

History of the Crusades.
Episode 180.
The Crusade Against the Cathars.
The Majorcan Plot.

Hello again. Last week we saw King Philip IV and Queen Joan tour the region of southern France. To say the tour was not a success is an understatement. To the Franciscan friar Bernard Delicieux, the tour had provided an ideal opportunity to sway the French King to his cause. If Philip the Fair could only be made to see that southern France would rise in full rebellion unless the Inquisition was shut down, then Bernard would have achieved his goal.

The French monarch was the only person with the power to put an end to the oppression and persecution carried out by the Dominican friars, and Bernard was desperate to get King Philip on side. Too desperate, in fact. In his eagerness to convince King Philip of the validity of his arguments, he became reckless and stopped playing the intricate and complex game of diplomacy, instead resorting to telling King Philip in no uncertain terms what he should do. The unsurprising results of this miscalculation on Bernard's part was that Bernard was left out in the cold. Any lines of communication or goodwill which Bernard had previously established with the French King were immediately shut down. King Philip turned his back on Bernard and headed back to Paris, and the Inquisition resumed in Languedoc.

Now apparently, before the Royal Party left southern France the King's powerful adviser, the man who had brought down a Pope, Guillaume de Nogaret, took Bernard aside and told him something that really Bernard should have worked out for himself. The current Pope was a Dominican. King Philip had played a very risky hand in defeating Pope Boniface VIII. There was no way he was going to draw more attention to himself by making an enemy of the new Pope. No Dominican Pope was going to sit idly by while the French monarch wound down the Inquisition in southern France. Philip the Fair just couldn't afford to get the current Pope offside. There was no way in the current political climate that he was going to acquiesce to Bernard's wishes and take on the Dominicans. The fight was over. It was time to back off and leave things as they were.

But Bernard Delicieux was not the sort of person to just sit back and watch the Inquisition roll on. If the King of France wouldn't protect the citizens of Languedoc, then Bernard would just have to find someone else who would. So Bernard came up with a plan, a plan that can really only be described by one word: stupid. To fully understand Bernard's plan, we have to backtrack a bit and take a look at recent events in the Kingdom of Aragon.

Now, King James I of Aragon, also known as James the Conqueror, had ended up ruling the Kingdom of Aragon for over 60 years, in a reign that can only be described as spectacularly successful. One of his many conquests took place back in 1229 when he took the island of Majorca from the Muslims and annexed it to Aragon. Now, this move was massively popular with the people of Catalonia. The island under Muslim rule had been home to pirates who had been doing everything in their power to disrupt the trade coming and going from the busy ports of Catalonia. So when King James annexed the island and resettled it with Catalonians, a big cheer erupted from his grateful subjects.

But the island of Majorca would in the future provide a more important service for the King of Aragon. King James was clearly a successful monarch, and he wanted to see his

Kingdom continued to flourish after his death. He had three sons, and he was keen to ensure that, as much as possible, they wouldn't fall to fighting amongst themselves for the spoils of Aragon, after their father's death. King James' eldest son, Alfonso, died in 1260 leaving two remaining male heirs. The eldest was now called Peter, and the youngest was called James. Peter would obviously become the King of Aragon after James I died, but King James needed to create a consolation prize for young James so that young James wouldn't cause problems and fight his brother for land and power.

So, following Alfonso's death, King James made a will, leaving the majority of his Kingdom to his son Peter, but allocating a small portion of it, consisting of the island of Majorca and the islands surrounding it, the city of Montpellier in southern France, the city of Roussillon in Catalonia and the county of Cerdanya in Catalonia, to his younger son James. Together these holdings would become the new Kingdom of Majorca. So when King James the Conqueror died in 1276 his son Peter became King Peter III of Aragon, later known as Peter the Great, and young James became King James I of Majorca. King Peter III was an astute monarch, and in 1279 he decreed his brother's tiny little kingdom to be a vassal to the mighty Kingdom of Aragon. So to summarize, by the early 14th century, the Kingdom of Majorca was tiny and totally under the thumb of the Kingdom of Aragon.

Early in the year 1304, following the disastrous royal tour, Bernard Delicieux came up with a plan for southern France to split from the Kingdom of France and transfer its loyalty to, wait for it the Kingdom of Majorca. Now anyone who was thinking clearly should have seen that this was doomed to fail. The Kingdom of Aragon was never going to let the Kingdom of Majorca expand its territories to that extent, and the mighty Kingdom of France was clearly not going to sit back and happily watch a significant part of its territory be swallowed up by a minnow on the European political stage. But Bernard Delicieux was obviously not thinking clearly. He was 100% focused on one goal and one goal only, to shut down the Inquisition in Languedoc, and to Bernard this was the only option available to achieve that goal. So Bernard was determined to go through with his scheme.

He approached the councilors of the cities of Carcassonne, Albi, Limoges and Cordes, seeking their support. Of these cities, only Carcassonne gave a nod of approval, and even then there were some councilors who thought the scheme hare-brained. But there were enough men giving their support, so they wrote a letter, requesting the Kingdom of Majorca to place their city under its protection, and Bernard, along with a companion whose name has been lost to history, volunteered to travel to the city of Perpignan, the capital of the Kingdom of Majorca, to personally deliver the letter. Now, interestingly, the letter wasn't addressed to King James I, the King of Majorca. No, King James had four sons, and the letter was addressed to his third son, Prince Ferran.

Now, according to Stephen O'Shea in his book "The Friar Of Carcassonne", Bernard Delicieux had met Prince Ferran during Philip the Fair's tour of southern France. King James of Majorca and his family had traveled to the city of Montpellier, one of the Kingdom's possessions, to greet the French King. Prince Ferran was probably the most ambitious of all of King James' sons, despite being only third in line for the throne. On at least two occasions during the French King's visit to Montpellier, Bernard Delicieux was seen conferring with Prince Ferran. Of course, we have no idea of the content of these conversations, but whatever was said gave Bernard the impression that the ambitious prince would be receptive to his plan.

So in the spring of 1304, around Easter time, Bernard Delicieux made the journey on horseback to Perpignan. Unfortunately, when he entered the city, he found the royal Palace empty, the royal family, having journeyed to their summer palace at St Jean Pla-de-Corts, a picturesque town overlooking a river in the foothills of the Pyrenees. So Bernard and his companion got back on their horses and rode to St Jean Pla-de-Corts.

It was during the journey to the country residence of the royal family of Majorca that Bernard seems to have started having second thoughts about the whole venture. What he was proposing was, after all, high treason. Once Carcassonne was safely under the protection of Majorca, he hoped that the rest of Languedoc would rise in rebellion against France, and once the French were expelled, southern France's new overlord, the King of Majorca, would order the Inquisition to shut down, and the Dominicans would be expelled from the region. There was clearly a lot that could go wrong with this plan, and of course, it didn't help that the King of Majorca himself was unaware of the plot. Prince Ferran was the only member of the royal family who knew of Bernard's plan. Bernard decided he needed to destroy the letter he was carrying, and in this activity, at least, Bernard was admirably thorough. He tore the letter into little pieces, dug a hole and placed the pieces in the hole. Then he refilled the hole with dirt and then urinated on it. That should do it.

When he arrived, letter-less, at St Jean Pla-de-Corts, Bernard and his companion found lodgings at a local church and, after making some enquiries, were informed that the Prince was out hunting with his father, the King. But after he returned from the hunt, Prince Ferran was able to slip out of the palace in secret and meet with Bernard. Now, Bernard would later claim that he spent this meeting, not trying to convince Prince Ferran to go through with the plan but trying to talk him out of it. Whether this was the case or whether Bernard later changed his story is inconsequential, because by the time this meeting took place, unbeknownst to either Bernard or Prince Ferran, their plot had already been uncovered.

Prince Ferran's father King James had been notified of the bizarre plan hatched by his son and the Franciscan from Carcassonne, just before Bernard and his companion had arrived. In his book "The Friar of Carcassonne", Stephen O'Shea speculates that perhaps one of the dissenting councilors from Carcassonne, appalled by the consequences that could flow for their city from this crazy scheme, sent a message to King James, or perhaps a similarly concerned councilor from Albi or one of the other southern French cities approached by Bernard, spilled the beans.

The end result was King James I of Majorca knew about his son's scheme, and King James I of Majorca was not happy. The next day, King James went hunting with Prince Ferran as usual. But instead of returning to the royal residence for a siesta following the hunt, he instead summoned his son to his royal apartments. Once his son was safely alone with his father, in the privacy of the King's rooms, King James proceeded to beat the living daylights out of his son. Servants later reported hearing the King screaming at his son, and then the sounds of the physical assault which followed were so concerning that a couple of footmen breached royal protocol, and entered the rooms to restrain the King, to prevent him from killing Prince Ferran.

Prince Ferran was seen leaving the King's apartments, struggling to keep his footing, with clumps of his hair, missing, his father having torn handfuls of it out by its roots. It's not known exactly what King James said to Prince Ferran before setting upon him, but it would likely be something to the effect of "Your ridiculous scheme has put the very existence of

our Kingdom at risk. We need to maintain a strong alliance with the Kingdom of France to prevent us from being totally overtaken by the Kingdom of Aragon. If we made moves to annex southern France, either France or Aragon would move against us and we would cease to exist. Besides, we have no army. How did you think you are going to take a huge chunk of the Kingdom of France with no army?"

Prince Ferran, third in line to inherit the Kingdom of Majorca, had just placed his inheritance, his father's life, and the very Kingdom that sustained him, at grave risk. I can kind of understand why King James got so angry that he totally lost control. The King sent a messenger to Bernard Delicieux telling him that their plot had been uncovered and that the King was mightily displeased with the friar for not informing him of the plan. So mightily displeased, in fact, that Bernard and his companion were no longer welcome in the Kingdom of Majorca, and were to leave without delay.

The following day Bernard started his journey back to Carcassonne, bearing the news that his only remaining plan to rid Languedoc of the Inquisitors had just failed. And things are about to go from bad to worse. While Bernard had been in the Kingdom of Majorca, the Dominican Pope, Pope Benedict XI, had written a Papal Bull entitled "Er Nobis" and had ordered it to be delivered to the head of the Franciscan order in Languedoc. What did the Papal Bull say? Well, I'll read you an extract, and I quote, "We have heard reports about Friar Bernard Delicieux of your Order, saying such things as we must not and shall not allow to go unpunished. Wherefore we order you, under the pain of excommunication, deprivation of your office, and the right to hold any future office should you fail to execute this mandate, to arrest and place under close guard and to bring personally into our presence, Friar Bernard Delicieux." End quote.

If the Pope ordering Bernard Delicieux to be placed under arrest and brought to Rome wasn't bad enough, the network of Cathars in the County of Foix painstakingly established by the Authie brothers is about to attract the attention of the head Inquisitor in Carcassonne, Geoffroy d'Ablis. Oh, dear. I think things are going to start getting interesting for both Bernard Delicieux and the Authie brothers. Join me next week to see how it all plays out. Until next week, bye for now.

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