

Introduction

Crusading and crusades

To understand the circumstances that gave rise to the Crusade of Varna it is useful to make a distinction between crusading as an ideology and crusades as discrete events. The idea of crusading as a continuing military struggle against the enemies of Christendom had formed in western Europe in the centuries following the First Crusade and the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. A crusade, within the framework of this ideal, came to be defined as a military campaign waged against the enemies of the western Church, and conducted – nominally at least – under the auspices of the Pope. The enemies in question might be Muslims, heretics, schismatics or pagans, but Islam was the archetypal enemy and the one that played the central role in the formation and sustenance of the crusading ideal. Furthermore, the notion of ‘liberating’ Jerusalem after the Muslim reconquest of the city in 1244 remained an inspirational chimera throughout the western Christian world. Nonetheless, however firmly established the idea of crusading may have become in the mindset of western Christendom after the First Crusade, it still required a particular set of circumstances to translate it from an ideology into an active undertaking.

What was essential in the first place was that the crusade should serve the secular interests of the participants. Viewed from this perspective, the Crusade of Varna was simply one episode in a series of conflicts arising from Ottoman expansion into the Balkan peninsula, which pre-dated 1443 and were to continue long afterwards. Furthermore, the crusades of 1443–45 were not simply wars between Muslims and Christians: the Muslim Ibrahim of Karaman shared the anti-Ottoman interests of Byzantium and Hungary and was an ally of the crusaders. The Christian Genoese, on the other hand, were allies of the Ottomans, while the Christian Duke of Athens sought Ottoman protection against the equally Christian Despot of Mistra, Constantine Dragases, who was a keen advocate of the crusade. What transformed the wars of 1443–45 from a secular conflict into a crusade was the involvement of the Pope. One of Eugenius IV’s motives in organising the enterprise was no doubt simply to restore and extend his own authority at a time of crisis in the papacy, but it was his involvement as head of the Church that activated the crusading ideology, and this had important consequences. In the first place, the worldly aims of the participants in the Crusade of Varna were disparate and sometimes conflicting: the notion that the campaign was a crusade provided a unifying idea to which all the participants could subscribe, whether princes and prelates or common soldiers and sailors. Furthermore, it could also inspire princes and commoners with no apparent material interests in its outcome to join the campaign. Nevertheless, despite the shared faith of most of the

participants, the success of a crusade in the face of numerous obstacles required in its leaders a combination of diplomatic skill and a true, not to say fanatical, belief in the undertaking and its religious ideology. This is what the papal legate to the crusade, Cardinal Julian Cesarini, provided. His determination is evident especially in his skill in presenting the disastrous campaign in the autumn and winter of 1443–44 as a Christian triumph and in his successful manoeuvring to break a treaty concluded with the Ottomans on favourable terms and sworn on oath. Without Cesarini, the Crusade of Varna would probably never have happened.

The historical context of the Crusade of Varna: the Ottomans in the Balkans and the Crusade of Nicopolis

The Ottoman Empire emerged as a small principality in the early fourteenth century in north-west Anatolia. It was still an insignificant power when Ottoman troops and raiders first appeared in Europe as allies of the Byzantine pretender and later Emperor, John Kantakouzenos (1347–54). In the following decades, the Ottoman rulers combined their growing military strength with astute dynastic politics to expand their territory eastwards into Anatolia and westwards into the Balkan peninsula. In 1387, Murad I (1362–89) conquered Thessaloniki. In the early 1390s, his successor Bayezid I (1389–1402) established his suzerainty over Stephen Lazarević of Serbia. In 1395, he invaded Wallachia to the north of the Danube in an effort, presumably, to bring its ruler Mircea (1386–1418) under his overlordship. In the same year, he executed the Bulgarian Tsar, appointing an Ottoman governor in his stead. An inevitable result of the expansion of Bayezid's realms was a conflict with King Sigismund of Hungary (1387–1437) who, like Bayezid, sought to exert his suzerainty over Serbia and Wallachia, and whose territory to the north of the Danube had begun to suffer from Ottoman raids. Hitherto an expansionary power in the Balkans, the Kingdom of Hungary found itself for the first time on the defensive.¹ However, it was not only Hungary that Bayezid threatened. Venetian records from the 1390s record the assaults of Ottoman raiders on Venetian territories in the Peloponnesos, while an Ottoman fleet based at Gallipoli harried Venetian-held islands in the Aegean. In 1394, Bayezid brought the city of Constantinople under siege.

These were the circumstances that provoked the first anti-Ottoman crusade. In the early 1390s Sigismund was already discussing the possibility of an anti-Ottoman league with Venice. By 1396, with the urgent need to defend his city, the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II (1391–1425) had joined the negotiations with the pledge to add a fleet of ten galleys to the four promised by the Venetians. It was the threat from

¹ For Hungary during the period under discussion, see Pál Engel, *The Realm of St Stephen*, ed. Andrew Ayton (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001). For a conspectus of Ottoman–Hungarian warfare, see F. Szakály, 'Phases of Turco-Hungarian warfare before the battle of Mohács', *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XXXIII (1979), 65–111. For the Ottoman Empire during this period, see Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1481* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990).

Bayezid that had triggered this alliance, but it was Sigismund's appeal to the wider Catholic world that gave the undertaking the character of a crusade. In 1395, the marriage between Richard II of England and Isabella, the daughter of Charles VI of France, formalised a truce between France and England, releasing the knights of France, England and Burgundy for adventures elsewhere. It was the men of France and Burgundy in particular, together with smaller contingents from other parts of Europe, who answered Sigismund's appeal to join his campaign against Bayezid. The purpose of Sigismund, Venice and the Byzantine Emperor in seeking allies to join their coalition was simply to defend their territories from attack and even, in the case of the Emperor, from extinction. What, however, allowed them to make an appeal beyond their own borders and to give the coalition a unity of purpose was the fact the enemy was Muslim. This made it possible to present the undertaking as a crusade and, if the chronicler Froissart is to be believed, it was as crusaders that the Franco-Burgundian contingent under John of Nevers, the son of the Duke of Burgundy, set out for Hungary. 'It was published in Paris and elsewhere,' he wrote, that John of Nevers would lead the expedition against the Ottoman Sultan and then 'advance to Constantinople, cross the Hellespont, enter Syria, gain the Holy Land and deliver Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the infidels.' This was a fantasy. What had provoked the campaign was Ottoman-Hungarian rivalry combined with the Ottoman threat to Byzantium and to the Venetian colonies in Greece and the Aegean. It had nothing to do with Jerusalem or the Holy Sepulchre. It was, however, a fantasy that gave the campaign both a political coherence and a religious purpose: the crusading ideology had transformed a secular conflict into a religious war. The same combination of *Realpolitik* and idealism was to provide the motivating force for the later Crusade of Varna.

Sigismund's undertaking ended with the rout of the crusading army at Nicopolis in 1396, and it was probably in part to seek vengeance for this defeat that the Burgundians participated in the Varna crusade. The memory of the battle certainly lingered. Jehan de Wavrin records, in his account of the Burgundian campaign on the Danube in 1445, how his nephew asked to be shown the site of the battle (II). For the six years after 1396, Ottoman raids across the Danube into Hungarian territory and against Venetian colonies intensified, and Constantinople remained under siege. Bayezid, however, left Europe and, in 1397, annexed the emirate of Karaman, the main rival to Ottoman power in Anatolia. In the end, his downfall came about not through the efforts of crusaders, but through his defeat and captivity at the hands of Timur – or Tamerlane – at the battle of Ankara in 1402.

The Crusade of Varna: antecedents

After his victory and before leaving Anatolia, Timur re-established the Emirate of Karaman and other formerly independent territories in western Turkey. In the Balkan peninsula, by the terms of the Treaty of Gallipoli concluded in 1403 between Bayezid's eldest son Süleyman, Byzantium, and the maritime powers of the Aegean,

the Emperor Manuel II recovered Thessaloniki, and Süleyman accepted restrictions on the movements of his ships at Gallipoli. The Venetian senate, meanwhile, discussed but rejected the possibility of occupying Gallipoli itself. For ten years after 1403, civil war between the sons of Bayezid reduced the threat which the Ottomans posed to neighbouring powers. Constantinople was no longer under siege; raids in southern Greece continued, but with less ferocity than before 1402; and Sigismund restored security to the southern border of Hungary. From 1403, Bayezid's former vassal, Stephen Lazarević of Serbia, accepted *de facto* Sigismund's overlordship. In 1408 he became a founding member of the Hungarian chivalric Order of the Dragon and, from 1411, Sigismund reinforced his loyalty by bestowing on him vast estates within the Kingdom of Hungary itself. The King similarly awarded Mircea of Wallachia, whose lands adjoined the southern border of Transylvania, with estates in southern Transylvania. The loyalty of these principalities for a while provided Hungary with a buffer against Ottoman incursions.

The Ottoman civil war ended in 1413, with the victory of Mehmed I (1413–21), but the unrest that it had brought to the Balkans was still apparent in the uncertain loyalties of the Ottoman marcher lords at the time of the Varna crusade. In 1414, Manuel II and Mircea attempted to reignite the Ottoman civil war by sponsoring an Ottoman prince of uncertain lineage as a claimant to the Ottoman throne. The prince's attempt to seize power failed, but the appearance of Mehmed's brother Mustafa² offered his sponsors a second opportunity. In 1416, Mircea and Manuel materially supported his invasion of Ottoman Rumelia, to coincide with a Karamanid attack on Ottoman territory in Anatolia. This enterprise too ended with the defeat of the Karamanids and Mustafa's flight to the safety of the Byzantine city of Thessaloniki. While sponsoring rival claimants to the Ottoman throne, Manuel tried at the same time to construct an anti-Ottoman league. Ottoman raids on Byzantine and Venetian territories in the Peloponnesos had intensified since the end of the civil war and, furthermore, Ottoman intervention on behalf of an anti-Hungarian faction in Bosnia and the subsequent defection of the Bosnian King Stephen Ostoja in 1415 from Hungarian to Ottoman allegiance led to a severe weakening of the Hungarian defensive system. As the Byzantine Emperor's envoy tried to negotiate a conclusion to the longstanding war between Venice and Hungary early in 1416, a league of these threatened powers seemed to be a possibility. However, the opportunity soon passed. Following a Venetian naval victory over the Ottomans in April 1416, Venice's interest in the proposal evaporated.

However, the Ottomans continued to threaten all three powers. As a reprisal for the Emperor's support of Mustafa, Mehmed had laid siege to Thessaloniki. In Albania between 1417 and 1418, he occupied the port of Vlorë (Valona) and Gjirokastër (Argyrokastron), presenting an immediate threat to Venetian colonies and interests in the region. The same years, too, saw a weakening of Hungarian defences. In 1417, a year before Mircea's death, Mehmed I captured the Danubian fortresses of Isaccea,

2 On this prince, see C. J. Heywood, 'Mustafa Çelebi, Düzme', *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition), VII (Leiden: Brill, 1993).

Giurgiu, Novo Selo and Turnu Severin which guarded the passage of the river into Wallachia and Transylvania. At the same time, he took three of Mircea's sons to his court as hostages. In 1419, Sigismund retook Turnu Severin and fortified the frontier between there and Golubac, but with Mircea dead and the Ottoman Sultan in control of the Danube crossings to the east of Turnu Severin the frontier, and especially the passage through Wallachia into Transylvania, were no longer secure.

The death of Mehmed I in 1421 offered the Byzantine Emperor the opportunity to undermine Ottoman power, once again by fomenting strife within the dynasty. Mehmed's successor was his eldest son, Murad II (1421–51). Shortly after Murad had ascended the throne, Manuel released from captivity his uncle Mustafa, with the agreement that when he had seized power, Mustafa would surrender Gallipoli and other territories to Byzantium. Despite Mustafa's initial success in securing the loyalty of the Ottoman lords of Rumelia and crossing the straits into Anatolia, Murad drove him back, took him prisoner, and hanged him as a common criminal from the city walls of Edirne. Murad owed this victory – as he was to owe his victory in 1444 – to a Genoese ally. When Mustafa had fled back across the straits to Gallipoli, he had drawn the ships in the port up on land, depriving Murad of transport across the water. It was the Genoese governor of New Phokaia who not only ferried Murad's men across the straits but also provided crossbowmen for his army. The Genoese colonists in the Aegean had, as a result perhaps of their mutual enmity with Venice, been allies of the Ottomans since the mid-fourteenth century.

Manuel II's attempt to use Mustafa to overthrow Murad invited reprisals and, in 1422, the Sultan laid siege to both Constantinople and Thessaloniki. The appearance of Murad's younger brother as a finally unsuccessful claimant to the Ottoman throne saved Constantinople, but Thessaloniki remained under siege. Its defence was beyond the Emperor's means and, in 1423, he ceded the city to Venice. This involved the Venetians in a war with the Ottomans, which they could not hope to sustain alone. Apart from sponsoring a series of pretenders, claiming to be Murad's uncle Mustafa, they looked for allies among the Turkish rulers of western Anatolia whose principalities Timur had restored in 1402. However, by the end of the decade, Murad had eliminated the rival dynasties in western Anatolia, leaving only Karaman as a threat to his territory in Anatolia. One of the Turkish rulers whose assistance Venice had tried to enlist was Cüneyd, the Emir of the Aegean principality of Aydın, whom Murad had defeated and killed in 1425 with Genoese assistance. With Cüneyd's demise, Venice looked for other allies and began negotiations with Sigismund, offering to support a Hungarian invasion of Ottoman territory by cutting Ottoman communications at the straits. Nothing came of this plan and, in 1430, Thessaloniki fell to an Ottoman assault on its land walls. The recovery of the city was a Venetian goal during the Crusade of Varna.

Although the Venetians failed to engage Sigismund in a joint action against Murad, their approach came at a time of renewed Ottoman–Hungarian conflict over the old issue of which power was to dominate Wallachia and Serbia. In Wallachia, the Ottomans provided military support for the claims of the Voevode Radu against the Hungarian-backed Dan II, leading Sigismund to intervene personally and to win

a clear victory over Radu in the winter of 1426–27. However, the death of Dan in 1432 led to renewed conflict and Ottoman raids into Transylvania. It was only in 1436 that Sigismund was able to restore his authority over the principality by installing Vlad Drakul as Voevode. Vlad had received his education at the Hungarian court and, as his sobriquet implies, was a member of the Order of the Dragon. He was to fight in the crusading army in 1444.

The second area of Hungarian conflict with the Ottomans was Serbia. In 1427, Stephen Lazarević died, bequeathing his lands to his nephew George Branković. In the year before his death, he had also agreed that the fortresses of Belgrade and Golubac on the Danube should pass to Sigismund of Hungary, giving the King control of the passage of the Danube between Serbia and Hungary. In 1427, Sigismund took possession of Belgrade, but Golubac to the east of Belgrade passed to the Ottomans, and Sigismund failed to wrest it from them in 1428. To compensate for the loss of these fortresses, in 1435 Branković completed the construction of the castle of Smederovo on the Danube between Golubac and Belgrade. The possession of Smederovo and Golubac was to be a central issue in the negotiations between Murad, Branković and the Hungarians in 1444 (V.8). Sigismund's alarm at having the Ottomans as Hungary's immediate neighbour across the Danube and the increasing frequency of Turkish raids into the Kingdom is evident from the defensive measures which he took in the 1420s. The decade saw the construction of fourteen new castles between Turnu Severin and Belgrade, including Szentlászló, constructed in 1428 directly opposite Golubac. In the following year, and at great expense, Sigismund handed over the defence of this section of the Danube frontier to the Teutonic Knights. The arrangement lasted until an Ottoman force overwhelmed the Knights in 1432.

The appearance of Ottoman forces on the Danube frontier with Hungary was to be the major source of friction that was to spark the Varna crusade. The same years following the death of Stephen Lazarević also saw the extension of Ottoman control in Albania. In 1432, Arianit, lord of the lands around Berat, won a victory over the Ottoman occupiers of his territory, encouraging the leaders of the Zenevis and Kastriote clans in southern and central Albania to unite against the Sultan. By 1433, however, the Ottoman lord of Thessaly Turahan – whom Murad was to imprison for his failings during the Hungarian invasion of 1443 – had violently suppressed the uprising, reoccupying the territory of the Zenevis around Gjirokaštër and reducing John Kastriote of Krujë to vassalage. His son George, better remembered as Iskender Bey or Scanderbeg, became a hostage at the Ottoman court. In 1438 Murad appointed him governor of the ancestral Kastriote territory, and it was from here, during the Crusade of Varna, that he launched his rebellion against the Sultan. The re-establishment of Ottoman power in Albania thoroughly alarmed the Venetians whose Albanian colonies the Ottoman occupation seemed to threaten.

The other neighbours of the Ottomans had equal cause for alarm. During the 1430s, the system of buffer principalities which protected the southern border of Hungary collapsed. In 1434 or 1435, Murad sent raids into Hungary, forcing the Despot George Branković to pay tribute. In 1435, he demanded Branković's daughter in marriage, so formalising her father's status as an Ottoman tributary and at the same

time undermining Serbia's role as Hungary's first line of defence against Ottoman attack. In Anatolia Karaman occupied a position somewhat similar to that of Serbia, as a buffer between Ottoman territory and the territory of the Mamluk Sultan and his vassals to the east and south-east, and it was a dispute between Ibrahim of Karaman and a Mamluk vassal that triggered the threat of Mamluk intervention. It was to counter this danger that Murad invaded Ibrahim's territory early in 1437, forcing the Emir to cede the two towns of Beyşehir and Akşehir on the western border of the principality. Ibrahim was to recover these and other possessions in 1444 (IV.4).

The Crusade of Varna: preliminaries

The issues, therefore, which led to the Crusade of Varna were longstanding. The first of these was the Ottoman threat to the continued existence of Byzantium, both the city of Constantinople itself and the remaining Byzantine territories in the Peloponnesos. The Emperor could not defeat the Ottomans on his own, but had necessarily to rely for his survival either on creating strife within the Ottoman dynasty, or on forging alliances with the Latin powers of the west or with the Muslim powers in the East. The second issue was the struggle between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Ottoman Empire for dominance in the Balkan peninsula, and in particular the competition for control of Serbia and Wallachia which lay between the two powers. The third issue was the commercial and colonial rivalry between Venice and Genoa. While the Venetians needed to adapt their commercial and colonial policies to accommodate the Ottoman presence, their attitude to the Ottomans, although always realistic, was essentially hostile. When they felt their interests threatened and could find suitable allies, they were ready to go to war. The Genoese, by contrast, had remained on good terms with the Ottoman Sultans since the mid-fourteenth century, and Murad II in particular seems to have maintained personal friendships with the Genoese dynasts of the Levant. Ciriaco of Ancona reports how, when he was in retirement at Manisa in 1446, Murad invited the Genoese Francesco di Drapieri not simply to his residence but into 'a separate, private, inner chamber, where no outsider may so much as step on the threshold.'³ The last issue was the permanent rivalry between the Ottomans and the Karamanids in Anatolia which, in the Karamanids, provided the western powers with a willing anti-Ottoman ally.

In its essentials, therefore, the Crusade of Varna was no more than the continuation of the struggle between these powers, using means that had been proposed or even put into effect on more than one occasion before. The plan to use a Karamanid attack to lure the Sultan into Anatolia while the Hungarians invaded from the west was not new. Nor was the idea of blocking the straits to prevent the Sultan's army returning from Anatolia to fight the Hungarians in Europe. Nor was the idea of releasing an Ottoman pretender in order to stir up disaffection among the Sultan's subjects.

3 *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels*, ed. and transl. Edward W. Bodnar (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), 247.

The problem which the anti-Ottoman powers faced was that, apart from a desire to defeat or at least weaken the Ottomans, they had no aims in common, making co-operation and the formation of effective alliances difficult. The idea of a crusade, on the other hand, provided a coherence among the Christian powers that was usually lacking and also had the potential to attract allies who had no special interests in the Levant. However, a crusade required the leadership of the Pope, and a pope would involve himself in such an undertaking only when it suited the political ends of the papacy. Precisely such circumstances arose during the 1430s.

In 1431, the Venetian Gabriele Condulmer became Pope as Eugenius IV. In the same year a General Council of the Church assembled in Basel under the presidency of Cardinal Julian Cesarini to discuss ecclesiastical reform, and since the reforms that the Council proposed would limit both the power and the income of the Pope, Eugenius opposed it from the outset. One of the issues at stake between Pope and Council was the union of the Latin and Greek Churches. The previous Pope, Martin V, had already reached an agreement with the Byzantine Emperor to begin discussions, and the question of whether the proposed meeting between Greeks and Latins should be held at Basel or in Italy became a matter of dispute between Pope and Council. When in 1437 two-thirds of the prelates on the Council voted that it should be held at Basel, the Pope endorsed the minority view and called a council at Ferrara in Italy. It was at this stage that Cesarini – a key figure in the Crusade of Varna – abandoned the Council of Basel for the Pope.

The decision of the Greeks, on the advice of the Doge of Venice, to attend the Pope's Council at Ferrara in 1438 and its continuation at Florence in 1439 represented a coup for the Pope against his rivals at Basel. His victory was complete when Cesarini publicly proclaimed the Latin text of the Decree of Union in Florence in 1439. This settled the theological issues of purgatory, the eucharist and the *filioque* that had divided the Churches and, in its final clause, gave unequivocal recognition to the primacy of the Pope (IV.1).⁴ Only a minority of Latin bishops and of Greek clergy had attended the Council, and of the secular rulers, only the Angevins and – significantly for the Crusade of Varna – the Duke of Burgundy had sent representatives. In the same year as the Decree of Union, the Council of Basel had elected a rival Pope. Nonetheless, the Council of Ferrara and Florence was a triumph for Eugenius against the prelates at Basel and the first step in the organisation of the Crusade of Varna, as the anonymous author of the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad son of Sultan Mehmed Khan* clearly understood (I).

The Greek Emperor's motive in attending the Council of Florence and Ferrara had not been simply to discuss theology, but rather to solicit the Pope's help against the Ottomans. The Greek concessions on the theological issues and the unwelcome recognition of the Pope as head of the reunited Churches was the price that John VIII was forced to pay for military aid. This the Pope had promised in June 1439,

4 For an outline of the dispute between Eugenius IV and the Council of Basel, see Hubert Jedin and John Dolan (eds), *History of the Church*, vol.IV (London: Burns and Oates, 1980), 474–84.

before the promulgation of the Decree of Union, and the Greeks had good reason to expect that he would keep his side of the bargain. Eugenius' success in negotiating the union undoubtedly increased his authority against the claims of the Council of Basel. If in the wake of the union, he could rescue Byzantium by sponsoring a successful crusade, he could more easily enforce the Decree of Union, his role as head of the reunited Church would be reinforced, and his authority against the claims of the Council of Basel undisputed. Furthermore, the defection of Cardinal Cesarini from Council to Pope improved the prospect for such a venture. In confronting the Hussites in Bohemia, Cesarini had shown himself to be an enemy of negotiations with heretics, and in 1429 Eugenius IV's predecessor had appointed him papal legate to the fifth crusade against the Hussites. The rout of his forces at Domažlice in 1431⁵ did not apparently diminish his enthusiasm for crusading, and his presence in the entourage of the Pope provided the impetus for a campaign against the Ottomans.

However, in the years immediately following the Decree of Union, circumstances did not favour a crusade. While the affairs of Italy diverted the Pope's attention, the Greek response to the union showed that, in practice, it amounted to no more than a private agreement between Pope and Emperor. The Greek chronicle of Doukas invents a dramatic scene where the prelates returning from the Council of Ferrara–Florence denounce their own actions with the words: 'We have betrayed our faith. We have exchanged piety for impiety. We have renounced the pure sacrifice and become azymites.'⁶ Meanwhile, the Orthodox Patriarch of Russia, Isidore of Kiev, whom Eugenius had appointed as legate to enforce the union in Russia, was driven from Kiev and imprisoned in Moscow as a heretic. The problems in Byzantium were not, however, simply ecclesiastical. The apparent failure of the union coincided with dynastic quarrels within the Byzantine imperial family. John VIII's brother Demetrios claimed the imperial title for himself and, as was the practice in such disputes, called on the Ottoman Sultan for assistance. In the spring of 1442, Murad II's forces attacked Constantinople on Demetrios' behalf, and then, in the summer, Murad provided ships to besiege John and his other brother, Constantine, on the island of Limni. However, by the autumn of 1442, the Byzantine civil war had ended. Its conclusion came at a moment when the prospects for a crusade seemed at last to be realistic.

Hungary was the key to any crusade against the Ottomans but, in the five years since Sigismund's death in 1437, the Kingdom had suffered persistent internal problems. Sigismund's successor was his son-in-law Albert, Duke of Austria. On his succession the Hungarian nobility coerced him into signing a law to 'restore the ancient laws and customs of the realm', meaning in effect that he could not

5 Thomas A. Fudge, *The Crusade against Heretics in Bohemia, 1418–1437* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 262–340.

6 Doukas, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks*, transl. J. A. Magoulias (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 181. The azymite controversy was one of the theological issues settled in the Decree of Union.

take political decisions without the participation of the landed nobility of the realm,⁷ an arrangement that was to add to the complications and misunderstandings over the negotiations with Murad II in 1444 (V). Furthermore, Albert's main foreign interest was not in a crusade, but rather in a war with King Vladislav of Poland over the Kingdom of Bohemia. Seeing this as a hindrance to the crusade project, Pope Eugenius proposed a conference at Wrocław to settle the matter. The parties met in the presence of a papal envoy early in 1439, but without ending the dispute.⁸ In the meantime, the Ottoman threat to Hungary's southern frontier increased.

Doukas attributes this to Murad II's appointment to the vizierate of Hekim Fazlullah, whom he describes as an inveterate foe of Christianity. The first assault came in 1438, when Murad, using Vlad Drakul as a guide, led an army across the Danube at Turnu Severin and, without meeting any resistance from King Albert, devastated the towns of Transylvania.⁹ The raid seems to have been the first stage of a planned conquest of Hungary. The next Ottoman attack was on Serbia, the Despot's position as the Sultan's father-in-law offering him no protection. The Ottoman chronicler Aşıkpaşazade claims that it was the Ottoman marcher lord and Aşıkpaşazade's own patron, Ishak Pasha of Skopje, who persuaded the Sultan to begin the war. Ishak Pasha, in this account, claimed that Hungary and Karaman – who were to be allies during the Crusade of Varna – were in league with one another, and would not submit to Murad so long as the Despot Branković occupied Smederovo. By this account, too, it was Ishak Pasha who convinced the Sultan that Vlad Drakul was unreliable and persuaded him to imprison him at Gallipoli and to detain his two sons. It is with this incident that Jehan de Wavrin (II) begins his account of the crusade.

The campaign against Serbia itself began with the occupation of Borač in 1438. Zvornik and Srebrnica fell in 1439. The campaign ended with the capitulation of Smederovo at the end of the same year. George Branković fled to Hungary where he had large estates. During the siege, King Albert had come with his army to Tüdörev at the confluence of the Danube and the Tisza, but had made no attempt to encounter the besiegers.¹⁰ He died soon after the withdrawal of his army.

The Ottoman occupation of Serbia and the forced subjugation of Vlad Drakul removed all protection from Hungary's southern border, at a time when the death of Albert had weakened the Kingdom's ability to resist invasion. In 1440 Murad clearly intended to defeat and occupy Hungary itself. In 1439, he had sent to King Vladislav of Poland an embassy which had offered the King help in his war with Albert over Bohemia. Albert's death deprived Murad of this weapon against Hungary, but in

7 Engel, *The Realm*, 279–80.

8 Maurice Michael, *The Annals of Jan Długosz* (Chichester: IM Publications, 1997), 472–7.

9 For a captive's account of the campaign, see Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus, Condicionibus et Nequicia Turcorum*, ed. Reinhard Klockow (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1994), 151–7.

10 János Thuróczy, *Chronicle of the Hungarians*, transl. Frank Mantello (Bloomington, Indiana: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1991), 102–3.

1440 he laid siege of Belgrade, the most important Hungarian bastion against an Ottoman invasion. The defenders, under the command of John Tallóci, Prior of the Hospitallers in Hungary, successfully resisted, but throughout the months of the siege they received no help from elsewhere in the Kingdom, since by this time Hungary was engulfed in a civil war.

It was the death of King Albert that had precipitated the conflict. At the time of his death in October 1439, his widow, King Sigismund's daughter Elizabeth, was five months pregnant. The Hungarian Estates were unwilling to entrust the Kingdom to the rule of Elizabeth or, should she give birth to a son, to accept an infant as king, with the boy's mother as regent. Their solution to the crisis was to invite the sixteen-year-old King Vladislav III of Poland to accept the crown as Vladislav I of Hungary. Murad was clearly aware of this development, as his envoys, Długosz tells us, were present at the solemn mass in Cracow cathedral where Bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki urged the King to accept the offer.¹¹ In February 1440, when the Hungarian envoys were still in Poland, the Queen gave birth to a son, Ladislaus, and when Vladislav arrived in Buda in May, she refused to accept him as king. Instead, she instructed her lady-in-waiting, Helene Kottanner, to steal the Holy Crown from safe-keeping at Visegrád.¹² On 15 May, the Archbishop of Esztergom, Denis Szécsi, used it to crown the infant Ladislaus at Székesfehérvár, a ceremony which by tradition made Ladislaus legitimate King of Hungary. In June, however, the partisans of Vladislav declared the coronation invalid by invoking an entirely new 'tradition': 'The crowning of kings is always dependent on the will of the kingdom's inhabitants, in whose consent both the effectiveness and the force of the crown reside.'¹³ They were, in effect, declaring the legitimacy of the King to be dependent on the will of the nobility. This was to erode further an already fragmented royal authority, with consequences that were to become evident in later negotiations with Murad II.

On 17 July, Vladislav was crowned at Székesfehérvár, using a crown removed from the reliquary of St Stephen: Elizabeth had stolen the Holy Crown of Hungary, which she was to deliver, together with her son Ladislaus, to the safekeeping of Ladislaus' second cousin, Frederick III, the Duke of Styria and King of Germany. Then, as the Ottomans laid siege to Belgrade, the civil war began. The majority of the Hungarian nobility were partisans of Vladislav, but Elizabeth had the support of the towns and some of the most powerful magnates of the Kingdom, including the Archbishop of Esztergom and the exiled Despot of Serbia, George Branković. Above all she had the support of the Bohemian warlord John Jiškra, who controlled much of the northern part of the Kingdom on her behalf. The King, meanwhile, enjoyed the support of Nicholas Újlaki, Ban of Mačva and John Hunyadi, Ban of Severin, who routed the Queen's forces during the winter war early in 1441, bringing much of southern Hungary under Vladislav's control. In recognition of their success,

11 Michael, *The Annals*, 478.

12 Helene Kottanner, *The Memoirs of Helene Kottanner* intro. and transl. Maya Bijvoet Williamson (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1998).

13 Quoted from Engel, *The Realm*, 281.

Vladislav appointed them jointly as Voevodes of Transylvania, Counts of Székely and castellans of Timișoara, Belgrade and the fortresses along the Danube border. The two men divided their responsibilities, with Újlaki conducting the King's war in the western part of the Kingdom, while Hunyadi took over operations east of the River Tisza. By April 1441, he had pacified the eastern counties, forcing George Branković and other powerful supporters of Elizabeth to recognise the King. Hunyadi's victories allowed him to seize from the defeated partisans of Elizabeth their castles and possessions in Transylvania, and to add them to the substantial estates which he had already received from Vladislav. He was by this time not only one of the most powerful men in the Kingdom, but also, as master of Transylvania, responsible for protecting Hungary's southern border against Ottoman raids. His pre-eminent position in the Kingdom, together with his experience of warfare against the Ottomans, were to ensure that he played a leading role in the crusade.

Although by 1442 Vladislav's party controlled much of the Kingdom, the north and parts of the west remained faithful to Elizabeth. By the end of the year, however, the civil war was over. It was above all the strife in Hungary that had thwarted Eugenius IV's plans for a crusade, and it was to negotiate an end to the war that he sent Julian Cesarini to Buda in the summer of 1442. Cesarini's numerous journeys between the Queen in Győr and the King in Buda finally produced a settlement between the two. What, however, brought the civil war, if not the uncertainties over the Hungarian crown, to a definitive end was the death of Elizabeth in December 1442.¹⁴ Certainly, at the end of 1442, Vladislav felt secure enough in his kingdom to reject a proposal from the Sultan's envoys, made in Cesarini's presence, of peace in exchange for the surrender of Belgrade.¹⁵ With the civil war in Byzantium having ended about two months earlier, the prospects for a crusade suddenly seemed to be realistic.

The Crusade of Varna: preparations

In 1442, when the majority of Orthodox clergy had rejected the Decree of Union and civil wars affected both Hungary and Byzantium, the outlook for a crusade seemed bleak. Nonetheless, diplomatic efforts continued. In February 1442, the Byzantine ambassador Ianakis Torcello stopped in Venice on his journey from Hungary to Rome. He reported despairingly on the state of affairs in Hungary and, at the same time, sought Venice's assistance against the Turks. The senators prevaricated. They needed to know what the German Emperor intended to do and promised Torcello an answer on his return journey.¹⁶ Two months later, when Cardinal Cesarini lodged in Venice, clearly on his way to Austria and then Hungary, he too must have discussed

14 Michael, *The Annals*, 487–8.

15 Michael, *The Annals*, 488.

16 N. Jorga, *Notes et Extraits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XV^e Siècle*, vol. II, 3e série (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1902), 83.

the proposed campaign.¹⁷ In March, in the meantime, the Pope's accounts show payments to the Bishop of Coron 'for going to Hungary',¹⁸ presumably in an effort to end the civil war there. In August, when Cesarini's negotiations were underway, he despatched a Matthew of Hungary to him as an envoy.¹⁹ Finally, at the end of December 1442, he authorised payments of Cesarini's expenses up until March 1443,²⁰ clearly intending him to stay in Hungary after the end of the civil war to make preparations for the crusade.

The Emperor John VIII had also sent an ambassador, Theodore Karystinos, to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, whose representative had attended the Council of Ferrara–Florence and with whose 'companion' John Cocq the Pope had held discussions in March 1442.²¹ Jehan de Wavrin describes Karystinos' arrival in late June or early July 1442, and the successful accomplishment of his mission (II), with the Duke promising to supply seven galleys, a transport vessel and a caravel, provided Venice, the Pope and other princes did likewise.²² The Duke of Burgundy had no obvious material interest in the proposed crusade, but crusading as an ideology was part of the literary and chivalric culture of the Burgundian court. The Burgundians had participated, with disastrous consequences, in the Crusade of Nicopolis in 1396, and the Duke undoubtedly sought revenge for this defeat. Later, in 1431, Philip had gone so far as to make preparations to participate in the Domažlice crusade against the Hussites, and in the early 1430s he had despatched his courtier Bertrandon de la Broquière to the Holy Land to report on the enemy and the terrain in advance of a planned crusade.²³ In 1441, the Burgundian Geoffroy de Thoisy had led a flotilla that had sailed from Villefranche-en-Provence to assist in the defence of Rhodes against the Mamluks. Furthermore, quite apart from idealistic considerations, a crusade would raise the Duke's own status. Legally, he ruled his lands as a vassal of the King of France. Participation in a victorious crusade would open the possibility of receiving a royal crown from the Pope.²⁴

At the same time as he sent ambassadors to Hungary, Rome, Venice and Burgundy, John VIII must also, as the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad (I)* informs us, have sent an envoy to the crusaders' Muslim ally, Ibrahim of Karaman. By the end of 1442, therefore, the crusade was under negotiation. However, to turn negotiations into action required a real prospect of success and this John Hunyadi had provided. As commander of the southern marches, the defence of Hungary against Turkish raids was primarily his responsibility. Thuróczy reports his success in 1441 against a raid under Ishak Pasha from Smederovo,²⁵ but it was his victories in 1442 that made his heroic reputation. On 22 March, he almost annihilated an army under Mezid

17 Ibid., 88.

18 N. Jorga, *Notes et Extraits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XV^e Siècle, vol.II*, 2e série (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 20.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., 21.

21 Ibid., 20.

22 H. Taparel, 'Une épisode de la politique orientale de Philippe le Bon: Les Bourguignons en Mer Noire (1440–1446)', *Annales de Bourgogne*, LV (1983), 5–29.

23 See Bertrandon de la Broquière, *The Voyage d'Outremer of Bertrandon de la Broquière*, ed. and transl. Galen R. Kline (New York: Peter Lang, 1988).

24 On Philip the Good, see Richard Vaughan, *Philip the Good* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2002).

25 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 124–6.

Bey that was harrying Transylvania. Then in September, in the Ialomița valley, he routed a second army under the governor-general of Rumelia, Şihabeddin Pasha, whom the Sultan had sent into Wallachia to avenge the earlier defeat (IV.2). Hunyadi had in reality overcome large-scale raids rather than full-scale invasions, but in the midst of civil war and against the apparent invincibility of the Ottomans, his victories seemed like miracles. The news of them immediately spread. When the senate in Venice heard from the King himself and from other sources about ‘the most felicitous and triumphant victory’ won against the Turks ‘in the lands of Hungary’, it ordered a celebratory procession in St Mark’s Square for 4 November.²⁶ On 21 December, the Pope paid ten florins to Matthew of Hungary ‘for the good news of the victory over the Turks, which Matthew himself had brought.’²⁷ Jehan de Wavrin prefaces his account of the Crusade of Varna with a report of these events (II).

Hunyadi’s victories gave the crusade the impetus that it required, and on New Year’s Day 1443 Eugenius IV published a crusading Bull. The chief propagandists for the crusade clearly wished to keep up the momentum. Early in April, Cesarini wrote from Hungary to the Duke of Burgundy and to Venice reporting that ‘the people of these regions’ were enthusiastically preparing to repel the Turks. Clearly convinced by his report, the Venetian senate forwarded his letter to the Pope, urging him to end discord in Italy since there was no better time for the proposed crusade. Early in May, the Byzantine ambassador, Theodore Karystinos, maintained the enthusiasm when, arriving in Venice on his way to Rome, he reported, with reference presumably to the current war between the Ottomans and the Karamanids (IV.3), that the Turks were in a bad state and that it would be easy to expel them from Europe.²⁸

However, the Emperor’s specific purpose in sending Karystinos to Venice was to discuss the construction of the fleet that was to block the straits. The senate could reassure him that the Pope had already requested the Republic to provide ten galleys and that Cesarini was asking him to arm these vessels. To expedite matters, the senators advised the ambassador to go directly to the Pope and to write to the Duke of Burgundy. If time and resources allowed, he should even visit him personally.²⁹ In the meantime, the Cardinal of Théroouanne had arrived in Rome to discuss the fleet on the Duke’s behalf.³⁰ As legate to the fleet, the Pope appointed his nephew and Apostolic Vice-Chancellor, Cardinal Condulmer,³¹ who was to accompany the Burgundian fleet on its crusade on the Danube in 1445 (II).

By May 1443, therefore, the allies had demonstrated their serious intent to construct a fleet to block Murad’s passage of the straits. The Duke of Burgundy, in the meantime, had secured from his relative Louis I of Savoy the continuing use of Villefranche and also of the neighbouring port of Nice for the refurbishment and construction of the ships and despatched Geoffroy de Thoisy to oversee these operations. In July 1443, the Doge of Genoa permitted the export of sails, oars,

26 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 105–6.

27 *Ibid.*, 21.

28 *Ibid.*, 121–3.

29 *Ibid.*, 122–3.

30 *Ibid.*, 125.

31 *Ibid.*, 126.

armour and other necessities to Villefranche and Nice. By the beginning of 1444, the flotilla was ready. De Thoisy raised oarsmen by impressing 'idle persons and vagabonds', and sailors by hiring Provençal and Italian seamen. Some of the costs he defrayed by renting space to merchants and their goods bound for Constantinople. The commander of the flotilla was Geoffroy de Thoisy, supported by the Hospitaller Regnault de Confide.³²

In Venice, however, where the Pope's flotilla and most of the Burgundian vessels were to be constructed, progress was less rapid. The main factor hindering progress was lack of money. The Venetian senate complained that the Pope was asking Venice to take full responsibility for his ten galleys, whereas the Venetians were offering only the hulls and rigging. The ships' armament was the responsibility of the Pope. Furthermore, the Pope was proposing to raise the money by a tithe on the clergy of Venice and Florence, while the Venetians considered that he should raise the money from other states.³³ On 26 May, the senate expressed surprise that the Pope was now talking of providing six galleys only, when at least ten would be required to make up the fleet of sixteen to twenty needed to guard the straits. At the same time, they urged him to raise money by means other than the tithe.³⁴ This he evidently tried to do since, on 12 June, the Doge of Genoa reported that 'certain persons' had invited him in the name of the Holy See to contribute to the crusade. However, his acknowledgement that this was 'a divine undertaking' and his promise that he would do whatever he could if 'certain turbulent affairs' – a reference to civil war in Genoa – 'did not shackle him' amounted to a refusal.³⁵ Both the Venetian ambassador to Rome and Cardinal Condulmer had in the meantime expressed their view that no money would be forthcoming from the Pope.³⁶ When, at the beginning of August 1443, Cardinal Condulmer finally sought permission to come to Venice to begin collecting the tithe, the senate consented only grudgingly, on condition that Venice supervise the operation very closely and on the understanding that granting consent did not condone the Pope's unjust treatment of Venice.³⁷ A month later, the senate was protesting that the Pope was demanding sums which he claimed were owed by Venice, when in reality it was he who was the debtor.³⁸ By the end of 1443, no ships were ready.

The Crusade of Varna: the campaigns of 1443

The success of the crusade depended on the Karamanid and Hungarian armies invading Murad's realms simultaneously, while the allied fleets blocked the straits.

32 Taparel, 'Une episode', 10.

33 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 126.

34 *Ibid.*, 128.

35 *Ibid.*, 134.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*, 136.

38 *Ibid.*, 138.

In the spring of 1443, urged on by John VIII and emboldened by Hunyadi's success in the previous year, Ibrahim of Karaman attacked Murad in Anatolia. By this time, however, neither the fleet nor the Hungarians were prepared, allowing Murad and his son Alaeddin to attack him in full force and, in a brutal campaign, to devastate his lands in reprisal (**I, IV.3**). The campaign, according to Neşri's chronology, was over by the end of the Muslim year 846, corresponding to 30 April 1443, but more probably it lasted into the early summer. It was not long after the campaign that Murad received news of the death of Alaeddin (**IV.3**).

The second campaign began in the autumn of 1443, once again before the fleet was even built. In mid-October 1443, a Hungarian army under the command of King Vladislav and the two most powerful magnates in Hungary, John Hunyadi and George Branković, crossed the Danube into Serbia. The motive for attacking at this season was most probably the fact that the majority of Ottoman troops were fief-holding cavalrymen who, in the autumn, returned to their fiefs to collect the taxes due on the harvest, and could be mobilised only slowly and unwillingly. This was in contrast to Hunyadi himself, who had gained experience of winter campaigns during the Hungarian civil war. The Hungarians too enjoyed other advantages. The Sultan could not match the size of their army, and had difficulties in countering their methods of warfare. During the campaign, the wagenburg tactic, which the Hungarians had learned from the Hussites,³⁹ proved devastatingly effective both during their advance and in preventing the annihilation of their army during its retreat. Furthermore, Ottoman weaponry was often useless against the plate armour which the Hungarian knights and commanders wore. According to the author of the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad*, it was to his armour that Hunyadi owed his life. To add to Murad's difficulties, he could not rely on the loyalty or even the fighting capacity of the lords and troops from Rumelia (**I**).

The Hungarian advance was victorious. At the beginning of November, their army overcame a contingent of Rumelian troops in Serbia, forcing the governor-general of Rumelia, Kasim Pasha, to abandon his camp and to flee with his fellow commander Turahan through the Pirot and Dragoman Passes to Sofia, and to warn the Sultan of the invasion. It was presumably following this encounter that Hunyadi wrote to Nicholas Újlaki on 8 November, naming the Ottoman commanders in the battle and reporting on the prisoners that he had taken.⁴⁰ In the course of their flight, Kasim and Turahan burned the villages between Niš and Sofia. When the Sultan arrived in Sofia from Edirne, he followed Turahan's advice to burn the city and its surroundings,⁴¹ and to retreat. The Ottoman tactic was to use scorched earth to wear

39 Emanuel Constantin Antoche, 'Du Tábor de Jan Žižka au *tabur çengi* des armées ottomanes', *Turcica*, 36 (2004), 91–124.

40 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 142.

41 Following the narrative of the *Holy Wars of Sultan Murad*. European accounts make the Hungarians rather than the Ottomans burn Sofia. In making the Sultan follow Turahan's advice, the *Holy Wars* agrees with the version of Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae Atheniensis Libri Decem*, ed. Immanuel Bekker (Bonn, 1843), 310–11.

down the Hungarians and then to encounter them in the mountain passes beyond Sofia, where Ottoman inferiority in numbers would not be such a disadvantage. To this end, the Sultan ordered the inhabitants in the mountains to fell trees to impede the invaders' passage.⁴² The tactic was successful, and made more so by the onset of bitterly cold weather. At the battle of the Zlatitsa Pass, fought in the snow immediately before Christmas 1443, the Hungarians suffered their first – and crucial – defeat. It was the wagenburg defence that saved their retreating army from destruction. On the return march, however, Hunyadi was able to secure another victory, when he ambushed a pursuing force in the Dragoman Pass, taking prisoner Mahmud Bey, the son-in-law of the Sultan and brother of the Grand Vizier (I, III, V.I). Constantine Mihailović names the place of the action as Kunovica.⁴³ It was probably, above all, this success that created the illusion that the war of the Zlatitsa Pass had been a Christian triumph.

In reality, it had been a disaster. In his account of the Hungarian army's retreat, Długosz describes 'the greater part of the King's army falling in heaps, overcome by hunger, and some soldiers marching with their bodies tottering hither and thither ... most of them in truth so exhausted that you would think them to be ghosts devoid of flesh rather than men.'⁴⁴ His description echoes precisely the account of the army's return in *The Holy Wars of Sultan Murad* (I). However, the appearance of the captured standards in the Church of the Blessed Virgin in Buda reinforced the illusion of victory.⁴⁵ It was an illusion that the King and, especially, Cesarini were anxious to maintain. Jehan de Wavrin reports that, after the battle, Cesarini was to go to the Pope, and 'in every place that he went through, he was to announce the great victories that he and the King had won against the Turks. However, he was to keep quiet about the losses that the Christians had suffered in the mountains, contradicting anyone who said anything about them' (II).

In contrast to the triumphalism of the Christian allies, Murad returned to Edirne in a state of anger and dejection. He had, it is true, stopped the crusaders at the Zlatitsa Pass, but they had, as they advanced and during their retreat, won victories over his forces, who had proved themselves unreliable. He reserved his special anger for Turahan, whom he held responsible for the setbacks of his army and for the capture of Mahmud Bey at the Dragoman Pass, and sent him to imprisonment in Tokat (I, IV.5).

42 Ibid., 308.

43 Konstantin Mihailović, *Memoirs of a Janissary*, transl. B. Stolz (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1975), 65.

44 Jan Długosz, *Ioannis Długosii seu Longini Historiae Polonicae* (Leipzig, 1711), 778.

45 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 138; Michael, *The Annals*, 490. Unlike Długosz, Thuróczy does not report on the state of the Hungarian army on its return.

Preparations, 1444

The news of Christian victories had spread before the end of the campaign. Already in December 1443, the Venetian senate had received information from the Bailo of Corfu that the Turks in the Albanian castles of Vlorë (Valona), Gjirokastër (Argyrokastron) and Kanina were in great fear, and strengthening their defences against a possible attack. Taking the view that the Ottomans were unlikely to remain in Albania if Christian successes continued, the senate instructed the Bailo to take possession of these places ‘but only if the Turks were to offer them.’⁴⁶ The Venetians maintained a cautious interest in acquiring these strongholds throughout 1444. However, a suggestion in early February 1444 that, should the reports of a Christian victory be true, Venice should occupy Scutari (Üsküdar) on the Bosphorus and Gallipoli ‘in the name of King Vladislav’ was voted down.⁴⁷

Clearly unaware of the defeat at the Zlatitsa Pass, the Venetian senate in January 1444 began to press for the completion of the fleet. The senators congratulated the King – ‘the supreme and most excellent leader among the Christians’ – in addition to Cesarini and John Hunyadi on their victories which, they emphasised, demanded the immediate despatch of galleys ‘to gain the greatest honour and immortal glory.’ That their intent was serious is clear from their agreeing to the collection of tithes from the Venetian clergy to pay for the undertaking.⁴⁸ Towards the end of January, they instructed the Captain of the Gulf to convey Isidore, Cardinal of Russia, to Clarentza in the Peloponnesos with twenty men, most probably on a mission to Constantine Dragases, the Byzantine Despot of Mistra and brother of the Emperor John VIII,⁴⁹ who was to participate in the crusade. In March, after a six-week delay, they finally despatched their own ambassador, John De Reguardati, to King Vladislav in Buda.⁵⁰ In a letter of 23 March, the senate, in reply to enquiries from the Duke of Burgundy, reported that the Duke’s four galleys and the ten galley hulls for the Pope’s flotilla were complete and that Cardinal Condulmer was in Venice, adding optimistically that he was ready to embark. The arming of the galleys, they said, could go ahead shortly, reporting that the Cardinal was hoping to extract money for this from Florence. The Florentine contribution in fact continued to be a matter of dispute between Venice and the Pope and Cardinal.⁵¹ The senators, in a reference to the battle of the Zlatitsa Pass, also reported that the King of Hungary had returned to his land after the lack of food and the devastated country had forced him to retreat, but was said to be ready to set out again in the spring. It was obviously with this timetable in mind that they had urged Cardinal Condulmer at the beginning of February to begin arming the Pope’s galleys and to depart as early as possible.⁵² Cesarini, they told the Duke, was due to

46 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 145.

47 *Ibid.*, 151.

48 *Ibid.*, 146

49 *Ibid.*, 147

50 *Ibid.*, 161.

51 *Ibid.*, 150; 6 February 1444.

52 *Ibid.*, 149.

arrive in Venice, and they promised to give the latest news to Waleran de Wavrin, when he arrived in Venice with letters of exchange.⁵³

The Venetian government was clearly anxious to maintain a sense of urgency among the allies. On 12 May, in reply to letters from both De Reguardati and Cesarini in Hungary, they stated that the Pope's flotilla would depart in a few days' time, and that a Burgundian ambassador had arrived to press for the armament of the Duke's galleys. In recognition that power in Hungary did not rest exclusively with the King, De Reguardati received the instruction to pass this information to John Hunyadi and George Branković, and to put pressure on Cesarini to make sure that the army's departure was not delayed.⁵⁴ The senate clearly envisaged a campaign during the summer of 1444 and the over-optimistic information about the papal galleys was perhaps deliberately misleading, and intended simply to hasten the preparation of the Hungarian army. In fact, at the end of May, the galleys still had not left, and Venice, Cardinal Condulmer and the Pope were still wrangling over costs. On 25 May, the senate complained that the Pope had not completed arming the galleys and was using the money from the tithe for other things, and that Condulmer was unjustifiably demanding money for his own upkeep. The senators ended by threatening to 'take measures', since, as they put it, 'if the Supreme Pontiff values his honour, we also hold ours in high esteem.'⁵⁵

Nonetheless, preparations continued. When Cardinal Condulmer announced at the beginning of June that the arming of the galleys was complete, the Venetians became more willing to raise funds for the fleet in their own territories. On 17 June, for example, the Doge instructed the Duke of Candia to collect the tithe of Crete to pay for provisions for the galleys which Venice was arming on Crete, and even for the pontifical, Burgundian and Ragusan galleys if the money already collected proved to be insufficient.⁵⁶ On the same day, the Venetian commander, Alvise Loredan, received his instructions. He was to go directly to the straits, where he was to serve under the command of the Cardinal Vice-Chancellor Condulmer. The same applied to 'the magnificent Lord De Wavrin (II) who, as we know for certain and as has been promised to us, must obey the Most Reverend Lord Cardinal Legate.' He was to expect the Byzantine Emperor's ships at the straits: if they were not there, the legate would ask for the Emperor's help in the name of the Pope. The instructions refer to the problems encountered in arming the fleet, and order Loredan to complete equipping the vessels and taking on board crews at Pola and Corfu.⁵⁷ Finally, at the beginning of July, the senate could report to Cesarini in Buda that Cardinal Condulmer had departed on 22 June. They followed the letter with another to Condulmer, urging him to reach the straits as soon as possible as the season was

53 *Ibid.*, 162–3.

54 *Ibid.*, 167–8.

55 *Ibid.*, 170.

56 *Ibid.*, 173.

57 *Ibid.*, 173–4.

already advanced.⁵⁸ Finally, on 7 and 8 July, the Burgundian galleys left. Condulmer reached Modon on 17 July and left three days later;⁵⁹ Loredan was in Modon on 25 July, and from there wrote to the Duke of Candia, urging him to raise money for the ‘most holy fleet’ from the Greek clergy and monks on Crete.⁶⁰ De Wavrin left Corfu on 28 July.⁶¹

Most of the vessels in the fleet came from the Pope, Venice and the Duke of Burgundy. However, in early 1444 the Pope had also requested a further two galleys from the Republic of Ragusa, which were granted on condition that the Pope himself provide not less than twelve – a condition that was never fulfilled – and provided that the Christian fleet be at the Dardanelles by 30 September, suggesting that the Ragusans were anticipating a Hungarian campaign in the autumn rather than in the summer.⁶² The vessels were nonetheless ready to depart in the first week of July.⁶³ On 17 August, the captains of the galleys announced their imminent departure from Modon.⁶⁴ By the end of August, the entire Christian fleet – Papal, Venetian, Burgundian and Ragusan – had assembled in the straits.

The arming of the fleet had accompanied the preparation of the land armies. In Hungary, since the treasury was empty, the King levied a tax on every town and village in the Kingdom to pay for the expedition, at the same time making Hunyadi responsible for the supply of wagons, horses, artillery and other war materials.⁶⁵ The implementation of the tax began in June.⁶⁶ In the Peloponnesos, Constantine Dragases had rebuilt the defensive wall across the isthmus of Corinth and prepared to harry southern Greece (IV.6). On 24 September 1444, when the crusade was already under way, the Ragusans sent news from the Christian camp ‘to the lords of Albania and Morea, exhorting them to arms.’⁶⁷

Negotiations, 1444

By the end of August, therefore, the military and naval preparations for the crusade were complete. The allies had also begun negotiations over the spoils of victory, with discussions, it seems, centring on Buda. In April 1444, the Ragusans received requests to facilitate the passage of both Constantine Dragases and the ambassador of the Byzantine Emperor to Hungary. At the end of June they despatched their own

58 *Ibid.*, 176.

59 *Ibid.*, 184.

60 *Ibid.*, 180.

61 *Ibid.*, 184.

62 *Ibid.*, 401.

63 *Ibid.*, 403.

64 *Ibid.*, 407.

65 Michael, *The Annals*, 491.

66 Pál Engel, ‘János Hunyadi and the peace “of Szeged” (1444)’, *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XLVII (1994), 241–57.

67 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 403.

envoy.⁶⁸ The Venetian De Reguardati had already left in March, with instructions to accompany the Hungarian army on the campaign, in order, presumably, to ensure that Venice received her rightful reward. In the end, for reasons that are unclear, De Reguardati did not depart with the Hungarians, but returned to Venice in October.⁶⁹

It is clear that, as the Ottomans' rival for hegemony in the Balkan peninsula, Hungary would acquire most of the conquered territory. The extent of Hungarian ambition is unknown, but Długosz reports that the King gave Hunyadi a written promise that, following the victory, he was to be made King of Bulgaria.⁷⁰ During his negotiations with a Hungarian intermediary, the Venetian envoy De Reguardati had received an undertaking that Venice would receive Thessaloniki and Gallipoli and 'other Greek lands'. At the same time he complained that the Byzantine ambassador had talked about the pontifical, Burgundian and Byzantine galleys, but 'made no mention of our state.' De Reguardati received instructions to remind the negotiators that Venice was sending six to eight, and perhaps more, of her own galleys, and had provided money and crews for the remainder so that 'although they are said to belong to others, they can be called ours.' The senate, in the meantime, had also considered but rejected a plan to acquire 'Maronia and Panidos which are situated on the sea.'⁷¹ Maronia on the coast of Thrace was a site of alum production. While negotiations were continuing in Buda during July, the senate once again considered the proposal from the governor of Corfu to occupy Vlorë, Gjirokastër, Kanina and Ioannina, which were important to Venice as sources of wheat and salt. While reminding the governor that they had already rejected this proposal in June, they nonetheless permitted the occupation of Valona and Kanina on condition that the Turks evacuate them first. What they perhaps did not know is that the Ragusans were hoping to acquire exactly these places. The Ragusan ambassador to Hungary had received instructions on 27 June to ask whether the King '— if God should grant him to expel the most cruel Turkish enemies from Greece, which we fully believe —, would grant that the territory of Valona [Vlorë], situated on the sea, together with its appurtenances and with its fortress called Kanina, be conceded to us.' This district was 'copious and abundant in victuals.'⁷² It is unclear whether the Emperor John VIII and the Despot Constantine Dragases made any territorial demands beyond, presumably, retaining what they themselves could conquer.

The negotiators in the summer of 1444 knew that the key to victory, and therefore to their own territorial and other aspirations, was the participation of Hungary under the leadership of King Vladislav, John Hunyadi and George Branković. The pressure on the King to lead a second expedition was therefore almost irresistible. The carefully fostered illusion that the campaign of 1443 had been a triumph had clearly spread. Długosz even claims that the Kings of France, England, Spain and Aragon,

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., 188.

70 Michael, *The Annals*, 493.

71 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 177–8.

72 Ibid., 403.

as well as the Dukes of Burgundy and Milan, and the cities of Venice, Florence and Genoa had sent messages of congratulations, urging the King to organise a second expedition.⁷³ Venice and Burgundy were already participants, while the King of Aragon involved himself in the negotiations for the crusade, without in the end contributing. These were external inducements to continue with the undertaking. In Hungary itself, the King held a Diet at Buda on 24 April at which, as Cesarini reported to the Venetian senate, he swore between the Cardinal's hands to lead an expedition in the summer.⁷⁴ It was on this occasion too that John Jiškra, the strongest supporter of Queen Elizabeth's son Ladislaus, agreed to a truce with Vladislav, thus removing the danger of civil war within Hungary.⁷⁵ The allies received further assurances of the King's intentions when, on 2 July 1444, he made a declaration at Buda of his intention to set out for Várad on 15 July to assemble an army against the Turks. In this carefully worded statement, the work probably of Cesarini, he refers to his victories of the previous year, glossing over the defeat at the Zlatitsa Pass (V.4). The King, it seems, intended this statement as a public announcement of his aims. In August, referring presumably to this document, the Ragusan ambassadors to the King of Bosnia claimed to have seen a letter 'from the most serene King of Hungary, written on the twenty-fourth of last month, which he wrote to the King of Bosnia, saying how he was now preparing to proceed to the destruction of the evil Turks.'⁷⁶ Another copy went to Florence (V.4), and others presumably to different rulers and governments in Europe.

If, however, the King's resolve had been as clear cut as his public statements imply, he and Cesarini would not have felt the need to reassure the world of his intentions with the July declaration. In fact, while he was under pressure to mount the expedition, he faced equally strong pressure to abandon it altogether. In the first place, a faction in Poland was demanding his return to put an end to civil strife in the country. This demand he put off, by promising to return when he had defeated the Turks.⁷⁷ Second, the horrors of the winter war of 1443, in contrast to the publicly proclaimed version of events, must have acted as a disincentive to reopen hostilities. Most important, however, were the peace negotiations which accompanied the preparations for war.⁷⁸

Subsequent events suggest that Murad II himself was the greatest proponent of peace. Nonetheless, he must also have faced pressure to negotiate from within his own family. The Hungarians had captured Mahmud Çelebi, who was both his own brother-in-law and brother of the Grand Vizier, and the chronicle of Neşri makes Murad's sister in particular beg him to obtain her husband's release (V.1). Further

73 Michael, *The Annals*, 490.

74 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 168.

75 Michael, *The Annals*, 490.

76 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 407.

77 Michael, *The Annals*, 490, 493.

78 For the sanest accounts of these negotiations and their outcome, see Halil İnalçık, '1444 buhranı', in Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri üzerinde Tetkikler ve Vesikalar* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), 1–53, and Engel, 'János Hunyadi'.

pressure must have come from Murad's wife Mara, acting on behalf of her father George Branković. On 6 March 1444, the Ragusans provided a ship to transport as far as Split a Greek monk, the 'envoy of the daughter of the lord Despot', on an embassy to Branković.⁷⁹ What they discussed is unknown, but the envoy seems to have set in train peace negotiations with the Sultan. On 24 April, at the same time as he was vowing to lead a crusade, King Vladislav sent a letter to Murad announcing that he was despatching his ambassador, Stojka Gisdanić, to Edirne, with full powers to negotiate on his behalf. He requested Murad to swear an oath on the treaty to be concluded and to send his own ambassadors to Hungary, so that he, the King, could also swear (V.2).

The first result of the negotiations was the release of Mahmud Çelebi, who arrived in Edirne evidently in late May or early June (I). The embassy from Hungary arrived soon afterwards. The antiquarian Ciriaco of Ancona, whom the Pope had clearly co-opted as a spy to report on the progress of the crusading plans,⁸⁰ reports the arrival in Edirne of Stojka Gisdanić, representing the King, a certain Vitislav, representing John Hunyadi, and two others representing George Branković. The negotiations, Ciriaco informs us, lasted for three days, and he agrees with the *Holy Wars* (I) in making the return of the Danubian fortresses the most contentious issue. In particular, the Ottomans wished to retain Golubac, but it was at this point that the crusaders' ally, Ibrahim of Karaman, invaded Murad's lands in Anatolia, leaving him with no time to prolong the negotiations and forcing him to abandon the castle.⁸¹ The discussions ended with a treaty concluded on 12 June. By its terms, Murad was to return his lands and castles, including Smederovo and Golubac, to George Branković, and to release his two sons. The Voevode of Wallachia, Vlad Drakul, was to continue to pay tribute to Murad, but without the obligation to attend his court in person. With Hungary, Murad concluded a ten-year truce. When Murad had sworn an oath to observe the treaty, he sent Baltaoğlu Süleyman (I) and a Greek called Vranas to Hungary to ratify the agreement with the oaths of the King, Hunyadi and Branković.⁸²

By July, when he publicly declared his intention to lead a crusade, the King must already have known the outcome of the negotiations at Edirne. It is clear, too, that knowledge of the peace negotiations had spread to other partners in the undertaking, and that these put pressure on the King, Hunyadi and Branković to renounce the treaty. On 24 June, the pontifical spy Ciriaco of Ancona wrote to Hunyadi from Pera begging him not to observe the peace. The Turks, he said, were terrified, repairing their fortifications 'and preparing their army for retreat rather than battle.' The peace

79 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 401.

80 E. W. Bodnar, 'Ciriaco d' Ancona and the crusade of Varna: A closer look', *Medievalia*, 14 (1988), 253–80.

81 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letter 9, 36–9.

82 *Ibid.*, Letters 9A, 9B1, 9B2, 37–47. Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th Century): An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 197–9.

would allow Murad, who had crossed the straits into Asia to attack the Karamanids, to return to Europe with his army ‘to avenge the defeat that you inflicted on him in the recent past.’ Instead, the Christians should ‘declare a war worthy of the Christian religion’ and invade Thrace while the fleet blocked Murad’s passage to Europe.⁸³ While urging Hunyadi on to war, Ciriaco must also have informed the Pope about the treaty, and he, in his turn, must have informed Cesarini, if the Cardinal was not already aware of the events. On 19 July, Ciriaco went hunting outside Constantinople in the company of the Emperor John VIII and his brother Theodore,⁸⁴ and on this occasion, too, the treaty must have been a subject of discussion. The uncertainty that it caused for the Byzantine imperial family is evident from a letter dated 30 July 1444 which, Długosz claims, John VIII wrote to King Vladislav from Mistra. The author of the letter seems in fact to have been the Despot Constantine Dragases.⁸⁵ In it, he states that his envoy returning from Hungary had reassured him of the King’s intentions ‘to go against the Turks this summer’ and that he, the Despot, ‘had resolved to add all our powers and zeal to supporting you against the most cruel enemy, Amurath.’ Constantine however continues, ‘it has come to our notice that the Despot George and Your Serenity have concluded certain peace treaties with the said Amurath, and that he himself is preparing to send envoys to Your Excellency to conclude and confirm the agreements.’ He urges the King not to damage all Christendom by making peace with an enemy ‘who is so defeated and vanquished that his empire would collapse at the mere name of Your Majesty.’ It was, he continued, unthinkable that the King should be ‘turning his thoughts to peace’ when Murad’s subjects and neighbours – a reference perhaps to the lords in Albania – were turning against him, and when even his co-religionist, Ibrahim of Karaman, had ‘occupied the greater part of eastern Asia, right up to the seas, with his powers and his army’, and ‘the most holy fleet’ was blocking the straits. Furthermore, Murad had ‘venal ministers’ who would never negotiate in good faith. Finally, given the uncertainty of what is happening, Constantine urges the King that if he is abandoning the crusade ‘– something which the mind cannot even entertain – we urge and beg Your Excellency to make us more certain, without any doubt or obscurity concerning your thoughts, counsels and deliberations.’⁸⁶

The letter is an indication of the confusion that news of the peace negotiations caused among the allies. There was also confusion in Hungary. George Branković, through his daughter Mara, had clearly played a major part in the moves towards peace, and had gained the most from the treaty concluded at Edirne. The description in the *Holy Wars (I)* of Baltaoğlu’s arrival in Hungary also suggests that the Ottoman envoy conducted separate negotiations with him in his own residence. The problem for Branković, however, was how to convince the King and Hunyadi to ratify the

83 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letter 11, 50–53.

84 *Ibid.*, Letter 12, 52–9.

85 A. Hohlweg, ‘Kaiser Johannes VIII. Palaeologus und der Kreuzzug des Jahres 1444’, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 73 (1980), 14–24.

86 Długosz, *Ioannis Długosii*, 790–93.

treaty. Hunyadi he appears to have won over by bribery. In the belief, presumably, that the treaty would secure the return of his lands and rulership in Serbia, on 3 July he transferred to Hunyadi in perpetuity his lordship of Világosvár in the Kingdom of Hungary, and it was probably at the same time that he transferred to Hunyadi, nominally as security, his other estates of Mukačevo, Baia Mare, Satu Mare, Debrecen and Bősörmény, making Hunyadi the largest landowner in the Kingdom.⁸⁷ Thus he hoped to secure Hunyadi's adherence to the treaty. How he sought to persuade the King is not clear.

The King, however, faced equally powerful forces pushing him in the opposite direction. The Polish faction in Hungary was anxious for him to lead a crusade in order to bolster his claims to legitimacy against the infant King Ladislaus, but above all he faced the persuasive powers of Cesarini. The Cardinal was a fervent believer in the crusade. Furthermore, since abandoning the Council of Basel, he had staked his career on supporting Eugenius IV against the Council, and this support entailed promoting the union of the Churches and organising the crusade. He had therefore to find a solution to the King's dilemma when Baltaoğlu and Vranas arrived in Szeged at the beginning of August to take the oath from Hunyadi, Branković and the King himself.⁸⁸ His solution, on 4 August 1444, was to make the King, in the presence of Hunyadi and all the barons and prelates of the Kingdom, abjure any treaties, present or future, which he had made or was to make with the Sultan (V.5). Cesarini had so formulated the declaration that negotiations with the ambassadors could continue, and the King could confirm the treaty by oath, but since the oath would be invalid, the crusade could still go ahead. Negotiations with Murad's ambassadors in fact went on for ten days after the King's declaration, causing further confusion among the crusading allies. On 12 and 14 August, Cesarini and De Reguardati respectively sent letters from Várad to the Venetian senate about the agreements made between Murad, the King and Despot, obliging the senate to despatch instructions to their commander at the Dardanelles on what to tell the Turks if a peace had been concluded (V.6). On 15 August, the treaty was ratified, evidently at Várad. A week later, on 22 August, Branković took back Serbia (V.7). It was, it seems, during the course of these negotiations that Vladislav offered to make Hunyadi King of Bulgaria if he abjured the oath.⁸⁹ This, as it turned out, he was quite willing to do, and it was in fact the King himself who suffered pangs of conscience. Thuróczy reports that he did not take the oath in person, but rather that 'lord János [Hunyadi] the Voevode swore a binding oath on behalf of the King himself and all the people of Hungary.'⁹⁰ Furthermore, both Długosz⁹¹ and the *Holy Wars* (I) comment on how the broken oath weighed heavily on Vladislav's mind.

87 Engel, 'János Hunyadi', 251.

88 Michael, *The Annals*, 492.

89 *Ibid.*, 493.

90 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 140.

91 Michael, *The Annals*, 493.

Murad's ambassadors knew nothing of Cesarini's stratagem to invalidate the treaty and must have returned to Edirne to report on its successful ratification. In their absence, much had happened in the Ottoman realms.

During the course of the negotiations at Edirne, as Ciriaco of Ancona had reported, Ibrahim of Karaman attacked Murad in Anatolia. He had most probably timed the action following advice from the Byzantine Emperor that the Hungarians would invade Rumelia during the summer, and that by then the allied fleet would be in place (I). The attack, however, came too early and Murad was able to lead his army across the straits in person. From the evidence of a chronological list of 1445, it seems that Ibrahim plundered the towns lying on or near the border between Ottoman and Karamanid territory – Beyşehir, Akşehir, Bolvadin, Kütahya and Sivrihisar – and harried the lands around (IV.4). However, Murad's approach forced him into submission, seemingly without any major engagements. The hostilities ended with a treaty, concluded probably in August 1444, in which Ibrahim swore fealty to Murad and, significantly, also to his son Prince Mehmed (V.8). Murad seems also to have been generous to Ibrahim in the territorial settlement, granting him, the chronological list informs us, several border towns, including Akşehir and Beyşehir (IV.4), which Murad had seized in 1437.

By the end of August 1444, therefore, unaware that Cesarini had released the King from his oath, Murad must have felt that both his western and eastern borders were secure. It was, according to the *Holy Wars*, immediately after Ibrahim's submission that Murad on his journey southwards from Bursa announced his decision to abdicate in favour of his son, Prince Mehmed (I). There can be no doubt that he had been considering this step for some months. He had brought Mehmed from Manisa to Edirne in June, at the time of the peace negotiations (I), and Ciriaco of Ancona reports the Prince as remaining there when his father left the city to encounter the Karamanids.⁹² It is certain too that Murad's purpose in granting favourable terms in the treaty with Vladislav, Branković and Hunyadi and in the later settlement with Ibrahim of Karaman was to secure a lasting peace which would make his retirement possible.

What can never be certain is what prompted the abdication. It seems possible that the gloomy mood in which Murad returned from the Zlatitsa Pass never lifted, and that the death of his son Alaeddin had affected him deeply. His love for this son is evident from his will, where he stipulates that he should be buried 'at the side of his son Alaeddin, at a distance of three or four cubits'⁹³ The abdication was perhaps also a reflection of Murad's own character. The Greek chronicler Doukas, who must have had dealings with him on behalf of his Genoese employers, describes Murad as being a man without guile or malice,⁹⁴ while the Burgundian Bertrandon de la Broquière reports that 'he is said to be a gentle person, benign and free with lands and money.

92 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letter 11, 51–3.

93 See İnalcık, *Fatih Devri*, 206 (Turkish text); 211 (Arabic text).

94 Doukas, *Decline and Fall*, 177.

He hates war, which seems to be true ...'.⁹⁵ The primary function of a monarch, however, was as a leader in war, while politics and diplomacy required a cunning and ruthlessness which were perhaps alien to Murad's character. It is very probable therefore that, after the vicious wars of 1443 in Asia and Europe, and saddened by the death of Alaeddin, Murad had simply lost any taste for rulership. He retired to Manisa, believing that he had secured a lasting peace.

The campaign of 1444

The Ottoman chronicler Aşıkpaşazade believed that it was Murad's abdication that inspired the Hungarian campaign in the autumn of 1444. This cannot, however, be entirely accurate. The Sultan would not have abdicated before he knew the outcome of the negotiations with Hungary and Karaman, and by this time, urged on by Cesarini, Vladislav had already resolved to renounce any treaty that might be concluded. Nevertheless, Aşıkpaşazade may well be right in reporting that Ibrahim of Karaman sent an envoy to Hungary to urge the King to war (IV.5). With Murad's retirement and a twelve-year-old boy on the Ottoman throne, victory seemed certain.

By September 1444, Hungarian preparations were complete and the allied fleet had finally arrived at the straits. The Venetian and pontifical galleys, together with two from the Duke of Burgundy, blockaded the Dardanelles, where Ciriaco of Ancona confirmed their presence on 29 September.⁹⁶ The rest of the Burgundian ships, together with the galleys armed at Ragusa, and two from the Byzantine Emperor took up their position on the Bosphorus (II).

The presence of the fleet added to the fear of a second Hungarian invasion, and clearly increased the sense of foreboding that seems to have infected Murad's realms. The Ottomans, the Athenian Chalkokondyles reports, 'were in great fear and almost in despair ... and began to repair the walls wherever they had reason to expect a siege.'⁹⁷ It was in this atmosphere that the formerly independent dynasts on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire, encouraged by the envoys of the crusading powers, began to reclaim their lands 'like a grain harvest that has not yet come to maturity.'⁹⁸ The first of these was a member of the Zenevis clan who, with many of his Albanian followers, lost his life in an unsuccessful attack on his ancestral territories around Gjirokastër in southern Albania.⁹⁹ By contrast, George Kastriote, known in Europe as Scanderbeg, from his Muslim name Iskender Beg, successfully reoccupied his father's stronghold of Krujë in central Albania, resisting Ottoman attempts to defeat him until 1466. Constantine Dragases, the Byzantine Despot of Mistra, in the meantime harried southern Greece (IV.6), gaining the allegiance of Thebes, the plain of Boeotia and the Vlachs of Mount Pindos, and compelling the

95 Kline, *The Voyage d'Outremer*, 114–15.

96 Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, 92–3.

97 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 324.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

Florentine Duke of Athens, Nerio Acciajuoli, to pay tribute.¹⁰⁰ Constantine's brother, the Emperor himself, lacked the resources to make a military contribution to these incursions. Nonetheless, he had in his custody an Ottoman prince – perhaps Orhan, the son of Bayezid I's son, Süleyman¹⁰¹ – whom he released in the hope that he would find followers among Murad's subjects and recreate the chaos of the Ottoman civil war. The plan was a failure, except insofar as it heightened Ottoman unease in the face of an apparently imminent crusade (I).

These episodes on the fringes of the Ottoman Empire must have encouraged the crusading powers to believe that their victory was certain, and reports reaching the Hungarian army as it assembled that 'great burghers and merchants' had fled in terror across the straits to Bursa undoubtedly reinforced this impression (III). In the Ottoman capital, Edirne, panic spread when the Viziers ordered the construction of a moat around the city, making it clear that they expected a siege and, above all, when they began to remove their own valuables from the city to the more secure fortress of Dimetoka (I). A fire in the capital's commercial district intensified the terror. A measure of the population's fear was the appearance in Edirne of a preacher from a quasi-Muslim sect that held Jesus to be superior to Muhammad, and which became visible only at times of eschatological crisis.¹⁰² Preaching his heretical doctrines in public, he gained converts to his beliefs, forcing the judge of the city to order his execution and the gruesome punishment of his followers (IV.7).

While the Sultan's subjects waited in fear, most of the crusaders that departed from Szeged on about 20 September 1444 must have been confident of victory (IV.10). The army was, however, smaller than the force that had set out in 1443. Furthermore, George Branković, who had regained his lands in Serbia and apparently had scruples about breaching a sworn treaty,¹⁰³ did not participate. Chalkokondyles, like the author of the *Holy Wars* (I), makes him beg Vladislav to abandon the campaign, claiming that the Turks could not be defeated, as they were 'so numerous and all good warriors, hardened and accustomed to live on campaign.' It was only, he said, when reduced to extremity that they showed their true powers. Vladislav ignored his advice.¹⁰⁴ It is clear, nonetheless, that the King did not set out with high hopes or a clear conscience. He was, Długosz informs us, without his Polish contingent, as they had demanded too high a price for their participation, and the broken treaty preyed on his mind.¹⁰⁵ This is a point which the *Holy Wars* emphasises (I), and the King's letter of 22 September to the Polish State Council, justifying his breach of the treaty (V.9), must have been an attempt to salve his conscience. Of the leaders

100 Ibid., 318–20.

101 İnalçık, '1444 buhranı', 37.

102 Colin Imber, 'A note on "Christian" preachers in the Ottoman Empire', *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, X (1990), 59–67.

103 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 325.

104 Ibid., 326.

105 Michael, *The Annals*, 493.

of the expedition, it seems to have been Hunyadi and Cesarini who set out in full certainty of victory.

The army's victorious and destructive march to the Black Sea coast at Varna¹⁰⁶ seemed to justify their optimism. As he had sworn on 4 August at Szeged, the King crossed the Danube at Orşova and, devastating the land to the south of the river, followed its course as far as Vidin. A German participant in the campaign, Hans Maugest, remembers the army conquering and burning the town, and slaughtering its inhabitants (III). The *Holy Wars* reports that the King spared it, since a prolonged siege would have delayed the army's progress (I), the two accounts suggesting that the crusaders destroyed the town and its suburbs, while sparing the citadel. It was as the town was in flames that Vlad Drakul – an Ottoman vassal according to the terms of the Treaty of Edirne – joined the Hungarian army with, Maugest says, seven thousand men (III). The army continued to Nicopolis, destroying Orjahovo on its way (I). Nicopolis, Maugest tells us, was completely razed to the ground (III). Once again, even if Maugest is correct about the town, the *Holy Wars* reports Ferizbeyoğlu's successful defence of the castle, which was in Ottoman hands when the Burgundian fleet arrived there in 1445 (II). From the Danube, the army turned southwards towards Tărnovo, 'plundering and burning, killing all the Turks they found' (III). It seems that the main body of the army bypassed Tărnovo, but the King, in Maugest's half-remembered version of events, sent a detachment against it, as he himself was besieging Shumen (III). The *Holy Wars* gives the details of how Ferizbeyoğlu ambushed and routed these men (I), killing three out of five hundred (III). This minor defeat, however dispiriting to the crusaders, could not check the army's progress. When the crusaders arrived before Shumen, they set fire to the castle, forcing the defenders to jump to their deaths (I, III). To the east of Shumen, Maugest recalls the capture of the town and citadel of Novi Pazar, and the subsequent slaughter of the inhabitants and their animals. When they had burned the town and castle 'they set off again through markets and towns. Whatever these were called, many of them were destroyed' (III). Maugest next describes the conquest and destruction of a castle which he calls Taşhisar (III), which the *Holy Wars* omits from its account, recalling instead the successful defence of Provadiya (I). Both describe, but in rather different terms, the capture of the fortress of Petrez and the march to the Black Sea at Varna where, after capturing the fortress, the army encamped (I, III). From there, the King and Hunyadi clearly intended to proceed southwards down the Black Sea coast towards Edirne. They had chosen this route to the north of the Balkan range and down the coast since the Ottomans had blocked the Shipka Pass and other passages leading southwards through the mountains to the Maritsa valley (I, II), and to use any of these routes would have risked repeating the bitter experience of the winter of 1443.

The only solution to the many crises that faced the Ottoman Empire in the late summer of 1444 seemed to be to recall Murad from retirement. According to the *Holy*

106 Inconsistencies within and between texts make it difficult to reconstruct the crusaders' route.

Wars, the Viziers had already, when the Emperor released the Ottoman pretender, taken the decision to send Kassabzade Mahmud Pasha to the old Sultan. By the time he reached Manisa, Kassabzade had received the news of the Hungarian invasion, and Murad, reluctantly it seems, agreed to return (I).

In the meantime, the fleets blockading the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus had received news of the peace concluded at Várad in August: an Ottoman officer who enquired what the galleys were doing on the Bosphorus even showed De Wavrin a copy of the treaty. However, the arrival in Constantinople of messengers from Cesarini to announce that news of the peace was without foundation persuaded Cardinal Condulmer and the commanders of the fleet to remain in position. This was probably in mid-September. When Murad arrived with his Anatolian army in mid-October the straits were blocked (II).

He was, however, aware of the blockade and had already taken counter-measures. Part of his army, it seems, crossed the Dardanelles below Gallipoli, out of sight of the allied fleet (II). At the same time, Murad sent instructions to the Grand Vizier Halil Pasha to wait for him on the European shore of the Bosphorus, at the place where the channel is at its narrowest, and to set up artillery to bombard the allied vessels. To enable him to cross the water, the Sultan had arranged for the Genoese – presumably from the colony of Pera opposite Constantinople – to supply him with transport vessels and cannon from Pera. Halil Pasha arrived on the European shore with seven- or eight thousand men on ‘about 15 October 1444.’ The Sultan arrived on the Asian side on the following morning, bringing with him metal for casting cannon. When the guns were ready, they fired on the fleet, providing, together with the artillery on the other shore, cover for the transports bringing the army across. Under the protection of the guns, and with assistance of the strong current in the Bosphorus and a rising storm which made it impossible to keep the galleys in position, Murad and his army crossed the strait to Europe (I, II). From there, he sent the news of his safe crossing ahead to Edirne. He followed with his retinue, reassuring the population by ‘showing his person along the way.’ From Edirne, he issued the order for a general levy of troops from throughout Rumelia (I, IV.8). From Edirne, he proceeded to Varna.

The armies met on 10 November 1444. All accounts of the battle agree that, for most of the day, the Hungarians had the advantage, defeating first the Anatolian troops and killing their commander, the governor-general Karaca Bey, and then towards the end of the day driving the Rumelian cavalry under Şihabeddin Pasha from the field. By this time, the Sultan remained alone in a valley, with a guard of Janissaries and other infantry. It was at this point that the course of the battle changed. As the Sultan stood apparently defenceless, the King saw the opportunity for combining victory with personal glory. Chalkokondyles imaginatively depicts him as watching Hunyadi ‘a mere soldier’ gain glory by his victory first against Karaca Bey and then against the Rumelians, while he, the King, ‘sat idly by, like a lady in a grandstand watching his feats.’¹⁰⁷ Almost all accounts agree in making him ignore Hunyadi’s

107 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 335.

advice not to attack. As he charged into the ranks surrounding the Sultan, a Janissary, called Hayder the Hunchback according to Constantine Mihailović¹⁰⁸ or Koca Hızır according to Aşıkpaşazade (IV.5), dragged him from his horse and removed his head. When the Hungarian troops lost sight of the King, they fell into confusion, allowing the Ottoman cavalry that had fled the battlefield to return and complete the rout. It was, in the end, the King's folly that determined the outcome of the battle, his own death (IV.9) and the slaughter of several thousand crusaders.

Hunyadi, it seems, was able to gather his men and leave the battlefield in good order. However, as he crossed the Danube into Wallachia, his erstwhile ally, Vlad Drakul, captured him and held him prisoner,¹⁰⁹ supposedly for having pillaged his territories on the march to Varna and for having slandered him in the presence of the King.¹¹⁰ When Vlad had released him against a large sum of money, he returned to Hungary. The exact fate of Cardinal Cesarini remained unknown. Długosz reports that a Vlach boatman killed him as he ferried him across the Danube on his flight from Varna, and that his body was later retrieved from the river.¹¹¹ De Wavrin has a similar report (II) but, according to Hans Maugest, the Turks took him to Edirne, where they wished to flay him alive (III). It was not until 26 July 1445 that the College of Cardinals finally acknowledged his death.¹¹² The Hungarians never recovered the King's body or learned of its fate. Maugest claims that Murad arranged for the King's burial in a Greek chapel (III), but apparently without his head, which had a different posthumous fate. De Wavrin reports that the Turks at Gallipoli showed Loredan a severed head which they claimed to be the King's (II); Maugest states that Murad sent it to the Mamluk Sultan (III); while Mihailović¹¹³ and some recensions of Neşri's *History*¹¹⁴ describe how it was preserved for display in Ottoman cities. Murad despatched victory proclamations (IV.12) and several of the captive Hungarian knights to neighbouring Muslim rulers. Maugest enumerates twelve knights and twelve squires to the Mamluk Sultan in Cairo; twelve knights and twenty-four squires to the Khan of the Crimea; and six knights and six squires to Karaman (III). In March 1445, the Hungarian captives arrived in Cairo, to be paraded around the city in full armour. A few weeks later they converted to Islam (IV.10). The remaining captives who escaped execution were sold as slaves. A few were ransomed in Constantinople (II). The Sultan, meanwhile, believing his realm to be secure, once again retired to Manisa, leaving his son on the throne in Edirne.

108 Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 79.

109 Thuróczy, *Chronicle*, 147.

110 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 337–8.

111 Michael, *The Annals*, 497.

112 Joseph Gill, SJ, *Personalities of the Council of Florence* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964), 102.

113 Mihailović, *Memoirs*, 79–81.

114 Neşri, *Kitab-i Cihan-nümâ*, ed. F. R. Unat and M. A. Köymen (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1957), 652–5.

The aftermath of battle

The defeat at Varna ended all realistic prospects for continuing the crusade. The scheme was impossible without the participation of Hungary, and at the end of 1444 the Kingdom faced disintegration. Since King Vladislav's body had never been recovered, his fate was unknown. The legitimately crowned King, Ladislaus, was an infant in the custody of Frederick III of Austria. The lack of a recognised king once again inflamed the animosities of the civil war of 1439–42, with Queen Elizabeth's kinsmen, the counts of Cilli, seizing castles in Croatia from the partisans of Vladislav, and Elizabeth's chief supporter Jan Jiškra extending his territory in the north. In the summer of 1445, Frederick III occupied the western borderlands of the Kingdom. The law-courts had not functioned since 1439, and castles remained in the hands of the barons who had seized them during the civil war. It was not until a Diet assembled in June 1446 to elect Hunyadi as regent on behalf of King Ladislaus that peace was restored,¹¹⁵ and by this time the hopes of the other crusading allies had evaporated.

The idea that the crusade might continue nonetheless lingered for a year after the battle. The immediate aftermath, however, saw recriminations and quarrels over money. At the end of January 1445, when the pontifical galleys were due to return to Venice, the senate instructed its envoy to Rome to demand money for the crews.¹¹⁶ When the envoy reported that the Pope was refusing to pay on the grounds that the fleet had achieved nothing noteworthy, and blaming Venice for its failure, the senate in reply taxed the Pope with ingratitude, reminding him of the almost intolerable hardship that the sailors had suffered, unable to acquire enough bread to eat or 'ever to provide themselves with fresh water without the spilling of blood and the deaths of many.' Furthermore, the cold in the straits had left many crippled with frostbite, and many more had died in daily battles with the Turks. To emphasise the point, the senators annexed Loredan's letter, and also stressed that the Pope already knew this from the letters he had received from the Emperor. When the envoy reported that the Pope was to pay by letters of exchange in Pera, the senate objected, asking him to send the letters directly to Venice for forwarding to Negroponte or Constantinople.¹¹⁷

The quarrels between Venice and the Pope continued. At the beginning of March, the Venetian envoy to Rome reported, the Pope had had letters read out in the consistory reporting on the battle between the Hungarians and Turks and the death of 'the Most Reverend Lord Cardinal of St Angelo' and putting the blame for this on the Venetians. He had, at the same time, asked whether the crusade should continue and whether he should appoint a new legate. The Venetians expressed the view that it would be useful to send a legate to Hungary, given the divisions within the Kingdom, but they were unable to make a decision on the crusade, since nothing had been heard from the east for two months. At the same time, they reminded the

115 Engel, *The Realm*, 288.

116 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 195.

117 *Ibid.*, 196.

Pope not to make payment for the galleys through the Genoese at Pera.¹¹⁸ Towards the end of April, the senate again instructed the Venetian envoy to Rome to continue reminding the Pope of the money he owed.¹¹⁹

By this time, the future course of the crusade had become clearer. On 13 February, Cardinal Condulmer had written to Venice that he was prepared to remain at Constantinople and restart the war, as he had heard that the Hungarians were ready to resume the offensive. On 3 April, the senate forwarded this letter to the envoy in Rome.¹²⁰ A month later, however, they wrote to Loredan, who had retired from the straits to the Venetian colony of Negroponte complaining of an illness and the miserable condition of his crews,¹²¹ instructing him to negotiate a peace with the ‘Sultan of Europe’ – a reference to Prince Mehmed – and to gain his permission to trade in his realms. The instructions display uncertainty about who the Ottoman ruler really was, by telling Loredan to make sure that the prince’s father, Murad, confirmed the treaty. In contrast to what Condulmer had heard, the senate was certain that the Hungarians would not return.¹²² In September 1445, Venice concluded a treaty with Mehmed, putting an end to even a formal allegiance to the crusade.¹²³

In the meantime, however, Condulmer continued to believe that the Hungarians would launch a third campaign, writing to Venice in early July that an Aragonese ambassador – presumably to the Emperor in Constantinople – had come from Buda carrying assurances from Hunyadi that the Hungarians intended to return to Thrace with a large army.¹²⁴ At the end of the same month, De Wavrin and Cardinal Condulmer heard from a Hungarian messenger that Hunyadi was assembling an army, and would be ready at Nicopolis on the Feast of Our Lady in September 1445 (II). This assurance seems to have determined the last phase of the crusade.

During the winter of 1444–45, Waleran de Wavrin had remained with Cardinal Condulmer in Constantinople. Here he faced severe problems in paying for the maintenance of his fleet, which he had overcome only by pawning his jewelled garments in Pera for a thousand ducats. A better way of raising money, however, was piracy and, after Easter 1445, the Burgundian ships left Constantinople for the Black Sea. De Wavrin and Pietre Vasquez took two galleys to the Danube where, at Kilia, they made contact with the Vlachs, and since these were in favour of continuing the crusade Pietre Vasquez continued to Hungary to seek news and to enlist Hungarian support (II). From the Danube, De Wavrin returned to the Black Sea, capturing two vessels laden with wheat on the journey to Caffa. Meanwhile Geoffroy de Thoisy, his cousin Jacot, Regnault de Confide and others had left Constantinople with three galleys, a galliot and a caravel. They cruised along the coast of Turkey, plundering

118 Ibid., 196–7.

119 Ibid., 200.

120 F. Thiriet, *Régestes des Délibérations du Senat de Venise concernant la Romanie* (Paris, The Hague: Mouton, 1961), no. 2682.

121 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 201.

122 Ibid., 200–201.

123 Ibid., 210–13.

124 Ibid., 202.

both ships and coastal settlements, covering the expenses for the re-equipment of their ships at Trebizond with five slave-women, worth in all 164 ducats. The ships continued to the coast of Georgia, hoping to plunder vessels carrying silk, when De Thoisy landed at Poti with the intention of pillaging the place and perhaps, since this was the site of the ancient Colchis, hoping, as a Knight of the Golden Fleece, to reenact the exploits of Jason and the Argonauts. In reality the inhabitants killed several of his men and took him prisoner. He obtained his release through the good offices of the Emperor of Trebizond (II) or, according to the Genoese version, of the Genoese Jerome de Nigro.¹²⁵ On his release, Geoffroy continued to Caffa, capturing on the way two Greek vessels with cargoes of fish. In September, the government of Genoa complained bitterly of De Thoisy's piracy to the Duke of Burgundy, demanding that he release their Muslim subjects and their goods: 'Now if arms were taken up against the King of the Turks, what did the Persians, Armenians and Sarmatians who choose to live in these parts deserve? Why should they be plundered and taken prisoner?'¹²⁶ The dispute continued to poison relations between Genoa and Burgundy, and it was also Genoese displeasure that persuaded De Thoisy to return to Constantinople. Here he found letters from De Wavrin and Condulmer about the forthcoming expedition with the Hungarians and Vlachs, but he preferred to return with his ships to Nice and Villefranche.¹²⁷

For his part, De Wavrin returned to the Danube to meet Pietre Vasquez at Brăila. Vasquez brought the news about the battle of Varna, and reported that Hunyadi had asked De Wavrin and the Cardinal to go up the Danube with eight galleys. He would meet them in September with eight- to ten thousand troops. At the beginning of August, Cardinal Condulmer joined De Wavrin in the Danube delta, while Vasquez returned to Hungary to confirm that the fleet was ready. The Hungarians had also urged Vasquez to take on board an Ottoman prince, Savcı, who must be the same as the Davud son of Savcı, whom Chalkokondyles shows as fighting with the Hungarians at the battle of Kosovo in 1448, and who, he claims, was the grandson of Murad I (1362–89), through his son Savcı.¹²⁸ The galleys departed in mid-August for Silistra, at the same time as the governor-general of Rumelia, Şihabeddin Pasha went to Sofia,¹²⁹ presumably to forestall a co-ordinated Hungarian attack. Silistra was too well garrisoned for the fleet to assault and the attempt to use Savcı to spread disaffection among its Ottoman defenders was a complete failure. On 29 August, however, the combined forces of the Burgundians and Vlachs captured and burned Tutrakan, and Giurgiu and Ruse shortly afterwards. They continued towards Nicopolis, with the Vlachs on the north bank of the river and a Turkish force shadowing them on the south. At Nicopolis, they began to besiege the fort of Turnu-Măgurele opposite the town on the north bank of the Danube. On 15 September, Hunyadi arrived with a

125 Ibid., 203.

126 Ibid., 204.

127 Taparel, 'Une episode', 22.

128 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 363.

129 İnalçık, 'İstanbul'un fethinden önce Fâtih Sultan Mehmed', in *Fatih Devri*, 88–9.

Hungarian army, and the fleet continued upstream to the mouth of the River Jiu, where the Hungarians had their transports. On 29 September, the Hungarians crossed at Orjahovo, to engage in a few indecisive skirmishes with the Turkish force that had followed the fleet. When it departed, leaving scorched earth in its wake, Hunyadi refused to follow. He had, he said, fulfilled his promise by meeting De Wavrin and Condulmer at the time agreed, and advised the fleet to return before the river froze. It reached Constantinople on 2 November 1445 (II).

This was the end of the crusade, although hopes of prolonging it faded only slowly. In October 1445, the Venetian senators received a Byzantine ambassador, Archbishop Pachomios, who informed them of negotiations with the King of France, the Duke of Burgundy and the Pope, but they refused to support the proposed expedition before they had received news of the galleys.¹³⁰ When Cardinal Condulmer and Loredan finally returned to Venice in January 1446, Condulmer continued to Rome with proposals for an expedition 'to expel the Turks from Greece,'¹³¹ but by this time the scheme was a mere fantasy.

The failure of the crusade did not, however, put an end to the secular motives of the participants. Murad had retired to Manisa after the battle of Varna. Two years later, a devastating fire in Edirne and then a Janissary rebellion persuaded the Viziers to recall the old Sultan, who arrived in the capital at the end of August 1446.¹³² His return to the throne ended a period of political crisis in the Ottoman Empire at about the same time as Hunyadi's appointment as regent restored peace in Hungary. Murad's first major action after his reaccession was to attack one of the crusading allies, Constantine Dragases. In December 1446, partly at the instigation of Constantine's enemy, Nerio Acciajuoli of Athens, Murad destroyed the Hexamilion wall and entered the Peloponnesos to harry Constantine's territory, reducing the Despot to the status of Ottoman tributary and repossessing the lands that he had seized in southern Greece. These included Thebes, which had previously belonged to Nerio.¹³³ In 1448, with the encouragement of Venice, he opened hostilities against Scanderbeg, who had re-established himself in 1444 as an independent ruler on his family's domains in Albania and extended his realms by marrying into the Arianit clan. This action Murad cut short at the news of a renewed Hungarian attack.

In 1447, with his position in Hungary assured, Hunyadi had tried to resuscitate the crusading alliance of 1444. The new Pope, Nicholas V, promised to provide contingents of pontifical and Aragonese troops, which never in practice materialised, while Scanderbeg also promised help, which never in the end came. Hunyadi's only ally was Dan, the Voevode of Wallachia and murderer of Vlad Drakul. On this occasion Hunyadi marched southwards to encounter the Sultan on the Plain

130 Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 204.

131 *Ibid.*, 206

132 İnalcık, 'İstanbul'un fethinden önce'; Franz Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath: Vor- und Nachspiel der Schlacht bei Varna', *Oriens*, 3 (1950), 229–65; Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 136–7.

133 Chalkokondyles, *Laonici Chalcocondylae*, 155–70.

of Kosovo on 23 October 1448. Two days later, apparently in the early morning of 25 October, he fled the battlefield, giving Murad the victory. In the following year, the Ottomans recaptured Giurgiu, which the Vlachs and Burgundians had taken in 1445.

As a result of the crusade George Branković had recovered his lands in Serbia, and Vlad Drakul had, with Burgundian assistance, acquired two castles on the Danube. Both of these outcomes benefited Hungary by making the southern frontier of the Kingdom less vulnerable to Ottoman raids. Hunyadi had acquired Branković's estates in Hungary and the regency of the Kingdom, which his son Matthias Corvinus was to rule as king. It is Hunyadi, however, who acquired a lasting reputation, first as a Christian hero and later as a national hero of both Hungary and Rumania.

The translations

There are several English translations of contemporary or near contemporary accounts of the crusade. For a narrative of events, modern historiography has relied in particular on the *Annals or Chronicles of the Famed Kingdom of Poland* of Jan Długosz (c.1415–80). As an employee of Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, Długosz had a first-hand knowledge of events and incorporated documentary material into his narrative. He began work on his *Annals* after Oleśnicki's death in 1455. For a summary of the entire chronicle, see Maurice Michael, with a commentary by Paul Smith, *The Annals of Jan Długosz* (Chichester: IM Publications, 1997). The chronicle of János Thuróczy (c.1435–89), a clerk in the royal courts of Hungary, has a section on the crusade, but is not as well informed as Długosz, and lacks the kind of documentation that Długosz provides. See János Thuróczy, translated by Frank Mantello, with foreword and commentary by Pál Engel, *Chronicle of the Hungarians* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University, 1991). The letters of the antiquarian traveller Ciriaco of Ancona are an important source for establishing the chronology of events and, since Ciriaco was clearly acting as a spy on the Pope's behalf, absolutely essential in following the Hungarian–Ottoman negotiations of 1444. It is Ciriaco who has preserved a Latin translation of the text of the Treaty of Edirne. For the Latin texts of his correspondence, with English translations, see Edward W. Bodnar, with Clive Foss, *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2003). The Serb Constantine Mihailović, who served in the Ottoman army, probably as a Janissary, from about 1453 until his capture by the Hungarians at Jajce in 1463, also describes the campaign. For an English translation of the Czech recension of his 'memoirs', see Konstantin Mihailović, translated by B. Stolz, with a commentary by Svat Soucek, *Memoirs of a Janissary* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan, 1975). The Greek chronicle of Michael Doukas is important not simply because it provides a contemporary account of the crusade, but also because Doukas (d. after 1462), who carried out diplomatic missions to the Ottoman court on behalf of his Genoese employers on Chios, sometimes provides comments on the personalities of the figures involved in events. For an English

translation, see Doukas, translated by J. A. Magoulias, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1975). The important contemporary narrative of the crusade by the Athenian historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles awaits a translation.

The texts translated below are:

I Anonymous, edited, with notes and facsimile, by Halil İnalçık and Mevlûd Oğuz, *Gazavât-i Sultân Murâd b. Mehemed Hân. İzladi ve Varna Savaşları Üzerinde Anonim Gazavât-nâme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1989). An anonymous Ottoman account of the battles of the Zlatitsa Pass and Varna. The text survives in a single manuscript, dating probably from the late fifteenth century. The work was probably composed during the second reign of Murad II's son, Mehmed II (1444–46, 1451–81). The author seems to have been a witness to the events described and to have served in the entourage of Murad II, perhaps in the scribal service.

II Jehan de Wavrin, edited by N. Jorga, *La Campagne des Croisés sur le Danube (1445)* (Paris: J. Gamber, 1927). Excerpt from the *Anciennes Chroniques d'Angleterre* by the Burgundian chronicler Jehan de Wavrin (d. c.1474). Jehan de Wavrin based this account of the crusade largely on the memoirs of his nephew Waleran, who commanded the Burgundian ships on the Bosphorus, the Black Sea and the Danube in 1444–45. A short memoir by Waleran himself survives in manuscript (Lille, Archives du Nord, B 1984, no. 59 234).

III Michel Beheim, 'Türkenschlacht bei Warnâ', in Hans Gille and Ingeborg Spiewald, *Die Gedichte des Michel Beheim* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1968), vol.1, no. 104, 328–56. A ballad on the crusades of 1443 and 1444. Michel Beheim (1416–74) was a minstrel who served in the courts of the German nobility, including the royal court at Vienna. He based the section of the ballad on the crusade of 1444 on the memoirs of a captive of the Turks, Hans Maugest. He is the author of several ballads on events and personalities in Hungary, Bohemia and the Balkans. The translation indicates the stanzas but not the individual lines of the ballad.

IV.1 Georg Hofmann (ed.), *Acta Concilii Florentini* (Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1955), 262.

IV.2 Uruç b. Âdil el-Kazzâz, edited by Franz Babinger, *Tevârîh-i Âl-i Osmân* ('Annals of the House of Osman') (Hanover: Heinz Laufer, 1925), 52–3. Uruç's chronicle survives in several recensions, the earliest of which continues to 1467. For the period from 1422 the author relies heavily on Ottoman chronological lists (see **IV.4**). The author was a resident of Edirne, active during the reign of Bayezid II (1481–1512).

IV.3 Neşri, edited by Franz Taeschner, *Ğihannüma. Die altosmanische Chronik des Mevlânâ Mehemed Neschrî*, facsimile of the Codex Menzel (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1951), 170–71. Neşri (d. probably c.1520) completed the first recension

of his chronicle in c.1485. The text is based largely on the chronicle of Aşıkpaşazade and the anonymous chronicle, Oxford Bodleian Library, Marsh, 313, but at times diverges from these sources. The Codex Menzel appears to be an autograph of the first recension of the chronicle. See V. L. Ménage, *Neshri's History of the Ottomans: The Sources and Development of the Text* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

IV.4 Osman Turan (ed.), *İstanbul'un Fethinden Önce Yazılmış Tarihî Takvimler* ('Historical almanacs written before the conquest of Istanbul') (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1954), 31. Excerpt from a chronological list compiled in 1445. See V. L. Ménage, 'The "Annals of Murad II"', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, XXXIX (1976), 570–84.

IV.5 Aşıkpaşazade, edited by Ç. N. Atsız, *Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* ('Annals of the House of Osman') (Istanbul: Türkiye Yayınları, 1949), 183–5. In the late 1430s, Aşıkpaşazade (c.1400–after 1484) was in the following of the marcher lord Ishak Bey of Skopje, and participated in several of Murad II's campaigns, including the siege of Belgrade in 1440.

IV.6 Peter Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1, 1975), chronicle 33, ¶49, 251.

IV.7 *Cronaca Zancaruola*, unpublished. This excerpt in Franz Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath: Vor- und Nachspiel der Schlacht bei Varna (1444)', *Oriens*, 3 (1950), 244–5.

IV.8 Text in Adnan Sadık Erzi, 'Türkiye kütüphanelerinden notlar ve vesikalar, II', *Belleten*, 14 (1950), 595–6.

IV.9 Schreiner, *Die Byzantinischen Kleinchroniken*, 1, chronicle 54, ¶13, 389.

IV.10 Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Tibr al-Mabsūk fī Dhayl al-Sulūk* (Cairo, n.d.), 98–9. Al-Sakhāwī (1427–97) was a Mamluk scholar and historian. This passage combines, sometimes verbatim, the accounts by his older contemporaries, especially Ibn Hajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-Ghumr*, 9 (Hyderabad, 1976), 231.

IV.11 St Cyril and St Methodius Library, Sofia. OAK 45/29, 37v. Ottoman tax register of the Nicopolis district, c.1450.

IV.12 Text in Erzi, 'Türkiye kütüphanelerinden notlar ve vesikalar, II', 620–31. Murad II's victory proclamation is discussed in Lajos Fekete, 'Das *Fethname* über die Schlacht bei Varna (Zur Kritik Feriduns)', *Byzantinoslavica*, 14 (1953), 258–70.

V.1 Neşri, ed. Taeschner, *Ğihannüma*, 172.

V.2 Ciriaco of Ancona, edited and translated by Edward W. Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona: Later Travels* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 2003), Letter 9A, 38–41.

V.3 Ciriaco of Ancona, ed. and transl. Bodnar, *Cyriac of Ancona*, Letters 9B1, 9B2, 41–7; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th century): An Annotated Edition of 'Ahdnames and Other Documents* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 197–9. The text of the Treaty of Edirne is analysed in Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman–Polish Diplomatic Relations*, 100–109.

- V.4** N. Jorga, *Notes et Extraits pour Servir à l'Histoire des Croisades au XV^e Siècle*, II, 2 (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 404–5.
- V.5** Długosz, *Ioannis Długossii seu Longini Historia Polonicae* (Leipzig, 1711), 794–6. Partial text of Vladislav's renunciation of the Treaty of Edirne in Jorga, *Notes*, II, 2, 182–3.
- V.6** Jorga, *Notes et Extraits*, II, 2, 187. Partial text in Pál Engel, 'János Hunyadi and the peace "of Szeged" (1444)', *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest), XLVII (1994), 245n. The translation follows the text as given in Engel, 'János Hunyadi'.
- V.7** L. Stojanović, 'Srpski rodoslovi i letopisi', *Glasnik Srpskog Ucenog Drustva*, 53 (1883), 88–9. Quoted in O. Halecki, *The Crusade of Varna: A Discussion of Controversial Problems* (New York: Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, 1943), 54–5, and Babinger, 'Von Amurath zu Amurath', 240.
- V.8** Text in Yahya bin Mehmed el-Kātib, edited by Şinasi Tekin, *Menāhicü'l-İnşā* (Cambridge, Mass.: Orient Press, 1971), 23–4; İ. H. Uzunçarşılı, 'İbrahim Beyin Karaman imareti vakfiyesi', *Belleten*, 1 (1937), 120–21.
- V.9** Text in Engel, 'János Hunyadi', 254.