LOUIS XI AND THE FEUDALITY OF FRANCE
1461-1483

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Mark B. Spencer, B.A.
Denton, Texas
December, 1984

This thesis examines the struggle between King Louis XI and the great feudal houses of the fifteenth century such as Burgundy, Brittany, Anjou, Armagnac, Bourbon, and Foix. It attempts to provide a detailed narrative based on the primary sources and the excellent studies on individual feudal princes produced by a number of French historians, supplemented by a critical analysis of the traditional view of Louis XI as the "vainquer de la grande féodalité."
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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this thesis to examine the struggle between Louis XI and the feudality of France that characterized a major part of his reign. Surprisingly, no complete and adequate monograph exists on this topic. A number of eminent French historians have produced excellent studies on individual feudal lords, but no work has tied all of this together outside of the biographies and general histories. In the latter, the powerful and fascinating personality of the King, and his dramatic contest with the greatest feudal prince, Charles the Bold of Burgundy, dominate and overshadow the story of the lesser féodaux and their relations with Louis, making it difficult to piece together a coherent and comprehensive picture. In any case it is no easy task as B. A. Pocquet de Haut-Jussé has aptly observed. Such a lacuna is all the more regrettable since historians have traditionally viewed Louis XI as the "vaingueur de la grande féodalité," and thus the founder of modern France. This thesis, then, will attempt to satisfy a significant desideratum by providing a detailed narrative based on the primary sources and the individual studies mentioned above, supplemented by a critical examination of the traditional interpretation. It will be my contention that the "victory" of Louis XI was an
exremely narrow one, and that his battle with the feudality was more a desperate struggle for survival, attended by a remarkable streak of good fortune, than a triumphant conquest.

The term feudality is used to denote the grande féodalité, who ruled about half of France at the accession of Louis XI in 1461. The houses of Burgundy, Orléans, Anjou, Bourbon, and Alençon were cadet lines of the Capetian royal family and held wide powers as apanage princes in their French lands, to which Burgundy and Anjou added sizable extraterritorial possessions, and Orléans ambitious pretensions. Brittany, Armagnac, Foix, and Albret were ancient feudal houses with a long tradition of independence. Edouard Perroy has argued that the use of the term feudal be discarded for the late 14th and 15th centuries because the greater of these feudal princes such as Burgundy, Orléans, Brittany, Anjou, and Armagnac ruled virtually independent states whose feudal allegiance was purely theoretical. His primary concern is to emphasize the dissolution of the 13th century feudal hierarchy. My purpose however, is to distinguish the feudality of the 15th century from the aristocracy or nobility of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Beginning in the reign of Louis XI and continuing through the 16th century, most of the old feudal houses became extinct, partly due to the failure to produce a legitimate male heir, in which case the lands reverted to the Crown, partly by marriage into the royal family, and partly by the accession
of the houses of Orléans and Bourbon to the throne. For the most part these lands were not parceled out again as apanages but were retained in the Crown's domain. A new group of landed nobles rose in royal service to administer these acquisitions. Armed with wide powers as governors and military commanders, sustained by fat pensions and lucrative privileges, and exercising new powers of patronage to supplement the feudal prerogatives they retained over their lesser neighbors and dependents, the landed nobility of the Renaissance dominated France as surely as their precursors had in the middle ages. Yet, they no longer formed a feudality because they did not hold their lands and powers in fief from the king as did, at least theoretically, Charles the Bold of Burgundy, Francis II of Brittany, René of Anjou, Louis II of Orléans, and Jean V of Armagnac.
NOTES

1 Henri Courteault, Gaston IV, comte de Foix (Toulouse, 1895); A. Lecoy de La Marche, Le roi René (Paris, 1879); Achille Luchaire, Alain le Grand, Sire d'Albret (Paris, 1877); B. A. Pocquet de Haut-Jussé, Deux féodaux: Bourgogne et Bretagne, 1363-1491 (Paris, 1935); Henri Stein, Charles de France, frère de Louis XI (Paris, 1921); Charles Samaran, La maison d'Armagnac au XVe siècle et les dernières luttes de la féodalité dans le midi de la France (Paris, 1907); Henry de Surrirey de Saint Remy, Jean II de Bourbon, duc de Bourbonnais et d'auvergne (Paris, 1944).

2 "La lutte de Louis XI contre les grands vassaux n'est pas facile à saisir dans son ensemble, ni à exposer clairement....C'est une confusion où semble recommencer indéfiniment le même travail et rouler éternellement le rocher de Sisyphe." Pocquet de Haut-Jussé, Deux féodaux, p. 95.


CHAPTER I

A NEW KING, 1461-65

On 22 July 1461 Charles VII died and his son, Louis, was finally king. Thirty-eight years old, Louis XI had waited longer and more impatiently than any other Valois monarch. As Dauphin, he had displayed an unrelenting hostility toward his father, and his father's policies, whether at the French court, in his apanage of Dauphiné, or in self-imposed exile at the court of Duke Philip the Good of Burgundy. Such an attitude on the part of the heir to the throne is all the more curious considering the remarkable success achieved by Charles VII in the course of his long reign. The old king had all but driven the English from the Continent, created a standing army to protect against future incursions, established a permanent royal tax not subject to the consent of the Estates, and asserted the independence of the French Church from Rome in the Pragmatic Sanction of 1435. The most formidable threat remaining to the monarchy was the independence and power of the feudality, but since the abortive feudal revolt known as the Praguerie, led by the sixteen-year-old Dauphin, Charles VII had ruled for over two decades without serious challenge to his growing power and authority. Louis XI would rule less than four years before almost the entire grande féodalité was in
open armed revolt against him in the gravest feudal coalition of the fifteenth century. In order to examine how this state of affairs came about, each of the great feudal houses must be introduced and their relations with the new king traced, from the inception of his rule to the formation of the League of the Public Weal in 1465.

The Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Good, was the chief prince of the blood royal. Beginning in 1363, when King John the Good of France bestowed the Duchy of Burgundy in appanage upon his youngest son, Philip the Bold, the Burgundian dukes through a shrewd policy of dynastic aggrandizement had assembled a brilliant collection of territories straddling the border between France and the Holy Roman Empire. In the Low Countries, Duke Philip's domains stretched from the valley of the Somme to the Zuiderzee, and included the Counties of Flanders, Holland, Hainault, Zeeland, Namur, Artois, Boulogne, and Ponthieu, the Duchies of Brabant and Luxembourg, and a part of Picardy known as the Somme towns. A second large block of land lay athwart the upper Saone, with the original Duchy of Burgundy and the Counties of Charolais and Mâcon on the right bank, and the County of Burgundy or Franche-Comté on the left. Somewhat less than half of these lands formed part of the Kingdom of France, namely, Flanders, Artois, Ponthieu, Boulogne, the Duchy of Burgundy and the Somme towns; the rest pertained to the Empire. In area, Valois Burgundy was roughly equal to England, including Wales, while in wealth, population, and
resources, it constituted a Continental power second only to France. Philip the Good had only one legitimate male heir, Charles, who was styled the Count of Charolais, although at no time did he directly administer, or enjoy the revenues of, his titular county before his father's death in 1467.5

According to the Burgundian court chronicler, Georges Chastellain, Duke Philip hoped the accession of Louis XI would usher in a new era of Franco-Burgundian amity and accord. Although this might seem a bit naive considering the complicity of Burgundy in the humiliation of France at the hands of the English, and the palpable threat such a powerful vassal would pose to any monarch, there is little reason to doubt the Duke's sincerity. Philip the Good thought of himself as, above all, a loyal Frenchman, as did Chastellain, and the behavior of the Duke toward Louis, motivated perhaps by a tinge of guilt for past sins, does not belie this belief.6 When the Dauphin had panicked at the approach of a royal army and had fled from the Dauphiné to the court of Burgundy in 1465, the Duke received him with gracious deference, generously provided for the refugee and his entourage, and steadfastly refused the demands of Charles VII for the return of his wayward son.7 When Charles died, Duke Philip escorted the new king into Rheims for the coronation on 15 August 1461, and then performed hommage to Louis XI for the lands he held in France, something he had never done to Charles VII, and from which the Treaty of Arras in 1435 had specifically exempted him for life.8 However, the new king
quickly demonstrated that he did not feel beholden toward Philip. At the festivities following the coronation in Paris, the Duke was pointedly snubbed, his advice for the establishment of the new regime was ignored, and promises made to Burgundian courtiers while the Dauphin was in exile were dismissed with the casual remark, "My friend, I am no longer the Dauphin as I was then, now I am King." A deputation arrived in Paris from the towns of the bishopric of Liège, an independent, ecclesiastical enclave amid the Burgundian territories in the Low Countries. The prince-bishop, Louis of Bourbon, a nephew of Philip the Good, maintained his authority in the principality against the aggressive and tumultuous popular assemblies in the towns only by the force of Burgundian arms. Charles VII had always supported and encouraged the popular party against the bishop; Louis XI, as Dauphin-in-exile had supported Louis of Bourbon, but now as King, he warmly received the delegation from the towns and promised to place them under his protection. This last incident provoked Chastellain to indulge in a chapter-long, indignant denunciation of the perfidious "ingratitude" of King Louis.

Yet, despite the fact that Philip ultimately left Paris insulted, empty-handed, and completely excluded from any active role in French affairs, he persisted in a strongly pro-French policy. He was encouraged in this direction by his current court favorites, Antoine and Jehan of Croy, both secretly in
the pay of the King, and their continued pressure helped Louis to his greatest diplomatic coup against the aging Duke: the recovery of the Somme towns in 1463. According to the Treaty of Arras in 1435, the towns, castles, lands, and lordships belonging to the crown of France on either bank of the river Somme, including Amiens, Abbeville, St. Quentin, St. Riquier, Corbie, and more, were ceded to Philip the Good and his heirs in mortgage, redeemable by the king of France for 400,000 gold crowns. Charles VII had been unable or unwilling to raise the money, but Louis XI managed it, and he persuaded Philip the Good to complete the transfer. The Count of Charolais was furious at what he considered as the alienation of his just inheritance, but as long as his enemies, the Croy, were in favor at court, his protests went unheeded.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, according to the Milanese ambassador to Burgundy, there was hardly less war between Duke Philip and his son, than had been between Charles VII and Louis XI.\textsuperscript{12}

Ominously for Louis XI, the Duke of Burgundy was soon reconciled with Charles in the fall of 1464. The bastard brother of the lord of Rubempré, and a relation of the Croy, was sent by Louis XI to Holland in order to intercept an agent bearing conspiratorial messages between Duke Francis II of Brittany and the Count of Charolais. Count Charles discovered the Bastard of Rubempré, arrested him, and allowed the rumors to circulate that Rubempré had been sent to arrest Charles, or perhaps even kill him.\textsuperscript{13} Whether the Duke really believed
the rumors or not, the incident provided the occasion for a reconciliation with Charolais, and the influence at court of Count Charles grew while that of the Croy waned, until in 1465 the Croy were banished from Burgundy and had their lands confiscated. It used to be asserted that by 1465 the Duke had become senile and unable to rule, and that Charles then ruled in his stead, but the most recent scholarly historian of the House of Burgundy has convincingly argued that Philip the Good remained in control until his death; Charles became the dominant influence at court because he finally convinced his father that Louis XI was as implacably hostile to Burgundy as Charles VII had always been. The Count of Charolais continued his negotiations with the Duke of Brittany and the other malcontent princes while awaiting the opportunity for action against the King.14

After Burgundy the most important apanage house was that of Bourbon, descended from Robert of Clermont, the youngest son of King Louis IX. The principal lands of Duke Jean II were the Duchies of Bourbon and Auvergne, the County of Forez, and the Seigneurie of Beaujeau, which together formed a large, connected block of territory atop the northern half of the Massif Central. The family had waxed strong in royal service under Charles VII, and Jean II apparently hoped to continue in like manner under Louis XI, for he was the first great lord to greet the new king arriving in France. But in Louis' zeal to undo the regime of his father, the Duke of Bourbon was stripped
of the governorship of Guienne, and his pension stopped. The Duke was further offended by the reception of the delegation from Liège, for the Burgundian supported bishop was his brother. Jean II retired to his duchy, insulted and humiliated. Later the King appeared to repent of his harshness, for he restored the Duke's pension and invited him back to court. Louis also promised to intercede favorably in a long standing dispute with the Duchy of Savoy over several small seigneuries acquired by Bourbon with the Beaujolais. Endless judicial enquiries followed with no final settlement. All in all, the belated favors of the King were insufficient to repair the prior humiliations. The Duke remained outwardly loyal, but he kept in touch with the malcontents and bided his time. Jean II enjoyed especially close relations with Burgundy, for his mother Agnes was the sister of Philip the Good, and his sister Isabelle was the second wife of the Count of Charolais.  

The House of Orléans was the nearest in succession to the throne, but during the reign of Louis XI it was not of great political importance owing to the ages and temperaments of its leading representatives. The sixty-six-year-old Duke Charles of Orléans, a grandson of King Charles V, had always been more interested in poetry than politics, and he preferred to spend his declining years at his favorite residence in Blois with his young wife, Marie of Clèves. Not until 1462 did Marie provide him with a male heir, the future King Louis XII, for the Duchies of Orléans and Valois, the Counties of Blois and
Soissons, and the Seigneurie of Coucy. A slightly younger brother, Count Jean of Angoulême, shared the Duke's artistic tastes and disinclination for political activity, and like Charles, he left a minor as his heir, Charles of Angoulême, the future father of King Francis I. The most active member of the family was the renown warrior Count Jean of Dunois, bastard of Orléans and military hero of the Hundred Years War. Dunois had been one of the most loyal adherents of the dead king, and Louis XI employed him on several diplomatic missions, but partially as a semi-exile from court. The chief grievance of the Orléans family against the new king, besides the lack of respect shown to its illustrious, illegitimate scion, was the friendship and alliance of Louis XI with the ex-condottiere, Francesco Sforza, who had usurped the Duchy of Milan after the death of the last male Visconti duke. Charles of Orléans claimed the Duchy through his mother Valentine Visconti, daughter of Gian Galeazzo, the infamous tyrant.16

The link between Louis XI and Sforza also irritated the Angevin family, descendants of Louis of Anjou, the second son of King John the Good. The chief representatives were René, titular King of Sicily, Duke of Anjou and Bar, and Count of Provence, René's younger brother Charles, Count of Maine, and René's son John, Duke of Lorraine and titular Duke of Calabria as the heir apparent of Sicily. Anjou, Maine, and one-half of Bar lay within the French kingdom, while Lorraine, Provence,
and the other half of Bar formed part of the Empire. The title King of Sicily was a misnomer for in reality the island of Sicily had been absorbed by the Kingdom of Aragon at the end of the thirteenth century; the claim was actually on the Kingdom of Naples. The fifty-five-year-old René shared the artistic and cultural interests of the Orléans family, and its political diffidence. Charles held his County of Maine in fief from his older brother; thus he sought to augment his fortunes through royal service, and Louis XI was prepared to oblige him. John of Calabria burned to realize the claims of his house in Italy, and at the accession of Louis XI, he was engaged in yet another Angevin invasion of the Neapolitan kingdom, this time against the rival claimant Ferrante of Aragon, who enjoyed the support of the Duke of Milan. At first, Louis distanced himself from his erstwhile ally Sforza, and applied diplomatic pressure to aid the Angevin cause, but after Duke John's decisive defeat at Troia in 1462, the King abandoned John completely and resumed his association with Milan. In 1463 a second treaty of alliance ceded the city of Genoa to Sforza, and pledged French neutrality in Italy in return for a pledge of military assistance from Duke Francesco when requested by the King of France. Duke John returned to Lorraine bent on revenge against Louis XI. The King further alienated the Angevins by his lukewarm support for the Lancastrian cause in England, led by Margaret of Anjou, the daughter
of Duke René, and wife of King Henry VI. By 1464, Louis XI was eagerly seeking a rapprochement with the victorious Yorkist claimant, King Edward IV.

The least powerful of the apanage princes of the blood royal were the dukes of Alençon, descended from King Louis IX, and in possession of the Duchy of Alençon and the County of Perche, both situated on the southern edge of Normandy. In 1458 the Parlement of Paris, sitting with Charles VII and the lords temporal and spiritual in a lit-de-justice, had tried and convicted Duke Jean II of lèse-majesté for conspiring with the English. The Duke was sentenced to death—commuted to life imprisonment by the King—and his lands with their rights and dues were forfeited to the Crown, in a trial that set important precedents for future legal processes against the highest nobility of the realm. However, Louis XI pardoned the Duke, released him from prison, and restored him to all of his titles, lands, and goods.18

The new king displayed a similar generosity to the ancient feudal house of Armagnac, a particularly troublesome family owing to its determination to retain its independence and feudal prerogatives. The principal lands of the family formed two large blocks; the first, including the County of Armagnac, lay between the great bend of the Garonne river and the Pyrenees, and the second was situated on the southwest flank of the Massif Central. Jean V, Count of Armagnac, also held the Counties of Rodez, Fezensac, and l'Isle Jourdain, the
Viscounties of Lomagne, Auvillars, Magnoac, Quatre-Valleés, and the Seigneurie of Rivière. In 1460, in a process modeled on that of Alençon, Jean V was condemned by the Parlement of Paris for lèse-majesté, incest, rebellion, and disobedience to the King and his justice; the sentence was perpetual banishment—Jean had already fled France—and confiscation of all his lands and goods. The incest charge was notorious, for Jean had had three children by his sister Isabelle, and when the Pope refused to grant him a dispensation to marry her, he forced his chaplain to marry them anyway, and later paid to have papal bulls forged in an attempt to legitimize the union. As with Alençon, Louis XI recalled the Count from exile in Aragon, revoked the sentence against him, and restored his lands and goods. 19 When Bernard VII, the old tutor of the young Dauphin Louis, died in 1462, his son Jacques inherited the Counties of Pardiac, Castres, and La Marche, the Viscounties of Carlat and Murat, and several small seigneuries. As a mark of special favor, Louis XI made Jacques the Duke of Nemours by recognizing the long disputed claim of the County of La Marche to the duchy. A possible reason for this royal largess was the long and devoted service of Louis' crony, Jean of Lescun, bastard of Armagnac, an intimate of Louis XI since his days in the Dauphiné. Jean de Lescun in 1461 was made Count of Comminges and Marshall of France, the chief military officer of the kingdom. Unfortunately the legitimate Armagnacs would later show little gratitude in return. 20
Gaston IV, Count of Foix, Viscount of Béarn and Bigorre, was the main rival of the Armagnac family in the Midi, for his vast lands were nestled against the Pyrenees on both sides of the Armagnac holdings. In 1448, Gaston purchased the Viscounty of Narbonne on the Mediterranean coast, and in 1455, King Jean II of Navarre disinherited his son Carlos and promised the crown to his daughter Eleanor, wife of Gaston IV. The Count of Foix drove out the disinherited Carlos and became Prince of Navarre in 1457, greatly increasing his power, prestige, and prospects for further dynastic aggrandizement. But the loyal service of Gaston under Charles VII and the jealousies of the Armagnac favorites, led Louis XI to be initially cool toward the Count. However, the political turmoil in the Spanish peninsula soon provided an opportunity for French intervention, and in Spain the interests of France and Foix happily coincided. In 1462 the King of France formally recognized the claims of Gaston IV on the Kingdom of Navarre, and married his sister Madeline to the Count's son; then Gaston led a Franco-Foix army across the Pyrenees into Catalonia to suppress a Catalan rebellion against the Count's father-in-law Jean II, now King of Aragon. Gaston IV acquitted himself well, and the Counties of Roussillon and Cerdagne were ceded by Aragon to Louis XI as the price of French intervention.21

The last feudal house of the Midi was the least significant politically of the entire feudality during the reign of
Louis XI. The seat of the family was the Seigneurie of Albret, a large block of land with little agricultural value south of Bordeaux, but the family had also acquired the rich County of Dreux just west of Paris. When his father Jean died in 1467, and his grandfather Charles in 1471, Alain the Grand inherited Albret, Dreux, and all the small but numerous parcels of land sprinkled across the Midi that pertained to the Albret house. Alain then proceeded in the course of his long life to reap the rewards of loyal, if largely inactive, royal service, and eventually became one of the wealthiest proprietors of the kingdom, while leading an existence, "retired, obscure, nearly unknown."  

Brittany, in contrast, was the most independent and troublesome feudal house after Burgundy. Although the Breton dukes were descended from the Montfort family, and were thus an offshoot of the Capetian royal stem, in the tumult of the Hundred Years War they had come to consider themselves a sovereign entity, ruling by "the grace of God," and therefore refused to swear liege hommage to the kings of France. When in 1461 Francis II of Brittany arrived in Tours to meet Louis XI for the first time, the Duke was intent on maintaining this principle, but to his surprise Louis merely waved the issue aside and accepted simple hommage only. Soon afterwards, however, the King blithely proceeded to nominate two of his protégés to the bishopric of Nantes and the abbacy of Redon. Francis II refused to accept the appointments, and responded
by having the Redon abbot called to Rome in an appeal to the 
Pope, and by chasing the bishop out of Nantes by force. The 
Duke called for and received the support of the Breton Estates 
in the quarrel, and then began to fish about for allies against 
Louis XI, entering into secret negotiations first with Charles 
of Burgundy, and then Edward IV of England. Francis II agreed 
to a commission of arbitration headed by Charles of Anjou, the 
Count of Maine, but the King used the occasion to demand 
redress for all the grievances of the Crown against the Duke: 
the affectation of sovereignty, the refusal to swear liege 
hommage, the use of the title "by the grace of God," the levy 
of unauthorized taxes, the interdiction of royal officials 
attempting to enter the duchy, the intrigues with the English, 
and now the assertion of ecclesiastical independence. Not 
surprisingly, when the commission, without the presence of any 
representatives from Brittany, decided in favor of the King, 
Francis ignored the verdict.23 Louis XI then publicly accused 
the Duke of lèse-majesté in conspiring with the English; Francis 
II dispatched letters to the princes claiming that Louis had 
offered Normandy or Guienne to Edward IV in return for aid in 
crushing the French nobility. Finally, the King called for an 
assembly of the feudality at Tours in December 1464 to pass 
judgement on his charges against the Duke. Most of the great 
lords attended the assembly, and when Louis himself addressed 
them, detailing his grievances against the Duke, and calling 
for their adherence and aid, the princes responded by
declaring their unanimous support of the King! The assembly adjourned, but the crisis with Brittany continued unabated, and would soon be absorbed in the general feudal revolt.²⁴

A few words must be said about the younger brother of Louis XI, Charles of France. Born in 1466 after the Dauphin had left the French court for his apanage, Charles never saw his older brother until Louis became king. There is some question as to whether or not Charles was styled the Duke of Berry before the death of Charles VII, but it was Louis XI that formally invested him with the duchy in apanage in November 1461. Not until 1470 did Charlotte of Savoy provide the King with a surviving male heir, the future Charles VIII; thus the Duke was the heir presumptive for the first nine years of Louis' reign. Endowed with little native intelligence, and an ambitious, but weak and unstable, character, Charles was a pliant tool for the discontented princes. Yielding to their insinuations, he decided that the Duchy of Berry was insufficient for his dignity. The King promptly increased his allowance to 6000 crowns a year, and promised him a larger apanage once the quarrel with Brittany was settled. At the end of February 1465, two of the Duke of Brittany's chief advisors arrived at Poitiers; they announced that Francis II now wished to be reconciled with his sovereign, and requested an escort for a personal visit by the Duke. On March 3 they left for Brittany, and Louis XI went off on a pilgrimage to a local religious shrine, leaving Berry behind who said he
preferred to hunt. As soon as the King was gone, Charles
rode off to meet the Breton envoys and all sped to Brittany.
The War of the League of the Public Weal was about to begin.  

Is it possible to assert with the eminent specialist of
the period Joseph Calmette, that Louis XI, "had from the
beginning, an awareness of the seigneurial danger, a clear
sense of the unity of France, the resolution to perfect it,
and above all the conviction that in order to realize it,
it was necessary to break the feudality"? Certainly the
contemporary chronicler Thomas Basin, Bishop of Lisieux and a
personal enemy of the King, would have agreed, although his
sympathies were precisely opposite. According to him, all
the princes of the realm knew for a fact that Louis XI was
determined to destroy the great houses and principalities,
or at least weaken them to the extent that neither individually
nor in concert could they oppose his will.  

Yet, the King was
not uniformly hostile to the great lords during these first
years. The rehabilitation of the Duke of Alençon and the
Count of Armagnac undid solid gains achieved by Charles VII.
The other marks of favor bestowed upon the Armagnacs made that
family dangerously formidable in the Midi. The Count of Foix
also did quite well by the new king. The Angevins had failed
repeatedly to make good their Neapolitan claims; it would
only be foolish to plod blindly on when a more fruitful policy
in Italy might be established. The redemption of the Somme
towns, as wealthy as they were, can hardly be described as
an attempt to break the Burgundian house, and the Duchy of Berry provided for Charles of France, if not brilliant, was by no means stingy or inadequate. Only against the Duke of Brittany was a hostile and aggressive assertion of royal over feudal prerogatives undertaken, and Brittany was dangerously close to breaking away from the kingdom of France entirely.

The feudality had other general complaints against the new king and his policies. Royal officials were vigorously active in asserting the claims of the Crown in legal disputes over lands and revenues. Many of the loyal adherents of Charles VII, such as the Count of Dunois and the military commander Antoine de Chabannes, Count of Dammartin, were displaced from their offices and pensions by the favorites and cronies of Louis XI, all "new men" and usually of low estate. The King rarely employed the great lords in his government, thereby unavailing himself of his "natural councilors." Chastellain speaks disparagingly of the King's passion to know and do all himself—he had no real advisors only confidants and servants. Chastellain also condemns Louis' passion for "novelties"; he was always vexatiously experimenting and tinkering with the traditional way of doing things. Louis XI detested pageantry and display; his court was paltry and meager, usually on horseback, and compared very unfavorably the luxurious splendor of Burgundy. But much of this may well be more a reflection of the unusual personality of the King, than a deliberate effort to weaken
the great lords. It is difficult to dispel the suspicion that Louis XI blundered into the League of the Public Weal more through heedless neglect than calculated policy. Schooled in adversity, Charles had always taken great care in his handling of the princes. He had availed himself of their services, but he adroitly played off one faction against the other through the mechanism of favor and disgrace, thereby directing their jealousies and ambitions against each other, instead of against the Crown.28 Louis XI lacked the desire, patience, and perhaps even the subtle finesse, for such fine court politics. Several of his recorded remarks suggest that he had little respect for the intelligence or the ability of the leading princes, and nothing but contempt for their airs and pretensions.29 As Georges Chastellain observed, Louis XI was determined to rule alone and most likely he seriously underestimated the will and the ability of the great lords to resist being ignored and excluded from power. However, once the feudality revolted and inflicted losses upon the Crown, then the battle was joined, for the King became determined to win back all he had lost and more.
NOTES


2 Calmette, Louis XI, pp. 6-7.


4 Ibid., p. 343.


6 Georges Chastellain, Oeuvres (Brussels, 1864), Vol. IV, pp. 21, 37.

7 Vaughan, Philip the Good, pp. 353-54.

8 Chastellain, Oeuvres, IV, 63; Longnon, L'unité française, p. 258.

9 Chastellain, Oeuvres, IV, pp. 93-100.


12 Paul M. Kendall and Vincent Ilardí, editors, Dispatches with Related Documents of Milanese Ambassadors in France and Burgundy, 1450-83 (Athens, Ohio, 1971), Vol. II, p. 188.

13 Vaughan, Philip the Good, p. 374; Chastellain, Oeuvres, V, 81-85; Basin, Histoire, I, 141-45.

14 Vaughan, Philip the Good, p. 375-76.


19. Samaran, La maison d'Armagnac, pp. 3-19, 118-20, 130, 142-43.


22. Luchaire, Alain le Grand, pp. 6, 16-17.


CHAPTER II

THE LEAGUE OF THE PUBLIC WEAL, 1465

As the Rumempre affair illustrates, Louis XI was aware of negotiations and conspiracies among the discontented princes, particularly Brittany and Burgundy; thus when news of the flight of Charles of France reached the King on March 5, he instantly divined the import of this event. Returning in haste to Poitiers, he shot off urgent letters to his "good towns", calling upon their loyalty and support, and warning them to spurn any advances from the feudality. On March 13 the Duke of Bourbon issued a public manifesto as a political justification for the imminent rebellion. Jean II declared that he and his fellow princes, hearkening to the grievous cries of nobles, churchmen, and the poor, had united in the name of the bien publique to redress the manifold oppressions, injustices, and exactions inflicted upon the realm by King Louis XI. Listed as adherents in this public-spirited enterprise were René of Anjou, the Count of Charolais, the Duke of Calabria, the Duke of Nemours, the Count of Armagnac, the Count of Dunois, Charles of Albret, and Louis of Luxembourg, Count of St. Pol, a prominent noble in the service of Burgundy with wide lands in both the kingdom and the ducal territories. 1 From the court of Brittany, Charles of France dispatched a
manifesto protesting the sufferings of the people under the King, and demanding the suppression of all taxes except the taille, which was necessary to support the army. Also in Brittany, the Count of Dunois unleashed a propaganda barrage denouncing the ill-treatment of Charles at the hands of his brother, and appealing to the feudality for a reformation of the government before the realm was completely ruined by the excesses of the King. Finally on March 22, Charles of Charolais and Francis II of Brittany signed a treaty of alliance to redress the grievances of the feudality against Louis XI, and specifically included in the treaty were Charles of France and the Dukes of Bourbon and Calabria. The War of the League of the Public Weal had begun, and of all the grande féodalité, only Gaston of Foix would prove unswervingly loyal to the King. The House of Anjou sat on the fence, with Duke John among the rebels, Duke René in hiding at Angers, and the Count of Maine ostensibly in the service of the King, but perhaps a traitor. Charles, Duke of Orléans, had already died in January, two weeks after the assembly of Tours.

The other constituents of the French body politic, however, were not sympathetic to the appeal of the great lords. Most of the towns sent declarations of loyalty and support to the King, although when presented with a rebel army before their gates, few resisted strongly, especially in the north. The French Church had numerous grievances against Louis XI, and it was urged to fight "for its liberty" by Thomas Basin,
Bishop of Lisieux, but the only prelates to declare for the League besides Basin were the Bishop of Puy, a bastard of the Bourbon house, and a second Norman prelate, the Bishop of Bayeux. Similarly, the public office-holders in the Parliament had found little to please them in the King's policies, but they were too fearful and diffident to declare openly for the rebels. Among the common people, for whom the princes were allegedly acting, the King enjoyed perhaps his strongest support, especially in Paris. Even the petty nobility showed itself remarkably reluctant to fight and die in the quarrel of the great lords.4

Louis XI had propaganda campaign of his own. In a manifesto of March 16, he denounced the rebels and refuted their charges, emphasizing the peace and prosperity of the last decade, and warning that a return of feudal anarchy might well invite the English to return. He exposed the promises of the princes for the abolition of taxes and other reforms as mere lies to cover their selfishness and greed for fat pensions and lucrative offices. Later events appear to substantiate the claims of the King. In August of 1465 the Count of Dunois unveiled the reform plan of the feudality before an assembly of the leading citizens of Paris. The great lords were to control the royal finances, the army, and the distribution of all offices and pensions. They were to receive compensation for the expenses and damages incurred in
in the revolt, and the person of the King was to be placed in their custody. Rumor had it that Charles of France was to be made regent for his brother, but perhaps Louis would be allowed to reign while the princes ruled. Even Thomas Basin, although an adherent of the League, charges in his history of the reign that the great lords were utterly devoid of any real concern for the general welfare of the kingdom, and sought only to enrich themselves at public expense. Apparently the people of France were not fooled, and the lack of general support for the feudality was a great strength of the King in the conflict.\textsuperscript{5}

Having completed his martial preparations in mid-April, Louis XI decided to strike first against the Duke of Bourbon, knocking him out of the war before the others could take the field. The King had already neutralized René of Anjou by occupying the Angevin town of Saumur on the Loire, which proved sufficient to bring the King of Sicily hurrying in with anxious and belated protestations of fidelity. The Duke of Nemours and the Count of Armagnac, despite the many favors bestowed upon them by King Louis, were leading their men from Gascony to join Bourbon. Louis XI dispatched an appeal for military aid to the Duke of Milan, and he called upon Gaston of Foix to keep the Midi quiet in the absence of the Armagnacs. The Count of Maine was sent with a royal force to prevent an invasion of northern France by the Duke of Brittany. Then at
the head of his small, but heavily armed and well disciplined standing army, the King marched into the Bourbonnais.  

At first Louis met with great success, for town after town capitulated without a fight, having little enthusiasm for the cause of their Duke. A contingent from Dauphiné led by Robin Malortie, an old intimate and crony of Louis XI, was fighting its way north to join the King. Word arrived that Francesco Sforza was sending five thousand men under the command of his son and heir Count Galeazzo-Maria. But at the end of May, before Louis reached Bourbon's capital at Moulins, news arrived that the Count of Charolais and a large Burgundian army were marching into northern France. Charolais was not in any hurry to reach Paris, or fight the King, since his main motive in entering the rebellion was the recovery of his lost Somme towns, and he spent the month of June occupying these territories and leaving garrisons to secure them. Yet, clearly the King had to end his campaign in the Bourbonnais, for the Duke of Brittany with Charles of France and the Count of Dunois were also assembling an army. Louis opened talks with Jean II, and the newly arrived Duke of Nemours served as a mediator. Both Nemours and Bourbon knew that time was running against the King, and thus they deliberately prolonged the negotiations, interspersed with military activity, throughout the month of June. Not until June 30 was an agreement finally confirmed between Louis XI, Bourbon, Nemours, and
Armagnac, in which the three princes pledged their loyalty and support to the King in return for pensions, offices, and privileges. With half his army already on the road north, Louis made haste to Paris, reinforced by the men from Dauphiné.

On July 5 the Count of Charolais with a motley Burgundian, Picard, and Flemish army of about 25,000 men appeared before the walls of Paris. The city refused to open its gates and the Burgundians had no chance of assaulting it by force, although a few half-hearted attempts were made. Meanwhile, the men led by Francis II, Dunois, and Charles of France had marched into the kingdom unopposed by the Count of Maine, who had merely retreated before the Breton advance. Charolais decided to strike south and rendezvous with Brittany at Étampes on the Paris to Orléans road, but as Francis II was in no hurry to join up with Count Charles, he deliberately slowed his pace, lingering not far from Chartres. The King chose to race ahead past Étampes and defeat the Burgundians before they could link up with the Breton forces. On July 16 the armies of Charolais and the King met at the small village of Montlhéry.

The battle of Montlhéry was bloody but indecisive. The King arrayed his smaller army along a ridge running east to west at right angles to the Paris–Orléans road. Commanding the right flank was Pierre de Brezé, the Grand Senschal of Normandy and a devoted advisor of Charles VII, who had been
disgraced and then rehabilitated by Louis XI. The King commanded the center with the Count of Maine on his left. The Count of Charolais fortified his men in the plain below the King, placing the Count of St. Pol on the left and himself on the right. Louis planned a rolling attack in which Pierre de Brezé would strike first, followed by the King himself leading the center, and then the Count of Maine. Word was sent to Paris calling for a sally against the Burgundian rear. About mid-afternoon the battle began. The first attack by Pierre de Brezé was enormously successful and the Burgundian far left broke and fled. Louis then unleashed his men and the Burgundians were soon in serious trouble, but when the Count of Maine was called upon to advance, he and his men turned about and retreated south, without striking a blow against the enemy. Charolais hotly pursued the fleeing Count, thereby leaving the two center battle lines to maul each other through the rest of the afternoon, while both wings were flying off in opposite directions. Finally, as it became dark and the two armies had regrouped, the King pulled his troops from the fight, leaving perhaps two or three thousand men dead on the field. Among the fatalities was the Grand Seneschal of Normandy. Louis XI rested his men for the night at Corbeil on the Seine, and the next day he crossed the river and headed for Paris, unmolested by the exhausted Burgundians.
As the King marched to his capital, the Count of Charolais waited for Francis II, the Count of Dunois, and Charles of France. The Count of Armagnac and the Dukes of Nemours and Bourbon had renounced their pact with Louis XI and were now marching north to join the other rebel lords. John of Calabria, leading still another army from the Duchy of Lorraine, joined Charolais and Brittany at the end of July. By the middle of August, all the rebel princes were camped once again before Paris. The King meanwhile had gone off into Normandy to round up men and supplies for the expected siege of Paris. In his absence, the princes sent the Count of Dunois to persuade the assembled leading citizens to yield to the justice of the great lords' quarrel. Some were sympathetic, but the temper of the common people ruled out any accommodation with the rebels, and Dunois left empty-handed. Finally, Louis XI returned on August 28 bringing reinforcements, supplies, and the news that a Milanese army under Count Galeazzo was now fighting in the Bourbonnais for the King.

Louis XI hoped to wait out the siege, for successful assault was still almost impossible, despite the great size of the combined princely armies. Winter would come all too soon for the besiegers, and whereas it was already becoming more and more difficult for the rebels to find provisions, Paris held great stores in reserve that could be replenished
by boat, since the besiegers were unable to block traffic on the river. Sorties, skirmishes, and truces followed each other daily with little positive result. By the middle of September, negotiations between the King and the rebel princes were underway, but the demands of the feudality were unacceptably high for Louis XI. Charolais insisted on the formal restoration of the Somme towns to him; Charles of France demanded the Duchy of Normandy as an apanage, and John of Calabria wanted the immediate dissolution of the Milanese alliance together with money and troops for another Neapolitan campaign. The rest of the great lords would be satisfied with fat pensions, lucrative offices, generous privileges in their lands, and compensation for expenses and damages incurred in the revolt. Charolais and Francis II of Brittany were especially eager to secure Normandy as an apanage for Charles, because their combined territories would then be directly adjacent, lying across the north of France between Louis XI and England. The King peremptorily dismissed these demands, but he intimated that he might consider Champagne and Brie as an apanage for his younger brother.¹²

However, the situation changed when at the end of September the King suffered a grievous blow. The widow of Pierre de Brezé, suspecting that the death of her husband had not been a mere accident of war, opened the city of Rouen to the Duke of Bourbon, acting in the name of Charles of France.
The other Norman towns swiftly began to follow suit, and with this rich province open to the princes as a winter camp, Paris could be besieged indefinitely. Desperate, the King determined to satisfy Charolais, Brittany, and Charles lavishly in the hope that these would then have little enthusiasm for the demands of the other princes, beyond what a cursory gesture to their honor required. Normandy was lost anyway, thus it cost Louis nothing to appease his brother with the formal investiture of the duchy in apanage. To Charolais the King granted not only the redeemed Somme towns, but all royal possessions north of that river, and he also appointed the Count of St. Pol, Charolais' lieutenant, as Constable of France with the princely salary of 24,000 crowns per annum. On October 1 the Treaty of Conflans put the seal upon these agreements. A week later Francis II was granted ecclesiastical jurisdiction in his duchy, and the King pardoned two of Brittany's allies, the Count of Dunois and Antoine de Chabannes, restoring them to the pensions and lands they enjoyed under Charles VII. The Duke of Brittany hoped to reap even richer rewards from his weak-willed protégé Charles of France, now Duke of Normandy.  

As the King had hoped, Charles of Charolais was now eager to depart for Burgundy, for word had reached him of new disturbances and insurrections in the towns of Liège. He brushed aside the complaints of the still unsatisfied princes, for after all only his army had actually fought that of the King.
The unity of the feudality collapsed as each scrambled to secure the best terms possible from Louis XI. John of Calabria had to settle for a grant of 17,000 crowns with a promise of larger subsidies later for a campaign to recover the Kingdom of Naples. The Count of Armagnac received only a modest pension, and the Duke of Nemours contented himself with the right to name a few royal officials in his domains, a pension, and the governorship of Roussillon. Charles of Albret, who had tagged along with Nemours and Armagnac, got nothing but his pardon, while the Duke of Alençon, who had declared for the League but took no active part in the campaigns, did no better. The Duke of Bourbon, however, was singled out for special attention, because the King was now determined to win him over to the loyal service of the Crown displayed by his house under Charles VII. Jean II was appointed lieutenant-general of the King for an immense stretch of royal domain in central and eastern France at a generous annual salary, with an immediate grant of 20,000 crowns for expenses. Louis also intervened favorably for Bourbon in a number of judicial suits pending in the Parlement of Paris, exempting all his lands from the payment of contested rights and revenues. This was to be only the beginning of favors lavished on the Bourbon family by Louis XI. On October 30 the Treaty of St. Maur-des-Fosses ratified all agreements and declared a general peace.14
The disunity and selfishness of the feudalism allowed Louis XI to emerge from the feudal revolt in much better shape than he might have. Nothing had been done for the general reformation of the realm beyond a lame Council of Thirty-Six which the King easily sabotaged. As Philippe de Commynes remarked, the bien publique had been converted into the bien particuliers. But the King sustained serious losses in the cession of Picardy and the Somme towns to Burgundy, in the grant in apanage of Normandy, the richest province of the realm, to Charles of France, and in the pensions and subsidies which would cost his treasury at least 200,000 livres a year. Also, the Ile-de-France and Champagne had been ravaged and plundered by the armies of the Leaguers. But the swift course of events soon allowed Louis to redress a major part of his losses almost before the year was out.15
NOTES


7 Basin, Histoire, I, 189; Stein, Charles de France, pp. 84-85; Maupoint, Journal, pp. 53-54; Jean de Roye, Chronicle, pp. 313-15; Vaughan, Philip the Good, pp 380-83.

8 Stein, Charles de France, p. 91; Samaran, La maison d'Armagnac, pp. 149-51; Surrirey de Saint Remy, Jean II, pp. 122-24; Mandrot, "Jacques d'Armagnac," pp. 309-12.


CHAPTER III

THE ROCK OF SISYPHUS, 1465-72

In early November 1465, Charles of France made his way west to take possession of his apanage, accompanied by Francis II of Brittany, the Count of Dunois, and Antoine de Chabannes. All along the way, the new Duke of Normandy was besieged by importunate petitions for offices, pensions, and privileges, not only from the Bretons and others in his immediate entourage, but also from a growing pack of Norman lords and townsmen. By the time the ducal procession reached the monastery of Mont-Sainte-Catherine on the outskirts of Rouen, Charles was exasperated to despair by indecision and bewilderment. Francis II, fearful that his influence over the spineless Charles was waning, attempted to delay the formal entry into the Norman capital until his demands were satisfied. Meanwhile, the Norman nobility and the leading citizens of Rouen, anxious over the designs of Brittany, decided to take the situation in hand themselves. On November 25 a party of armed Norman lords burst into the monastery, seized the person of their Duke and carried him off to Rouen, where they officially invested him with the duchy. The terrified Duke of Brittany retired with his men to Caen, while both Francis II and Charles
dashed off urgent letters to the King full of mutual complaints and recriminations.¹

Louis XI wasted no time in seizing this opportunity to regain his lost province. Claiming that Charles was conspiring with the English, the King ordered his military officers to begin occupying immediately nearby towns and strongholds in Normandy. On December 3 the Duke of Bourbon took the field with a royal army, and a week later the King was at the head of another force moving toward Caen and the Duke of Brittany. On the way, the valiant old soldier Antoine de Chabannes appeared before Louis and offered his services, having become disgusted with the feckless Charles and Francis. Without hesitation Louis XI accepted the able Count of Dammartin, who soon became Grand Master of the Royal Household and the King's most trusted and effective military commander. At Caen, Louis quickly came to terms with the Duke of Brittany, who was hungry for revenge against Charles of France now that his dreams of Norman wealth and influence were evaporating. On December 23 Francis agreed to serve the King against all enemies, saving the Duke of Calabria and the Count of Charolais, in return for a full pardon for any and all transgressions against the Crown. Louis XI also promised to pay Brittany 120,000 crowns for his assistance against Charles of France, and to extend his grace to the chief councilors of the Duke, including Antoine de Chabannes and the Count of Dunois. Since Chabannes was already
in the service of the King, Louis used this occasion to secure the illustrious Bastard of Orléans, who henceforth served the Crown loyaly until his death in 1468.²

By this time all the towns of Normandy were in the possession of the King, except Rouen and its close neighbors Louviers and Pont de l'Arche. Desperate, Charles of France urgently appealed to Burgundy for help, but the Count of Charolais was occupied in suppressing the recalcitrant Liègeois and could not succor the beleaguered Duke of Normandy. Closing in on the Norman capital, Louis XI made an offer of clemency to Charles, and declared his willingness to allow the Dukes of Bourbon and Brittany to decide upon an appropriate apanage for the heir presumptive. Having little alternative, the Duke of Normandy agreed to accept the King's terms, and Francis II promptly arranged a safe-conduct for Charles to join him at Honfleur. Several days later, a delegation from Rouen met with the King and received a promise of full pardon if the city would return to its former allegiance. Weary of a Duke who had brought them only trouble, the Norman lords and Rouen bourgeoisie expelled the few remaining adherents of Charles of France from the capital. On January 17 the city received the official representatives of the Crown, while Charles made his way to Honfleur. In less than three months, Louis XI had reclaimed the richest province of his realm. But total victory eluded the King, for as soon as Charles joined the
Duke of Brittany, the two princes began to reconcile their differences, questioning the wisdom of complete submission to the royal will. When in early February Louis announced his intention of travelling to Honfleur for a final settlement, Charles and Francis fled to the safety of the Breton peninsula.3

Although the League of the Public Weal proved to be only the beginning of a long series of feudal wars stretching at least through 1472, it was not without significant consequences. Louis XI now realized that he could not ignore the feudality and rule alone. He was also aware that in his blind zeal for revenge against the adherents of his father, he had alienated worthy and capable servants of the Crown. Thus, Antoine de Chabannes and the Count of Dunois were now employing their formidable talents for, rather than against, the King. The Duke of Bourbon was firmly in royal favor, and he had acquitted himself well in the Norman campaign. Duke John of Calabria was permitted to come to court, while Louis determined a suitable outlet for the insatiable ambition of the fiery Angevin. The Duke at first insisted on a campaign in Italy, but the recent death of Francesco Sforza had made the King of France an anxious protector of the unstable Duke Galeazzo-Maria. Then in late 1466, the Catalans chose René of Anjou as King in their rebellion against John II of Aragon. Louis XI was delighted to support Angevin pretensions in Spain, and
rid himself of a troublesome prince at the same time. Catalan adventures conveniently diverted the energies of King René and Duke John until the Duke's death in 1470. Also in the course of 1466, the King of France acquired a completely new feudal adherent. Louis of Luxembourg, Count of St. Pol and Constable of France, had fallen out with his Burgundian master and was offering his services to Louis XI. The King bestowed the sister of his Queen upon the Count in marriage, and appointed him to the governorship of Normandy, which was adjacent and convenient to St. Pol's hereditary lands in France. One prince, however, was dismissed in disgrace. When Louis XI came to terms with John of Calabria, the Duke handed over evidence that implicated the Angevin Count of Maine as a secretly of the League of the Public Weal while ostensibly in the service of the King. Convinced that the flight of the Count at the battle of Montlhéry was a product of treachery rather than cowardice, Louis stripped Maine of his offices and pensions, and pardoned him only on the condition that he retire to his estates, and refrain from public affairs. His governorship of Languedoc was transferred to the Duke of Bourbon.

With the adherence, or at least neutralization, of the Bourbon, Orléans, and Anjou families, the princes of the Midi were effectively isolated in the south. Gaston of Foix remained essentially loyal to Louis XI, although the Angevin
campaigns in Catalonia against his father-in-law John of Aragon clashed with the Count's ambitions in Navarre. The Armagnacs continued in their dubious loyalty, indulging occasionally in petty intrigues and local depradations with their armed retainers, while the Albret family slept in quiet oblivion. Not until Charles of France received the Duchy of Guîenne as an apanage in 1469, did the Midi become once again a dangerous center of feudal conspiracy and rebellion.\(^5\)

But if the south of France was relatively quiescent, the situation in the north was unstable and fraught with peril. Even with the loss of Normandy as a convenient territorial link, the position of Brittany and Burgundy vis-à-vis the King was strengthened considerably by the War of the Public Weal. Francis II now enjoyed virtual autonomy in the Breton peninsula, and fancied himself as a European power. The resources of his duchy belied his dreams, but as long as the Duke maintained his connections with England and Burgundy, he constituted a force to be reckoned with, and need not overly fear Louis XI.

The presence of Charles of France at the Breton court was another powerful political weapon, since the question of a suitable apanage for the heir presumptive was the most pressing feudal issue still unresolved. As for Burgundy, Charles of Charolais enjoyed a new frontier less than fifty miles from Paris. On 5 June 1467, Duke Philip the Good died and Charles succeeded to all the Burgundian territories. Unlike his
father, Charles the Bold did not conceive of himself as merely the chief prince of the fleur-de-lis; from the inception of his reign the ambitions and dreams of the new Duke turned toward the Empire and Europe. However, Charles was determined to preserve intact his lands in France, and it suited his purposes to weaken the French king wherever possible. The Duke of Burgundy once told Philippe de Commynes that he would just as soon see six kings in France as one. Louis XI, for his part, was no less determined to win back all he had lost and more. Thus, continued feudal warfare in northern France appeared inevitable, and the likely adversaries prepared accordingly.

One other factor complicated feudal politics in the north, namely, the English. It was by no means clear to contemporaries that the Hundred Years War had effectively ended in 1453, for the kings of England still regarded themselves as the legitimate rulers of France. Furthermore, in contrast to the normal state of international relations in which nations enjoy peace in the absence of hostilities, a state of war technically persisted between the French and English kingdoms, unless suspended by a truce or some other form of agreement. In the spring of 1466, Louis XI arranged a truce lasting until March 1468, and the two-year interval witnessed a fierce Franco-Burgundian rivalry for an English alliance. As a sweetener, Edward IV had an attractive and marriageable
sister, Margaret of York. Charles the Bold, a widower for the second time, offered himself as a husband and ally. King Edward clearly favored a Burgundian connection, as did most Englishmen, but Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick and "King-maker", was staking his influence and reputation on a French alliance. Louis assiduously courted the powerful Earl, but it was to no avail, for ultimately Charles married Margaret in July 1468.7

Meanwhile, the Duke of Brittany was putting together a new feudal coalition in the name of Charles of France. In August 1467, Francis II and Charles signed a pact directed toward reinstating Charles as the Duke of Normandy. The Duke of Burgundy promised men and money for the projected campaign, and in October the Duke of Alençon joined the conspiracy. A number of small towns and castles in lower Normandy were still held by Breton garrisons in the name of the King, and Alençon agreed to make his territories available as an additional base of operations. Thus, Francis and Charles were able to enter Normandy without a fight, and quickly seize the towns of Caen and Bayeux. However, renewed disturbances in Liège forced Charles the Bold to renege on his promises; the Burgundian army marched against the Liégeois and not into France. The excesses of the Breton troops in Alençon and Perche, combined with military pressure exerted by Louis XI, soon forced Duke Jean II to abandon the effort as well. Faced with the
impossible task of fighting the King alone, the Duke of Brittany and Charles of France signed a truce with Louis XI on January 25, in which both sides retained their respective military positions.8

In an effort to settle the Norman question, Louis XI convoked the only full Estates-General of his reign at Tours in April 1468. The truce with England had expired in March, and the King needed all the support he could muster in case an Anglo-Breton-Burgundian alliance were to coalesce against him. Representatives from all parts of the realm attended, except for the territories of Burgundy and Brittany, and among the great lords present were René of Anjou, Charles of Maine, Gaston of Foix, the Duke of Bourbon, the Count of Dunois, and the Count of St. Pol. Louis XI controlled the assembly from beginning to end, wresting from it all that he desired. The Estates agreed that Normandy must not be alienated from the royal domain; some other apanage should be provided for Charles bearing the title of Count or Duke and with revenues of 12,000 livres per year to be augmented further by a royal pension. The assembly condemned the occupation of lower Normandy by Duke Francis II, and declared that the princes must abandon all alliances with foreign powers against the King of France, particularly with the English, or risk being accounted as traitors to the realm.9
Armed with the support of the Estates, the King decided to strike first in the summer of 1468. Edward IV was absorbed in domestic problems, and Charles the Bold was celebrating his recent marriage. When the truce with Brittany expired on July 15, three French armies attacked the Breton positions in Normandy and the Duchy of Brittany itself. Francis II and Charles cried out for assistance, but not until mid-August did Charles the Bold muster his army in Picardy, and even then he dallied on the Burgundian side of the Somme. Abandoned once again, the Duke of Brittany and Charles of France negotiated the Treaty of Ancenis with the King in September. Francis II renounced his alliances with England and Burgundy, and he swore to obey the King "for and against all". Charles of France renounced his claim on Normandy, and while the Duke of Brittany and the Count of St. Pol were deciding on a worthy apanage, the heir presumptive would receive a pension of 60,000 livres per year. The Norman towns garrisoned by Breton troops were traded for the towns captured by Louis in Brittany.

Charles the Bold was astounded and angry when he heard that Francis II and Charles of France had accepted a separate peace settlement with the King. Louis XI quickly transferred his armies to the Burgundian frontier, and his military officers were eager for an attack on the Duke, being sure of a resounding victory. But the King, who generally preferred to negotiate rather than fight, wished to try once more his
subtle persuasive arts upon Duke Charles, whose character he had closely studied as an exile at the Burgundian court. Charles was reluctant, but after considerable haggling and a generous cash subsidy, he agreed to the famous interview at Peronne in October. This face to face encounter between King and Duke has recently engendered a flurry of historiographical controversy which need not be dwelled upon. It suffices to say that although accorded a ducal safe-conduct, the King of France soon became a virtual prisoner of a furious Charles the Bold, when word arrived of a serious Burgundian defeat at the hands of Liège. Louis XI had hoped for a firm and lasting peace settlement, but was instead subjected to a humiliating capitulation to Burgundian demands. The King agreed to abide by the Treaties of Arras and Conflans, and to permit the Duke to make alliances with England provided they were not directed against France. Louis promised 100,000 crowns in reparations for the Duke's military expenses, and the Counties of Champagne and Blois, which were conveniently adjacent to Burgundian territories, would be given to Charles of France in apanage. Finally, if Louis XI infringed any of the Treaties of Arras, Conflans, or Peronne, then all lands held by the Duke in fief from the King would be automatically freed from French jurisdiction. This last clause clearly reveals the ultimate direction of Charles' ambition, namely, the separation of Valois Burgundy from the French kingdom. In return, Charles
swore hommage for his lands in France, which he had not done previously. The King then accompanied Charles to Liège, where the Duke of Burgundy in a fury of destruction once and for all eliminated the power of the Liègeois to resist his will.  

In forcing the Treaty of Peronne upon the King under duress, Charles the Bold rendered its provisions nugatory from the start, for apparently Louis XI never had the slightest intention of compliance. Thus, Franco-Burgundian relations were essentially unaltered as the King now directed his attention to Charles of France. In early 1469, Louis offered to his brother the province of Guienne, which was much richer than Champagne but safely distant from Burgundy and Brittany. Charles was undecided as usual, but the King bribed several of his brother's intimate councilors, including the wily Gascon Odet d'Aydie, and after months of negotiation, Charles of France became the Duke of Guienne. In addition, he received the sénéchaussées of Agenais, Quercy, Périgord, Saintonge, Aunis, and the town of La Rochelle. It was a splendid apanage and Charles exercised almost regalian powers in his domains. In return, the Duke again renounced his former Duchies of Berry and Normandy, and swore upon the sacred Cross of St. Laud of Angers that he would never conspire against the person of the King, or marry the only daughter and heir of Charles the Bold, young Mary of Burgundy. Louis XI thought he finally had his weak, pleasure-loving brother safely tucked away.
Meanwhile, the King was ridding himself of a perpetual nuisance in the Midi. In the spring of 1469, Louis XI produced a shady English adventurer named John Boon, who claimed to have served as a messenger in a treasonous correspondence between Jean V of Armagnac and Edward IV of England. There is little doubt that Boon did visit Armagnac in the fall of 1468, and the Count's penchant for intrigue and dubious loyalty to the Crown were well known, but the mystery enshrouding the entire affair makes a definite assertion of treason hazardous. However, it proved a sufficient pretext for the King, whose favor and grace had been shamelessly abused by the perfidious Jean V. Antoine de Chabannes immediately began occupying Armagnac's territories; the Count held out as long as he could, then fled to Spain. Eventually in 1470, the Parlement of Paris condemned Jean V in absentia for lèse-majesté, and his lands and goods were confiscated anew by the Crown.13

With Armagnac in exile, Charles of France installed in Guienne, and Francis II bottled up in Brittany, Louis XI could think of revenge against Charles the Bold. Affairs in England were auspiciously favorable as well, for open warfare had broken out between Edward IV and the Earl of Warwick. Temporarily worsted, Warwick fled to France in May 1470. There he proposed a reconciliation with the exiled Queen Margaret of Anjou in a French-supported effort to reestablish
Henry VI and the House of Lancaster on the throne of England. After endless difficulties, Louis XI persuaded the proud and bitter Margaret to make peace with her former archenemy, and in September, Warwick led a Lancastrian invasion of England. Edward IV was forced to flee to Holland, and the King of France instructed his ambassadors to negotiate with Warwick an Anglo-French military pact against Burgundy. Then Louis convoked an assembly of notables at Tours, in which the Treaties of Conflans and Peronne were pronounced null and void due to imposition under duress. On December 3 the King published his declaration of war on Burgundy, announcing that all the Duke's lands and lordships were forfeited to the Crown.

The attack began at once. In January 1471 the Somme town of St. Quentin opened its gates to the Count of St. Pol and accepted a royal garrison. Wealthy Amiens, the chief town of Picardy, surrendered to Antoine de Chabannes in February, and the towns of Roye and Montdidier quickly followed suit. Another French army was plundering the Burgundian counties of Mâcon and Charolais. Charles the Bold mobilized his forces and marched on Amiens. The Duke laid siege to the French-occupied town through most of March, but the military campaign in Picardy soon dissipated into desultory skirmishes, and on April 4 a truce ended the fighting on both fronts. Discouraging news was percolating across the Channel, for Edward IV, supported by Burgundy, had returned to reclaim his crown.
By the end of April, the battles of Barnet and Tewkesbury ended forever the hopes of Warwick and Lancaster. The armed truce between France and Burgundy continued for a year, punctuated by constant and fruitless negotiations. Louis XI had regained the most important of the Somme towns, but Charles the Bold and England were once again joining against him, and a new feudal coalition was forming behind the King's back.15

Unfortunately for Louis, his younger brother was not content for long in Guienne. The birth of an heir to the throne in 1470 considerably diminished the importance and future prospects of Duke Charles, who began to dwell upon the forbidden Burgundian marriage. In the summer of 1471, Charles asked the Pope to annul his oath never to marry the daughter of Charles the Bold. The Count of St. Pol and the Duke of Brittany saw advantages for themselves in the match, and aided the Duke of Guienne in his negotiations with Burgundy. Louis XI exerted every possible effort to block the papal dispensation, but he might have spared himself the trouble, for it is highly unlikely that Charles the Bold seriously intended the marriage to take place. According to Philippe de Commynes, the Duke of Burgundy had no wish to see his daughter married while he lived. However, it served as a useful device to alienate the Duke of Guienne from the King, and as Charles the Bold was planning to renew the war and recover his lost Somme towns, he was fishing for allies among the French princes.16
The French feudality was in a receptive mood, for the repudiation of the Treaty of Conflans had alarmed the great lords included in it. Furthermore, the presence of Duke Charles in Guienne served as a link between Burgundy and Brittany in the north and the southern malcontents of the Midi. In the fall of 1471, the Duke of Guienne invited the Count of Armagnac back to France, and restored his lands to him. The outlaw Jean V fortified himself in the stronghold castle of Lectoure in the County of Armagnac proper. Gaston IV of Foix had also become estranged from the King. Fearful of a reconciliation between the two rival families of the Midi, Louis XI had vigorously but un成功地 opposed the marriage of Gaston's daughter Jeanne with the Count of Armagnac in 1469. Then in 1470, Louis attempted to force the Count of Foix to relinquish the government of Navarre in favor of his eldest son Gaston, the Prince of Viane and husband of the King's sister Madeline. Ultimately, Louis planned to absorb Navarre into the French kingdom, but in October the Prince of Viane suffered a mortal wound at a jousting tournament. The Count of Foix sought to secure the guardianship of his grandchildren, but the King bestowed it upon Madeline, whom he hoped to control. Exasperated by the hostility of Louis XI, Gaston began to intrigue with Armagnac, Guienne and Brittany, until in the spring of 1471, he married his third daughter Margaret to Duke Francis II of Brittany.
Several letters written during late 1471 reveal that Louis XI was perfectly aware a feudal coalition in league with Charles the Bold was forming around him, and he took vigorous measures to prepare for the coming showdown. In early 1472 the King dispatched a royal army against the returned Count of Armagnac, who was soon besieged at Lectoure. Distinguishing himself in this campaign was Pierre de Beaujeau, a much younger brother of the Duke of Bourbon rising rapidly in royal favor. In March word arrived that Charles of Guienne was seriously, perhaps mortally, ill. Paid informants kept the King apprised of the Duke's failing health, while royal troops massed at the borders of the duchy, ready to move if Charles should die. Meanwhile, Louis had been negotiating with Charles the Bold, seeking a separate peace excluding the other princes. The King went so far as to offer the return of Amiens and St. Quentin, but the Duke was confident that he would soon smash his royal enemy on the field of battle, permanently ending the French threat to Burgundy.18

On 24 May 1472, Charles of France died, probably of tuberculosis complicated by venereal disease. The King's habit of richly rewarding the first bearer of favorable news may have served him ill in this instance, for he had announced Charles' death in a letter of May 18, and his armies were already occupying the Duke's territories. Thus, Louis XI appeared as the initiator of hostilities, and it was widely
rumored that the King had murdered his brother with a combination of poison and magic. Early in June, a Burgundian army crossed the Somme into France brutally ravaging the countryside as it went, while Francis II attacked simultaneously from Brittany. With Charles of France dead, the adherence of Armagnac and Foix proved of little military significance, but a third princely ally, Nicholas of Anjou, Duke of Lorraine and son of the deceased John of Calabria, brought a substantial body of troops to augment the forces of Charles the Bold.19

The Duke of Burgundy campaigned in France with a ferocity new to the feudal conflict. On June 12 the garrison and armed citizens of Nesle were massacred after a Burgundian herald was killed in a parley. The town was then demolished and burned to the ground. After hearing of this atrocity, Roye and Montdidier surrendered without a fight, but the large town of Beauvais had no confidence in the clemency of the Duke and decided to resist. For several weeks in July, the Burgundian artillery blasted the city walls destroying about a quarter of their circumference, but assault after assault was bloodily repulsed by the heroic defenders. Finally, Charles raised the siege and moved west into Normandy laying waste the countryside as he went. In retaliation, a small royal army invaded Hainault and burned down a church at Prisches along with the men, women, and children seeking refuge inside. Charles the Bold had planned to link up with the Breton army,
but Louis XI forced Francis II back into Brittany by capturing the town of Ancenis. Unable to pass the Seine in early September because of a large French army under Antoine de Chabannes, The Duke of Burgundy burned and pillaged his way back to the Somme. Francis II signed a truce with the King in mid-October, and a Franco-Burgundian cease-fire followed on November 3. It was the last campaign either Francis II or Charles the Bold would personally wage in France, and it ended in failure; the general relationship between Burgundy, Brittany, and the King continued essentially unchanged. But Louis XI did gain one new adherent, for the famous author of the Mémoires, Philippe de Commynes, disillusioned by the increasingly violent and irrational behavior of Charles the Bold, slipped away from the Burgundian camp in early August and offered his services to the King. Commynes quickly became one of Louis' most trusted and intimate associates, receiving generous pensions, wide lands, and a wealthy marriage for his pains.20

Elsewhere however, the King enjoyed considerable success against the feudality. In June 1472 the Count of Armagnac surrendered to Pierre de Beaujeau on easy terms, being allowed to live freely on several of his estates until he was called to Paris to answer the charges against him. The formidable natural fortress of Lectoure was occupied by Beaujeau and a small royal garrison. But Jean V immediately returned to his intrigues, encouraged by the raging feudal warfare in the north.
One night in October the gates of Lectoure were secretly opened to the Count and two hundred followers. Pierre de Beaujeau and his men were captured in their sleep and held as hostages. A royal army equipped with heavy artillery was soon besieging Lectoure for a third time. By now it was known that the coalition of 1472 had dissolved ignobly, yet Lectoure was almost unassailable, and not until 5 March 1473 did the Count consent to a honorable capitulation. As the castle was changing hands the next day, an altercation broke out between a few royal and Armagnac partisans. When Jean V came down to investigate, he was killed in the scuffle by a royal franc-archer named Pierre Le Gorgias. The lands of the dead Count were chopped up and parceled out to various royal followers, including Pierre de Beaujeau, while his movable goods were given to Alain the Grand.21

Meanwhile, a younger brother of Jean V was languishing in the Bastille for unrelated crimes. Charles of Armagnac, Viscount of Fezensaguet, did not play an active role in feudal politics and has been unmentioned heretofore. Charles' chief enjoyment was to take advantage of the disorders in the Midi and indulge in local depradations and debaucheries with his band of armed retainers. Eventually he was caught in early 1471 and charged with brigandage just as a common criminal. Being of noble birth he escaped hanging, but in February 1472 he was sentenced to multiple fines totaling 10,000 livres,
incarceration until the sum was paid, and then banishment from the kingdom for three years. Ultimately however, he remained in the Bastille until the death of Louis XI in 1483.\textsuperscript{22}

Although the Count of Foix had intrigued with the rebel lords and married his daughter to the Duke of Brittany, Gaston took no active part in the feudal war of 1472. An insurrection against his rule in Navarre diverted his attention, and in late spring he mobilized an army to suppress it. But the Count's health was failing, and as he led his troops over the Pyrenees in July he died, leaving only a young grandson as his heir, François-Phébus, the ward of Madeline of France. In less than a year, Charles of Guienne, Jean V of Armagnac, and Gaston IV of Foix were all dead. Charles of Armagnac was in prison, and the reclusive Alain the Grand abided in loyalty and obedience. Of the once turbulent and formidable feudality of the Midi, only the Armagnac Duke of Nemours remained, and he would shortly meet his end as well.\textsuperscript{23}
NOTES


5. Courteault, Gaston IV, pp. 304-5; Samaran, La maison d'Armagnac, pp. 153-60; Luchaire, Alain le Grand, p. 15.


22 Samaran, La maison d'Armagnac, pp. 210-19.

23 Courteault, Gaston IV, pp. 349-55.
CHAPTER IV

A ROYAL HARVEST, 1473-83

After the campaigns of 1472, a series of truces between the King, Burgundy, and Brittany stretched until mid-1475, providing a lull in the feudal wars of northern France. Charles the Bold used this opportunity to further his ambitions in the Empire, while the main preoccupation of Louis XI during these years was the threat of an English invasion. Throughout the previous decade internal problems in England had spared Louis from active English intervention in the French feudal conflict, but with the death of the Earl of Warwick and the extinction of the House of Lancaster, save for Queen Margaret of Anjou languishing in the Tower, Edward IV was now free to cross the Channel. King Edward bore a grudge against Louis XI for the reconciliation of Warwick and Margaret, and he owed a debt to Charles the Bold for Burgundian aid in reclaiming his crown. Besides, an invasion of France was always popular in England and would bolster public support for the Yorkist regime. All through the spring of 1473, Louis heard ominous reports of English military preparations and grants of money by Parliament for war. The King of France scrupulously maintained his truces with Burgundy and Brittany and waited.1
However, the English did not cross the Channel that year, and Louis XI attended to a little feudal housekeeping. The King had pardoned the elderly Duke of Alençon for his conspiracy with Duke Francis II and Charles of France in 1467, but an apparently unrepentant Jean II soon returned to his princely intrigues. In February 1473, Louis produced two officers from Château-Gontier near the Breton border who declared their knowledge of treasonous correspondence between the Duke of Alençon and King Edward IV of England. The Duke was promptly arrested and imprisoned in a fortress near Tours. At his second trial for treason before the Parlement of Paris in July 1474, Jean II was accused of the murder of two commoners, the coinage of false money, and conspiring to hand over his lands in Normandy to the English in exchange for the Duchy of Gloucester and a generous cash gratuity. On July 18 the Duke was convicted on all counts and sentenced to death, which the King commuted to life imprisonment. Jean's son René succeeded to the Counties of Perche and Beaumont, but the King retained the Duchy of Alençon for the Crown. However, one year later Louis allowed the eighty-nine-year-old former companion in arms of Joan of Arc to return home and die on the family estates.²

Weary of service at the royal court, the Duke of Bourbon asked for and received permission to retire to his duchy in November 1472. His place in the councils of the King was taken up by his brother Pierre de Beaujeau, who proved a more useful
royal servant than the somewhat petulant and lethargic Duke. Recognizing the ability of the younger Bourbon, the King was lavish in his favors. Upon the death of Charles of France, Pierre had assumed the governorship of Guienne, and after the demise of the Count of Armagnac, the largest portion of Jean V's lands were bestowed upon Pierre de Beaujeau, including the County of Armagnac, although the comital title was abolished and Louis XI reserved all regalian rights. In early 1474, Louis married his eldest daughter Anne to Pierre. Since the Duke of Bourbon had no children, Pierre could hope to succeed to his brother's titles and lands, but the King also foresaw this possibility, and the marriage contract explicitly stipulated that the Bourbon inheritance would revert to the Crown if Pierre and Anne died without male issue. Although not at court the Duke of Bourbon retained his royal offices, and these were augmented further when his jurisdiction as lieutenant-general was expanded in 1475 to cover all of central and southeastern France adjacent to the Burgundian frontier. The House of Bourbon was waxing strong indeed in the service of the King.³

Relations with the Angevin family were more turbulent. Since 1471 René of Anjou had resided in his imperial County of Provence, partly as a refuge from the domineering Louis XI. René's grandson Nicholas, Duke of Calabria and Lorraine, was in alliance with Charles the Bold and fought against the King
in the feudal war of 1472. But in July 1473 young Nicholas followed his father to a premature death, leaving René of Anjou without an heir in the direct male line. Louis XI hoped to add the rich Angevin inheritance to the royal domain. The Duchy of Lorraine was not a French fief, having come to the Angevin house through René's wife Isabelle, and the Estates of Lorraine assembled without delay and offered their duchy to René's daughter Yolande of Anjou. Yolande graciously accepted and promptly abdicated in favor of her young son, who thus became Duke René II. Unable to win satisfactory terms from the King, the new duke followed the example of his predecessor and allied himself with Burgundy. Then to the great chagrin of Louis XI, René of Anjou in his third and final testament willed the Duchy of Bar to his young namesake grandson, and the Duchy of Anjou and the County of Provence to his nephew Charles of Maine, son of the deceased Count of Maine who had fled the battle of Montlhéry. The King responded by occupying Anjou and Bar under the pretext that in the absence of a direct male heir the duchies reverted to the Crown.

Louis XI was also having problems with the Count of St. Pol. Although ostensibly in the service of the King since 1466, the Count was in fact attempting to carve out a precarious independence from both France and Burgundy by playing off one against the other. Neither King Louis nor Duke Charles nurtured any illusions concerning St. Pol's
loyalty, but the Count's strategically placed lands and considerable wealth made him sufficiently powerful to command attention and respect. It was an extremely dangerous game and would ultimately cost Louis of Luxembourg his life. The Count's capture of St. Quentin for the King in 1471 had infuriated Charles the Bold, who retaliated by confiscating St. Pol's lands and revenues in Burgundian territories. Having failed to recover these losses by less desperate measures, the Count audaciously expelled the royal garrison from St. Quentin in December 1473, and occupied the town with his own men. The Duke of Burgundy was obsessed with recovering this vital strategic outpost on the Somme, and St. Pol hoped to strike a deal with him. Louis XI was now as angry as Duke Charles, but with the English threat impending, the King could not afford to risk driving the Count into the arms of Edward IV. At a personal interview in May 1474, Louis and St. Pol were temporarily reconciled with the Count retaining possession of St. Quentin.\footnote{5}

In July 1474 the King's worst fears were realized when Edward IV and Charles the Bold signed the Treaty of London. The Duke of Burgundy recognized Edward as King of France and agreed to provide 10,000 men to help him reclaim his rightful crown. The English king pledged to lead an army across the Channel no later than 1 July 1475, and after the deposition of Louis XI, Edward would cede the entire northeastern
corner of the French kingdom to Burgundy. Charles the Bold then marched off to besiege the episcopal town of Neuss, which was rebelling against Archbishop Ruprecht of Cologne, a Burgundian client. Louis XI prepared for the English. First, the King contracted alliances against Charles in the Empire. Duke René II of Lorraine was outraged by the depredations of Burgundian troops passing through his duchy, and fearful of Charles' ultimate intentions toward him, he secretly renounced his treaty with Burgundy and signed an alliance with Louis XI. In January 1475, the King entered into an offensive pact with the Swiss cantons and the imperial towns of the upper Rhine, led by Bern, Basel and Strasbourg, who were already at war with Charles the Bold. Then through the winter and spring, Louis slowly assembled the most powerful army he had ever commanded and stationed it on the Picard frontier. Two smaller armies were placed opposite the Duchy of Burgundy and the Counties of Mâcon and Charolais.

When his truce with Burgundy expired on 1 May 1475, the King launched his attack. Charles the Bold was still bogged down in the siege of Neuss, and Edward IV had not yet left England. Louis XI swept across Picardy capturing the towns of Montdidier, Roye, and Corbie in less than a week. French troops penetrated deep into Burgundian Artois, Hainault, and Ponthieu, burning villages and laying waste the countryside, but avoiding fortified positions. The King ordered that all towns in Picardy not capable of withstanding a siege were to
be destroyed in order to deprive the English of provisions and a base for military operations. Meanwhile, the Duke of Bourbon invaded the Duchy of Burgundy, René II of Lorraine attacked the Duchy of Luxembourg, and other royal forces pillaged and burned in the Mâconnais and Charolais. Charles the Bold did virtually nothing to succor his ravaged lands. 7

In early July Edward IV arrived in Calais at the head of the largest English army ever assembled on the Continent, numbering some 36,000 men. Unfortunately however, his supposed allies were nowhere to be found. Duke Francis II had pledged to send 8,000 men to aid Edward, but in the end not one Breton soldier joined the English army, and Francis almost refused to accept a contingent of 2,000 English archers in Brittany. The Count of St. Pol had promised to engineer a feudal coalition against Louis XI, but when his intrigues with René of Anjou, Charles of Maine, the Duke of Bourbon, and the Duke of Nemours all came to naught, the Count fortified himself in St. Quentin, hoping to ride out the campaign safely ensconced behind the town's stout walls. Charles the Bold finally broke off the fruitless siege of Neuss, but instead of marching to join the English, he sent his men off to "refresh themselves" by plundering the Duchy of Lorraine. With only a handful of retainers, Charles met Edward at Calais in mid-July, where in an effort to assuage the disappointment of his ally, Charles assured Edward that the Count of St. Pol
would open St. Quentin to the English. From there the King could march into Champagne, while Charles rejoined his troops in Lorraine and attacked from the east. After the two armies had met in Rheims, Edward IV would be crowned King of France. Edward tentatively agreed to this plan, and accompanied by the Duke of Burgundy the English marched across the blackened fields of Picardy, passing the Somme into France on July 28. But when an advance detachment appeared before St. Quentin in early August, it was fired upon and repulsed by a sally of defenders. Seemingly nonplussed, Charles the Bold blithely announced he was leaving to join his troops in Lorraine, and promised to meet Edward shortly in Rheims. Abandoned by his allies and having little desire to fight the King of France alone, Edward immediately opened negotiations with Louis XI.8

On 29 August 1475, a personal meeting between King Louis XI and King Edward IV on a wooden bridge over the river Somme sealed the Treaty of Picquingy and ended the English invasion. A seven-year truce between England and France was proclaimed. Louis XI agreed to pay Edward 75,000 crowns in cash at once, to be followed by an annual subsidy of 50,000 crowns for the duration of the truce. The five-year-old Dauphin Charles was to wed the nine-year-old Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Edward IV, with the King of France providing a substantial dowry. Louis also agreed to ransom the imprisoned Queen Margaret of Anjou for another 50,000 crowns. Additional pensions and
gratuities were liberally distributed to the principal councilors and advisors of the English King. A final clause called for each monarch to succor the other against rebellious subjects, and in this spirit Edward handed over to Louis XI documents spelling out in great detail the treasonous machinations of the Count of St. Pol.\(^9\)

It cost a fortune but the English were sent home without a fight. Within a week Burgundian ambassadors were negotiating a settlement between Louis XI and Charles the Bold. The Treaty of Souleuvre promulgated on September 13 called for a nine-year truce, which was respected and maintained by both sides until the death of Duke Charles. The treaty also sealed the fate of Louis of Luxembourg. Charles agreed never to pardon St. Pol, and, if he could ever lay his hands upon the Count, he would either execute him or hand him over to Louis XI within eight days. If Charles really did deliver St. Pol to the King, he would receive the town of St. Quentin as a reward, and he could conquer the Duchy of Lorraine without infringing the truce, despite the King's alliance with Duke René II. Also in September, Louis XI and the Duke of Brittany signed a "perpetual peace, alliance, good and true union." Francis II swore upon the Cross of St. Laud that he would defend the realm against all enemies and renounce all other alliances, particularly with England. In return, Louis bestowed the honorific title of Lieutenant-General for the entire realm upon the Breton Duke.\(^{10}\)
Although it went unrecognized at the time, the truces of 1475 marked a turning point in the reign of Louis XI. No further princely coalitions against the Crown would trouble the peace of the kingdom. The King had survived a decade of feudal onslaught, but only just barely. As late as that spring before the English invasion Louis XI told Philippe de Commynes that if he were to suffer a major defeat in battle, the great lords would rise at once in rebellion against him. Commynes himself believed that if Charles the Bold had joined Edward as planned in the Treaty of London, Louis might well have been lost. The Treaties of Picquingy and Souleuvre amply illustrate the precarious position of the French King, for he gave away a great deal and gained little beyond a promise of revenge against the Count of St. Pol. Meanwhile, after the conquest of Lorraine, Charles the Bold reached perhaps the peak of his political fortunes and the zenith of Burgundian power in Europe. Yet, in little more than a year the Grand Duke of the West was dead, and the feudal challenge to Louis XI evaporated as rapidly as it had materialized in the early years of his reign.\footnote{11}

The end of the Count of St. Pol swiftly followed the Treaty of Souleuvre. Aware that Edward IV had hopelessly compromised his standing with the King of France, Louis of Luxembourg fled to Hainault and threw himself upon the mercy of Charles the Bold. Charles issued a safe-conduct for the Count to come to his court, but Louis XI promptly occupied
St. Quentin in an effort to persuade the Duke of Burgundy to honor his pledge. Charles was reluctant to satisfy the King, but his desire to recover St. Quentin prevailed, and in late November the Duke relinquished St. Pol to the custody of royal officials, despite his safe-conduct. Condemned for lèse-majesté by the Parlement of Paris on December 19, the hapless Count was sentenced to death and executed the same day. A large crowd eagerly witnessed his beheading, for St. Pol was widely known and hated in Paris as a Burgundian traitor. The Count's remaining, lands, revenues, and goods were divided by Louis XI and Duke Charles. 12

The trial of St. Pol uncovered extensive evidence that implicated Jacques d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours. Since the League of the Public Weal, Jacques had not taken any active part in the various feudal coalitions and conspiracies, due primarily to his great fear of the King. But the Duke was always on the periphery of the plotting, and often did not adequately distance himself from it in order to remain above suspicion. In 1470, Louis XI forced him to swear to his loyalty upon the Cross of St. Laud and promise that he would denounce all conspiracies and machinations of which he became aware. The Duke rebuffed the initial advances of St. Pol in 1474, but the persistence of the Count eventually compromised Nemours, who allowed himself to become too deeply embroiled in St. Pol's fruitless but treasonous intrigues. In February of 1476 a royal
detachment besieged the Duke of Nemours in his castle of Carlat. A few hours after his wife died in childbirth on March 9, the Duke surrendered to Pierre de Beaujeau. Armagnac was imprisoned for six months in Lyons and then transferred to the Bastille. One year later on 4 August 1477, the Duke was condemned for lèse-majesté by the Parlement of Paris and beheaded the same day. Unlike that of St. Pol, the execution of Nemours was a source of shock and consternation to many in France. The King felt himself compelled to dismiss summarily from their offices three councilors in the Parlement who had been particularly active in attempting to block the proceedings against the Duke. Commynes claims that shortly before his death Louis expressed remorse for having executed Jacques d'Armagnac, but not the Count of St. Pol. The Duke's lands and goods were divided among the royal favorites, with Pierre de Beaujeau receiving the valuable County of La Marche.13

In 1476 Louis XI forced the fourteen-year-old Duke of Orléans, son of the poet Charles, to marry his deformed daughter Jeanne. The two had been engaged since four days after Jeanne's birth in 1464, but when the unfortunate princess grew up to be ugly, stooped, with a severe limp and one shoulder markedly higher than the other, Louis of Orléans understandably became averse to the union. But it was either marriage or prison for the young Duke, and the King later brutally forced the couple to consummate their marriage in
order to deprive Orléans of possible grounds for annulment. Louis XI had earlier made a little joke about the marriage in a letter to Antoine de Chabannes. The King wrote, "I have decided to marry my little daughter Jeanne to the little Duke of Orléans because it seems to me that their children will not cost them much to bring up." Actually, Louis hoped the marriage would prove barren, for there was some question as to whether Jeanne was physically capable of bearing children, and without an heir, the Duchy of Orléans would revert to the Crown.14

Recent scholarship has demonstrated that Louis XI did not deviously engineer the fall of Charles the Bold. Although the King provided money and encouragement, it was the Swiss cantons and the imperial towns of the upper Rhine, especially Bern, Basel, and Strasbourg, that initiated the war against Charles in response to the threat of Burgundian expansion, and ultimately defeated the Duke on the field of battle at Granson, Murten and Nancy. Louis XI was essentially an interested spectator to the tragic end of the last Duke of Burgundy in January 1477. After three marriages Charles had only one heir, the twenty-year-old Mary. According to Commynes, Louis had often remarked that if by some mischance Charles were to die, he would attempt to wed the much younger Dauphin to the Burgundian princess. But once the Duke's death became a reality, the King abandoned all thought of the unlikely match and launched
an immediate military assault on the Burgundian frontier. The ducal government was in chaos, and Mary of Burgundy soon became a virtual prisoner of the town of Ghent. Mary needed a husband and by mid-April a marriage was arranged with Maximilian of Austria, who arrived in Ghent on August 18 and was promptly wedded the same day. Meanwhile, royal troops were overrunning Picardy, Ponthieu, Boulogne, and Artois in the north, along with Mâcon, Charolais, Franche-Comté, and the Duchy of Burgundy in the west. But Maximilian and the Flemish towns eventually organized an effective defence and counterattack, dragging out the war over the Burgundian inheritance for five long years. Edward IV often threatened to intervene in behalf of Maximilian and Mary, but in the end he did nothing, perhaps because he found his French pension too comfortable. Mary died in March 1482 after a fall from a horse, leaving two children by Maximilian, Philip and Marguerite. Later that same year the Treaty of Arras ended the fighting only eight months before the death of Louis XI. The treaty contained no clauses concerning Picardy, the Duchy of Burgundy, or the Counties of Ponthieu and Boulogne, which quietly reverted to the Crown as French fiefs in the absence of a male heir. The Dauphin Charles was engaged to young Marguerite, who would come to live at the French court bringing Artois and Franche-Comté as her dowry. The Counties of Mâcon, Charolais, and Auxerre, dependent upon the Duchy of Burgundy and located
within the French kingdom but technically not French fiefs, also passed to Louis XI.\textsuperscript{15}

The King was the lucky beneficiary of a magnificent feudal windfall when the second House of Anjou became extinct for lack of male heirs. Louis XI had become reconciled with Duke René in 1476, restoring the Duchies of Anjou and Bar to him, but keeping a royal garrison in the fortress of Angers. The King ransomed Queen Margaret from the English as stipulated in the Treaty of Picquingy, but as the price of her release he forced her to relinquish any and all of her claims to the Angevin inheritance. When Duke René died, Louis annexed the Duchy of Anjou outright and retained \textit{de facto} possession of the Duchy of Bar, despite the claims of René II of Lorraine. Charles of Maine, the nephew of René of Anjou, was allowed to inherit the County of Provence and the Angevin claim to Sicily, but when he passed away prematurely in 1481, Provence and the County of Maine were also added to the royal domain in accordance with Charles' will. The County of Provence had been heretofore a completely independent fief of the Empire, and it formed a splendid acquisition for France, doubling the kingdom's Mediterranean coastline.\textsuperscript{16}

Young René of Alençon, Count of Perche and Beaumont, was more loyal to Louis XI than his father Jean II, but his dissolute life made him an easy target for unscrupulous royal serviteurs. Accused of doubtful crimes in 1481 by one Jean of
Daillon, Seigneur of Lude, René took fright and attempted to flee to Brittany but was captured in route. On 22 March 1482, the Parlement of Paris sentenced the Count to implore the mercy of the King, to swear to serve him for and against all, and to accept a royal garrison in his château as a kind of house-arrest. Louis XI saw fit to accept this mild form of imprisonment, and after the King died in 1483, René was released and even restored to the confiscated Duchy of Alençon.17

Finally, the House of Foix followed that of Anjou to extinction with the death in January 1483 of François-Phébus, the grandson of Gaston IV and only male heir to the County of Foix, the Viscounty of Béarn, and the Kingdom of Navarre. The claims of François-Phébus' sister Catherine were hotly disputed by collateral branches of the family, but Madeline of France quickly arranged a marriage for her daughter to Jean of Albret, son of Alain the Grand. The Foix inheritance not only gave a crown to the relatively obscure Albret family, but also made it by far the most powerful feudal house in the Midi, ruling almost all of southern France between the Garonne and Spain, except for the Counties of Armagnac and Comminges.18
NOTES


3 Surrirey de Saint Remy, Jean II, pp. 156-58, 165.

4 Lecoy de La Marche, Le Roi René, pp. 385-94; Gaussin, Louis XI, p. 234.


6 Jean de Roye, Chronicle, pp. 376-77; Calmette and Déprez, Les premières grandes puissances, pp. 78-88; Vaughan, Charles the Bold, pp. 292, 306-07.


16 Lecoy de La Marche, Le Roi René, pp. 415-18, 425-28, 435-37; Gaussin, Louis XI, pp. 244-47.


18 Courteault, Gaston IV, pp. 400-01; Luchaire, Alain le Grand, pp. 22-25.
CONCLUSION

It is not difficult to understand why Louis XI has been traditionally viewed as the vainquer de la grande féodalité. After years of feudal warfare stretching from the League of the Public Weal through the death of Charles the Bold, Louis XI ultimately emerged with his princely enemies cowed and his power and authority in France unchallenged. But it had been an extremely close contest, and the victory of the King owed more than a little to a remarkable streak of good fortune. The death of Charles of France in 1472 could hardly have been more opportune for Louis, for his troublesome younger brother always provided a useful focus for feudal discontent while he lived. If Charles the Bold cannot be faulted for failing to produce a male heir of his flesh, he might have found a suitable husband for his daughter, who could have acted as his lieutenant and been able to succeed him immediately. The death of the last Duke of Burgundy would have had radically different consequences for France in either case. René of Anjou watched helplessly as his only son and grandson went to untimely deaths in the prime of their vigor. When the young and childless Charles of Maine followed his uncle and cousins, the entire Angevin inheritance fell into the lap of the King. The once formidable House of Foix came to the same cruel end as Anjou.1
This peculiar hereditary enfeeblement and ill fortune continued after the reign of Louis XI, and may well be a far more important factor in the extinction of the great feudal families of the 15th century, and the resultant territorial unification of France, than the actions of any French monarch. In 1488, Francis II of Brittany died without a male heir, and the Breton peninsula was absorbed into the realm through the marriage of his daughter to two successive kings of France. The royal family suffered from the same debilitation, for neither Charles VIII nor Louis XII left a Dauphin to succeed them. Louis of Orléans added his duchy to the royal domain when he became king, and Francis I brought the County of Angoulême with his accession. Thus, of the eight great feudal houses described in the first chapter, Burgundy, Brittany, Anjou, and Foix were extinguished by hereditary default, while Orléans came to the throne because the royal succession failed. As Auguste Longnon observed, "It seems that Providence had wished, by this physical enfeeblement of the principal feudal houses of France, to favor the work of unification at the moment it was shaken and menaced by the coalition of the great vassals."2

Yet, under Louis XI the monarchy did not fully realize the advantages that could have accrued from the feudal default. The confiscated lands of the Armagnac family were entirely parceled out among royal favorites. The inheritance of Foix
passed to the House of Albret. The royal largess to the Bourbon family created a new feudal menace to the Crown. The lands added to the royal domain were so vast that the rudimentary central administration was unable to assume their government. Louis XI had to rely heavily upon governors and lieutenant-generals to rule his territorial acquisitions, and he often bestowed these offices upon powerful noble families. In later reigns such offices became formidable bastions from which the aristocracy could dominate local government and assert its power and influence in the kingdom.

It is more difficult to accept the view expressed by Joseph Calmette that Louis XI initiated and successfully carried to completion a deliberate and preconceived program to break the power of the feudality and unify France. The actions of the King toward the princes were by no means uniformly hostile in the early years of his reign, and the rehabilitation of Armagnac and Alençon provides only the most obvious example. Commynes records how in a rare interview with his son Charles, the King as much as admitted that by blindly dismissing the worthy and loyal officers of his father Charles VII, he had stupidly provoked the War of the Public Weal, and almost lost his crown as a result. Charles VII had subtly masked the growing power and authority of the monarchy, but under his eccentric and imperious son it stood naked and painfully apparent to all. It was the feudality that determined to
fight in order to maintain its status in the realm. From the inception of the League of the Public Weal until the death of Charles the Bold, Louis XI was essentially on the defensive, struggling to preserve the monarchy as he had inherited it, rather than to expand radically its power and reach.  

Although he made a contribution to the general effort, the real credit for the defeat of Charles the Bold does not belong to Louis XI. By 1472 France and Burgundy had fought each other to a bloody stalemate. After that it was the Swiss cantons and the towns of the upper Rhine, especially Bern, Basel and Strasbourg, that destroyed Duke Charles along with his dream of a revived Kingdom of Burgundy-Lotharingia. Nor did the King vanquish Francis II of Brittany. Despite his oaths on the Cross of St. Laud in 1475, the Duke maintained his English alliance, and after the death of Charles the Bold, Francis allied himself with Maximilian of Austria. Although usually described as weak and ineffectual, the Breton Duke increased his independence from France in the War of the Public Weal, and successfully preserved that strengthened position throughout the reign of Louis XI. The only feudal house destroyed purely by the hostility of the King was Armagnac, and Louis XI was largely responsible for the resurrection of the Armagnac nuisance in the first place.  

Finally, the fact that the fall of Burgundy occurred as late as it did in the King's reign attenuated its consequences
for the feudality. The subsequent war with Maximilian of Austria over the Burgundian inheritance sapped the last energies of the rapidly aging Louis XI. The remaining princes such as Jean II of Bourbon, Francis II of Brittany, Alain the Grand, and even the delinquent René of Alençon could simply lie low and await the King's death, confident that they had little to fear from the Dauphin Charles, whose youth would probably necessitate a regency. All this is not to deny the solid achievements of the King, but it required far more than the mortal powers at the command of Louis XI to break the feudality of France.
NOTES

1. Vaughan, Charles the Bold, p. 399.


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