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With a Little Help from the Cousins – Charles I and the Habsburg Dukes of Austria during the Interregnum*

With the death of King Andrew III of Hungary in January 1301 the male line of the Árpád dynasty that had ruled the Kingdom of Hungary for precisely three centuries died out. It was self-evident and natural to everyone that a ruler who was linked to the Árpáds through the female line must be elected to head the kingdom; however, opinions were divided as to who actually should wear the Hungarian crown. One of the important factors of the interregnum prevailing in Hungary in the first decade of the fourteenth century examined below is the support for royal candidates arriving from outside the country's borders, which in many respects contributed to the coronation of the last remaining candidate in accordance with expectations and traditions in 1310.

Keywords: royal succession in Hungary, Holy Crown, Angevins, Habsburgs, Papacy

By the end of the Árpád era the coronation of kings already had set rules in Hungary. According to custom, the ceremony had to take place in the basilica of Székesfehérvár, founded by the first king of Hungary, (Saint) Stephen I (1001–1038) and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary; during the coronation the Holy Crown, kept in the basilica and held to be the royal diadem of Saint Stephen, had to be placed on the future ruler's head; and the ceremony had to be performed by the archbishop of Esztergom. At the time of King Andrew's death the title of archbishop of Esztergom was held by Gergely Bicskei; many, however, called his dignity into question, since at the time of his election a few of the members of the cathedral chapter of Esztergom, opposing the will of the majority, from the outset rejected him. For this reason the pope did not confirm the divisive archbishop in his office, but instead appointed him as procurator of the Archbishopric of Esztergom as a temporary solution.¹ Bicskei's position had been further weakened by the end of the reign of Andrew III, for the king

* The author's research is supported by Bolyai János Research Fellowship (BO/00099/12/2)

1 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár* [Charters of Angevin Hungary], 32 vols., ed. Tibor Almási et al. (Budapest–Szeged: n.p., 1990–2012), vol. I, no. 470.

deprived him of control over the estates that were the reigning archbishop's due.² All this indicates that officially he was no longer regarded as elected archbishop of Esztergom either, and this is why the author of the *Illuminated Chronicle*, dating from the mid-fourteenth century, could state in reference to the year 1301 that "at that time the archiepiscopal see of Esztergom was not occupied."³

The cause of the prelate's loss of favor essentially foreshadowed the political crisis that took place after Andrew's death. In fact, Bicskei, abandoning his loyalty to the sovereign, had gone over to the side of the lords of Slavonia and Croatia who supported the claims of the Angevins, rulers of the Kingdom of Naples, to the throne of Hungary against Andrew. The king of Naples, Charles II (the lame), and his wife, Queen Mary, who was the daughter of the Hungarian king Stephen V (1270–1272), not only tried to strengthen the position of their first born son, Charles Martel, by winning over adherents in Hungary, but through the marriage of Charles Martel and Clemence, the daughter of King Rudolf I of Germany, they also made the Habsburgs an interested party in the matter, which in any case reveals wise foresight. The Angevins' claim to the throne of Hungary did not cease with the death of Charles Martel in 1295, for in August 1300 the only son of Charles Martel and Clemence of Habsburg, Charles Robert, came ashore in Dalmatia to assume his rightful paternal inheritance. The young prince, probably twelve years old at the time, was received by one of the most powerful Croatian lords, Paul Šubić, and Gergely Bicskei, who regarded himself as archbishop of Esztergom beyond any doubt.⁴ Andrew III was in all probability prepared to fend off the power crisis ushered in by the Angevin duke's appearance; however, the implementation of his plans was foiled because of his death on January 14, 1301. While the country's inhabitants, lay and ecclesiastical—at least according to a contemporary account—mourned the last male member of the House of Árpád in the manner of Rachel (*more Rachelis deplorantes*),⁵ Bicskei was not overcome by mourning, and appeared at the gates of the coronation town with the Angevin prince at his side in February 1301. Because the people of Székesfehérvár, who were moved much rather by dismissal of the archbishop than by antipathy towards Charles Robert, refused

2 Zoltán Lenkey and Attila Zsoldos, *Szent István és III. András* [Saint Stephen and Andrew III], (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 2003), 214.

3 *Képes Krónika* [The Illuminated Chronicle], transl. János Bollók (Budapest: Osiris Kiadó, 2004), 120.

4 Zsoldos–Lenkey, *Szent István és III. András*, 219.

5 For Palatine István Ákos's diploma, dated February 26, 1303, see Imre Nagy and Gyula Nagy, eds., *Anjou-kori okmánytár* [Charters from the Angevin Period], 7 vols. (Budapest: MTA Könyvtár Hivatala, 1878–1920), vol. I, 52.

to allow the prelate and his protégé into their town, the determined archbishop crowned the prince with an occasional diadem of unknown origin in Esztergom, probably in early April. The new king of Hungary, the grandson of Queen Mary of Naples, and great-grandson of Stephen V of the Árpád dynasty, bore the name of Charles.⁶ If we take into account the reservations concerning Bicskei's archiepiscopal dignity, we may state that the ceremony accorded with the coronation customs established in the Kingdom of Hungary in virtually no respect whatsoever, and this, in turn, made the legitimacy of the newly crowned king's rule questionable and disputable.

To Charles's misfortune, apart from Gergely Bicskei he had another supporter whose person and ambition aroused antipathy in many. Pope Boniface VIII, who could thank both the pro-Angevin Orsini party of cardinals⁷ and his thorough knowledge of canon law for his ascension to power, had incessantly supported the claim to the Hungarian throne of the Angevin dynasty since his election in 1294. The lawyer-pope, who himself had searched out the laws needed to procure the resignation of his predecessor, Pope Celestine V,⁸ and had "attentively provided for" the house arrest of the ex-pontiff as well, revived the centuries-old idea of papal supremacy over secular authority.⁹ According to this, as he explained to the French ruler in a bull composed in 1301, it was within the rights of the reigning pontiff both to elevate kings and to deprive them of their dignity.¹⁰ Boniface in any case did not consider Europe's most important rulers worthy of his favors (or did so only reluctantly). He became embroiled in a fateful conflict with King Philip IV (the Fair) of France,¹¹ and he accused King Albert of Germany, who, after the defeat of Adolf of Nassau in the Battle of Göllheim in 1298, followed in the footsteps of his father Rudolf

6 For the circumstances of Charles Robert's first coronation, see Attila Zsoldos, „Anjou Károly első koronázása” [The First Crowning of Charles of Anjou], in *Auxilium Historiae. Tanulmányok a hetvenesztendő Bertényi Iván tiszteletére* [Auxilium Historiae. Studies in Honor of Iván Bertényi on his Seventieth Birthday], eds. Tamás Körmendi and Gábor Thoroczkay (Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kara, 2009), 412.

7 Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1972), 270.

8 Karl-Friedrich Krieger, *Die Habsburger im Mittelalter. Von Rudolf I. bis Friedrich III.* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2004), 94.

9 Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners. A History of the Popes* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2006), 159.

10 Joseph Canning, *Ideas of Power in the Late Middle Ages, 1296–1417* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 16.

11 John Watts, *The Making of Politics. Europe, 1300–1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 162.

I, of treachery and regicide, and was so unwilling to recognize his election¹² that he summoned even the electors to appear before the papal tribunal.¹³ Being close to the Angevins, the pope identified himself with the cause of Charles of Hungary, all the more so since, according to the opinion of the Holy See, which dated back to the eleventh century, King (Saint) Stephen I of Hungary had offered up his crown to Saint Peter, and thus the right to decide who should sit on the throne of the Kingdom of Hungary belonged to the head of the Holy Roman Church.¹⁴ Although both the Árpáds and tradition in Hungary rejected the papal assertion, Rome grasped every possible opportunity to assert papal supremacy over Hungary.¹⁵ In this respect the acceptance of the pope's protégé, the Angevin prince, as king of Hungary in the eyes of the Hungarians would have been tantamount to the utterly unwelcome spread of papal influence in Hungary. Thus the Hungarian lords, according to the straightforward wording of the chronicler, "lest they lose the freedom of a free country by accepting the king given by the church,"¹⁶ chose a candidate of their own to occupy the vacant throne, namely the thirteen-year-old son of the Czech king Wenceslas II, also named Wenceslas. The young Wenceslas, who was the great-grandson of the sister of Stephen V of Hungary, and was thus tied to the Árpáds through the female line, was crowned king of Hungary with the Holy Crown on August 27, 1301 at Székesfehérvár by the archbishop of Kalocsa, János.¹⁷ Although the legality of the ceremony on this occasion, too, was questionable, as it was not performed by the archbishop of Esztergom, it appears that the majority of the country stood on the side of Wenceslas, called Ladislaus in Hungary, against Charles.

Already in May Boniface VIII had reckoned that the Czech Přemyslid dynasty could enter into the struggle for the Hungarian throne with serious chances,¹⁸ and his counter-measure was not long in coming. He addressed a letter to Wenceslas II in which he warned the Czech king, who, according to the pope, had consented to his son's election in Hungary out of obvious error.

12 Alois Niederstätter, *Die Herrschaft Österreich. Fürst und Land im Spätmittelalter* (Vienna: Ueberreuter 2004), 106.

13 Eduard Maria Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, 8 vols. (Vienna: Schaumburg und Compagnie, 1836–1844), vol. 2, CCXXXI/307.

14 József Gerics, „A Hartvik legenda mintáiról és forrásairól” [About the Models and Sources of the Hartvik Legend], *Magyar Könyvszemle* 97 (1981): 178.

15 Zsoldos–Lenkey, *Szent István és III. András*, 135.

16 *Képes Krónika*, 120.

17 Zsoldos, „Anjou Károly első koronázása,” 410.

18 See the pope's letter to Wenceslas, dated May 13, 1301, in *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol I, no. 41.

The boy's coronation, the pontiff continued, he considered unlawful, because the ceremony had been performed by the archbishop of Kalocsa,¹⁹ whom he summoned along with the two rulers concerned before the papal curia for the purpose of a hearing about this.²⁰ Nor did Boniface fail to call upon the Czech king to cooperate with that same Niccolò Boccasini who, as papal emissary vested with full legatine authority, had been residing in Hungary, pushed to the brink of disaster because of internal dissension, since September 1301.²¹

In order to save the Kingdom of Hungary and restore its internal peace, Cardinal Boccasini, bishop of Ostia and Velletri, convoked a meeting of the prelates of Hungary for October 25 in Buda, where only a short time earlier the two kings, Charles and Ladislaus, had also conducted negotiations with one another.²² However, at the Synod of Buda, held in late October and early November, the papal legate was forced to accept that his efforts were not enough even to bring the positions closer together. Gergely Bicskei, who clung tenaciously to his office, almost completely lost the support of all the prelates of Hungary, and it was precisely in these weeks (thus before he could be called to account by the Holy See), that the archbishop of Kalocsa, János, departed this world.²³ The experiences of the Synod of Buda with regard to Bicskei in any case shook papal confidence in the chosen archbishop of Esztergom, and Boniface VIII therefore instructed his emissary to inquire with proper circumspection about the person of a candidate suited for heading the Archbishopric of Esztergom.²⁴

19 „qui auctoritatem reges Ungariae coronandi non habebat de consuetudine vel de iure,” in *Regesta Diplomatica nec non Epistolaria Bohemiae et Moraviae*, 4 vols., ed. Karol Jaromir et al. (Pragae: Typis Grégerianis, 1855–1892) (henceforward RBM), vol. II, 814.

20 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 88–89.

21 Boccasini's appointment as legate was dated May: see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 39–42; his presence in Hungary can be dated from September: see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 72, 89. „statu miseribili dicti regni, quod pro dolor in spiritualibus et temporalibus multipliciter est collapsum, et in quo undique bella fremunt.” RBM, vol. II, 815.

22 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, no. 96; „de concordia facienda inter dilectos filios nobiles viros Carolum [...] ac Wenceslaum [...] habitum fuisse tractatum” — RBM, vol. II, 819.

23 „praelati regni Ungariae quasi omnes communites Strigoniensi adversabantur electo” — RBM, vol. II, 818; „et archiepiscopus, qui coronavit regem Boemiae, propter hoc citatus erat ad curiam, sed mors prevenit citationem” — *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II (1291–1327)*, 2 vols., ed. Heinrich Finke (Berlin–Leipzig: Dr Walther Rothschild, 1908), vol. 1, 112.

24 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, no. 106; „a nobis te diximus praesentialiter informandum, videlicet ut de praeficiendo eidem ecclesiae praefato electo vel alio, si ad eam alium eligi vel postulari contingeret, te intrmittere non deberes, [...] ac volumus ut ad id sine nostra licentia speciali non apponas ullatenus manum tuam” — RBM, vol. II, 818.

At the same time, with regard to the filling of the archiepiscopal see of Kalocsa, which had become vacant with the death of János, the pontiff unambiguously and firmly stated that he reserved for himself the right to decide the fate of the archbishopric.²⁵

The papal emissary's movements in Hungary reflect clearly how beginning in late 1301 Charles and his adherents were gradually being forced out of the central areas of the country. While the legate, who at first had resided in Esztergom and Buda, transferred his headquarters to Pressburg in December 1301,²⁶ which was just then in Austrian hands through the widow of Andrew III, Queen Agnes of Habsburg, Charles, following an unsuccessful attack against Buda, returned to the southern areas that had supported him earlier also. Buda, the country's capital, fell into Ladislaus's (Wenceslas's) hands, while the castle of Esztergom was conquered by the palatine and ispán of Sopron, the pro- Přemyslid János (or Iván) Kőszegi. In return for a significant sum of money Kőszegi handed it over to King Ladislaus, who put the family's loyal man, Zdislav Měšec, in charge of the castle.²⁷ The newly appointed castellan of Esztergom was a citizen of Uherské Hradiště in Moravia,²⁸ and his sobriquet *měšec* or 'money purse' suggests that he may have been a financial support to the Czech crown during the Hungarian adventure as well. As castellan, Měšec did not treat the church of Esztergom with kid gloves, seizing the chapter's assets and seriously violating its economic privileges.²⁹ King Wenceslas of Bohemia was nonetheless dissatisfied with how his son's fate was unfolding, and the rumor spread that he regretted having intervened in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Hungary.³⁰ The Czech king's disappointment may have stemmed from the widely known fact that the Hungarian lords "had not granted a single castle, a single dignity or office, or a single royal prerogative whatsoever" to his son, just as they had not

25 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, no. 105.

26 The relevant datings in *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, the last in Pressburg, June 1302 (vol. I, 230), the first in Vienna, July 1302 (vol. I, no. 250).

27 In Hungarian sources his name occurs in the form *Mesych dictus Sdyzlaus* and/or *Zdyzlaus*; see *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol I, nos. 398–99. In the Czech source material he figures as witness in a land donation in 1298 under the name *Sdyzłao dicto Meschütz*; RBM, vol. II, 769.

28 On Měšec's origins, see Vratislav Vaníček, *Velké dějiny země koruny české: 1250–1310* [The History of the Lands of the Czech Crown: 1250–1310] (Prague: Pesaka, 2002), 305.

29 For his loyal service, however, King Wenceslas on April 22, 1303 bestowed on the returning citizen the market town of Hluk in Moravia. RBM, vol II, 841.

30 „ex aliquorum relationibus et conjecturis versimilibus perceperisti [...] Wenceslaum regem Boemiae illustrem, de inchoatis et attentatis per ipsum super regnum Ungariae praelibato non modicum poenitere” — RBM, vol II, 818.

granted anything to Charles either; in other words, they only nominally regarded both rulers as king.³¹ In truth, those few families that had been able in recent decades to increase their estates at the expense of the central authority and by the time Andrew III died held sway over expansive territories were now seeking to exercise actual power. In their own provinces these lords acted in the image of the king, that is, they exercised the sovereign rights otherwise belonging to the reigning ruler, bestowed noble titles, sat in judgment, or pursued an independent foreign policy.

Nor could Pope Boniface VIII be completely satisfied with how the situation of his protégé, King Charles, was evolving. However, before he pronounced a judgment in the power crisis in Hungary, he had to decide on the legal claim of another lay ruler. On April 30, 1303, after almost five years of rigid resistance, the pontiff appeared ready to recognize the rule of the German king, Albert of Habsburg, and was not averse to the latter's coronation as emperor either, provided the German king's emissaries made concessions to him which would in fact amount to acknowledging that the King of the Romans was the servant and immediate subject of the Holy Father.³² Albert I accepted the (for him) humiliating conditions, and thus the last obstacle was removed from his way to the Empire, where he followed, after a short interruption, his father as the second Habsburg duke on the imperial throne. Regarding the interested parties in the dispute over the Hungarian throne the Holy Father made his decision one month later, on May 31. Queen Mary of Naples, summoned before the papal curia, appeared in person, while King Charles of Hungary was represented by István, the new, pro-Angevin archbishop of Kalocsa elected by the pope in 1302, who was accompanied by the bishops of Győr, Zagreb, and Veszprém.³³ The Hungarian prelates were accompanied by the provosts of Esztergom, Vác, and Vasvár, as well as the archdeacon of Transylvania, who probably also were on Charles's side.³⁴ Compared to the distinguished Angevin delegation from Hungary, the delegation of the Czech side was disappointingly modest. The Czech king Wenceslas and his son through their emissaries, two priests and a lay lawyer, sent word to the pope that they did not wish to litigate regarding their rule over the kingdom of Hungary, since the Hungarians had elected the

31 *Képes Krónika*, 121.

32 Krieger, *Die Habsburger*, 98.

33 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, no. 392.

34 *Ibid.*, no. 386.

young Wenceslas as king unanimously and according to canon law.³⁵ Knowing the previous stance of the Holy See, truly no one was surprised by the judgment of Boniface VIII and the College of Cardinals, according to which Hungarian rulers came to power through inheritance and not by election. Therefore, because Queen Mary and her grandson Charles were the closer heirs (*propinquior erat successor et haeres*), they had a stronger claim to the Hungarian throne.³⁶ The papal bull issued under the terms of the decision stripped Ladislaus (Wenceslas) of the right to use the royal title and Boniface VIII released everyone from the oath taken to him, at the same time declaring that the obedience and tax of the subjects belonged to Charles, and threatened those prelates, priests, monastic orders and lay people who might turn against him with the penalty of excommunication.³⁷ The delegation led by the archbishop of Kalocsa could depart from Anagni, not far from the pope's seat at Rome, completely satisfied. On June 11 they were already in the vicinity of Naples when the pontiff's letter caught up with them, in which the archbishop and the bishop of Zagreb received the instructions to make sure the judgment of the curia was promulgated in Bohemia as well.³⁸ During their journey Charles's emissaries naturally could also rely on the solicitous support of the Hungarian king's grandfather, the ruler of Naples, and Charles II ensured their journey home by sea as well. The ferrymen of Apulia transporting the delegation left the shores of Italy in late June, and after a boat journey of nearly a month arrived in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary.³⁹ Thus, Boniface's May bull was officially published in Hungary from the penultimate day of July; upon instructions from the archbishop of Kalocsa and Bishop Mihály of Zagreb it was proclaimed first before the collegiate chapter of Csázma (Čazma, Croatia) and later before the cathedral chapters of Bosnia and Bács.⁴⁰ Apart from the southern areas, which backed the Angevins in any event, the judgment of the papal curia was sent to Székesfehérvár and

35 „in regem Ungariae concorditer et canonice proponebat electum” — *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae ecclesiasticus ac civilis*, 11 vols., ed. by György Fejér (Budae: Typis Typogr. regiae Universitatis Ungaricae, 1829–1844) (hereafter CD), vol. VIII/1, 207. The diploma's correct date of issue is August 10, 1306, since king Wenceslaus III is still mentioned as living: „negotium quondam Wenceslai eiusdem regis filli nunc viventis” — *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. II, no. 221 (dated 1307).

36 „regnum ipsum Ungariae successionis iure provenit, et electionis suffragio arbitrioque non defertur” — CD, vol. VIII/1, 210.

37 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 392, 406.

38 Ibid., nos. 403, 443.

39 Ibid., no. 415.

40 Ibid., nos. 426, 432, 433.

Transylvania only.⁴¹ Despite the papal decision and the prospective interdict for the disobedient, in the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary more remained on the side of the Czech Ladislaus (Wenceslas), who continued to maintain his headquarters in Buda, regarded as the center of the country. We know that the town of Sopron continued to recognize him as the ruler of Hungary,⁴² just like the cathedral chapter of Eger,⁴³ or the Kőszegis, who numbered among the most eminent oligarchs of the kingdom. It is important to emphasize, therefore, that the position of the Přemyslid dynasty did not become untenable in Hungary after the papal decision, and, with a little paternal assistance, it could even have been maintained in the long run.

Boniface VIII informed the German king, whom he had very recently readopted to his favor, of the Holy See's decision of May 31 on that same day, then in mid-June in a separate letter he asked Albert and his son, Duke Rudolf of Austria, to render all the aid they could to the Angevin prince,⁴⁴ who was Rudolf's cousin through the maternal line.⁴⁵ Thereafter Charles himself turned to his uncle for help a number of times, first through the bishop of Várad, and later the bishop of Zengg (Senj, Croatia) and other secular ambassadors.⁴⁶ Assistance against the Czechs on the part of the Habsburg relatives, however, could only be realized if it was in the interest of the Empire and the Habsburgs to turn against the Kingdom of Bohemia. King Albert's relationship with the Czech king Wenceslas II could be described as basically good, since as an elector in 1298 Wenceslas himself had supported Albert,⁴⁷ and in a separate letter to the pope he admitted also that he regarded the Habsburg, at that time considered by Rome to be a traitor and a regicide, as king of Germany.⁴⁸ Albert in return did not block Wenceslas's expansionist policy towards Poland; indeed, in June 1300 he guaranteed him the Polish territories that had fallen into Czech hands.⁴⁹ He also acquiesced in his imperial subject's coronation as king of Poland in August 1300. Nor did he raise his voice when, beginning in 1301, his eastern neighbor attempted to extend his power to Hungary as well. Albert in fact

41 Proclamation at Székesfehérvár: *ibid.*, no. 434; proclamation in Transylvania: *ibid.*, no. 417.

42 *Ibid.*, no. 634.

43 *Ibid.*, nos. 593–94.

44 *Ibid.*, nos. 393, 404, 405.

45 Clemence and Albert of Habsburg were siblings.

46 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 510, 511, 611.

47 Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. II, CCV, no. 87.

48 *Ibid.*, CCXII, no. 138.

49 *Ibid.*, CCXXVII–CCXXVIII, no. 280.

needed the support of the Czech king in these years, both because Rome had not yet recognized his rule, and because the Rhenish electors had entered into an alliance against him in 1300. Albert was able to check his enemies within the Empire only through war, and the auxiliary troops of Wenceslas II of Bohemia contributed to his decisive victory in 1302.⁵⁰

In 1303, however, the time seemed ripe for breaking the excessive power of the Přemyslids. Albert as king of Germany approached the Czech ruler with territorial and financial demands to which he himself knew Wenceslas could not agree and which would thus lead to the disintegration of their alliance.⁵¹ The occasion to attack the Kingdom of Bohemia was provided almost by Wenceslas II himself, when in June 1304,⁵² in order to “consolidate his own son’s dominion over the Hungarians,” he arrived in Hungary with a sizeable armed retinue.⁵³ He first set up camp at the ferry of Kakat situated opposite Esztergom; then, crossing the Danube, he put the archbishop of Esztergom to flight, and reinforced the Czech-held castle of Esztergom⁵⁴ and Visegrád.⁵⁵ Arriving in Buda, however, Wenceslas was soon deterred from his original intention. According to the account of the *Styrian* (or *Austrian*) *Rhymed Chronicle*, while secretly planning for their departure with his son, he attempted to convince the Hungarian notables summoned to Buda that he was preparing to chase Charles from the country. After he had won the trust of the Hungarians, Wenceslas put forward the wish that during the next church feast day he would like to see his son entering the church for the holy mass wearing the Hungarian royal vestments. The royal insignia, hitherto kept in the sacristy, were thus produced. Donning these, Ladislaus (Wenceslas) appeared in the church, while during the mass the Czech king’s soldiers, camped near the gates, lined up in front of the building. When the mass neared its end the youth, departing with the crown on his head, was quickly put on a horse and escorted to his quarters. The ceremony complete, the Czech king hosted the lords and prelates staying in Buda in lavish fashion, after which he showered them with gifts. Following this Wenceslas, alluding to

50 Krieger, *Die Habsburger*, 100.

51 Ibid., 101–02.

52 On May 23, 1304 Wenceslas was still dating his letters from Brno. *Codex Diplomaticus et Epistolaris Moraviae*, 15 vols., ed. Antonín Boček et al., (Olmütz–Brünn: Verlag des Märischen Landes Ausschusses, 1835–1903), vol. VII, no. 160.

53 Gyula Kristó and Ferenc Makk, eds., *Károly Róbert emlékezete* [The Memory of Charles Robert], (Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1988), 64.

54 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 657, 756.

55 Ibid., no. 705.

the danger threatening his country from the direction of the Austrian territories, left Buda with his travel-ready retinue and son and set out for home.⁵⁶ Before entering the territory of Moravia they were overtaken by the bishop of Győr, who asked the Czech ruler not to take the Hungarian coronation regalia out of the country. To the words of the pro-Charles prelate Wenceslas angrily replied that nobody had a better right to them than the king, who was none other than his son.⁵⁷

The precise date of the Czechs' departure is not known; what is certain is that on July 7 Ladislaus (Wenceslas) was still residing in Buda, whereas on September 22 Wenceslas II was once more dating his diplomas from Prague.⁵⁸ Based on the account cited above, we may consider it likely that the Czech king had indeed arrived to Buda with the intention of strengthening his son's rule in Hungary. The circumstances of their departure, however, in any event allow us to conclude that during his stay in Hungary Wenceslas II learned of some event that imperiled not only the Kingdom of Bohemia but also his son resident in Buda, causing him to return home in haste, albeit not empty-handed. What could have been that unexpected event which thwarted his original plans? It was undoubtedly the fact that Charles, leaving the southern marches of the kingdom behind, had entered into an alliance with his cousin, Duke Rudolf of Austria, in Habsburg-held Pressburg on August 24.⁵⁹ The most important prelates of Hungary adhered to the agreement,⁶⁰ which was also signed by a dozen lay notables, the majority of whom had been on Charles's side previously. In other words, it was not the news of the theft of the crown that had brought about the alliance. A few days later, the King of the Romans, Albert, who was just preparing for his campaign against Moravia, called upon the bishops and barons of Hungary to provide the Austrian duke armed assistance.⁶¹ According to the records from the Cistercian abbey at Zwettl in Lower Austria, Charles and Rudolf launched attacks against the Kingdom of Bohemia at virtually the

56 *Ottokars Österreichische Reimchronik*, ed. Joseph Seemüller (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1890–1893) (henceforward: *Reimchronik*), 1090–92.

57 *Reimchronik*, 1095–96.

58 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, no. 634; RBM II, no. 2013.

59 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, no. 643.

60 *Ibid.*, no. 644.

61 *Ibid.*, no. 674. In his letter Albert mentions Neuburg on the Danube as his most recent location, which means that the letter was composed between August 20 and September 8, since the king was still in Nuremberg on the former date and in Linz on the latter. Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. II, CCLI–CCLII, 454, 457.

same time: while Rudolf looted and burned the neighbouring areas of Bohemia and Moravia, his cousin, with his army that was highly overestimated in size, reached Znaim (Znojmo, Czech Republic), taking many prisoners and obtaining much booty along the way.⁶² With King Albert arriving in Linz on September 8, part of his imperial armies to march against Bohemia assembled at Freistadt in Upper Austria, while the remainder, including the armed force led by the Count Palatine of the Rhine, stationed at Budweis (České Budějovice, Czech Republic), where according to the plans they were to join the armies of Rudolf and Charles gathering between Weitra and Gmünd.⁶³ However, after the army, made up of Hungarians and Cumans and allegedly numbering twenty thousand, also ravaged the northern areas of Lower Austria on its way from Znojmo to Gmünd, Albert commanded them to disband and release their prisoners. Defying the Roman king's request, the Hungarians were dealt with by Duke Rudolf at Altenburg, near Zwettl, on October 2.⁶⁴ Despite the incident we can safely state that there were still Hungarian auxiliary troops in the Roman king's army, which lay siege to Europe's most important silver mine, Kuttenberg (Kutná Hora, Czech Republic), on October 18.⁶⁵

As a result of the anti-Czech collaboration, bolstered by Habsburg-Angevin family bonds, Charles, returning to Hungary and rid of his competitor, was finally in a position to begin to rule; at least this is what one would expect, for in reality the king completely disappears from the sources in 1305. From later references it may be concluded that he spent a long time in the northern regions of the country, in Szepes County, where the castle of Szepesvár (Spišský Hrad, Slovakia), still held by the Czechs, was retaken,⁶⁶ and the castle of Esztergom, which following the Czechs' departure had once more fallen into the hands of Iván (János) Kőszegi, was probably also reoccupied in that year.⁶⁷ Following the failed Bohemian campaign the Habsburgs did not make peace with the Czechs; indeed, in the late spring of 1305 they were preparing another campaign against them,⁶⁸ which was only prevented by the death of Wenceslas II on June 21. On

62 *Károly Róbert emlékezete*, 65.

63 *Ibid.*, 65; RBM vol. II, 871.

64 *Károly Róbert emlékezete*, 65.

65 For the date of the siege of Kuttenberg, see Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. II, CCLII, no. 457.

66 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. II, no. 44; vol. III, no. 230.

67 *Ibid.*, vol. II, no. 47.

68 *Wittelsbachische Regesten von der Erwerbung des Herzogtums Baiern (1180) bis zu dessen erster Wiedervereinigung (1340)*, ed. Johann Friedrich Böhmer (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1854), 57.

August 18 in Nuremberg the German king lifted the imperial ban against the Přemyslid dynasty and relinquished all his territorial demands against Wenceslas III (who succeeded his father on the throne) as well as his share deriving from the silver mines of Kuttenberg. The resulting peace emphasizes that Albert reconciled himself not just with the newly consecrated Czech ruler but with the latter's helpers and supporters as well. First listed among these supporters were the two dukes of Lower Bavaria, Otto III and his brother, Stephen I.⁶⁹

The dukes of Lower Bavaria were the sons of Duke Henry XIII of Bavaria, notorious for his hostility to the Habsburgs, and the sister of King Stephen V of Hungary, Elisabeth, which meant that they, too, were related to the Árpád dynasty of Hungary through the female line. This would account for the claim contained in the *Chronica de Ducibus Bavariae* that in 1301 the anti-Angevin Hungarian lords had offered the Hungarian crown first to Otto III, who, however, rejected the invitation,⁷⁰ and thus did the choice fall on the Czech ruler's son. Otto, restless and bellicose (*vir strennuus et bellicosus*) according to the same source, inherited his father's policy. In the battle of Göllheim in 1298 he had fought on the side of Adolf of Nassau, and he remained a steadfast enemy of the Habsburgs even after the election of Albert I as king of Germany.⁷¹ It was thus only logical that in 1304 Otto, together with his brother, ended up on the side of Wenceslas II, who appointed him commander-in-chief of his armies. Otto did not rest even after the peace of 1305, continuously seeking the opportunity to inflict damage on his southeastern neighbors.

With the death of Wenceslas II, Wenceslas III, who inherited the Polish and Czech thrones, was ready to relinquish the weakest link of his dominions, the Kingdom of Hungary, in favor of his ally. Otto, having acquired the Hungarian coronation regalia from Prague, was ready to depart for Hungary at the first call of Wenceslas's remaining supporters or perhaps of the German-speaking Transylvanian Saxons, and thus box the Habsburgs in from three sides, Lower Bavaria, Hungary and Bohemia. The Czech ruler used the Hungarian royal title for the last time on October 10, 1305,⁷² and on the basis of the narrative sources it appears that Otto was crowned as king of Hungary by the bishops

69 Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. II, CCLVI, 494.

70 *Cronica de ducibus Bavariae*, in *Bayerische Chroniken des XIV. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Georg Leidinger (Hannover–Leipzig: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1918) (henceforward: *Cronica*), 151.

71 Ludwig Holzfurtner, *Die Wittelsbacher. Staat und Dynastie in acht Jahrhunderten* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 2005), 65.

72 RBM, vol. II, 888.

of Veszprém and Csanád on December 6, 1305.⁷³ The coronation ceremony could hardly have been more than a play acted out for the Bavarian duke, the purpose of which may have been merely to retrieve the Holy Crown and deposit it once more in the safety of the basilica in Székesfehérvár. The very identity of the prelates who performed the ceremony guaranteed that the coronation would be anything but legally valid. Moreover, Bishop Benedek of Veszprém was so much an adherent of Charles that he had been one of those representing the ruler before the papal tribunal in Anagni on May 30, 1303. Less is known about Bishop Antal of Csanád, a Franciscan friar, but what is certain is that he assisted the work of the papal legate Boccasini in Hungary.⁷⁴ Probably nobody anticipated that after his coronation Otto would not wish to part with the insignia of his rule, and on feast days, according to the chronicler's disapproving comment, he would try to win over the people of Buda, opposed to Charles in any case, by marching in the streets and squares of the town with the Holy Crown on his head.⁷⁵

On August 4, 1306 Otto's plans were jeopardized when Wenceslas III was murdered at Olmütz (Olomouc, Czech Republic) on his way to a campaign in Poland. With his death the male line of the Přemyslid dynasty became extinct, and the duke of Lower Bavaria lost his ally. In addition, it was precisely in these days that Pope Clement V took the decision that he would apply the same punishment against those who invited Duke Otto to Hungary against Charles that his predecessor, Boniface VIII, had proposed.⁷⁶ The fact that the German ruler Albert I regarded the Kingdom of Bohemia as an electorate reverting to the empire, and as such he would have liked to secure it that same August for his son, Duke Rudolf of Austria, represented an additional threat to Otto. Some hope was offered by the majority of the Czech nobles supporting the aspirations of Duke Henry of Carinthia, brother-in-law of Wenceslas III, instead of the Habsburgs, to the Czech crown, who had already been appointed by the deceased king as regent for the duration of his campaign in Poland. While the German king, together with his son Rudolf, spent the second half of the year 1306 with a new campaign in Bohemia, where they attempted to exert pressure on the Czechs by laying siege to Prague itself,⁷⁷ Otto, not budging from the central areas of the

73 *Cronica*, 151.

74 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. I, nos. 119, 165.

75 *Képes Krónika*, 122.

76 RBM, vol. II, 907.

77 Krieger, *Die Habsburger*, 104–05.

Kingdom of Hungary, awaited developments in Buda and the vicinity of Pest.⁷⁸ By October the fears of the Bavarian prince had been justified. Duke Henry of Carinthia fled from Bohemia, and the Habsburgs acquired the Přemyslid inheritance, thereby uniting the Austrian provinces, the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Margraviate of Meissen, Eger (Cheb, Czech Republic) and Pleissen, as well as certain areas of Silesia and Poland, in their hands. By late 1306 Otto's plan to surround the Habsburg territories had not only failed but backfired, since the southeastern and northeastern areas of Lower Bavaria now bordered on Habsburg possessions along their entire length, as did the western and northern borders of the Kingdom of Hungary. Following the acquisition of the Czech throne, the Austrian provinces passed to the younger son of Albert I, Frederick. Duke Frederick of Austria did not fail to assure the Hungarian nobles and prelates on behalf of his father and brother that the Habsburgs would continue to back Charles, and essentially hoped for the same from the Hungarians as well.⁷⁹

Having been blocked by the Habsburgs from his imperial territories, the time had come for Otto to leave Buda and look for allies. It is certainly no coincidence that in the sources relating to the duke of Lower Bavaria, such as the previously mentioned chronicle of the dukes of Bavaria, it is during his stay in Hungary that the possibility of a marriage is raised,⁸⁰ which in accordance with the customs of the period meant the establishment of a military and political alliance as well. In early 1307 Otto set out towards Transylvania, and we can probably accept the assumption that his purpose was marriage to the Transylvanian voevode's daughter. The lord of Transylvania, one of Hungary's most prominent oligarchs, whose excommunication the pope had initiated in late 1306 because of his stubborn resistance to Charles,⁸¹ could have been an ideal ally for Otto against the Habsburg-Angevin party from every possible standpoint. However, for reasons unknown, the planned alliance ran aground. Otto and the Holy Crown were imprisoned in one of the castles of the Transylvanian voevode, László Kán, though the former was freed within a short time, probably in the summer of 1307. By this time, however, Buda had fallen into Charles's hands,⁸² and it had also been decided on that a new papal legate would come

78 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. II, no. 70.

79 *Ibid.*, nos. 65–66.

80 *Cronica*, 151.

81 *Anjou-kori oklevéltár*, vol. II, nos. 62, 114.

82 *Ibid.*, no. 173.

to Hungary in order to settle Charles's case.⁸³ Moreover, the Hungarian lords who appeared at the general assembly held on the Plain of Rákös in October, unanimously acknowledged Charles as their sovereign.⁸⁴ The year 1307 brought about another unexpected turn in Bohemian events as well. In early July 1307 the Czech king Rudolf died; the Czech lords, breaking the oath they had previously taken (namely, that in the event of Rudolf's death without an heir they would elect his eldest living brother as their ruler), once more went over to the side of Duke Henry of Carinthia.⁸⁵ King Albert of Germany lost no time in advocating the interests of his son, Duke Frederick of Austria, launching a campaign against Bohemia, which, however, ended in failure in late 1307. While the German king returned to the Empire to gather strength over the winter for his next campaign in Bohemia, the Czechs turned to Albert's enemies within the Empire for assistance. They first sought out Duke Otto of Lower Bavaria,⁸⁶ for whom the events of the second half of 1307 promised new hope of a triumph over the Habsburgs. Probably still in late 1307, leaving Transylvania and Hungary via a circuitous eastward route, he entered into an alliance with the militarily quite active Duke Henry III of Glogau (Głogów, Poland), a descendant of the Silesian branch of the Piasts, and betrothed the latter's daughter, Agnes. Then in February 1308 he returned to Lower Bavaria.

Otto's departure left Charles the sole candidate in the Kingdom of Hungary, and henceforth his lawful coronation was only a matter of time, depending on the eventual reobtention of the Holy Crown from the voevode of Transylvania. In the consolidation of Charles's power in Hungary and his getting rid of the rival pretenders, the diplomatic skill and military strength of his external supporters and at the same time his relatives, the Habsburg dukes, proved indispensable.

83 Ibid., no. 221.

84 Ibid., no. 243.

85 Krieger, *Die Habsburger*, 106–07.

86 Lichnowsky, *Geschichte des Hauses Habsburg*, vol. II, 280.

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Translated by Matthew Caples