Chapter 3

From Golubac to Belgrade, 1428–1456

1 The Last Years of Sigismund

After 1430, Sultan Murad again turned his attention to the Balkans. In 1430 the Ottomans finally took Thessaloniki and occupied Ioannina, and in the following years increased the pressure on the Albanian lands.1 The Hungarian-Ottoman truce concluded after the Golubac campaign was about to expire in 1431, and even before that there were fears of new Ottoman raids2 and the nobility of the counties most immediately concerned were mobilized.3 There were talks between Sigismund and Murad for a renewal of the peace, but these apparently yielded no result.4 The fall of Thessaloniki and the expectation of an intensification of Ottoman military activity along the Hungarian border led to a rapprochement between Venice and Hungary. Sigismund, who in the late summer of 1430 had departed yet again for Western Europe, making a long tour that was to culminate in his imperial coronation at Rome in 1433,5 declared himself ready to reach an agreement over the issue of Dalmatia.6 His willingness to compromise must equally have been fuelled by the breakdown of talks at Pozsony in 1429, after which the Czech Hussites restarted their devastating raids against the northern regions of Hungary, for a time causing a greater military emergency than the Ottomans in the south.

After false rumours of an invasion of Belgrade and its surrounding region,7 in June 1432 Ottoman troops invaded Wallachia and forced Voevode Alexander, who had previously come to power with Hungarian assistance, to join them for a raid against Transylvania. Although the circumstances of this incursion are particularly hazy, it seems that considerable areas of the province were affected, and the two principal Saxon towns, Brassó and Szeben, briefly

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1 On the events see Iorga, G.R., i, 398–417, and Imber, Ottoman Empire, 23–24.
3 DL 54734 = Szerbia, 88, and see ibid. the charter of Matko Tallóci from 10 December 1430 (87–88).
4 DrH 1301–1457, 424.
5 For Sigismund’s itinerary here and below see Engel-C. Tóth, Itineraria.
6 Listine o odnosnih izmedju južnega slavenstva i mletačke republike, vol IX (1423–1452), ed. Sime Ljubić (Zagreb: Jugoslavenska Akademija, 1890), 47–49. Cf. ibid., 57ff, for a five-year truce.
7 Szerbia, 90–91.
besieged. Thereafter, or simultaneously, the German knights who were defending the castles belonging to the banate of Szörény suffered a serious defeat, and were soon compelled to resign to Sigismund those which had been entrusted into their care in 1429.\(^8\) The Ottomans also strengthened their grip on Bosnia, taking Vrhbosna in 1429 from King Tvrtko II, who, while related to Sigismund through his marriage to a daughter of János Garai and bound by an inheritance treaty to Count Hermann of Cilli, could not evade an obligation to pay tribute to the sultan as well. Tvrtko’s attachment to the Hungarian court weakened his authority in Bosnia, however, resulting in increased political disintegration and the eventual emergence of a rival king of Bosnia, Radivoj, the son of Stephen Ostojić, who by 1433 had gained Ottoman support.\(^9\)

As dictated by his temperament and political priorities, Sigismund, who, despite protests by the Hungarian political elite, insisted on proceeding with his imperial coronation and settling the Hussite problem through compromise at the council of Basle, reacted to these developments with a mixture of military and administrative reforms.\(^10\) The most important of the latter was beyond any doubt the promotion of the Tallóci brothers, which was, alongside the elevation of Pipo of Ozora, the clearest proof of Sigismund’s ability to pick able collaborators with a sure hand. The four Tallóci brothers, a Dalmatian merchant family from the island of Curzola (Korčula), were living in Belgrade at the time it came under Hungarian overlordship. The two eldest, Matko and Frank, had received the captainship of Belgrade, together with the ispánate of two adjoining counties, Keve and Krassó, in 1429. With Sigismund’s unlimited support, their authority expanded rapidly after 1433: assuming the governance of four major vacant sees (the archbishopric of Kalocsa, the bishoprics of Várad and Zagreb, and the Hospitaller priory of Vrana), by 1436 they had also taken over the banate of Szörény from the German knights and the banates of Dalmatia-Croatia and Slavonia from the Frankopans\(^11\) and the counts of Cilli respectively.\(^12\)

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\(^10\) On the propositions of 1432–33 and the ensuing legislation see above, Chapter 1, 3.

\(^11\) A Croatian comital family known as Frangepáns in Hungary.

\(^12\) Mályusz, “A négy Tallóci fivér.” For the references see Engel, *Archontológia, passim*, under the different offices. The counts of Cilli (today Celje, in Slovenia), originally from the Duchy of Styria, expanded over the fourteenth and early fifteenth century to become a truly international aristocratic dynasty, with princely marriages all over central Europe,