

But his reign was intermittent and chaotic, interrupted by continual challenges from other claimants to the crown. At last in 915, having overcome or outlived his rivals, Berengar had himself crowned emperor at Rome. He retained his title until he died a decade later, despite a serious revolt by some of his vassals, among them Adalbert of Ivrea. This endless fighting shattered what was left of the Carolingian governmental system, but even more dangerous threats were looming from outside the kingdom. At the end of the ninth century a band of Saracen raiders had established themselves at a place called "Fraxinetum" (supposedly present-day La Garde-Freinet) in southern France, from which they launched raids across the Alps into the March of Ivrea and beyond. These so-called "Saracens" were apparently Muslims from Spain and North Africa, aided and abetted by an assortment of local bandits. They occupied the Alpine passes and preyed on the merchants and pilgrims who ventured across them. In a spectacular raid in 921 they sacked the monastery of Novalesa and drove its monks to seek refuge inside the walls of Turin. During their sojourn there, Marquis Adalbert granted the monks the use of a small church in the northwestern corner of the city, which would later become the city's most revered sanctuary, dedicated to the Virgin, under the name of La Consolata. Almost a century would elapse before the Saracen raids ceased and it was safe for the monks to return to Novalesa and rebuild their monastery. Meanwhile an equally dangerous threat was gathering in the east. In 898 a band of Magyar raiders crossed the Alps from Hungary and attacked Berengar's Friulian March. The sudden onset of these fierce warriors, from a hitherto unknown race, spread panic across the Kingdom of Italy. Next year they returned in force and inflicted a catastrophic defeat on Berengar's army, and for the next few years they ranged unchecked across the north Italian plain, raiding as far west as Vercelli. Then their incursions ceased, but in 924 they returned and destroyed Pavia. Faced by the danger from Magyar and Saracen raiders, the rural population fled to the walled cities, or to the castles that were being hastily erected as places of refuge by the local magnates, who had taken over the task of local defense in the absence of any effective central government.

As lord of the March of Ivrea, Adalbert led the fight against these invaders. In 929 he died, to be succeeded by his sons Berengar II and Anscar II, who apparently divided the March between them and continued directing the resistance to the Magyar and Saracen raids. In 940 Anscar was killed in one of the recurring struggles for the crown, and his brother Berengar of Ivrea fled to Germany, where he was granted protection by the new Emperor Otto I. In 950 he returned to Italy, de-