

STUDIES IN EUROPEAN HISTORY

XXI

THE
CROATIAN-SLAVONIAN
KINGDOM

1526-1792

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PREFACE

This book is concerned primarily with those territories inhabited by the Croatian people which remained outside the spheres of Ottoman and Venetian control during the period 1526-1792. Thus such historically Croatian settlement areas as Dalmatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are largely excluded from consideration in the present volume since their destinies were divorced from those of the Habsburg ruled Croatian lands. Dubrovnik (Ragusa) is a special case since it succeeded in preserving its independence vis-à-vis both the Ottomans and the Venetians whose territories surrounded it. It has seemed advisable to treat Catholic Croatian literature as a whole. Therefore Dalmatian Croat writers, whether from Dubrovnik, the Adriatic islands, or Venetian held Dalmatia are surveyed in the chapters on Croatian literary development, although the political and economic vicissitudes of these Croatian areas are treated only insofar as they impinge upon those of the Habsburg nucleus of the old Triune Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia.

It is assumed that any Croatian word once used in the text will be sufficiently familiar even to persons unacquainted with the Croatian language to preclude the necessity of further italicization. It should be noted that the western rather than the more generally used southern orthography has been employed in rendering Croatian proper names or phrases. Some deviations from this practice have appeared necessary, however, as in the case of such well known proper names as that of the Cathedral of St. Stjepan in Zagreb. While the writer regards the western dialect as the only truly Croatian speech, and as the proper idiom to be employed for the period in question, in view of its limited use today there seems to be no point in insisting upon the exclusion of the artificially adopted *štokavština* or southern idiom and orthography in every case.

The intention has been to confine footnotes to reference data but

again some departures from this rule have seemed necessary for purposes of clarification. For background information concerning Croatian history prior to 1526 the reader is referred to the author's work on the history of medieval Croatia.

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LIST OF ALTERNATIVE SPELLINGS OR NAMES

Frankapan, Frankopan (Frangepan)
Zrini, Zrinyi [sic!], Zrinski
Ragusa (Dubrovnik)
Erdödi (Erdedi)
Arsa (Raša). (A river in Istria)
Kulpa (Kupa)
Stipan (Stjepan, Stephen)
Thökolly (Tökolly)
Tisza (Theiss). (A Hungarian river)
Pressburg (Poszony) (Bratislava)
Pest (Ofen)
Sopron (Ödenburg)
Osiek (Essek) (Osijek)

Split (Spalato)
Trogir (Trau)
Šibenik (Sebenico)
Rieka (Fiume)
Senj (Zengg)
Sluin (Slunj)
Gran (Esztergom)
Zadar (Zara)
Grosswardein (Nagy Varad)
Zagreb (Agram)
Ljubljana (Laibach, Laybach)
Varaždin (Warasdin)
Kotor (Cattaro)

I

THE ACCESSION OF THE HABSBURGS IN CROATIA

On August 29, 1526, the armies of Suleiman II, Sultan of the Ottoman Empire (Turkey) crushed a smaller Hungarian force on the right bank of the Danube near the town of Mohacs. This combat, almost ignored by other than specialists in the history of Central Europe, was one of the decisive battles of history. It determined the destinies of the Danubian lands and peoples for centuries to come and it is hardly too much to say that the map of Central Europe today would be quite different than it is had there been another outcome to this conflict of more than four centuries ago. Mohacs is a classic illustration of the dictum of military historians that it is success or failure in war that determines the rise and fall of nations.

On the eve of Mohacs the Hungarian political state still looked as impressive on contemporary maps of Europe as it had throughout the Middle Ages when it had been one of the largest and most powerful of medieval entities. But it was financially exhausted and poorly administered.¹ In 1514 a serious peasant revolt was organized by a minor noble, George Dosza.² It was repressed with barbarous severity, but conditions in Hungary remained so bad that the associated Triple Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia began to consider seriously the question of divorcing herself from the Hungarian Crown of St. Stephen to which she had rendered homage for four centuries. Meeting in their Sabor or diet at Križevci on January 25, 1526, seven months before Mohacs, the Croatian estates had discussed seriously

¹ Franz Griselini, *Versuch einer politischen und natürlichen Geschichte des Temesvarer Banats*, 2 vols. in 1 (Vienna, 1780), Part 1, 59.

² For an interesting and unusual account of the origins of the Dosza episode see *ibid.*, Part 1, 53-58. Griselini based his relation upon the work of Nicholas Istvanffy, *Historiarum de rebus Hungaricis libri XXXIV* (Köln, 1622), lib. V, and on the study of the Magyar historian, G. Pray, *Epistolae procerum regni Hungariae*, 3 vols. (Bratislava, 1806), I, 354-356.

the advisability of choosing a new king to replace Louis II Jagellon (1515-1526). Owing to his neglect of Croatian interests vis-à-vis the Ottoman peril Louis was held to have forfeited the allegiance of the Croats.³

Since the day of Maximilian I Habsburg, Holy Roman or German Emperor as well as the ruler of the Habsburg hereditary lands in Austria from 1491 to 1519, the Croats had cherished a soft spot in their hearts for the House of Austria. Maximilian had ordered his commanders to assist the Triple Kingdom with all means in their power whenever the Croats requested such help.⁴

For their part the Habsburgs had long contemplated uniting the lands of the middle Danube. As far back as 1361 Rudolf IV Habsburg had arranged for a union of Austria, Bohemia, and Hungary in the event that the dynasties ruling the last named lands became extinct. Owing to the accession of Sigismund of Luxemburg to both the Bohemian and Hungarian-Croatian inheritances Rudolf's plan was stillborn. In 1437, however, Albrecht V Habsburg succeeded Sigismund and for a brief time did join Bohemia, the Hungarian and Croatian kingdoms, and his own Austrian territories into a single complex. Although his premature death in 1439 separated these countries and peoples once more, the hereditary claim of the Habsburgs to the succession to the Hungarian and Croatian thrones was established by a treaty of inheritance concluded with the Jagellon dynasty of Poland-Lithuania in 1463. This agreement was drawn up at Sopron (Ödenburg) in western Hungary. The Hungarian kingdom at this time was being ruled by Mathias Corvinus, son of the old 'Turk-Beater', John Hunniades, but the Jagellons expected to claim his kingdom when he died. His demise did not occur until 1490 and in the interim he succeeded in wresting Vienna and Lower Austria from the Habsburgs. In the course of reclaiming this part of the Habsburg inheritance Maximilian penetrated into Hungary and northern Croatia and endeavored to assert his right to the throne of these two associated kingdoms also.

The Hungarian nobles wanted a weaker king than Maximilian, however, and therefore passed up his bid for the throne in favor of that advanced by Wladislaw II Jagellon, who already was King of

³ L. v. Südland (Ivo Pilar), *Južnoslavensko pitanje* [*The Yugoslav question*], 2nd ed. (Zagreb, 1943), 24.

⁴ Stjepan Srkulj, *Hrvatska povijest u devetnaest karata* [Croatian history as depicted in a set of nineteen maps] (Zagreb, 1934), 71.

Bohemia. Maximilian had many adherents among the Croatians⁵ but rather than involving himself in a protracted war he evacuated the Hungarian and Croatian territory that he had occupied, recognized the accession of Wladislaw, and concluded with the latter another pact to supplement the mutual inheritance agreement of 1463. Whichever ruling house died out first, the other would succeed to its possessions.

In 1492 both the Hungarian and Croatian nobilities, the spokesmen of their respective nations, accepted the Habsburg-Jagellon agreement. But in 1505 the Hungarian diet met on the Rákos field to pass a law which excluded non-Magyars from the throne in the event of the extinction of the Jagellon line. Maximilian refused to acknowledge the validity of this law which in fact was forced through the Magyar diet by a minority faction. The Habsburg ruler reinforced the agreements of 1463 and 1491 by concluding a third inheritance pact with the Jagellon family. Then in 1515 he negotiated a treaty at Vienna which reaffirmed the inheritance provisions of the Habsburg-Jagellon family pacts of 1463, 1491, and 1506. What was perhaps of more direct significance in assuring the eventual succession of the Habsburgs in Hungary and Croatia-Slavonia was the double marriage of Maximilian's grandchildren, Ferdinand and Maria, to the last scions of the Jagellon house, Louis and Anna.

When Maximilian died in 1519 he was succeeded by his eldest grandson, Karl (Charles) as Holy Roman or German Emperor. Since Karl was also King of Spain and of its overseas possessions (through inheritance from his maternal grandfather, Ferdinand of Aragon) he had more territory to administer than he could handle conveniently, given the modes of communication of the day. Therefore he turned the hereditary Austrian lands of the Habsburgs over to his brother Ferdinand who was married to Anna Jagellon.

Ferdinand was at Innsbruck in the Tyrol where he was preparing to launch a blow against the French invaders of Italy when he received word of the Mohacs disaster. He was not aware at first that Louis II Jagellon had perished in this catastrophe. Therefore he hastily penned letters to various Hungarian and Croatian magnates urging them to stand behind the Hungarian king in his hour of peril.⁶

⁵ Pilar, 24-25.

⁶ E. Laszowski-Szeliga, ed., *Monumenta habsburgica regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae, Slavoniae. Habsburgski spomenici Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije, i Slavonije*, 3 vols. (Zagreb, 1914-1917), I, 19-20.

About midday of September 8, however, word of Louis' death arrived at Innsbruck. Ferdinand at once broke off his war against the French and repaired to Vienna. On September 15 he met with the council of Lower Austria to elaborate plans for the assertion of his claim to the Hungarian, Croatian, and Bohemian thrones, all left vacant by the death of Louis.

The chief opposition to the pretensions of Ferdinand could be expected to come from the Hungarian faction that had forced through the exclusion law on the Rákos field more than twenty years before. The principal authors of this legislation were the noted jurist, Stephen Verböczy, whose Tripartitum law had fastened the bonds of serfdom more firmly and onerously upon the Magyar peasants, and John Zapolya, Voyvode of Transylvania. The latter bore the principal responsibility for the horrible severity that had attended the repression of the Dosza uprising. Many of his contemporaries attributed to him also the blame for the defeat at Mohacs. Not only had he failed to bring up his Transylvanian forces to support the king's army but also he had prevented many other Hungarian contingents from reinforcing the array that the Turks destroyed at Mohacs.⁷

Few Croatians were involved in the Mohacs debacle either, although some of the Slavonian lords rode out behind the king and charged with him as far as the Turkish guns which were chained wheel to wheel and covered by a heavy small arms fire from the best marksmen in the world of that day — the Janissaries. Zagreb, the capital of the Croatian-Slavonian Kingdom, also contributed forty infantrymen and six riders to the Hungarian array.⁸

Word of the catastrophe reached Zagreb on September 2 when George (Juraj) Kobašić v. Brekovica rode a spent horse through the city gates. He told the citizens that the chief reason for the disaster was the indiscipline that prevailed in the Hungarian host before the battle. "Everyone wanted to command and no one to obey"⁹ (a not uncommon manifestation in Hungarian military history).

⁷ Grisellini, Part 1, 62-63, 83-84.

⁸ I. Tkalčić, *Monumenta historica liberae regina civitatis Zagrabiae metropolis regni Dalmatiae, Croatiae, et Slavoniae*, 19 vols. (Zagreb, 1889-1913), III, 250.

⁹ Kristofor (Krstó) Frankapan to John Antonio Dandolo, Koprivnica, Sept. 29, 1526, cited in Ferdo Šišić, ed. *Acta comitialia regni Croatiae Dalmatiae et Slavoniae*, 5 vols. (Zagreb, 1912-1913), I, 11-12.. These collections of documents constitute Vols. XXXIII, XXXVI, XXXIX, XLI, and XLIII of the *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium* published by the Southern Slav Academy of Arts and Sciences in forty-three volumes between 1869 and 1918. They will be referred to henceforth as *Acta comitialia*, and the volumes by the

As noted above there were already many Croatians who felt that the union forged at the beginning of the twelfth century was no longer consonant with the maintenance of Croatian interests. The Hungarian peasant revolt led by George Dosza in 1514 had filled the Croatians with forebodings.¹⁰ Now the news of the annihilation of the Hungarian levies threw all Slavonia into a state of panic. The population could think only of flight. In Zagreb the state of mind at this moment was analogous to that which prevailed in 1945 when the Russians and Partisans were closing in on the metropolis. But in 1526 the Croats had what they lacked so conspicuously in 1945 — courageous leadership.

The day before Brekovica's arrival at the capital Count Kristofor Frankapan had brought four hundred well armed riders into the city. Count Ivan Karlović of Krbava *župe* (county) contributed an equivalent force. These two noblemen set to work at once to calm the fears of the citizenry. Brekovica had brought one cheering piece of information. He said that King Louis himself had got safely off the field and had escaped across the Danube. Therefore, Frankapan opined, the situation was not so bad after all. By this time the king would have reached Buda where he would be able to assemble an army larger than the one destroyed at Mohacs. With it he would expel the Ottomans from the Danubian lands in short order. Hastily the lord of Krk penned letters to prominent personalities in all parts of the Triple Kingdom to awaken them to the true situation. On September 3 he issued a fiery appeal to the nobles and burghers of Croatia and Slavonia to stand fast in the face of the Turkish storm that was approaching them.¹¹

At this time the Croat ban, Francis Batthyany, was absent from the country. It was apprehended generally that he had fallen at Mohacs. Therefore everyone looked to Frankapan and his riders as their saviours. Gradually excitement and confusion abated and a more

numbers I-V. For a Croatian account of the fight at Mohacs see "De conflictu Ungarorum cum Turcis ad Mohacz verissima historia Stephani Broderic (Brodarić), Epi. Vesprimen Cancellarii Ungarie", *Acta Tomiciana. Epistole legationes, responsa actiones res gestae Sigismundi, ejus nominis princi, regis Polonie*, ed. A. T. Dzialynski, *et al.* (Poznan, 1876), VIII, 231-253. An English translation of Brodarić' report is given in the recently published work of the late Professor Francis Preveden, *A history of the Croatian people*, Vol. II (New York, 1962), 30-31.

¹⁰ King Sigismund of Poland to the Hungarian palatine, Stephan Bathory, *Acta Tomiciana*, IX, 19.

¹¹ Tkalčić, III, 251-252; V. Klaić, *Povjest Hrvata*, 5 vols. in 3 (Zagreb, 1899-1911), III, 357-358.

confident feeling made its appearance in the Croat metropolis. As early as September 5 Frankapan wrote to his old friend, the bishop of Senj, "... everyone would have fled from the entire Slavonian land if we had not come here; the country certainly was being depopulated until courage and faith flowed into them owing to our arrival."¹² The Croat lord commented caustically also upon his Magyar peers and declared that Mohacs was "the lasting salvation of Croatia". He expressed his satisfaction at the thumping the Magyars had received for if they had won their pretensions would have known no bounds. Now, however, they would have to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards the Croats.¹³

Once the fears of the public at large had abated, Count Kristofor urged that Sabor (parliament) convene in order that it might be ready to execute the king's orders when they arrived. He had learned that the bishop of Zagreb, Simun Erdödi, had survived the debacle of August 29 and was now at Dubrava in Slavonia. The Turks had overrun most of Slavonia on their way to Mohacs, but Frankapan foresaw that they would not tarry in this territory but would march directly on Buda. Therefore he wanted Erdödi to set to work to raise some forces in their rear. Then, with their commands united, he and the bishop would endeavor to protect the Bosnian stronghold of Jajce, if, as the Croat magnate expected, the Ottomans sought to carry that old nemesis of theirs on the way back to Asia. To gain time Frankapan sent a letter to Buda urging King Louis to hold his capital at all costs. He warned the monarch that if he abandoned the city his kingdom was lost for never again would either the Croatians or Hungarians rally beneath his banner. But if he held fast in the Magyar capital both peoples would stand behind him.

When Frankapan received the news of Louis' death he comprehended that the Croatian nation now faced the same situation that it had when its native dynasty, the Trpimirovići, had died out in 1091, and that it had encountered upon the extinction of the Magyar Arpad dynasty in 1301. Once again the throne was "up for grabs".

Like other members of the Croatian nobility the Frankapans had close ties with Austria. In 1436 the Habsburgs had appointed a Frankapan land captain of the province of Krain (Carniola), a Habsburg

¹² Frankapan to Bishop Frano Jožefić, 5 September, 1526, quoted in Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski, ed., *Acta Croatica* (Zagreb, 1863), 215-218. Another copy of the Glagolitic text of this letter appears in Tkalčić, III, 252-255.

¹³ *Ibid.*

possession inhabited principally by Slovenes. Since the fourteenth century the Habsburgs had ruled the partially Croatian province of Istria, although Venice had taken over the western shore of this peninsula. Croatian soldiers had long served, too, under the Counts of Görz (Gorica) who were Habsburg vassals as were the Counts of Duino, who owned Fiume (Rieka). When the Duino line died out this old Croatian city passed into the hands of an Austrian family which in turn willed it to Frederick III Habsburg. The latter bestowed upon the town a kind of municipal autonomy.¹⁴

Turkish aggression against the Croatian lands strengthened the cementing of Austro-Croatian relationships that had resulted from inter-marriage and land inheritance on the part of the two nobilities. Military service under the Habsburg banners, the settlement of Austrian artisans and peasants in Croatia, and Croatian migrations to Austria effected a blending of the two populations also. Indubitably there is a heavy admixture of Austrian blood in the veins of many Croats today. Certainly in the first quarter of the sixteenth century the Croats felt closer to the Austrians than they did to the Magyars.

So far as is known no Croats were present at the meeting on the Rákos field two decades before Mohacs. A strong element in the Triple Kingdom had continued to cherish the idea of an eventual union with Habsburg Austria throughout the years that separated these two events. The double marriage of Maximilian's grandchildren with the last scions of the Jagellon House, and the inheritance contracts concluded between the two families, strengthened the Croatian preference for an Austrian connection. Sabor commenced to speak of Archduke Ferdinand as "our natural ruler" and in correspondence with him referred to Croatia-Slavonia as "Your Majesty's Kingdom".¹⁵ Several years before Mohacs the Berislavić and Keglević families pressed Louis II to entrust the defense of the Croatian Quarnero

¹⁴ F. Šišić, *Abridged political history of Fiume (Rieka)*, (Paris, 1919), 4.

¹⁵ Matija Mesić, "Hrvati nakon bana Berislavića do muhačke bitke", [The Croats from the death of Ban Berislavić to the battle of Mohacs] *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti*, XXIII (1872), 100. In this article, and in a supplementary one that appeared in *Rad*, Mesić covers exhaustively the period between 1522-1526. See also for this epoch, Lajos Thallóczy and Antal Hodinka, *Codex. dipl. partium regni Hungariae adnexarum* Vol. I: *A hórát néghelyek okléveltára* [Archives of the Croatian frontier fortresses]; Baron Johann Burgio, "Relationes oratorum pontificiorum", *Monumenta Vaticana Hungariae*, ser. II (Budapest, 1884), Vol. I. Burgio was the papal nuncio or ambassador to Hungary at this time. See also H. Bidermann, *Geschichte der österr. Gesamtstaatsidee* (Innsbruck, 1889), II, 198-204; Klaić, IV, 330-331, 346, 486.

coast, including the port of Senj, to the forces of Ferdinand. For his part the Habsburg ruler had a keen appreciation of the magnitude of the Turkish danger and he evinced consistent interest in seconding the efforts of the Croatians to hold back the wave of Turkish conquest that was threatening to spill over all Central Europe. He far outdid Louis in supplying the Croatians with money and military reinforcements.¹⁶

While he was aware of the past services of the House of Austria to his nation Kristofor Frankapan remained personally uncommitted with regard to the succession to the throne. It is significant that he ignored the request that Ferdinand addressed to him after the Habsburg's meeting with the council of Lower Austria in Vienna on September 15. Along with Captain Nikola Jurišić and some of the nobles of lower Krain (Carniola) Frankapan was asked to establish contact with the Croatian estates in order to prepare the way for their acceptance of the Habsburg claim.¹⁷ Jurišić, Johann Pichler, and other individuals loyal to Ferdinand rode at once to Croatia-Slavonia to smooth the way to Ferdinand's accession. Frankapan's failure to collaborate with them may be related to the attempt of his kinsman, Count Ivan Frano Frankapan, to negotiate a Franco-Turkish alliance against the Habsburgs.¹⁸ While Kristofor probably knew about Ivan's activities he does not seem to have been involved in them.¹⁹ Nonetheless it is rather peculiar that Frankapan, like Zapolya, did not join King Louis' army when it marched out to Mohacs. The Croatian nobleman may have had far reaching plans of his own, although it is more than likely that he changed his ideas and projects according to circumstances of the moment. As early as September 29, however, he indicated a preference for Zapolya as the successor to Louis.

¹⁶ On Ferdinand's relations with the Croatians before Mohacs see in addition to the Mesić article mentioned in footnote 15, *Monumenta habsburgica regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae, Slavoniae. Habsburgski spomenici Kraljevine Hrvatske, Dalmacije i Slavonije*, ed. Emilij Laszowski-Szeliga, 3 vols. (Zagreb, 1914-1917), I, 2-10. These documentary collections are Vols. XXXV, XXXVIII, and XL of the *Monumenta spectantia historiam Slavorum meridionalium* mentioned previously and will be referred to from now as *Mon. habsburgica*, Vols. I, II, and III. See also F. Šišić, "Politika Habsburgovaca spram Hrvata do Leopolda I", *Rad Jugoslavenske akademije znanosti i umjetnosti* [Works of the Southern Slav Academy of Arts and Sciences], CCXVI (1939), 93-135.

¹⁷ *Acta comitialia*, I, 6-7, 9.

¹⁸ V. L. Bourrelly, "L'ambassade de la Forest et de Marillac à Constantinople (1535-1538)", *Revue historique*, LXXVI (1901), 297-298.

¹⁹ F. v. Bezold, *Geschichte der Reformation* (Berlin, 1890), 535; Felix Bamberg, *Geschichte der orientalischen Angelegenheiten* (Berlin, 1892), 13, fn. 1.

What immediately concerned Frankapan was not the question of the succession but the Turkish invasion of Hungary. Suleiman's host was enroute to Buda, burning and plundering all the way. Count Kristofor raised what forces he could in Croatia-Slavonia and led them across the Drave onto Hungarian soil. He sent five hundred horsemen to aid in the defense of Székesfehérvár and also directed an urgent summons to the Slavonian lords to meet in Sabor at Koprivnica on Sunday, September 25. He hoped that by this date he would be back in Slavonia himself and able to participate in the diet which would have to consider the question of the succession.²⁰

As Frankapan desired the Slavonian Sabor met in emergency session on September 23. The assembled estates named Count Kristofor himself Administrator and High Defender of the Slavonian land. In accordance with ancient custom they raised him three times above their heads and approved the payment of a contribution out of their own pockets for the defense of the country. To Frankapan they delegated authority to send out agents to collect this contribution. Likewise the estates decided to dispatch a delegation to Pressburg for the purpose of expressing the allegiance of the Croats to the widowed queen. From Pressburg, however, their spokesmen were to go on to Vienna to consult with Ferdinand.²¹

Prior to the Slavonian meeting part of the Hungarian estates already had proclaimed Ferdinand king of Hungary and Croatia in a meeting at Pressburg held on September 16. The Croats, however, took the view that this action made Ferdinand king of Hungary only. Ban Batthyany took no part in the Koprivnica deliberations although he seems to have instructed his representatives there to advocate Ferdinand's cause. Some nobles from Croatia proper, including Count Karlović, did attend the Koprivnica Sabor. These non-Slavonian Croats agreed with the nobles and burghers of Slavonia on this occasion that their nation ought to support the accession of the Austrian archduke to the Hungarian-Croat throne.

Frankapan stayed on at Koprivnica for some time after the dissolution of the Slavonian Sabor. He occupied himself with the formation of an armed force capable of defending the country. Požega and

²⁰ Hieronymous v. Zadar to John Antonio Dandolo, Oct. 22, 1526, in Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, 58 vols. in 59 (Venice, 1879-1903), XLIII, 274-281.

²¹ Letter of Hieronymous v. Zadar of 22 October cited above. See also *Acta comitialia*, I, 9-10, and Frankapan to John Antonio Dandolo, Koprivnica, 29 September, 1526, *ibid.*, I, 11-12.

Somogy counties in Hungary hastened to place themselves under his protection. Early in October Frankapan set out for Pressburg along with some Slavonian gentlemen who were escorting the bishop of Zagreb to that point.

At this time the Turkish army, which on September 12 had taken and burned Buda, was raging like a hurricane on both banks of the Danube. Therefore Count Kristofor found himself obliged to turn away from Pressburg and to join the cavalry unit that he had detailed to Székesfehérvár the previous month. With this force he struck a powerful blow at the Turkish raiders along the river banks. The Ottomans turned south, crossed the Drave, and united with other Moslem bands in Sirmia. Wasting the lands between the Danube and the Tisza the main Turkish army retired towards Belgrade. By October 12 Suleiman's entire command was out of Hungary.

But another peril now menaced the Magyar country – a recrudescence of the peasant rising of 1514. Still smarting under the savage repression inflicted upon Dósz's adherents in that year, the Magyar farmers held their recent noble antagonists responsible for the Mohacs debacle and the resulting ruin of the countryside at the hands of the Turks. Especially along the right bank of the Danube there now began a fearful *jacquerie*. Frankapan's army saved many noble families from a certain and horrible doom. Other aristocratic houses from the districts affected by the revolt, Zala and Baranya counties in particular, proclaimed him their protector. In fact Count Kristofor proved himself able to pacify all western Hungary. Once he had accomplished this task he left his trusted subordinate, Hieronymous v. Zadar, in command of a strong garrison at Somogyvár. Frankapan himself now resumed his interrupted journey to Pressburg.

Queen Maria sent word that she would like to consult with him and with the Slavonian delegation at Hainburg.²² Some Hungarian and Croatian dignitaries already had repaired to this place in response to an invitation that she and the palatine had issued. The object of the meeting of course was to discuss the succession to the throne. At Hainburg it soon became evident that a simple proclamation of Ferdinand's hereditary right by virtue of his marriage to Anna, daughter of Wladislaw II and sister of Louis II, would not suffice to secure for him the crown. Although the Slavonians expressed their willingness to recognize Ferdinand as king, if he complied with certain stipulated

²² *Ibid.*, I, 16.

conditions, they would not accord him regal honors on the basis of the Habsburg-Jagellon marriage contracts and inheritance agreements alone. When Frankapan reached Hainburg he concurred in this attitude.

There were other candidates than the Habsburg for the vacant Hungarian-Croatian throne. Sigismund I of Poland had his partisans among the Magyars. But John Zapolya, voyvode of Transylvania, invited the high nobility, the gentry of the Hungarian counties, and the representatives of the towns to meet with him at his castle of Tokay in the famed Hegyalja wine region. Stephen Verböczi, former palatine and outstanding jurist, the bishop of Eger, and other Magyar notables responded to his summons. They found that Zapolya had an army of ten thousand men under his command which assured him of control of the situation in Hungary, at least for the moment. At the Tokay gathering it was decided that the Hungarian diet should convene on November 5 at Székesfehérvár.²³ The purpose of the parliamentary assembly would be to elect Zapolya king. Verböczi and other legalists planned to get around the Habsburg-Jagellon inheritance treaties by negotiating a marriage between Zapolya and the newly widowed queen of Hungary, who herself was the sister of Ferdinand of Austria. Queen Maria, however, refused flatly to fall in with this scheme. As soon as he learned that she had repulsed his suit Zapolya turned his forces loose on Buda, Esztergom, and Višegrad. He was able to take possession of the Crown of St. Stephen and the royal regalia.

Reputedly of Croatian descent Zapolya came originally from Požega Župe near the modern town of Nova Gradiska. Because of his extensive Slavonian properties he was referred to as the "Slav King" by his Magyar peers. Seven bishops and many Hungarian nobles appeared at Székesfehérvár to take part in the royal election. Present, too, were the gentry from various Hungarian counties, delegates from the royal free cities, and Frankapan's friend, the Croatian bishop of Senj. These elements promptly proclaimed Zapolya King of Hungary, Croatia-Slavonia, and Dalmatia. On the following day he was solemnly crowned and warnings were sent to all nobles and royal free communes not represented at this meeting of the diet that they must render homage to the new king within fifteen days. Failure to observe this command

²³ Copy of the original invitation issued to Ban Batthyany, dated 17 October, 1526, *ibid.*, I, 16-17.

would mean the confiscation of their properties and offices on the ground of treason to the lawfully crowned king.²⁴

Zapolya sent the bishop of Senj as a special envoy to the Pope and charged him likewise with the task of persuading Venice and France to recognize the Hungarian election.²⁵ Other diplomatic missions hastened to the courts of Queen Maria, Ferdinand, Henry VIII of England, Sigismund of Poland, and to the various German princes.

Thus the anti-Habsburg faction in Hungary had presented Ferdinand's Magyar partisans and the pro-Habsburg Croats with a fait accompli. Now that he was formally crowned, Zapolya, in the eyes of many Magyars and some Slavonians, was the legitimate king. Ferdinand was put in the position of a usurper who was challenging the authority of a legally or at least officially crowned ruler. The peculiar reverence that the Magyars felt towards the holy Crown of St. Stephen legitimized Zapolya's status. Even pro-Habsburg Magyars and Slavonians felt that a second coronation (for Ferdinand) would be a dubious expedient. In Croatia proper, however, all classes of the population seem to have supported the Austrian ruler.

On the same day that Zapolya was elected king of Hungary Count Frankapan arrived at Hainburg. He had with him 2000 infantry and 1000 horse and with this force he intended to defend Ferdinand in the event of an attack upon the town by Zapolya's forces.²⁶ After prolonged discussions the Croat nobleman agreed to support Ferdinand's pretensions to the throne of Croatia-Slavonia. In return Ferdinand promised to restore the old holdings of the Frankapan family in Dalmatia and to assign to Count Kristofor other properties in Croatia, Slavonia, Istria, and Carniola. Also the Croat was to be commander of both the Croatian-Slavonian and Hungarian armies for the duration of his life.²⁷

As soon as Simun Erdödi, bishop of Zagreb, heard about this pact, he set to work to convince Frankapan that, in view of the march

²⁴ *Mon. habsburgica*, I, 90-92, 138-139, 169.

²⁵ M. Samsalović, "Diplomatska misija senjskog biskupa Jožefića god. 1526-1527", *Zbornik* (publication of the Southern Slav Academy of Arts and Sciences), I (1954). Foreign powers had been prepared for Zapolya's candidacy long before. Early in the century John repeatedly had proposed to King Wladislaw II that the latter's daughter, Anna (who became the wife of Archduke Ferdinand) should be given to him in marriage in order to facilitate the succession of the Zapolyas to the Jagellon inheritance. The birth in 1506 of a son to Wladislaw put an end to Zapolya's throne pretensions for the time being.

²⁶ *Acta comitialia*, I, 22-23; Sanuto, XLIII, 475.

²⁷ *Acta comitialia*, I, 23-25.

stolen on the Habsburgs by Zapolya, Ferdinand now stood no chance of getting the crown. Erdödi affirmed that all Slavonia had declared for Zapolya. Committed though he was to the Habsburg claimant Frankapan began to waver. As late as November 9, however, he outlined his activities in behalf of Ferdinand in a letter to an Austrian friend. He spoke strongly against Zapolya and predicted that his crowning would lead to great bloodshed and would expose the entire Hungarian-Croatian kingdom to Turkish aggression.²⁸

Meanwhile, in mid October, the Croatian Sabor had assembled at Cetin. Ferdinand's commissioners, Johann Pichler and Nikolas Jurišić, asked the nobles and delegates of the communes who had gathered there to hail the archduke as their legal king on the basis of the hereditary right of his sister, Louis' widow, and of the treaties concluded between King Wladislaw of Hungary and Maximilian of Austria in 1491, 1505, and 1515. Sympathy for the House of Habsburg was strong among the Croats, but Sabor had no intention of renouncing its right of electing a king now that the Jagellon dynasty was extinct in the male line. Also it cannily desired that before he was 'elected' Ferdinand should grant various demands. A delegation was appointed to appear before Queen Maria in order to pledge Croatian allegiance to her, but, like its Slavonian counterpart, it then was to seek an understanding with Ferdinand.

As soon as he discovered how the political winds were blowing among the Croats Johann Pichler arranged for relays of fast horses to carry him to Vienna. He reached the Austrian metropolis on October 30 and reported to Ferdinand on the state of affairs in Croatia. Meanwhile the Croatian delegation appointed by Sabor proceeded to Pressburg to see the queen. Here it learned of Zapolya's coronation. The Croats did not share the reverence of their Magyar peers for the Holy Crown of St. Stephen and they did not approve the unilateral action taken by the Hungarians. They reached an agreement among themselves that the Triple Kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia, and what was left of Dalmatia had better unite without delay with the hereditary Habsburg lands (Upper and Lower Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, Tyrol, etc.).

From Pressburg the Croatian delegation went on to Vienna which it reached on November 16. Representatives of the Austrian nobility welcomed the Croats and received from them an expression of the

²⁸ *Acta comitialia*, I, 22-23 (Frankapan to Joseph Lamberg, 9 Nov., 1526).

long standing esteem felt by the Croatian nation for the House of Austria which so often had aided the Triple Kingdom in its unending battle with the Turks. The Croatian delegates asked that this assistance be continued and promised the loyalty of their nation to the archducal house.

Soon after its arrival Ferdinand received the delegation personally. The Croats advised him that their nation desired to effect a permanent union between the Austrian and Croatian lands. They asked the archduke to send a thousand cavalry at a monthly salary of three golden *gulden* per man to aid in the defense of the Croatian territories. In addition they requested compensation to be paid for the losses suffered up to this time by Croatia-Slavonia in the fighting against the Ottomans. The delegates delivered a written exposition of these demands to Ferdinand who indicated that he would meet them to the best of his ability.

But while his cause was making such satisfactory progress among the Croats the Habsburg claimant to the Hungarian-Croatian inheritance found himself embarrassed by the lack of support that he was encountering among his prospective Magyar subjects. The meeting of the Hungarian estates that was supposed to take place at Komárom on November 25 had to be postponed because not enough pro-Habsburg elements could be found to make the assembly advisable. Ferdinand's Magyar partisans scheduled the parliamentary sessions for the following month by which time they hoped that they would have time to popularize the Habsburg cause in Hungary.²⁹ The archduke tried to induce the Croatian delegation to attend the meetings of the Hungarian diet and to support his claims in the deliberations that were to take place. Individually the Croats were inclined to do this. To Ferdinand, however, they pointed out the fact that they had no authority to represent the Croatian nation in a Hungarian legislative assembly.

The Croats now concluded that they had wound up the business that had brought them to Vienna. They had reached an agreement with the Austrian ruler that the Sabor of Croatia, as distinct from that of Slavonia, (Croatian Dalmatia was in Venetian or Moslem hands) would convene at Cetin on December 21 to hear the report of the

²⁹ On the state of opinion among the Magyars at this time see F. Rački, "Izvodi za jugoslavensku poviest iz dnevnika Marina Sanuda za g. 1526-1533" [Extracts concerning Southern Slav history taken from the journal of Martin Sanudo], *Starine*, XV (1883), 181.

Croatian negotiations with the House of Austria. Ferdinand delegated the Viennese canon, Paul Oberstein, Nikolas Jurišić, Johann Katzianer, and Johann Pichler to represent him at the meeting of the Croatian Sabor.³⁰

The electoral assembly of the Hungarian estates met at Pressburg (Poszony) on December 16 in advance of the Croatian gathering. Stephan Bathory, the palatine or highest Hungarian executive authority, opened its sessions. Besides the nobles of western Hungary, the representatives of the seven western counties and of the towns of Sopron and Pressburg attended. These elements voted unanimously in favor of the 'King of Bohemia' (Ferdinand had been elected king by the Bohemian (Czech) estates on October 24) and 'Archduke of Austria' as the new king of Hungary. The Hungarian estates went on to declare that the "election" and "coronation" of the "usurper", John Zapolya, was null and void. All of Zapolya's adherents were directed to render homage to their legitimate sovereign within forty days' time. No coronation took place to solemnize Ferdinand's accession for the simple reason that the Crown of St. Stephen and the rest of the royal regalia were in the hands of Zapolya.

Three days after Ferdinand's proclamation at Pressburg the nobles of Slavonia assembled in Sabor at Dubrava. Here Frankapan was installed as ban of Slavonia with all due formalities. Batthyany, who had exercised the banal functions both in Croatia and Slavonia since 1525, sent an emissary to Dubrava to request the assembled gentlemen to repudiate Frankapan's nomination. Also he wrote directly to Count Kristofor asking him to decline the banal dignity.³¹ But both the Slavonian Sabor and Frankapan had decided to play ball with Zapolya. Another meeting was scheduled for January 6, 1527, and it was agreed generally that at that time Zapolya would be acknowledged as the legal king.³²

In Croatia Sabor did not convene on December 21 at Cetin as planned. When Ferdinand's commissioners, after an exhausting journey over poor and mud clogged roads, arrived on Christmas Eve at Cetin they found no representatives of Sabor present. The Croat lords

³⁰ On the negotiations of the Croatian Sabor with Ferdinand see *Acta comitialia* I, 4, 7, 9, 21, 26, 30-31, 36, 49, 57-64, 98-99.

³¹ Batthyany was one of Ferdinand's strongest supporters. See L. Thalloczy, *Geschichte der Grafen von Blagaj* (Vienna, 1858), 124.

³² On the Dubrava Sabor of 18 December see Batthyany's report to Ferdinand of 21 December, *Acta comitialia*, I, 40-43.

were in their castles celebrating Christmas.³³ In response to the pleas of the emissaries, however, they gradually began to repair to the city. On the last day of the year formal sittings were initiated in the Franciscan cloister. In attendance were representatives of the Zrini family, of the Karlovcs of Krbava, the Frankapani of Brinje and Sluin, some members of the house of Blagaj, and numerous other scions of the great and small nobility. Also on hand was Bernardin Frankapan, father of the newly installed Slavonian ban.³⁴

On the early morning of December 31 Ferdinand's spokesmen addressed the assembled estates asking them to acknowledge the archduke as their legitimate sovereign on the ground of the hereditary right possessed by his wife, Anna, sister of Louis II of Hungary and Croatia. They alluded to the content of the Habsburg-Jagellon treaties as well. By way of reply the Croatian estates asked what the Austrian ruler was going to do about the demands that their delegation had presented to him the previous November. The Habsburg emissaries answered that it would be best to observe a regular order of procedure. In its course any matters which interested the Croats could be dealt with. This proposal satisfied the estates who forthwith retired to private chambers to discuss the claim of hereditary right that Ferdinand had put forward. All of the Habsburg-Jagellon treaties were read aloud. A few of the assembled delegates were not inclined to accept the Habsburg claims. Among this group were the confidants of Count Bernardin Frankapan. The entire day passed in discussing the legitimacy of Ferdinand's pretensions. Finally, in the last hours of this eventful year, the estates sent a committee to inform the commissioners that the Croatian nation found that the claim of hereditary right advanced by Ferdinand and Anna was justified.³⁵

Naturally the commissioners now felt encouraged to again request the Croats on the following day to give formal recognition to this principle of the hereditary right of the Austrian rulers in Croatia. But the Croats replied that although they freely acknowledged the justice of the Habsburg claim they could not pledge their nation's allegiance to the archduke until they knew what he was prepared to do to satisfy the demands that their representatives had presented to him the previous fall. An uninterrupted discussion of this impasse followed until four in the afternoon. Then the estates came to an understanding

³³ *Ibid.*, and the reports of the Habsburg emissaries from Cetin, I, 58-59, 61-62.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 50, 66.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 58.

with the Habsburg agents despite the endeavors of Bernardin Frankapan to influence his fellow peers against the claims of Ferdinand and his wife.³⁶

The estates insisted that Ferdinand keep his promise to send 1000 horse and 200 infantry to Croatia. All of the latter and a fifth of the riders were to be under the direct command of the Croatian war captain. The remainder of the cavalry was to be distributed among the nobility, according to rank, for service against the Turks in the defence of the borders. Thus Nikolas Zrini and the Frankapans of Sluin were to have 80 riders apiece at their disposal, units of 50 were to be assigned to the Frankapans of Brinje, the counts of Blagaj, the bishop of Klis and a few other nobles, while the rest of the Austrian horsemen were to be apportioned out in units of 15 to the lower nobility.³⁷

Sabor stipulated that Ferdinand also was to maintain a strong military force in Carniola along the frontier at all times. In addition his military commanders were to make a careful investigation of the defensive condition of all Croatian fortresses and cities. He was to supply these places with adequate numbers of cannon and with munitions. Furthermore 50 Austrian artillerists were to be garrisoned at Bihać, while from 60 to 80 were to be detailed to Klis and Senj. Finally the estates demanded that Ferdinand take a pledge to guarantee the maintenance of their privileges together with the rights, liberties, and royal decrees issued by earlier Croatian kings to the country and to its inhabitants. He also had to promise to respect all existing customs and laws. The question of the *Anschluss* of the Triune Kingdom to the hereditary Habsburg lands then came up for discussion. The Habsburg commissioners asked, however, that the Croats confine this desire to an oral expression rather than formulating it in a written demand.

When, at the end of these debates, the commissioners, acting in Ferdinand's name, obligated themselves in writing to fulfill the Croatian requests, the estates unanimously hailed Ferdinand, "King of Bohemia and Archduke of Austria", as their legitimate king and lord. Also they pledged allegiance to his wife as their queen. Then they took a solemn oath for themselves and their descendants to the successors of the royal pair. "Nor in future will we accept and acknowledge as our lord or king anyone other than their Majesties and their suc-

³⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 64-65.

cessors.”³⁸ Everyone now repaired to the monastery chapel where a ‘Te Deum Laudamus’ was sung as the thunder of cannon, the pealing of bells, and the calls of the heralds announced to Cetin and its environs that the Croats had a new king.

That evening Sabor drew up the electoral record. While this acknowledged the justice of the claims of hereditary right advanced by Ferdinand and his wife, and also took notice of the action of the Pressburg diet on December 18, it stipulated expressly that Croatian acceptance of the Habsburgs was based upon gratitude for the help that Ferdinand alone of all Christian rulers had accorded them in their wars with the Turks.³⁹

It is evident from the content of this document that the Croats acted altogether independently of the Pressburg election when they chose Ferdinand as their ruler. The mention of the Hungarian election contained in the Croatian electoral record was inserted for the purpose of impugning the validity of the previous Hungarian election of Zápolya, not as a ground for the recognition of the Habsburg claim in Croatia. It is significant that Ferdinand is not referred to as King of Hungary anywhere in the record elaborated by the Croatian estates. Instead there appear references to him as “King of Bohemia and Croatia, Archduke of Austria” etc.⁴⁰ Queen Anna’s status as the heiress of Wadislav II on the other hand is acknowledged.⁴¹

The Cetin action shows that the Croats considered their kingdom to be a distinct political nation which possessed full sovereignty in its own territory. This point is important today when the hope of Croatian national survival depends heavily upon preservation of the consciousness of Croatian historic state right. The western world, always complaisant towards Hungarian claims when these do not controvert Czech, Slovak, or Serbian pretensions, has tended to accept the verdict of Magyar historians that Croatia-Slavonia was a dependency of the Hungarian state complex formed in the Middle Ages. If the Croats did not regard themselves as politically independent, however, why would they have gone through the solemn rigamarole of the Cetin election when the Habsburg already had been elected King of Hungary by the Magyar diet meeting at Pressburg? The fact

³⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 50-52. See also Ivan Kukuljević-Sakcinski, ed., *Jura regni Croatiae, Dalmatiae, et Slavoniae*, 3 vols. (Zagreb, 1861-1862), II, 20-22, 22-25.

³⁹ *Jura regni*, II, 25-26.

⁴⁰ *Acta comitialia*, I, 50-51, II, 459.

⁴¹ In the words “Anna Hungariae, Bohemiae, Croatiae regina” and “nata regina Hungariae et Bohemiae”, *Acta comitialia*, I 51-52, II, 459-460.

is that the personal union that had existed between Hungary and Croatia-Slavonia since the end of the twelfth century was dissolved by the death of Louis II Jagellon. It is significant that the Croats recognized the hereditary right of the Habsburgs in their land, while the Hungarian crown was elective until 1687.⁴² Nor did the Magyars of this epoch take any exception whatsoever to the independent action taken by the Croats at Cetin. Even the Hungarian and Slavonian partisans of Zapolya did not make a serious attempt to question the validity of the Cetin decision. To be sure Croatian spirits were dampened somewhat when Kristofor Frankapan summoned the Croatian estates to attend the meeting of the Slavonian Sabor at Dubrava on January 6. But the Croats felt that now they had taken an oath to Ferdinand they had nothing to discuss with whoever might convene at Dubrava.

Of course the Croatian claim to a right of election that was independent of any decision concerning the succession to the throne that the Magyars might make was advanced at an inopportune moment from the point of view of Ferdinand. For all he knew he might offend his none too numerous Hungarian supporters if he took official cognizance of the Croatian position. Intentionally, therefore, he overlooked the term 'election' (*Wahlrecht*) and pretended to believe that the Cetin procedure represented only the customary act of allegiance or homage attendant upon the accession of a new king. The Croats, however, refused to be misunderstood. Ten years after the Cetin election Vuk Frankapan of Brinje reminded his sovereign "after we Croats solemnly elected Your Majesty our most merciful prince and king before other kingdoms did so . . ." ⁴³ On September 9, 1535, too, Sabor advised the Habsburg that his Croatian kingdom wished to effect a permanent *Anschluss* with his hereditary Austrian lands.⁴⁴ To this Croatian declaration the ruler returned a weak answer to the effect that the pressure of the war going on with the Turks and Zapolya's partisans made consummation of the desired union impossible at the moment; he implied that the matter would be taken up at a "suitable time".⁴⁵

This time never came. For four centuries the House of Habsburg

⁴² On this point see T. Smičiklas, *Poviest hrvatska*, 2 vols. (Zagreb, 1879-1882), II, 217.

⁴³ *Acta comitalia*, II, 77.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 340-341.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 342-343.

ruled the Croats without finding an opportunity to solve this kernel of the problem posed by the Austro-Croatian-Hungarian relationship. It is tempting to speculate as to the possible consequences for the Danubian lands and peoples of the conclusion of a "real" union between Austria and Croatia at this point in history.⁴⁶ But such speculation finds its most legitimate point of application in the era 1848-1918 and must be reserved for that period. Here we can only note that Croatian insistence upon the unilateral character of their acceptance of the Habsburg dynasty enormously strengthened the tradition and principle of Croatian state right which underlies modern Croatian nationalism.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ On the significance of the idea of "real" as opposed to "personal union" see Robert A. Kann, *The multinational empire. Nationalism and national reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918*, 2 vols (New York, 1964), I, 10, and footnote 11, p. 347.

⁴⁷ For a general analysis of the Cetin proceeding see F. Šišić, *Die Wahl Ferdinands I von Österreich zum König von Kroatien* (Zagreb, 1917). See also his *Pregled povjesti Hrvatskoga naroda*, 3rd. ed. (Zagreb, 1962), 268-269. The documentary record of the Cetin action is contained in *Acta comitialia*, I, 49-66, II, 459-460. See also J. Chmel, *Aktenstücke zur Geschichte Croatien und Slawonien in den Jahren 1526 und 1527* (Vienna, 1846), 35-36; *Jura regni*, II, 10-22.

II

THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF CROATIA AND SLAVONIA UNDER HABSBURG RULE

Nationally minded writers often have impugned the Habsburg dynasty for its policies of administrative centralization. Even serious historians often fail to realize that this process did not proceed according to a premeditated plan.

Ferdinand I originally did not intend to interfere with the Hungarian-Croatian constitutional relationship. As a matter of fact none of the sixteenth century Austrian Habsburg rulers aspired to weld their several kingdoms, principalities, and provinces into a uniformly organized state. The tendency towards centralization of authority was an unconscious and slowly evolving force, which had its origin in the necessary practice of nominating the employees of the Aulic Council in Vienna. This body was established by Ferdinand in 1528 to expedite the receipt and dispatch of correspondence from and to his various lands. Also he gave it the duty of drawing up rescripts, patents, diplomas and other necessary documents. Owing to the outbreak of war with the partisans of Zapolya for the possession of Hungary and Slavonia it appeared advisable in 1531 to transfer to Vienna the offices and funds of the Hungarian court chancellery. Unable to maintain his pretensions to the Hungarian and Croatian thrones out of his own resources Zapolya called in the Turks to help him against the Habsburgs. The Hungarian court chancellery could not be allowed to remain in Buda, which for a century and a half was destined to survive only as a ruins peopled by the destitute — save for its Turkish officials. This chancellery or secretariat functioned as a mediator between the Habsburg ruler in Vienna and the highest Magyar executive in 'royal' Hungary — that part of the lands of the Crown of St. Stephen which remained under Habsburg rather than Turkish control, or under that of Zapolya and his successors. Likewise the Hungarian body was the intermediary between Vienna and the Croatian-Slavonian kingdom.

Soon, however, the Hungarian court chancellery began to refer its

decisions and problems to the Aulic Council. Given the necessity of integrating the defenses of the Habsburg territories against Ottoman and French aggression, and also because of the financial difficulties that were common to all of the Viennese ruled lands, this step may be regarded as an inevitable one. In the interest of efficiency, and in view of the political and economic circumstances of the time, the Austrian (Aulic) and Hungarian chancelleries hardly could operate independently of one another. But over a period of time, and without any conscious scheming on the part of Ferdinand or of his successors to achieve this end, the Hungarian chancellery became dependent upon the Aulic Council. This development indeed occasioned a number of impassioned protests in the Pressburg (Poszony) diets of the Hungarian estates. The Croatian as well as the Hungarian estates maintained that the Aulic Council had no competence with respect to the internal affairs of either Croatia-Slavonia or Hungary. Its power was limited to intervention in matters which concerned Austria in its relationships with the two non-Germanic nations.

Again, however, an irresistible though largely unconscious force was at work to cement the unity of the empire. The location of the Habsburg court in Vienna made this city the natural administrative center for the entire Austrian Habsburg complex. Had the House of Austria chosen Prague, Pressburg, Zagreb, or Laibach (Ljubljana) as the imperial residence the history of Central Europe might have been other than what it turned out to be. But since the capital of the Habsburg lands was in Vienna and remained there¹ it was natural that Germanic Austrians should have staffed the central administrative offices. Entirely apart from the matter of its location, Vienna, since the era of the Babenberg dukes in the Low Middle Ages, was the real center of Germanic culture. Prague and Buda, too, had known their moments of renaissance splendor, but they hardly matched the Austrian metropolis in cultural glamor. The natural force exerted by Vienna in consequence of its position as the seat of the court and capital of the Habsburg state thus was reinforced by its status as a cultural magnet. It is the coalescence of these several factors that explains the growth of what often is referred to as Habsburg absolutism.

Perhaps the most important initial step in this slowly developing process was the assignment of foreign affairs to the competence of the

¹ Although Rudolf II (1576-1608) preferred Prague to Vienna he was such a dilettante ruler that the official status of Vienna was hardly weakened and the Czech capital did not become a permanent or serious rival of the *Kaiserstadt*.

Aulic Council. Significant, too, was the decision taken by Ferdinand to effect the improvement of the financial administration of his lands through an alteration in the structure of the old Hungarian treasury department. His purpose was to facilitate the collection of taxes and other contributions that were supposed to be paid to the crown. Gradually the Hungarian treasury office was subordinated to the more efficient Viennese financial organization. When, in 1556, Ferdinand set up a supreme military authority (*Hofkriegsrat* or Court War Office) for his several territories he completed the establishment of the basic foundations upon which the later absolutistic edifice was destined to be constructed.

In his Croatian lands, however, Ferdinand found that the ban, who was the supreme political, judicial, and military authority in the Triune Kingdom, constituted an impediment to the achievement either of absolutistic or centralized rule.² One of the prerogatives enjoyed by the ban was that of presiding over the Croatian Supreme Court, the Banal Table. There is an old Croatian proverb *Tko sudi, onaj vlada* (who judges, rules), and as a matter of fact there was no appeal from decisions handed down by the banal court to the Hungarian authorities in Buda or Pressburg. The ban had the authority and the power to convoke Sabor independently of the orders of the king. Furthermore if he chose to withhold his sanction from legislative measures enacted by Sabor these did not go into effect until some kind of accommodation had been worked out. There was no appeal from the banal authority save directly to the king himself. And, theoretically at least, the banal power exceeded that of the ruler himself insofar as the territory between the Save, the Bosna, and the Velebit was concerned. This circumstance antedated the accession of the Habsburgs since the second Angevin ruler of Hungary and Croatia-Slavonia, Louis I (1340-1382), had found the banal competence so great that he endeavored to diminish it by appointing a separate ban for each major division of the Triune Kingdom. But under his successors the bans of Croatia had recovered their powers while the Slavonian ban became important in his own right. Owing to the loss of so much of Slavonia to the Turks the office of Slavonian ban ceased to exist after 1539. Thus the way was left open for the bans of Croatia to extend their authority over Slavonia whenever that part of the Croatian heritage could be reclaimed from the Ottomans.

² On the banal office see Šišić, *Pregled*, 346-347.

It was customary for the ban to appoint a vice or podban (banal lieutenant) to assist him in the execution of his duties. This official served for the duration of the ban's own tenure of office. While the ban could nominate anyone he pleased to fill the office of vice ban the Croatian executive usually confined his choice to the high count of Zagreb or of Križevci county. This procedure was in accordance with traditional precedent. Whenever it was necessary for a ban to be absent from the country, or when other circumstances prevented him from carrying out his duties, the vice or podban functioned in his stead.

Several times it happened that bans were abroad serving with the military forces when the vice-bans, who were looking after domestic affairs for them, died. On such occasions the Habsburgs took it upon themselves to make appointments to fill these vacancies. Sabor regarded this procedure as an infringement of the Croatian constitution and challenged the right of the sovereigns to take such action. The estates insisted that they had the exclusive right to provide an interim government when for any reason there was no ban or banal lieutenant available to rule the kingdom. In 1537 they assembled at Križevci to put into office a provisional government consisting of four administrators. To this body the estates gave the right to administer all of the Croatian lands of the Habsburgs until such time as a new ban could be named. Ferdinand sanctioned this extraordinary proceeding.³

As long as the wars with the Turks were a serious matter, however, it was customary for the king to accept the nominations of Sabor with regard to the appointment of a ban. The bans took their oath of office in St. Mark's Church in Zagreb and Sabor refused to acknowledge the incumbency of any ban who did not go through the formality of this ceremony in the presence of the estates themselves. The laws passed between 1510 and 1790 defined the banal authority as extending over the territory between the Drave (both upper and lower reaches) and the Adriatic. Venetian Dalmatia and the areas conquered by the Ottomans of course remained outside the sphere of banal competence.

The banal treasury depended upon receipts from indirect taxes and upon stipulated contributions made by the Croatian cities. From the sums received it defrayed the expenses of the banal army, but turned whatever money was left over to the royal treasury. Some bans minted their own coins, but this practice gradually fell into disuse as the state

³ *Jura regni*, II, 33-35.

administration gradually became more centralized. The bans long continued to exert important regulatory powers over coinage however.

There was another important banal official besides the banal lieutenant. This was the protonotary (*protonotarius regni*) who guarded the seals of the kingdom and the banal office itself. He was nominated by Sabor and approved by the ban. The protonotary held the key to the archives where the *privilegia regia* were prepared and stored. Whenever a ban died or resigned his office, the protonotary had to destroy publicly the existing banal seal so that it could not be used to forge documents. Another duty of the protonotary was to function as recording secretary for Sabor. No records or minutes of this body were official without his signature. Finally the protonotary was an important judicial personality for in the absence of the ban he presided over the Banal Table from whose decisions there was no appeal save to the royal court. There was also a vice-notary elected by Sabor to aid the chief incumbent of the office in the carrying out of his functions. On occasion there even might be two such officials.

Ferdinand and his successors found that not only did they have to contend with the administrative authority exercised by the ban and his officials in the Croatian country, but also they had to reckon with the legislative competence of Sabor. This body was the determining force in organizing the day to day life of the Triune Kingdom. It made its own decisions in regard to the levy of recruits as well as with respect to other military details. Likewise it imposed taxes and duties independently of Hungarian laws and statutes relating to these matters. The legislative decisions reached by the Croatian estates assembled in Sabor were known as "Articuli statuum et ordinum regnorum Croatiae et Sclavoniae in Congregatione eorum generali ... celebrata edit." As a rule the king approved the laws (*articuli*) elaborated by Sabor. Through the medium of expressly issued royal orders it was possible for local assemblies or councils to put necessary norms into effect whether Sabor approved them or not. A notable instance of this kind was the setting up of the Military Border (*Voiska Kraina*). Another was the issuance of the Croatian Urbarium in the reign of Maria Theresa (1740-1780).

Fortunately the records of Sabor were preserved in the Zagreb archives from 1557 on. Up to this time the Croatian and Slavonian Sabors had kept separate protocols of their meetings. The Slavonian Sabor met as such for the last time in 1537, however, and after this year there was only one Sabor for the Croatian lands. Records main-