it was done by Richard, an illegitimate son of King John.

69 For further study of this treaty and for full text, see J. B. SMITH, *The Treaty of Lambeth, 1217*, in: The English Historical Review, Vol. 94, No. 372, 1979, pp. 562–579.

70 POWICKE, *The Thirteenth Century*..., p. 14.

71 As Angevins, the three successive rulers of England are reffered to (Henry II, Richard I, John). Since Henry III, it was the Plantagenet dynasty, up to 1399 in its main line, since than to 1461 in Lancastrian, from 1461 to 1485 (with exception of 1470–1471) in Yorkist line.

rebels. They negotiated an invasion of Prince Louis, the eldest son of Philip II, the King of France, and they promised him a crown of England. In October 1216, King John suddenly died in the middle of war and he was succeeded by his son Henry. Henry III was in relatively short time accepted by most of rebellious barons leaving Louis in very precarious situation and it eventually led to Louis' defeat in 1217. The treaty of Lambeth (September 1217) ended this war with Plantagenets still on English throne.

KEYWORDS
England; King John; Louis of France; Magna Carta; First Barons' War; Angevin Empire

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