

THAT a Roman Emperor should be a complete nullity seems almost a contradiction in terms. Certainly some Emperors were more famous and more important than others; some were strong, some were weak. Certainly also the Emperor Libius Severus (461–65), one of the very last to occupy the imperial throne in the West, is an obscure figure to us. Hardly more than a half-dozen bits of direct information about him can be elicited by the most stringent analysis of what the sources have to say, scanty as they are even for his contemporaries who obviously loomed much larger in the consciousness of men of the time. Like his immediate predecessors and successors Severus was overshadowed by the overpowering personality of his Patrician and Master of the Soldiers, the half-Sueve, half-Visigoth Ricimer. One can open any scholarly account of Roman history in the last generation of the Empire in the West to discover that Severus was a puppet, a complete fainéant, a nerveless tool of his master. And at least some of the evidence seems implicitly or explicitly to support this view. One suspects, however, that the relative lack of statements in the sources about him is at least partially responsible for this verdict, an argument from silence. It is by no means the purpose of this paper to argue that Severus was even in some farfetched sense a great or important Roman Emperor, but to suggest,

largely from indirect evidence and argument, that a possibility of whatever degree of strength exists that he was not entirely mindless putty in the hands of Ricimer, that the Emperor either conspired in fact against his master, or may have been suspected by the latter of doing so. Since Ricimer knew Severus, whom he had put on the throne, as we do not, his presumptive opinion should not be entirely without weight. Our sources suggest that the German Patrician was a cold, calculating, sinister man, who hesitated at no crime, no murder, no treason or perfidy, to maintain himself securely in power in Italy, a totally self-serving politician with no particular regard for the rest of the Roman Empire or its Emperors. Ricimer was also a man of the external conventional piety of his day, as his benefactions to the Roman church of S. Agata dei Goti show.²

Severus was Roman Emperor. The prestige of that position, the deference paid to it, at least the external forms of servile respect offered it, even in these last years when it was rapidly declining in every aspect of its real power, should not be overlooked. A letter of Apollinaris Sidonius (*Ep.* 1. 11) describes a dinner party attended by the Emperor Majorian (457–61); a historian of the last century noted, not without some surprise, the genial affability of the Emperor as well as the anxious wish of the courtiers to please the

1. Cf. J. Eckhel, *Doctrina numorum veterum*, Part II, VIII² (Vienna, 1828), 196. The name of course is as spelled here, Libius; thus it appears on both coins and inscriptions; Livius never occurs. Given the well-known interchanging of *B* and *V* in late Latin, it is unfortunate that O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt*, VI (Stuttgart, 1920–21), 349, cf. 482 (with some support from Mommsen),

stigmatized Severus as a Lucanian who did not know how to write his own name. For the correct view of the matter see T. Nagy, "Reoccupation of Pannonia from the Huns in 427," *Acta antiqua*, XV (1967), 159–86, at 175, n. 55. See also below on Severus' *supernomen*.

2. *ILS*, 1294.

Augustus.³ In the sixth century the historian Jordanes (*Get.* 143) makes the bedazzled Visigothic chieftain Athanaric exclaim upon beholding the majesty of Theodosius I (379–95) that the Emperor is beyond doubt a god on earth, and that whoever lifts his hand against him becomes liable in his own blood. Addressing Anastasius I, Eastern Emperor 491–518, Sigismund, King of the Burgundians, is made by his Latin secretary to declare that he prefers serving the Emperor to ruling his own people.⁴ The sentiment is doubtless largely owing to the etiquette of the time, but at least it demonstrates the proper external attitude of that time toward the imperial throne. Severus occupied this position and was regularly approached in similar fashion. And he would not fail to be aware that his predecessors for half a millennium had usually been active and absolute monarchs whose power had been real indeed.

Severus was murdered by Ricimer—in fact or merely by report. Cassiodorus⁵ says that he perished by the misdeed (poison) of Ricimer, “as it is said.” Since the other sources merely note the fact of Severus’ death, one might be inclined to question the veracity of the allegation of murder even without Cassiodorus’ qualification. The existence of the rumor of Ricimer’s guilt, however, it has long since been observed, is probably substantiated by Apollinaris Sidonius in his *Panegyric* directed to Anthemius, Severus’ eventual successor:⁶ “By the law of nature Severus Augustus had increased the number of the divine [i.e., in this Christian age, deceased Emperors].” Obviously, the emphasis on the natural death of the Emperor

points to the likelihood that there were those who did deny that the event was natural. Whatever his virtues when he later became a Christian saint and bishop, there can be little doubt that in his younger role as a panegyrist Sidonius was capable of manipulating, distorting, or denying, unpleasant facts or allegations in the interest of pleasing the great and the powerful—a fashion by no means peculiar to him.⁷ It seems not to have been commonly noted that in the same work (*Carm.* 2. 346–48) the poet in not so obvious a form may be making the same implication when he says that Fortune has thus regularly acted against native Emperors of the West. And whatever his ultimate source, centuries later Paul the Deacon seems to carry the same implication when he remarks that Severus died a natural death (*Rom.* 15. 1: *mortem propriam . . . occubuit*).

These statements or implications, of course, are far from tantamount to expressing even a reasonable probability that Ricimer was in fact responsible for Severus’ death. And the ancients were indeed prone to ascribe any death, especially if it were unexpected and seemed to benefit some powerful personage, to foul play. Other crimes, real or attributed, of Ricimer were such as to countenance the belief or suspicion that he had actually arranged for Severus’ demise. With the connivance of Majorian Ricimer had deposed the Emperor Avitus (455–56), who was forced to become a bishop; it was widely believed that the former Emperor’s death shortly thereafter had been brought about by Ricimer (and Majorian);⁸ the statement that Avitus died of pestilence

3. Thomas Hodgkin, *Italy and Her Invaders*, II² (Oxford, 1892), 415, 420.

4. Avitus *Ep.* 83 = 93 (Peiper), and cf. the whole letter.

5. *Chron.* 1280 (*Chron. min.*, II, 158).

6. *Carm.* 2. 317–18; cf., e.g., Anderson’s observation *ad loc.* in the Loeb ed., I, 35, n. 6. The statement that the world is

prostrate (“iacenti,” v. 345) at Severus’ death is mere rhetoric which means nothing.

7. E.g., see “Aëtius and Majorian,” *CP*, LIX (1964), 23–29, at 26–27; “Some Problems in the History of Galla Placidia,” *CP*, LX (1965), 1–10, at 6–7.

8. Sources and bibliography in K. F. Stroheker, *Der senatorische Adel im spätantiken Gallien* (Tübingen, 1948),

may well go back to the official version, authorized by Ricimer.⁹ In turn, it is beyond question that Majorian was murdered at Ricimer's behest; the tales preserved in some sources that he died of disease (Procop. *Bell.* 3 [*Vand.* 1]. 7. 14; Theophanes, p. 118 [de B.]), or was slain for his collusive treason with Geiseric, the King of the Vandals (Malalas 14, p. 375 [B]), are to be regarded as Ricimer's propaganda to conceal or justify the murder.¹⁰ Severus' successor, Anthemius, was apparently convinced that Ricimer had intended to murder him by the hand of Romanus, the Master of the Offices;¹¹ in fact when in the civil war between Emperor and Patrician Ricimer took Rome and the City fell for the third time in the fifth century to a barbarian foe (472), Anthemius was detected in disguise and slain, perhaps by the hand of Gundobad, Ricimer's nephew.¹² As far as victims of less than August rank are concerned, it is likely that in some quarters the death of Aegidius, the Patrician's archenemy in Gaul, was credited to Ricimer;¹³ suspicion likewise probably implicated him in the murder of Count Marcellinus, another bitter foe.¹⁴ The murders of Avitus, Majorian, and Anthemius, the first two of which occurred before the death of Severus, seem fairly certain; the suspicions of Anthemius himself certainly tell against the Patrician, but after two imperial murders one might think of mere gossip

rather than guilt in the case of Severus. Yet not all sudden deaths in antiquity were credited to murder. Ricimer himself died suddenly not long after the murder of Anthemius, while in turn his current Emperor, Olybrius, also died suddenly, not long after Ricimer. Yet—an argument from silence—there seems to be no trace of suspicion of foul play in either case. Although Ricimer's guilt in the case of Severus cannot be proved or disproved, it is certainly significant that not long after the death of that Emperor Sidonius found it desirable effectively to deny the imputation; his *Panegyric* on Anthemius was delivered on 1 Jan., 468. If Ricimer was thought by some to have murdered Severus, we may presume that some sort of motive was assigned; that is, that Ricimer wished to rid himself of the Emperor. But if Severus was in fact such a totally docile creature, why murder him? The pretender Attalus, deemed no danger, had merely been mutilated and exiled to Lipara by Honorius in 416; the formerly dangerous "tyrant" Constantine had thought (erroneously) that he could escape execution by entering holy orders;¹⁵ the Emperor Glycerius (473–74) was deposed and made Bishop of Salona.¹⁶ Avitus was at first permitted to become a bishop by Ricimer himself. In its last generations the Western Empire had begun to follow the habits of Byzantium, where for a thousand years fallen Emperors were by no means always

No. 58 (pp. 153–54); cf. J. Sundwall, *Weströmsche Studien* (Berlin, 1915), No. 60 (p. 55); L. Cantarelli, "L'imperatore Maioriano," *Archiv. della Soc. Rom. di Storia Patria*, VI (1883), 259–301, at 273 and n. 1 (who probably wrongly denies that Avitus was made a bishop); *idem*, "Annali d'Italia dalla morte di Valentiniano III alla deposizione di Romolo Augustolo," *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto*, XVII (1896), 39–123, at 62; F. Gabotto, *Storia della Italia occidentale nel medio evo (395–1313)*, I (Pinerolo, 1911), 256–57.

9. Evag. *HE* 2. 7 (with Bidez and Parmentier, *app. crit.*); C. E. Stevens, *Sidonius Apollinaris and His Age* (Oxford, 1933), p. 38, n. 4.

10. Stevens, *Sid. Apoll.* p. 58; Cantarelli, *Archiv. della Soc. Rom. di Storia Patria*, VI (1883), 298 and n. 1; A. Solari, *Il rinnovamento dell'impero romano*, I (Milan, 1938), 483, n. 181.

11. Sundwall, No. 409 (p. 127); cf. E. Stein, *Histoire du bas-empire*, I (French [2d] ed. by J.-R. Palanque; Bruges, 1959), 394.

12. Stein, *Hist.*, I, 395, with n. 172 (on p. 603).

13. Hyd. 228 (II, 33); cf. G. Tamassia, "Egidio e Siagrio," *Riv. stor. ital.*, III (1886), 193–234, at 226.

14. *Cons. Ital.* 601 (*Chron. min.*, I, 305); Marcellin. *s.a.* 468 (*Chron. min.*, II, 90); Procop. *Bell.* 3 (*Vand.* 1). 6. 25; with W. Ensslin, *s.v.* "Marcellinus" (25), *RE*, XIV: 2 (1930), 1446–48, at 1447; *idem*, "Zum Heermeisteramt des spätromischen Reiches: III. Der magister utriusque militiae et patricius des 5. Jahrhunderts," *Klio*, XXIV (1930), 467–502, at 492.

15. See *Galla Placidia Augusta* (Chicago, 1968), pp. 110, 132–33, or any detailed account of the reign of Honorius.

16. Sources in Stein, *Hist.*, I, 604, n. 176.

consigned to the safekeeping of the tomb. Yet Ricimer slew or was believed to have slain an absolute nonentity.

The point is that the common, facile textbook view that Ricimer regularly ruled with little or no objection from his puppets simply is not true;¹⁷ he had difficulty with every single Emperor (with the apparent exception of Severus) "under whom" he served, except for Olybrius, whose accession he himself survived only a few weeks or months. Even under Ricimer's domination an Emperor could hardly forget what he was or what he was supposed to be, *rerum dominus*, Lord of creation. A look at the politics of the 460's will show that while Ricimer had his adherents among the ruling classes, he also had his opponents; the facile generalization that under Severus the Patrician completely overawed the senatorial aristocracy¹⁸ is improbable. It is likely that the real political situation in Italy was more complex than has usually been thought. The murder of Majorian opened the way for the eventual succession of Severus; from the attendant circumstances one can deduce something of the political situation of the time as well as the ambitions of Ricimer.

Majorian made the mistake of discharging most of his expensively hired barbarian troops before he returned to Italy after the failure (through the betrayal of persons unspecified) of his great expedition against the Vandals before it even left Spain. In Liguria at Dertona the hapless Emperor was seized by order of Ricimer and stripped of the imperial insignia (2 August, 461); after he had been physically abused by his captors his head

was struck off in the vicinity of the river Ira not far away (7 August).¹⁹ There can be no doubt whatever that Ricimer was moved to his bloody deed by his resentment and probable envy of the activity and energy of Majorian, who had certainly disappointed the Patrician's expectation that he would be a mere figurehead. Yet Ricimer had not acted until Majorian's prestige and power were diminished by the Vandal failure, nor had he acted alone. The contemporary Hydatius tells us (210 [*Chron. min.*, II, 32]) that Ricimer was moved by *livor* (envy, spite, malice, ill will) and "*invidorum consilio fultus*" ("supported by the advice of persons ill-disposed [to the Emperor]"). It is fairly easy to infer who these ill-disposed persons were.

The first several months of Majorian's reign had beheld a series of reforming statutes enacted by the enthusiasm of the young Emperor and aimed at correcting various of the oppressive abuses of the day (see *NMaj. passim*). Historians have been guarded in their praise of these efforts because they question, rightly, whether the reformer's pen was capable of removing the inveterate oppressions of the time, intimately connected as they were with the centuries-old forces which were producing the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and its society, and whose triumph would be signalized, although not completed, by the disappearance of the Western imperial state itself within a few years. Nevertheless it has also been rightly pointed out that even the effort to enforce these laws, or the apprehension of such effort, would alienate those who profited from such abuses, the great nobles, the bureaucracy, and even the Church itself.²⁰ It has not been

17. So A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (2 vols.; Norman, Okla., 1964), I, 241, 327.

18. Stein, *Hist.*, I 380; the evidence for Stein's assertion of the alliance between Ricimer and the (whole) Italian aristocracy is merely the statement of Hyd. 211 (II, 32) that Severus was dutifully recognized at Rome by the senate (after Ricimer

had made him Emperor *de facto* at Ravenna, Cassiod. *Chron.* 1274 [II, 157]; cf. Mar. Avent. *s.a.* 461 [II, 232]).

19. Synthesis of sources and citations in Stein, *Hist.*, I, 379-80, with nn.; Seeck, *Gesch.*, VI, 348, with nn.

20. For characteristic praise of Majorian see J. B. Bury, ed. Gibbon, IV, 18-19; for reservations about the value of his

commonly observed, however, that two other policies of Majorian must certainly have augmented the numbers of his enemies and intensified their exasperation. In the first place, he was a very expensive Emperor. His great expedition against the Vandals must have cost a huge sum. Before the mobilization of the expedition a victory over a mere nine hundred barbarians was deemed worthy of lavish praise as an outstanding success (Ap. Sid. *Carm.* 5 [Pan. *Mai.*]. 376–77), but for the maximum effort against Geiseric a huge and motley horde of barbarian auxiliaries was collected (*ibid.* 470–80, 484). A large fleet was also constructed; Sidonius tells us (*ibid.* 448–61) in his usual exaggerating way that it exceeded in size those of Agamemnon, Xerxes, and Cleopatra at Actium. Priscus (Frag. 27 [FHG, IV, 103]) more prosaically informs us that it numbered about three hundred vessels.²¹ And this fleet was built in Italy (Ap. Sid. *Carm.* 5. 441–45), and probably mainly at the expense of its people.²² The spirit that the Emperor was trying to instill in the financial administration would try to insure that a proper and proportionate share of these taxes would fall on the estates of the great (*NMai.* 2; cf. the implications of 3 and 7). Notori-

ously the great nobles, who in smug self-satisfaction vaunted their devotion to Rome and what it stood for, in practice did their best to prevent their inordinate wealth from serving the real needs of the state.

Another practice of Majorian may have infuriated the great nobles of Italy even more, for it struck directly at their colossal pride of place and their overweening arrogance; the reference is to several of the Emperor's appointments to high office. In the fifth century the growing weakness of the central imperial government had caused it to yield to the increasing sense of corporate identity, as opposed to unanimity with the Empire as a whole, of the Gallic aristocracy, by regularly appointing Gallic nobles to the high offices of their homeland.²³ Thus, that Majorian should appoint the Gaul Magnus to be Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls,²⁴ and Aegidius, likewise a Gaul, to be Master of Both Branches of the Soldiery²⁵ presumably had little effect upon the nobles of Italy. But by the fifth century the higher administrative (and honorary) posts in the central administration were largely monopolized by the greater (Roman) Italian aristocrats.²⁶ Hence it was an entirely different matter when Magnus after holding the (central

efforts, Seeck, *Gesch.*, VI, 341. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire*, I (New York, 1958 [= 1923]), 332 and n. 3, thinks Majorian was popular in Italy. Perhaps he was thus among the theoretical beneficiaries of his reforms, but such popularity hardly affected the powerful forces whose perquisites, illegal gains, and prepotence would be adversely affected; unfortunately it was these latter who counted. On the church, see R. Paribeni, *Da Diocleziano alla caduta dell'impero d'occidente* (Bologna, 1941), p. 283; Seeck, *Gesch.*, VI, 342 (on the other hand, Majorian widened the area of episcopal jurisdiction by repealing a law of Valentinian III; cf. L. Salvatorelli, *L'Italia medioevale* [Milan, n. d.], p. 65); in general, A. M. Papini, *Ricimero* (Milan [1959]), pp. 140–41; Gabotto, I, 265; Bury-Gibbon, IV, 26; Cantarelli, *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto*, XVII (1896), 76; *idem*, *Archiv. d. Soc. Rom. di Storia Patria*, VI (1883), 297.

21. On the great effort involved on land and sea, in general Prisc. Frag. 27 (IV, 103) and Joh. Ant. Frag. 203 (IV, 616, probably based on Prisc.); Procop. *Bell.* 3 (*Vand.* 1). 7. 4.

22. The financial contributions of Gaul, once Majorian was recognized there, are obscure. Certainly the taxes were increased there, whether generally or on Majorian's former

opponents only (Ap. Sid. *Carm.* 5. 446–48; cf. 13. 19, 35–37). Sidonius asked for a remission of the tax increase (*Carm.* 13); it is usually assumed that he got it (cf. L. Vassili, "La figura di Nepoziano e l'opposizione ricimeriana al governo imperiale di Maggioriano," *Athenaeum*, 2 ser., XIV [1936], 56–66, at 60), but even if so, it is uncertain whether this remission was extended to others. If it was so extended, then Italy was still left to bear the burden. In any case it must have borne most of the cost, for much of Gaul was either in the effective control of barbarians (and thus not subject in fact to imperial taxation), or lay waste as a result of the continual destruction wrought upon the area's resources in the fifth century.

23. Sundwall, pp. 12–13; Stroheker, pp. 3, 25, 44, 62; *Galla Placidia*, pp. 151 (and nn.), 237–38; A. H. M. Jones, "Were Ancient Heresies National or Social Movements in Disguise?" *Journal of Theological Studies*, n. s., X (1959), 280–98, at 295.

24. Stroheker, No. 232 (p. 190); Sundwall, No. 288 (p. 98).

25. Stroheker, No. 1 (p. 141); Sundwall, No. 3 (p. 39).

26. Jones, *Roman Empire*, II, 1066; *Galla Placidia*, pp. 237–38.

administrative) post of Master of the Offices became consul of Rome in 460. The consulship, in fact an empty dignity, was still ardently sought after by the Roman nobility; its members were willing to expend on its inane frivolity the huge sums which they otherwise selfishly reserved to their own enjoyment. If Severinus, who was consul in 461, was also a Gaul (cf. Ap. Sid. *Ep.* 1. 11. 10), the grievance of the Italian aristocrats must have been redoubled. Perhaps it was less felt as a cause of resentment that Paeonius, who had usurped the dignity of Praetorian Prefect of the Gauls, was allowed to retain the rank and honors of an ex-Prefect.²⁷ Although Domnulus²⁸ was of African antecedents, he had moved to Gaul where he must have had important connections; at any rate he was not Italian, yet became Quaestor of the Sacred Palace. Petrus, who became *Magister epistularum* under Majorian, a high office although not of the very highest rank, may also have been a Gaul; in any event he possessed great influence with Majorian;²⁹ if he was a Gaul, or possibly a nobody, his appointment also cannot have pleased the Italian nobility. Obviously every appointment that Majorian made of Gauls excluded an Italian aristocrat from distinction or power; the accident of circumstance has preserved these names to us; it is legitimate to think that there may well have been others. Even if it was obvious to the Italian nobles of the time that Majorian on principle was

trying to conciliate the Gauls who had been disappointed by the overthrow of Avitus and Majorian's own accession,³⁰ and to win over the Gallic faction whose rebellion against him he had suppressed by force, we may be sure that no sentiments of patriotism or statesmanship softened the ire of many Italian aristocrats at the Emperor's infringement on what they regarded as their prideful and righteous monopoly. One begins to have a better idea of who the "ill-disposed" persons were who gave their support to Ricimer when he determined to rid himself permanently of Majorian.

Yet it would almost certainly be an error to suppose that Majorian had no supporters, and Ricimer no enemies. Obviously elements among the Gallic nobility represented by Majorian's appointments and partially identical with Sidonius and his friends were in some degree favorable to the Emperor. In the nature of human affairs we may also postulate that the latter was not without some support among the nobles of Italy. The various excuses put about by Ricimer to explain Majorian's death are themselves evidence that there existed groups which he wished to placate, if possible. Certainly at the time of the downfall of Anthemius there were those bitterly opposed to the Sueve,³¹ and it seems likely that one motive for Ricimer's elevation of Olybrius to the throne was to conciliate the greatest of all families among the Roman nobility, the Anicii.³² Again, there is a

27. Sundwall, No. 338 (p. 113), with the corrections of W. Ensslin, *s.v.* "Paeonius" (7), *RE*, XVIII: 2 (1942) 2411-12, at 2412; Stroheker, No. 273 (p. 197).

28. Sundwall, No. 132 (pp. 69-70); Stroheker, No. 105 (p. 164); cf. Jülicher, *s.v.* "Domnulus" (2), *RE*, V (1905), 1526.

29. Sundwall, No. 365 (p. 118).

30. Nepotianus, *mag. mil.* under Majorian (not Avitus as Sundwall, No. 326 [p. 109], says; cf. W. Ensslin, *s.v.* "Nepotianus" (6), *RE*, XVI: 2 [1935], 2513), is probably also to be seen as a promoted Gaul (as Tillemont, *Empereurs*, VI [Venice, 1739], 320, saw long ago); he was the father of the future Emperor Julius Nepos; his wife was the sister of Count Marcellinus (who may well also have had other Gallic con-

nections). The Gallic connection explains why the *coniuratio Marcelliniana* offered the throne to Marcellinus and was named after him. In his turn Anthemius later tried to conciliate the Gallic nobility; cf., e.g., P. Courcelle, *Histoire littéraire des grandes invasions germaniques*³ (Paris, 1964), p. 174.

31. Paul. Diac. *Rom.* 15. 3; cf. Joh. Ant. Frag. 209 (IV, 617); Nagy, *Acta antiqua*, XV (1967), 175-76, argues that Cassiodorus represents a tradition bitterly hostile to Ricimer.

32. So F. Lot in Lot, C. Pfister, and F. L. Ganshof, *Les destinées de l'empire en occident de 395 à 888* (Paris 1928), p. 89; on Olybrius, Sundwall, No. 331 (pp. 110-11).

tradition in the extant historiography for the later fifth century which bespeaks a (noble) source favorable to Ricimer.³³ The nobles at Milan who sought to promote a reconciliation between the Patrician and Anthemius (Ennod. *V. Epif.* 53 [p. 90, Vogel]) probably included adherents of both and of neither. The career of the great Roman noble Flavius Caecina Decius Maximus Basilius³⁴ serves as a warning not to interpret matters in a simplistic fashion. Basilius was Praetorian Prefect of Italy under Majorian and again under Severus, when he is also described as Patrician; in 463 he was consul. We are told he was a man of the greatest influence (Ap. Sid. *Ep.* 1. 9); yet he befriended the Gaul Sidonius so well in advancing his cause with Anthemius and Ricimer that the poet was able to deliver his *Panegyric* on the Emperor and be promoted to the urban prefecture as a result. Basilius may have come by his tendency to befriend a Gallic noble by heredity; he was a probable connection of the important Roman noble of the reign of Valentinian III, Caecina Decius Acinatus Albinus,³⁵ who seems to have had connections with Gaul (Prosp. 1341 [*Chron. min.*, I, 478]). Such a man as Basilius obviously could maintain his power and authority despite the kaleidoscopic political changes of the 460's, and his connection with Gaul despite the opposition of much of the Gallic aristocracy to Ricimer. And Sidonius himself could be son-in-law of Avitus, then change his allegiance to Majorian, serve Anthemius as Urban Prefect, and fulsomely praise both the latter and Ricimer in his *Panegyric* of 1 January, 468. Certainly there are groups, or factions, but they are fluid and changing,

in typical Roman fashion after the political habits of centuries, and depend more on personal interest than on ideology.

There were, however, other issues on which there was division among the political elements in Italy. In the first place, and of some importance, was the question of the attitude of Romans of all classes toward the Germans; this varied from almost total nonchalance to heated enmity; nevertheless it would be easy to exaggerate the relevant attitude as a force in Roman politics, especially in the Western Empire: it was an attitude that could be used by emotional appeals for the manipulation of Roman politics, rather than a prime motive force among the cold-headed politicians of late Rome.³⁶ It is in this context that we should note that Anthemius is said to have referred to Ricimer as a *pellitus Geta*, a "hide-wearing Geta [Goth]" (Ennod. *V. Epif.* 67 [p. 92, Vogel]); more than one student has pointed out that the description is a canard; almost certainly Ricimer ordinarily wore Roman garb. But Anthemius, who had given his daughter in marriage to the Patrician, was aware that, like emotion-laden words in the politics of every age, such a term could be used as a political weapon. Undoubtedly there were those who sincerely believed that it was disgraceful that a German barbarian should dominate the state, and, among the prime movers of policy and intrigue, others, realists, who found the utilization of such beliefs advantageous. The student of the politics of any epoch will smile cynically. Men are ruled and moved by words and symbols.

But Ricimer, whether by explicit cogitation or instinctively, knew this too. He

33. Nagy, *Acta antiqua*, XV (1967), 176-77.

34. Sundwall, No. 63 (pp. 55-56); cf. E. Stein, "Untersuchungen zum Staatsrecht des Bas-Empire," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte, Rom. Abt.*, XLI (1920), 194-251 at 237-38.

35. So Sundwall, No. 63 (p. 56); cf. No. 14 (pp. 45-46).

36. For fuller discussion, see *Galla Placidia*, index, s.v. "Germans: feeling for and against."

could acquiesce that Anthemius was a "Greekling" (*Graeculus*) and call him an "aroused Galatian" (*Galata concitatus*), or so we are told (Ennod. *V. Epif.* 53, 54 [pp. 90, 91, Vogel]). For there was certainly an envious antagonism on the part of many Westerners toward Constantinople and the Eastern Empire.³⁷ Westerners could not forget that the Empire was Roman, that the East had been subjected to Western Rome long centuries before by the might of Roman, Western, arms. Yet amid the progressive dissolution of the Western Empire the East remained relatively strong and presumed to impose sovereigns of its choosing on the West. Sidonius' verses honoring Anthemius recur again and again to this sore point with their repeated attempts to excuse the Emperor for his Eastern origins, and by their lame assertion that Western Rome is satisfied by her past triumphs (*Carm.* 2 *passim*). Ricimer's ambition, as the inter-regna both before and after the reign of Severus seem clearly to show us, was to rule without benefit of a Western Emperor to hinder him at all (see below). His acceptance of Severus himself, as well as Anthemius, was probably reluctant yielding to necessity; the time for an Odovakar who could dispense with an Emperor in Italy was not yet, although near. There were still influential circles in Italy which wanted an Emperor, at the very least as a symbol of the still enduring importance of the West and of themselves, preferably an Emperor of the West's own choosing, but at second best one imposed by the East, if

need be.³⁸ Thus Anthemius had his supporters as against Ricimer, especially among the mob of Rome as well as its eminent senators and officials; he was an Emperor, although a Greekling, as opposed to an upstart German.³⁹ These different opinions and interests, German and anti-German, East versus West, and above all the personal ambitions of the politically active, produced a complex situation—as usual in Roman politics. Any given individual might thus exert his influence and support in one direction at a given time in concert with a number of other individuals, at another time in another direction together with men who might by no means be wholly or partially identical with the previous group. The sailing by the prevailing wind, or what seemed to be (and with obvious success), of Sidonius and Basiliscus has been commented on above. This was, more or less, the political situation in which Severus as Emperor must play a role, whether as pawn or as Emperor.⁴⁰

The Emperor Majorian was killed 7 August, 461. Severus did not succeed him until 19 November, three and a half months later.⁴¹ Almost certainly the new Emperor was not recognized by Leo I in the East. Hence the delay in Severus' elevation is interesting and instructive. It seems probable that Ricimer did not on the spur of the moment resolve on so serious a step as the overthrow of Majorian; indeed his support from persons "ill-disposed" seems to imply a gradual maturation of his plans and resentment. It

37. E.g., M. A. Wes, *Das Ende des Kaisertums im Westen des römischen Reiches* (The Hague, 1967), p. 37 and chap. ii., *passim*; A. Loyer, *Recherches historiques sur les panégyriques de Sidoine Apollinaire* (Paris, 1942), p. 95.

38. This is the main thesis of Wes, *Ende*; it is almost certainly correct.

39. Joh. Ant. Frag. 209. 1 (IV, 617); Paul. Diac. *Rom.* 15. 3; in his usual imprecise fashion Malalas, 15, p. 375 (B.) remarks that Ricimer made Olybrius Emperor according to the sentiments of the Roman senate; rather, he made him

Emperor to win over as much as possible of the aristocracy of which Olybrius was so distinguished a representative.

40. The foregoing discussion is a repudiation of the simplistic view of those who see all things in fifth-century politics as pro- or anti-German, or, less commonly, as pro- or anti-East, or frequently as Italian vs. Germans or East. For this sort of opinion cf. esp. Solari in most of his books and articles, representing a long, and I believe mistaken, tradition in Italian scholarship.

41. On his accession date, see Seeck, *Gesch.*, VI, 349, 482, generally accepted.

might be foreseen without much difficulty that, once the Vandal expedition had failed and a peace or truce had been arranged with Geiseric, Majorian would dismiss his expensive barbarian forces and return to Italy, provided that he had no inkling of the lengths to which the Patrician was prepared to go, and in fact the Emperor obviously did entertain no such suspicion. But Ricimer was found, as the event shows, to have no ready candidate for the throne. The strong likelihood presents itself that he wanted no Emperor. When one reflects that after the death of Severus (14 November, 465⁴²) not until 25 March, 467⁴³ was Anthemius elevated to the purple in the East by Leo I, obviously with the prior agreement of Ricimer, and that the latter was driven to obtain at this price the help of the Eastern government against his encircling foes,⁴⁴ it becomes a probability that Ricimer would have preferred no Emperor; he had had difficulties with Avitus, Majorian, and perhaps Severus. And in fact he was to wage an open civil war against Anthemius.⁴⁵

Severus, then, was an afterthought, a necessity to legitimize his power forced on Ricimer by presumptive stubborn opposition to his naked domination on the part of influential Italian groups. Since Severus, at least at the beginning, if ever, was not recognized by Leo I, his accession was not an attempt to please the East. We must regard Severus as chosen purely to serve as a façade for Ricimer's power; certainly those who not only insisted upon its own Emperor for the West, but presumably that Emperor a Western choice, were to be placated. As we have seen, it is

unlikely that this group was either distinct from the anti-Germans, or that its personnel was regularly identical with the latter. Severus certainly was a Western Emperor; one of the few things we happen to be told about him is that he was a Lucanian.⁴⁶ After his proclamation, presumably by and to the troops, had occurred at Ravenna,⁴⁷ by ancient protocol⁴⁸ he was also recognized as Augustus by the senate at Rome (Hyd. 211 [II, 32]). This bow to custom and the prejudices of the senate meant little; members of that theoretically exalted body might secretly and perhaps successfully intrigue against Ricimer and his creature, but as a body, openly, they had no choice but to ratify the will of the man who controlled the armed force of the state. Perhaps more significantly, however, we are told that Aegidius, Majorian's old comrade in arms, angry at the latter's murder, projected hostilities against "the Italians" (Prisc. Frag. 30 [IV, 104]) (from which he was deterred by the necessity of coping with armed revolts in Gaul). Unfortunately the source is only a fragment in epitome, but it seems likely that Ricimer's name would have been mentioned instead of "Italians," had it occurred in the original text. That Aegidius' enmity was directed against the Italians in general may be important. Of course, in this age, the Italian people are not to be understood, but the regime in Italy, the "Western Romans," as Priscus calls them. We may be entitled to infer that at the beginning of Severus' reign the majority of the Italian aristocracy accepted Ricimer's solution and his Emperor, for whatever congeries

42. On the date, *ibid.*, p. 483.

43. Joh. Ant. Frag. 209. 1 (IV, 617), with Seeck, *Gesch.*, VI, 486.

44. E.g., Stein, *Hist.*, I, 359.

45. Cf. Theophanes, p. 109 (de B.), who remarks that there was no (*de facto*) Emperor after Severus, but that Ricimer ruled as he pleased.

46. *Chron. Gall.* 511-636 (I, 664); Cassiod. *Chron.* 1274 (II,

157); cf. K. F. Stroheker, "Der politische Zerfall des römischen Westens," *Germanentum und Spätantike* (Zürich, 1965), pp. 88-100 (= *Palaeologia*, VII: 3/4 [1959], 10-17), at p. 95.

47. Cassiod. *Chron.* 1274 (II, 157); Mar. Avent. *s.a.* 461 (II, 232); Paul. Diac. *Rom.* 15. 1.

48. On this form in the fifth century, see Wes, *Ende*, pp. 42-43.

of reasons as far as individuals are concerned. We are also informed that Severus became Emperor and consul at the same time (*Chron. Gall.* 511 636 [*Chron. min.*, I, 664]); the statement is manifestly untrue if taken literally, but Severus did in fact assume the Western consulate for 462, in accordance with the age-old custom of Emperors on the first Calends of January following their *dies imperii*. If any truth is to be found in this statement of a Gallic source, one may perhaps infer that Severus designated himself consul for the next year almost immediately upon his elevation. In turn this may also imply that his promotion had been undertaken without the prior consent of Leo, and that it was therefore useless to expect the confirmation of the senior Augustus.

Despite the silence of the sources we may also infer that Severus was a senator, and that he had previously held offices of at least some importance or distinction; otherwise, had he been a complete nobody, his election would have been a slap in the face to the aristocracy, and there is no reason to believe that the crafty Ricimer would have thus needlessly offended the *amour-propre* of such powerful men. That Severus' previous career is completely unknown to us is by no means surprising; many a tenant of very high office in the fifth century is also completely unknown to us until he attains such a position. It is unfortunate that Apollinaris Sidonius did not also deliver a panegyric in honor of this Emperor. And finally, of course, it is obvious that Ricimer will have supposed

that this time he had found a figurehead who would give him no trouble.

There is in fact a piece of evidence to which historians have often pointed disdainfully as an indication of the ineffectual impotence of Severus Augustus under the thumb of his powerful mentor. There exists a small bronze plate with the inscription, "salvis dd. nn. [Severus and Leo] et patricio Ricimere Plotinus Eustathius v. c. urb. pr. fecit."⁴⁹ For a subject thus to be put on a level with the ever August Emperors themselves was a very great thing. Nevertheless we should not be unduly impressed by this inscription. In the first place it is not found on a monumental document, and we may infer with little fear of contradiction that Eustathius was a devoted adherent of Ricimer. One may also note that Sidonius (*Carm.* 2 [*Anth.*]. 352) can call the Patrician "invictus," a title reserved for Emperors in the past, and further laud his military virtues in terms once appropriate only to the sovereign (*ibid.* 352–54, etc.). Such quasi-imperial honors had been of gradual growth for pre-eminent subjects through the whole course of the fifth century.⁵⁰ During Severus' reign Ricimer sent out ambassadors, but so had Aëtius under Valentinian III, both alone and together with the Emperor.⁵¹ Hence, one should not interpret this document to indicate a degree of especial power or dignity of Ricimer under Severus as compared with practice in the reigns of other Emperors of the time.

The two surviving pieces of the legisla-

49. ILS 813 = *CIL*, X, 8072. 4; cf. *CIL*, XV, 7109. For the reasoning to demonstrate that the Emperors referred to are in fact Severus and Leo, see L. Cantarelli, "Intorno ad alcuni prefetti di Roma della serie corsiniana," *Bullettino della Commissione Archeologica Comunale di Roma*, XVI (1888), 189–203, at 194–95; cf. J. Friedlaender, "Die Erwerbungen des Münzkabinetts im Jahre 1880," *Zeitschrift für Numismatik*, IX (1882), 1–17, at 2.

50. Ensslin, *Klio*, XXIV (1930), 500–502, correctly traces this tendency back to Constantius (III) when he was Patrician and *Mag. mil.* under Honorius before he became coregent

himself. But one can go back at least a bit farther, to the great honors paid to Stilicho at the beginning of the century; see J. Straub, "Parens Principum," *La nouvelle Klio*, IV (1952), 94–115, at 96. Among other things, note that Ensslin calls attention to Majorian's naming Ricimer as his collaborator in his programmatic constitution to the senate at the beginning of his reign (*NMai.* 1); yet no one has ever used this fact to impugn the energy of that Emperor.

51. Prisc. *Frgs.* 8 (IV, 85a), 29 (103); Hyd. 96, 98 (II. 22); cf. Ensslin, *Klio*, XXIV (1930), 501.

tion of the "Divine Severus" indicate that he did what was expected of him as Emperor, pleasing such powerful presumptive backers of Ricimer as the church and the nobility. On 20 February, 463, he revoked the more offensive of the anti-clerical legislation of Majorian (*NSev.* 1). This revocation is quite to be expected and supports the statement of another source (*Laterc. Imp. [Chron. min., III, 423]*) that Severus lived *religiose*, that is, piously, religiously, with due respect to the injunctions of the church. The same source states that he died at Rome while living such a life. This law was issued at Rome (*NSev.* 2 has no indication of place); we may infer that Severus ordinarily resided in or near the City, whether in the ancient residences of the Caesars on the Palatine, or in various of the imperial suburban villas in the close vicinity. This presence of the Emperor in the City⁵² must in itself have been gratifying to the pride and esteem of the nobility and the "Romans." Nor were the nobles otherwise forgotten. Another divine statute, decreed for eternity on 25 September, 465, and like the previous law directed to Basilius, Praetorian Prefect of Italy, shuts an escape route from serfdom which *coloni* had found for their children (*NSev.* 2). The great nobles had thousands of these *coloni* in their control to work their lands, and in the manpower shortage which characterized the Late Empire were anxious to lose neither their services nor their children's; the law was obviously uttered in the interest of the nobles.

Whether for his own sake, or for his

involvement with Ricimer, we may take it for granted that Severus had enemies, persons who were "ill-disposed" to him. There may be evidence which attests this fact independently of a priori considerations. Theophanes (p. 112 [de B.]) writes of Severus' elevation to the purple as follows: καὶ ἐπήρθη εἰς βασιλέα Σευήρος καὶ Σερπέντιος. One obviously notes that a singular verb is followed by a plural subject, contrary to the basic rules of Greek grammar for masculine nouns. De Boor's *apparatus criticus ad loc.* contains the note: "Σευήρος ὁ καὶ Σερπ[έντιος] Combefis." (François Combefis published an edition of Theophanes' *Chronographia* at Paris in 1655.) Conservatively de Boor does not admit the emendation (almost necessary though it may seem) into his text. In his index (II, 702, s.v. Σερπέντιος) he remarks of this passage: "in loco corrupto legitur . . . , ubi fort. leg. Σευήρος ὁ καὶ Σερπέντιος." In the circumstances by themselves the emendation seems almost irresistible. But the name recurs in the *Paschal Chronicle* (p. 593 [B]), where the consuls for 462 are listed as Leo I and "Serpentios." Since it is undisputed fact that in 462 the consuls were Leo I and Libius Severus, we must accept that Severus possessed a *signum*, or *super-nomen*, *Serpentius*, although the word seems otherwise unknown to Latin (or Greek) lexicography.⁵³ *Signa* are notoriously common in names of the imperial period,⁵⁴ and they sometimes have a pejorative significance; they could also be taken from the names of animals and were not infrequently developed according to

52. Cf. Jord. *Get.* 236; *Rom.* 336; Marcell. *s.a.* 465, 2 (II, 89); *Cons. Ital.* 595 (I, 305); Cassiod. *Chron.* 1280 (II, 158); Paul. Diac. *Rom.* 15. 1; *Laterc. Imp.* (III, 423).

53. O. Holder-Egger suggests, "Untersuchungen über einige annalistische Quellen zur Geschichte des fünften und sechsten Jahrhunderts," *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, I (1876), 13-120, 213-368; II (1877), 47-109; at I, 291, n. 3, that the name *Serpentios* may be a corruption. It seems difficult to believe that ΣΕΠΙΤΙΕΙΟΣ is a paleographical error for ΣΕΥΗΡΟΣ or

ΣΕΒΗΡΟΣ, or something similar. Hence there seems no reason for Cantarelli to say, *Studi e documenti di storia e diritto*, XVII (1896), 78, n. 2, that the two sources "erroneously" attribute the name to Severus. Long ago Tillemont, *Empereurs*, VI, 326, 327, saw that the name belonged to Severus, although he was at loss to explain the fact.

54. For all that is said here on *signa* see I. Kajanto, *Super-nomina* (Helsingfors, 1966), esp. pp. 16, 20, 21, 40, 52-57, 88 ("Serpentius" does not occur in K.'s alphabetical list).

the paradigm Constans > Constantius. There can be little doubt that the sense here is pejorative. The snake in pagan imagery, both Greek and Latin,⁵⁵ could symbolize wisdom, but most commonly it symbolized undesirable traits, as it did in the Judeo-Christian tradition which was widespread in the later fifth century. Hence, since we must assume that such a *signum* was hardly likely to be perpetuated by the man to whom it was attached, we may infer that its extension to Eastern usage (for it obviously originated in the Latin West) is the work of opponents of Severus who presumably saw him as "snakelike." This is true even if, as is possible but seems unlikely, the name were hereditarily transmitted. Possibly a "snake-like" person is devious, a born intriguer.

The important question then confronts us. Unless we are to assume that the fact or rumor of Ricimer's complicity in the Emperor's death is entirely without foundation, we must inquire whether there is anything in the history of Severus' reign which gives color to the supposition that he was not so harmless that Ricimer would

not lift his hand against him, or be credited with doing so. There is one fact which suggests that Severus might have become fractious, provided he were not a complete worm. The consuls for 464 were both Easterners, both certainly appointed by Leo I: Flavius Rustic(i)us and Anicius Olybrius.⁵⁶ What is important to note here is that Olybrius' name as consul was promulgated in the West.⁵⁷ Again in 465 both consuls, Hermeneric and Basiliscus, were Easterners; possibly Severus might have regarded their appointment with equanimity, but it seems impossible to believe that any man in his position could have noted the acceptance of Olybrius as consul in the West, almost certainly on the instructions of Ricimer, without grave misgivings for his own future. For Olybrius had imperial claims in the West himself. He was the husband of Placidia, the daughter of Valentinian III.⁵⁸ As the son-in-law of the last Western Emperor of the great and legitimate Theodosian house he had, according to ideas commonly held in the Late Empire, a natural claim to the position that Severus himself occupied.⁵⁹

55. See both the Greek and Latin lexica, *s.vv.*, all words for "snake."

56. A. Degrassi, *I fasti consolari dell' impero romano* (Rome, 1952), p. 93; Mommsen, *Chron. min.*, III, 535.

57. Degrassi, p. 93; De Rossi, *Ins. christ.*, I, 812, 813. The only scholar who seems to have appreciated that this is a significant fact is Nagy, *Acta antiqua*, XV (1967), 180-83, but for the reasons indicated in the text it seems impossible to believe that Severus could have passively accepted the naming and publication of Olybrius as consul for the West. By an ingenious argument Nagy also proposes that Leo recognized Severus as Caesar in the West, but not Augustus (184); this is possible, but doubtful. There can be no real doubt of the identity of the Olybrius concerned; cf., e.g., Paribeni, p. 288; O. Seeck, *s.v.* "Anicius Olybrius" (52), *RE*, I: 2 (1894), 2207-8.

58. See Sundwall, No. 331 (pp. 110-11); *CP*, LIX (1964), 27-28 with nn.; on the importance of legitimacy in the succession to the imperial throne in the Late Empire, see *Galla Placidia*, index, *s.v.* "Legitimacy, principle of."

59. Since the Theodosian house had also reigned in the East, Olybrius was also not without potential claims on the Eastern throne as well. There can be no doubt that when Leo sent Anthemius to be Western Emperor he was, among other things, ridding himself of a potential rival, for Anthemius was the son-in-law of the former Eastern Emperor Marcian, whose own legitimacy had been procured by marrying him to the Augusta Pulcheria, the last Eastern descendant of Theo-

dosius the Great. A question debated among scholars is whether Leo deliberately sent Olybrius to act against Anthemius in the West in 472; see, e.g., J. B. Bury, "A Note on the Emperor Olybrius," *EHR*, I (1886), 507-9; Tillemont, *Empereurs*, VI, 360; L. Vassili, "Note di storia imperiale," *Riv. di filol.*, LXV (1937), 160-68, at 161 and n. 2. It may be noted that one piece of evidence offered against this view, the pious and filial expressions of Anthemius regarding Leo in *NAnth.* 2, 3, are of little or no weight. Insofar as these are not merely imperial protocol by which one Augustus refers to the senior who had appointed him, they merely emphasize that Anthemius had no power base in the West; if he were to have any countervailing force to Ricimer he could only hope to find it in Leo, to whom, therefore, he must be cordial, not to say obsequious. That Olybrius was recognized as consul in the West in 464, eight years before his own brief elevation to the Western throne, would seem to confirm that thus early Leo was dealing with Ricimer and planning upon the eventual possibility of ridding himself of Olybrius by sending him to the West. Why he sent Anthemius first, and Olybrius later, is not immediately apparent. Perhaps fluctuations in the influence of Leo's own prepotent general, Aspar, were decisive; perhaps Leo did not wish in his thorny relations with Geiseric thus to gratify the Vandal king; perhaps he considered Anthemius the more dangerous potential rival, since his claim came from a man who had actually reigned in the East; cf. Bury, *Hist.*, I, 335.

Moreover, Geiseric, enemy of Ricimer, wished to see Olybrius Emperor of the West, since Geiseric's son, Huneric, a future King of the Vandals, was married to Eudocia, the elder sister of Placidia.⁶⁰ And Olybrius, although currently domiciled in the Eastern Empire, was by origin a Westerner, and by that fact would presumably be acceptable to those who wanted a Western Emperor who was himself Western. Furthermore, Ricimer was in fact negotiating with Geiseric.⁶¹ It has been noted above that there were doubtless many important persons in Italy opposed to Ricimer because he was a German, or an outsider, or perhaps even to an Emperor of Western origin who would come from the East, or who was a member of the Anician family (which we may be sure had its antagonists). On the other hand, even if Severus was not in fact conspiring with such persons against the Patrician, it would be in accord with human nature to suppose that so faithless a man as Ricimer, one so jealous of his own power, might well imagine a conspiracy even where none existed. After all, an Emperor could play politics in the same way that Ricimer did; Valentinian III had finally rid himself of his own overbearing general, Aëtius, by slaying him with his own imperial hand (454). No man, however, could live in the intrigue-poisoned atmosphere of the governing circles of the Late Empire, as we have argued Severus must have before his own accession, without gaining some sort of acquaintance with its methods and perils, at least if he were a man of merely ordinary intelligence.

And Severus could not have failed to be aware of the character of Ricimer and the Patrician's unscrupulous ruthlessness. The date of our first evidence for the promulgation of Olybrius' consulship in the West (about March) is not necessarily that of its actual publication, which might have occurred as early as the proper 1 January at Rome; if so, it could well have been known before. At least, the death of Severus in 465 freed Ricimer of an embarrassment in his negotiations with the Eastern court, from which he could now hope for help in restraining his enemy Marcellinus in Dalmatia and in dealing with Geiseric—eventually in return for accepting Anthemius. And on 14 November, 465, the Emperor Severus died in the Palaces of the Caesars at Rome, in the odor of sanctity and doubtless in the arms of Holy Church. Quite possibly his remains were deposited in the Mausoleum of the Theodosian House by the side of Saint Peter's⁶² in the mournful presence of Ricimer himself, Count, Patrician, Master of Both Branches of the Soldiery in the Sacred Presence.

A distinguished contemporary historian of ancient Rome once wrote of a paper of his discussing a problem (of far greater importance) and period of Roman history far removed from this that its only purpose was to sow doubt. If this paper has served to raise some doubt about the total imbecility of Libius Severus, and if in the process some additional light has been thrown on the politics of the 460's, it has accomplished its purpose.

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60. Prisc. Frag. 29 (IV, 104); Procop. *Bell.* 3 (*Vand.* 1). 6. 6; Joh. Ant. Frag. 204 (IV, 616). Priscus dates the beginning of this project of Geiseric to the time after the death of Majorian.

61. Prisc. Frag. 29 (IV, 103); there could have been other embassies, or Severus could suspect that there had been or would be.

62. Wes, *Ende*, p. 159.