

Matthias Corvinus and Charles the Bold¹

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The paper investigates the diplomatic relations of Matthias Corvinus with the Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, focusing on the 1460s and '70s. It is trying to put new lights on a slightly neglected field of the Corvinian foreign policy, that is, Western European contacts. Apart from the sole effort of Jenő Horváth in the 1930s there have been no researches looking further behind the traditionally emphasized scope of Matthias' diplomatic activity, that is, the Ottomans and the Habsburgs.² I am to introduce a wider span of Matthias' diplomacy. His concerns were not restricted to Central Europe but he was able to run a leading role in the European „grand policie”. The paper explores the political ties with the Duchy of Burgundy, with which Matthias wished to have Hungary involved in the anti-Habsburg, anti-Valois and pro-Burgundian „axis” of the contemporary European diplomatic system. Matthias' foreign policy is to be seen within the framework of the French-Burgundian antagonism, also in line with his Neapolitan stand: he faced the Venice-backed Valois-party, promoting René d'Anjou for the throne of Naples. Nevertheless, Matthias's reason to enter the Burgundian league might have been that he hoped to get financial resources for the struggle against the Turks.

First, I am going to oversee the relationship of Burgundy and Hungary in the framework of a parallel power constellation, and give an overview of the parties' common allies and partners within the Holy Roman Empire. Both Burgundy and Hungary were seeking for allies within Germany – the houses of Wettin, Wittelsbach, both its Palatinate and Bavarian branches – against France, Emperor Frederick III and the Jagiellonians, which put them onto the same diplomatic track. Matthias was especially aiming to extend the alliance system towards the eastern territories of the Empire, and Eastern and North-Eastern Europe. To gain an Electoral Principality, Matthias wished to form a united front and have Bohemia encircled by allies.

In 1468-1471 Matthias contracted an alliance with the House of Wettin, Albert the Bold [der Beherzte] Duke of Saxony (1464-1500), and Ernest, Elector of Saxony,

¹ The work is supported by the TÁMOP 4.2.1/B-09/1/KONV-2010-0007 project. The project is implemented through the New Hungary Development Plan, co-financed by the European Social Fund and the European Regional Development Fund.

² Horváth Jenő, „Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája,” [Matthias' Western diplomacy] in *Mátyás király. Emlékkönyv születésének ötszázéves fordulójára*, 2 vols. ed. I. Lukinich, Budapest 1940, I: 71-94.

Landgrave of Thuringia, Margrave of Meissen (1464–1486).³ He had the scheme on the political agenda to marry from the Wettin dynasty, either the daughter of Ernest, Duke of Saxony; or his sister. The agreement was that if Duke Albert would surrender his claims to the Crown of Bohemia, they put pressure on the Emperor to have the King of Hungary acknowledged as King of Bohemia, Matthias would acknowledge their rights to their landed properties in Bohemia and Silesia.⁴ The alliance was highly valuable since a few weeks later, in August 1471 Frederick III announced that he would not acknowledge Matthias as King of Bohemia, although some weeks before the Pope, Paul II also warned Frederick to acknowledge Matthias' crown. It was a great achievement to detach Albert of Saxony from the Habsburg alliance, since he was related to Frederick III: his mother was Margaret of Austria, sister of Frederick III, Holy Roman Emperor. However, parallelly with Matthias's alliance scheme, Duke Albert also moved towards Burgundy: he became a member of the Order of the Golden Fleece.

In 1472 Matthias, asking aid against Poland, came to an understanding with Albert III Achilles, Elector of Brandenburg.⁵ The parties, together with the dukes of Saxony, Ernest and Albert, and their uncle William III the Brave [der Tapfere], Landgrave of Thuringia discussed over their disputes at a conference at Zerbst, Albert joined the alliance.⁶ On the intermediation of William of Thuringia, who had a claim to the Duchy of Luxemburg, Hungary and Bohemia by right of his mother, a grand-daughter of Emperor Sigismund, the parties agreed that the son of Albert, John Cicero marries William's daughter and heir of Luxemburg, Margaret.⁷ William did not wish to make benefit of his rights. In 1467, when Elisabeth of Austria, last rival claimant to the title, renounced her rights, Charles, Duke of Burgundy, assumed the title of duke of Luxemburg. With the intermediation of Matthias, the Landgrave of Thuringia and his Wettin nephews could hope to receive Luxemburg from Burgundy; as well as the heiress' consort, John Cicero could hope to get a part of the inheritance in an alliance with Burgundy and Hungary versus the Habsburgs. 1473 saw a series of embassies to and from Hungary, Saxony and Brandenburg forging an anti-Habsburg league. Brandenburg allied with Corvinus primarily against their common enemy, Poland. It was only after Matthias received a positive answer from the Elector that he assured his backing for the Austrian estates discontented with the Emperor (1472)⁸, and with the support of the Imperial allies, he was to reproach Frederick for his Jagiellonian alliance

³ *Mátyás király levelei. Külügyi osztály. 1458–1490. Mathiae Corvini Hungariae regis epistolarum exterae*, ed. V. Fraknói, 2 vols. Budapest 1893–1895 [2008². ed. Gy. Mayer] [hereafter MKL] I: nos. 179.; 180–181.; 183.; 236.; 183.; 202.; 204.

⁴ E. Kovács Péter, *Matthias Corvinus*. Budapest 1990, 108.

⁵ MKL I: nos. 187–188. V. Fraknói, *Mátyás király és a Hohenzollernnek diplomáciai érintkezése*. [Diplomatic contacts of Matthias with the Hohenzollern] Budapest 1914, 5–6.; 9–10.

⁶ MKL I: nos. 191.; 192.; V. Fraknói, "Az 1472-iki zerbsti szövetség," [The Zerbst alliance] *Történeti Szemle* 3 (1915), 1: 115–118.

⁷ MKL I: nos. 195., 201.

⁸ MKL I: no. 196.

against Hungary.⁹ The king repeated it in 1475, now with a Burgundian backing.¹⁰ In the early 1470s Albert treated for a marriage between a son of his and Mary, heiress of Burgundy. The Elector, Albert IV the Wise [der Weise] of Bavaria-Munich, the archbishops of Trier and Mainz invited Matthias to a conference of the Electors to discuss their attitudes towards the Habsburgs.¹¹ Saxony and Brandenburg followed the directives of the Holy See. After his inauguration in 1472, Sixtus IV acknowledged Matthias' right for Bohemia. However, as Casimir IV of Poland invaded Hungary in 1471 and occupied castles, Matthias's new allies found that they were on the right path, Hungary being backed by the Papacy. It was also a point of common interest that moved Charles towards Matthias.

Matthias had long been maintaining warm relations with the Wittelsbach, both the Palatinate and the Bavarian branches. In 1469 he contracted a perpetual friendship and mutual military alliance against the Habsburgs and Podiebrady with Louis IX the Rich [der Reiche], Duke of Bavaria-Landshut and Albert IV, Duke of Bavaria-Munich.¹² Charles the Bold was long, since 1465 allied with Frederick I the Victorious [der Siegreiche], Elector Palatine of the Rhine (1451-1476), acting as his governor in Alsace, and his cousin, Louis IX.¹³ Elector Frederick from 1464 onwards was engaged in a series of bitter quarrels with the Habsburgs, which even flared up into open war in 1470. The Emperor did not manage to displace Frederick, who successfully fought against the emperor's follower, Dieter von Isenburg, Archbishop of Mainz. From 1469 onwards Matthias was also allied with Frederick I, and it was partly through Wittelsbach intermediation that he tried to have Burgundy involved in an anti-Habsburg alliance.¹⁴ Charles also succeeded in detaching the Palatinate from the French alliance. The Palatinate Wittelsbach were old followers of the cause of Burgundy and England versus France: in the Hundred Years' War they took part in the campaigns against France. Frederick's father, Louis III married Blanche of England, daughter of Henry IV. The successor, Philip also allied with Burgundy when assuming the Electoral title (1476). The Elector Palatines were also Matthias' partners in his struggle against Emperor Frederick III.

The Bavarian dukes were the first imperial princes to acknowledge Matthias as King of Bohemia in 1469.¹⁵ Albert also offered to act as Matthias' Bohemian vicar. The Wittelsbach sub-branch of Otto II of Pfalz-Mosbach favoured the cause of Matthias and Charles: he was also present at the wedding of Matthias and Beatrice, together with Christoph [der Starke], Duke of Bavaria-Munich who "sat closest to the Queen, on her left hand" and was knighted by the king "with St. Stephen's

⁹ MKL I: nos. 205., 214.

¹⁰ MKL I. No. 219.

¹¹ Á. Károlyi, „Adalék Frigyes császár és Mátyás király viszályai történetéhez,” [Additions to the conflicts of Matthias and Emperor Frederick] *Történelmi Tár* 37 (1892), 28-31.

¹² E. Kovács, *Matthias*, 106.

¹³ R. Vaughan, *Philip the Bold. The Formation of the Burgundian State*. London 1972. [2005²] 16.; 124.

¹⁴ K. Nehring, *Matthias Corvinus, Kaiser Friedrich III. und das Reich. Zum hunyadisch-habsburgischen Gegensatz im Donauraum*. München 1975, 68-69.

¹⁵ W. Paravicini, *Merész Károly*. [Charles the Bold] Budapest 1989, 110-111; Nehring, *Matthias*, 41.

sword".¹⁶ He also received an annuity from the Royal Household.¹⁷ Christoph's father, Louis III was an old opponent of the Habsburgs since in a dispute with the Emperor, he invaded the imperial free cities Dinkelsbühl and Donauwörth. Another ally, Ulrich V, Count of Württemberg was also present at Matthias' wedding. His cousin, Henry received an annuity from Burgundy.¹⁸ Duke Charles allied with several lords in the Low Countries and the Rhinelands (Dukes of Cleves, Geldres, Juliers-Berg).¹⁹ He also had understanding with spiritual princes like John of Baden-Zähringen, Archbishop of Trier (1456-1503), his brother, George, bishop of Metz (1459-1484) and Elector Ruprecht, Archbishop of Cologne (1463-1480), brother of the Palatine. The Duke chose to promote Ruprecht when he laid siege to Neuss in 1473. As the chapter turned against the archbishop and elected another claimant, in 1474 he contracted a military alliance with Burgundy.²⁰ Matthias also looked for spiritual elector allies. The Archbishop of Salzburg, Bernhard von Rohr (1466-1482) asked military help and let Styrian castles under Matthias' control.²¹ The members of the mutual interest system were tied up with a number of marriage contacts. Albert Achilles married a Saxon duchess. William of Thuringia's sister married Frederick of Brandenburg. Louis IX of Bavaria married a Saxon princess. John I Duke of Cleves-Mark was a son of Mary of Burgundy, daughter of John the Fearless. Ulrich of Württemberg married first from the house of Cleves, then from Bavaria. Otto of Pfalz-Mosbach was a son of a Bavarian duchess. Ernest of Saxony also married from Bavaria.

A greatest result was that in 1469 a Habsburg, Sigismund of Tyrol was detached and asked Burgundian help against the Swiss.²² In return, beyond mortgaged lordships in Upper Alsace Charles insisted that Sigmund raise the issue of his election as king of the Romans, offering the hand of his daughter, Mary.²³ Sigismund served a link towards Matthias, who also sought to have the Habsburgs divided, and attempted to detach Archduke Albert VI from the Emperor. Charles' policies, however, against the Alsatian prompted them to turn to the Swiss. Sigis-

¹⁶ "Magyarország királya, Mátyás esküvője és a királyné koronázása (1477)?" [Matthias' wedding and the Queen's coronation] in *Krónikáink magyarul*, ed. P. Kulcsár, Budapest 2006, 126-129.; *Aragóniai Beatrix magyar királyné életére vonatkozó okiratok*, [Documents for the life of Queen Beatrice] Monumenta Hungariae Historica. Diplomataria XXIX, ed. A. Berzeviczy, Budapest 1914, no. 25.; P. E. Kovács, "Magyarország és Nápoly politikai kapcsolata a Mátyás-korban," [Relations of Hungary and Naples in Mathias' age] in *Tanulmányok Szakály Ferenc emlékére*, eds. P. Fodor, G. Pálffy, I. Gy. Tóth, Budapest 2002, 239; *Mátyás király menyegzője 1476. A pfalzi választófejedelem követeinek hivatalos jelentése szerint*. [Matthias' wedding. The relation of the Palatinate envoys] ed. G. Kazinczy, Pest 1863, 117-137.; P. Eschenloer, "Geschichten der Stadt Breslau," in I. Szamota, ed., *Régi utazások Magyarországon és a Balkán-félszigeten 1054-1717*, Budapest 1891, 106.

¹⁷ 4600 florins per annum. V. Fraknoi, *Hunyadi Mátyás király 1440-1490*. [King Matthias Hunyadi] (Magyar Történelmi Életrajzok) Budapest 1890, [<http://mek.oszk.hu/05700/05736/> - 28 Oct 2010]

¹⁸ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 287.

¹⁹ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 57.; 73.; 320.; Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 107.

²⁰ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 111.

²¹ MKL I: no. 193.

²² Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 40.

²³ Horváth, "Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája," 84.

mund was bound to agree on *Ewige Richtung* with the Swiss confederates in 1474. Charles refused Sigismund to buy back his Alsace possessions. The latter united with the Alsace cities in the Constance "anti-Burgundian league".²⁴

Burgundy tried to get the support of as many opponents of Frederick III as possible to achieve his grand design, a kingdom stretching from the North Sea to the Mediterranean. In their overlapping alliance systems, a major basis of the common platform of Burgundy and Hungary was their mutual friendship with the Neapolitan Aragonese. From the late 1460s Matthias moved to the side of the Neapolitan Aragonese, which culminated in his marriage with Beatrice of Aragon in 1476. Both King Ferrante and his brother, John II of Aragon objected to the expansion of France. The titular monarchical house of Sicily, headed by René of Anjou were in constant antagonism with the Aragonese. In 1468 Louis XI set out to grab territories from the county of Barcelona and deployed an army. In return, Aragon and Naples contracted a military alliance with Burgundy in 1471.²⁵ Charles received the Aragonese Order of the Ermine, and in return, in 1473 King Ferrante joined that of the Golden Fleece.²⁶

The space around the Emperor was constantly narrowing by the early 1470s. It is not known how the two rulers came to terms regarding the issue of the Roman kingship, or, whether this arose at all at this early phase, when Matthias's prime move was to get the crown of Bohemia and he was not yet aspiring for the Roman crown. Charles aimed for a sovereign monarchy but he would have first been satisfied with an independent state even without the Roman crown. When Charles got disappointed in Frederick after 1473, he strove to realize his scheme with other partners, the Electors and Hungary.²⁷ Matthias, from the early 1470s sought for the aid of the Electors against the grievances he suffered from Frederick.²⁸ The two princes moved to one another and realized their mutual concerns. Charles' prestige was increasing within the Empire and his support from the Archbishop of Cologne and the Palatine made him a potential opposition leader, which much fitted into Matthias' schemes.²⁹

In 1472-1473 the Duke expected that the House of Habsburg might sacrifice their weak imperial power by ceding some of it or even all of it to Burgundy in return for the eventual acquisition by Maximilian of the entire complex of Burgundian territories. It would have also meant that Charles obtain the crown of the Romans. Then he took it into account that he would succeed on the imperial throne on Frederick's death or abdication.³⁰ In this way the Habsburgs would be pushed to the Western territories of the Empire. That was the prime motive that Matthi-

²⁴ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 127.

²⁵ J. Calmette, „Le projet de mariage bourgignon-napolitain en 1474. D'après une acquisition récente de la Bibliothèque Nationale,” *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes* lxxii (1911), 461. For the 1471 treaty of St. Omer see J. de Haynin, *Mémoires de Jean, Sire de Haynin et de Louvignies, 1465-1477*. 2 vols. ed. D. D. Brouwers, Liège 1905-1906. II. 131.

²⁶ Horváth, „Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája,” 83; Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 105.

²⁷ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 42.; Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 115.

²⁸ 1472: MKL I: no. 189.

²⁹ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 138.

³⁰ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 47.

as was also touched by. While Matthias was not acknowledged as King of Bohemia, their concerns met, and Charles could hope if he would support Matthias' Czech crown, the king would back him in the electoral college. Frederick was unwilling to promote full-heartedly Charles' dream of the kingdom of the Romans. Therefore he found a new ally in Matthias. Charles would not have to clash Hungarian interests, since Matthias at that point did not wish the Imperial throne, he was struggling for only one Electorate. They became partners, not enemies. Matthias would have been contented with the acknowledgement of his Bohemian crown. The question of the Kingdom of the Romans, to which in theory both rulers was applying, was set aside for the moment, but they got united to oppose the Habsburgs. Or, Matthias might have also agreed to Charles' crown of the Romans, and even his Imperial title, if it had meant the abdication of the Emperor at the same time. With Charles as elected Emperor, Matthias, acknowledged as King of Bohemia in the Empire, would have realized his aims and had the Habsburgs ousted from the Central European theatre. Matthias could have rightfully hoped that with the support of a new King of the Romans, or, even Emperor he would have modify the 1463 Habsburg inheritance treaty.³¹ He relied on the duke that he would help him in getting rid of the demands of the treaty.³²

I think the viewpoint of most of the Hungarian and Central European commentators of Matthias' policy regarding the Burgundian-Habsburg marriage connection may be revised.³³ Karl Nehring postulated that the Burgundian-Habsburg inheritance treaty of 1471 seemed threatening for Matthias since it confirmed the position of the Emperor within the Empire and meant a loss of a potential Western ally.³⁴ However, the political situation in 1471 and 1473-1474 was much different, and the political constellation of Burgundy and the Habsburgs was not continuously friendly on the basis of a preliminary agreement of a betrothal of Mary to Maximilian. Maximilian was only one of the suitors, with whom it had appeared preferable to make an agreement in 1471, but he was not the most suitable in 1473. It was just one of the several preliminary marriage negotiations. The first time that he made a concrete promise to the Habsburgs was only after the battle of Grandson, 6 May 1476, but before nothing was secure. The scheme was beneficial for Burgundy since it was linked to the appointment of Charles as vicar of the imperial territories on the left bank of the Rhine. However, by 1473 Mary and Maximilian were not yet engaged. Their betrothal was not the only option amongst the cards in the hands of the Duke. Her hand was eagerly sought by a number of princes (the future Ferdinand II of Aragon; George, Duke of Clarence; Philip of Wittelsbach; Nicolas of Lorraine).³⁵ Charles was using his only daughter as a bait, a diplomatic weapon, in

³¹ K. Nehring, "Mátyás külpolitikája," [Matthias' foreign policy] *Történelmi Szemle* 21:3-4 (1978), 430. [= "Mátyás külpolitikája." in *Mátyás király 1458-1490*, ed. G. Barta, Budapest 1990, 104-117.]

³² Horváth, "Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája," 86.

³³ Nehring, *Matthias*, 68; K. Nehring, "Angaben zu einer unveröffentlichten Kopie eines Registers aus der Kanzlei von Matthias Corvinus," *Levélári Közlemények* 43 (1972), 85-96.

³⁴ Nehring, *Mátyás*, 430.

³⁵ Calmette, "Le projet de mariage bourgignon-napolitain," 462; *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts in the Archives and Collections of Milan 1385-1618*. I. ed. A. B. Hinds, London 1912. (hereafter CSP Milan), I: 67; 168.

accordance with his momentous political considerations. The agreement with the Habsburgs is not to be taken seriously. Nothing showed that Maximilian would be the victorious. For Charles the Habsburg marriage was not an end in itself, it was a means to independent power. Charles' offers were yet all insincere. He could not watch with his own eyes that some non-Burgundian prince take over his territories. He did not for a moment think to give his daughter to Maximilian, not at all in 1473, after the break-up of his schemes at the Trier talks.³⁶

When Hungary and Burgundy first initiated contacts, at the beginning of the 1460s, Philip the Good was going to enter a crusade against the Ottomans organized by Pope Pius II. It already had an anti-French colour since Louis XI sought to make the Pope place the House of Anjou on the throne of Naples. He made it clear that otherwise he would back George of Podiebrady, and for years he was floating the opportunity to help the Hussite king, which, however, naturally turned Hungary against France.³⁷ In 1469, when Matthias invaded the kingdom, George turned to Louis IX for help.³⁸ This would have put Hungary and Louis' opponent, Charles the Bold onto the same platform. However, in the late 1460s Matthias and Burgundy had not the warmest relations since Podiebrady also sent embassies to the Duke.³⁹ Pope Paul II also found it an opportunity to have the Duke of Burgundy crowned King of Bohemia. Emperor Frederick III, hard pressed by Matthias, also thought to support this scheme.⁴⁰ Duke Charles himself first promoted the cause of George Podiebrady, as far as the Hussite king, as Elector, seemed to be willing to support his ambitions to get the Crown of the Roman Kingdom, or to promote his concerns to form an independent Monarchy of Burgundy.⁴¹ In return, Charles would reconcile George with the pope.⁴² However, when the Duke found that, Podiebrady had less and less weight, moved from George's side.⁴³ After the death of Podiebrady and the successes of the Hungarians in Bohemia, he moved closer to Matthias and strove to realize his schemes with the help of the king of Hungary. Matthias was also proposing for the crown of the Romans as well as for Frederick's daughter, Kunigunde in marriage, but as the Emperor refused him he also moved closer to the Burgundian alliance.

It is not by chance that as Matthias's troops again invaded Austria, and Frederick asked help from the estates at the Augsburg Reichstag in 1473, Charles was appointed by the Pope as arbitrator of the Bohemian inheritance conflict between

³⁶ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 126–128.

³⁷ Horváth, "Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája," 83; Fraknói, *Hunyadi Mátyás* [<http://mek.oszk.hu/05700/05736/>]

³⁸ Fraknói, *Hohenzollernek*, 8.

³⁹ Fraknói, *Hohenzollernek*, 16.; J. K. Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus. Diplomat, Feldherr und Mäzen*. Graz-Wien-Köln 1998, 114.

⁴⁰ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 99., 106.

⁴¹ J. Macek, "Corvin Mátyás és Poděbrad György," [Matthias and Podiebrady] in *Hunyadi Mátyás. Emlékkönyv Mátyás király halálának 500. évfordulójára*, ed. Gy. Rázsó, L. v. Molnár, Budapest 1990, 219–220., 230.

⁴² Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires*, ed. D. Godefroy-L. du Fresnoy, 4 vols. Paris 1747, III: 116–118.

⁴³ O. Odložilik, *The Hussite King. Bohemia in European Affairs, 1440–1471*. New Brunswick 1965, 239–242.

Matthias and Poland.⁴⁴ The Duke might have wished himself to obtain the position, we have no knowledge on that, but it is most probable that Charles hoped to get closer to the affairs of the eastern territories of the Empire, and desired to get allies in his primary scheme to be elected King of Burgundy. We may perhaps assume that Charles seemed to be convinced that the planned negotiations with the Emperor would fail, and started an anti-Habsburg campaign even before the negotiations.

However, on the basis of a letter of Matthias to Charles of 6 July 1471, so far unknown in Hungarian historiography, after the death of Podiebrady the king of Hungary sent an envoy to Burgundy, and asked the duke to act as a mediator in the Hungarian-Jagiellonian struggle for Bohemia.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the parties had already been in communication by the early 1470s: in 1469, when Charles was installed in Ghent as Count of Flanders he received envoys from Hungary.⁴⁶ On his way back the envoy was showing off with the Burgundian alliance in front of the Elector of Brandenburg.⁴⁷ Albert advised the Emperor to try to dissuade the Duke to act as an arbitrator in the Hungarian-Polish conflict and strengthen his bond with the Jagiellonians versus the rapprochement of Matthias and Charles.⁴⁸

Matthias seemed a good point of concern. If Matthias be crowned King of Bohemia, with the help of Burgundy, Charles could count on his aid in return for his designs within the Empire. The alliances and successes of Matthias in Austria in 1472 must have pushed Frederick III to declare that he was willing to acknowledge Matthias' rights for Bohemia if he would withdraw troops from Habsburg territory. As in April 1473 the Emperor urged the princes to give assistance against the Hungarian invasions, Charles made benefit of the situation as he pushed himself forth as the saviour of the Empire, who could make peace. He also hoped to increase his chances to get a sovereign monarchy, his authority was growing. The key towards his dream of a Burgundian kingdom seemed to be Matthias's Bohemian crown and a strong interest-circle in the eastern territories of Germany, the Hohenzollern, the Wettin and the Wittelsbach dynasties; centrally held together by Matthias from Bohemia. Matthias' control over the eastern peripheries of the Empire was aided by precious alliances in Silesia, first with Konrad X, Duke of Öls/Oleśnica; then with John II Duke of Sagan/Žagań.

A few weeks after Matthias's troops invaded again Austria, in May 1473 the duke of Burgundy received a Hungarian embassy at Valenciennes.⁴⁹ The threat of an encircling Burgundian-Hungarian alliance had a striking impact on the Emperor: in June he offered a personal meeting to Duke Charles, to be held at Trier in August. Nevertheless, the Emperor made it unquestionable that he had no intention of abdicating his imperial authority to Charles. Although Charles agreed

⁴⁴ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 132., 134.

⁴⁵ Bibliothèque National de France, Paris. *Mélanges de Colbert* 396, Nr. 688. cited by Nehring, *Matthias*, 68. 115n.; A. Ph. Segesser, *Die Beziehungen der Schweizer zu Matthias Corvinus, in den Jahren 1476-1490*. Luzern 1860, 4.

⁴⁶ R. Putnam, *Charles the Bold. Last Duke of Burgundy 1433-1477*. New York 1908, 245.

⁴⁷ *Politische Correspondenz des Kurfürsten Albrecht Achilles*. Hrsg. v. F. Priebsatsch, 3 Bde, Leipzig 1870-1898, I: no. 655. 587.

⁴⁸ Nehring, *Matthias*, 68.

⁴⁹ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 138.

to have a meeting to discuss their standpoints, he started a grand scheme of getting more and more allies to isolate the Habsburgs. Just before the Duke met with Frederick, he wished to put pressure on him with a massive list of allies. In 1473 at Thionville he received ambassadors from Hungary, England, Denmark, Brittany, Ferrara and the Palatinate.⁵⁰ The kings of Hungary, England and Naples also sent embassies to Trier.⁵¹ The members of the would-be coalition were all present. Frederick still felt himself strong enough to oppose Matthias, since he hoped to get to an understanding with Charles, for he was wishing to finalize the scheme of the betrothal of Maximilian with Mary of Burgundy. That is why he rigidly refused all Matthias' demands and summoned the Reichstag to call upon him to withdraw his troops from Austria. Formerly, in 1472, Frederick seemed to be willing to acknowledge Matthias's Bohemian crown if he would cease to support the rebels in Austria. Now, Frederick pronounced a much more stubborn standpoint: there was no word of the acknowledgement of the Bohemian crown. A few weeks before, at the end of June Matthias informed the Austrian estates that for the purpose of the acknowledgement of the Bohemian crown, he was bound to seek for other means, which of course meant war.

However, until the fiasco of the negotiations with Frederick at Trier the Duke found no reason to commit himself.⁵² A year after, in 1473 Matthias tried again to turn to him against the Emperor.⁵³ By the next year the Duke realized that the Habsburgs were on the way to approach the French and the Emperor was ready to propose for an alliance with Louis XI.⁵⁴ After the failure at Trier, Charles, committed himself in actively assisting his allies, first of all Archbishop Ruprecht of Cologne, if need be by force of arms. He explained in a letter to the Archbishop of Mainz that the Emperor "tried to persuade our subjects to rebel against us".⁵⁵ In 1474 he resumed the contacts with Matthias and initiated negotiations.⁵⁶ 1474-1475 saw several missions between Hungary and Burgundy. Charles must have been in need of support being tied up in three fronts from April 1474. The Upper Rhine provinces revolted and in a campaign against the chapter of Cologne he laid Neuss under siege.⁵⁷ Frederick was bound to call the estates to war but most of the allies of Charles and Matthias flatly refused to assist him. Duke Albert of Bavaria did not take an active part in the clash but kept being more or less neutral. Albert of Saxony, willy-nilly, responded the call and raised a contingent, but he was always "on the brink of packing up". Charles duly offered him a close alliance, which he accepted instead.⁵⁸ During the siege, a Hungarian embassy arrived to Charles and in November 1474 a treaty was drawn up.⁵⁹ The memoirs of Philippe

⁵⁰ Putnam, *Charles the Bold*, 363.

⁵¹ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 135., Putnam, *Charles the Bold*, 347.

⁵² Nehring, *Matthias*, 69.

⁵³ K. Szabó, "Egy schweiczi követ Mátyás király udvarában," [A Swiss envoy in Matthias' court] *Budapesti Szemle* 14 (1862), 144.

⁵⁴ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 291.

⁵⁵ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 336.

⁵⁶ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 135.

⁵⁷ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 119.

⁵⁸ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 333., 339.

⁵⁹ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 135.

de Croy relate that the "[...] the king of Naples' son" was sent "to see what is going on. The king of Hungary has sent here his ambassador".⁶⁰ Chastellain also confirms the presence of Matthias' embassy at the Burgundian camp.⁶¹ In addition, a German source emphasizes the presence of Hungarian envoys coming to Neuss.⁶² On 8 December 1474 in Breslau, in the armistice with the Jagiellonians, Matthias had Charles the Bold enlisted amongst his confederates. When the Neapolitan envoys arrived in 1475, the king also boasted with his Burgundian ally.⁶³

Charles' stand against Frederick III was newly confirmed by his acts to find a new fiancée for his daughter, putting the 1471 agreement with Maximilian aside. It was partly due to efforts of the pro-Burgundian power constellation that a new marriage plan was proposed to the Duke, to marry Mary to Federico of Taranto, infant of Naples, brother of Matthias's fiancée, in this way uniting the parties in a double matrimonial bond.⁶⁴ The new suitor and successor of the Burgundian inheritance was to become Prince Federico, and not Maximilian, which was a great victory for Matthias. Fearing of isolation Louis XI abandoned the scheme of the Catalan campaign and also sought to approach Naples: in 1473 he proposed that one of his sons would marry Beatrice of Aragon.⁶⁵ However, at the time Ferdinand of Naples had already been negotiating for the marriage of Beatrice with Matthias, and partly due to an intervention of Matthias and Duke Charles he refused France.

The Hungarian-Neapolitan rapprochement dates back to the mid-1460s. In 1468, partly because of the activation of the Anjou claimant in Catalan, Aragon and Naples wished to get Matthias involved in an anti-French alliance, under the leadership of Burgundy, and offered the hand of Beatrice d'Aragon.⁶⁶ The talks were continued parallelly with the rapprochement between Hungary and Burgundy.⁶⁷ The approach was helped by Ferrarese mediation.⁶⁸ The Este dukes had been nurturing deep connections with Burgundy.

Another ground for the Hungarian-Neapolitan rapprochement was the 1470 alliance of the French Angevins with Venice, which, apart from its strong anti-Aragonese colour meant a threat towards Hungary, particularly after the conspiracy of Janus Pannonius, who had been in good relationship with Venice and King René.⁶⁹ As Venice also took a pro-Habsburg stand, Matthias was interested to get closer to

⁶⁰ Haynin, *Mémoires de Jean*, II: 184.

⁶¹ G. Chastellain, *Oeuvres*. ed. K. de Lettenhove, 8 vols. Bruxelles 1863–1866, VIII: 268.

⁶² "Wie Kayser Friedrich mit dem Reych fur die stat News gezogen ist", „Wie die mechtigen Erbkünigreich vnnd Fürstentumb Hispania, Hungern vnnd Gelldern zu den loblichen heusern Osterreich vn (nd) Burgundi kommen sein". Walther Isenberg. 1520 gedruckt bei Johann Schönsperger zu Augsburg. München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 20 A. lat. b. 385/3, fol. 14 b.

⁶³ Fraknói, *Hunyadi Mátyás* [<http://mek.oszk.hu/05700/05736/>]

⁶⁴ Calmette, „Le projet de mariage bourgignon-napolitain," 459–460.

⁶⁵ Émile-Paul Toutey, *Charles le Téméraire et la Ligue de Constance*. Paris 1902, 169.

⁶⁶ Horváth, "Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája," 83.

⁶⁷ Zs. Teke, „Az itáliai államok és Mátyás," [The Italian states and Matthias] in *Hunyadi Mátyás. Emlékkönyv*, 258; E. Kovács, "Corvin János házassága és a magyar diplomácia," [The marriage of John Corvin and the Hungarian diplomacy] *Századok* 137 (2003), 961.

⁶⁸ E. Kovács, *Magyarország*, 233.

⁶⁹ Horváth, "Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája," 80–82.

the Aragonese.⁷⁰ He was to seek the friendship of the anti-Anjou and anti-French forces, that is, Naples and Burgundy since a French-Venetian alliance meant a constant threat. Anti-Venetian motives explain the rapprochement between Matthias and the Duke of Milan, Gian Galeazzo Sforza. Although in 1471 Matthias made an effort for an alliance, it was not until 1473 that they finally came to terms.⁷¹

The Italian partners of the Neapolitan-Burgundian coalition were also interrelated through several dynastic links. Duke Ercole d'Este of Ferrara married Eleonore of Aragon, and his daughter, Isabella d'Este married another member of the alliance, Francesco II Gonzaga, Margrave of Mantova. The Gonzagas, especially Ludovico III (1444–1478) maintained good relationships with Burgundy. Federico I Gonzaga married from the house of Bavaria-Munich. Both the Gonzagas and the Estes sought to seal the alliance by sending his offspring, Rodolfo Gonzaga and Francesco d'Este to the Burgundian court.⁷²

In May 1474, parallelly with the embassies to Neuss, Matthias sent missions to Naples to suit for the hand of Beatrice.⁷³ In the autumn of 1474 a double betrothal was announced between Matthias and Beatrice, and, Mary of Burgundy and Federico of Taranto. At the same time a Burgundian envoy was commissioned to travel to Naples and bring Prince Federico to the ducal court.⁷⁴ In October 1474 King Ferrante sent his son to the Duke, having a *procuratio* for the marriage.⁷⁵ The letters speak of a deep amity between the two houses, "*benivolentiae et fraternitatis nexus, quibus mutuo astringimur, indissolubili et perpetua firmitate et stabilitate firmabuntur, et mutuus amor effecit*". The two marriage negotiations were being conducted parallelly with the embassies between Matthias and the Duke of Burgundy. On 18 October 1474 the prince did set out for his would-be fiancée in Burgundy. On 20 June 1475 a preliminary marriage was contracted *per procuram* with Matthias in Naples.⁷⁶ Parallelly with the Hungarian embassy, in July 1475 King Ferrante received ambassadors from Charles. They were to go England, Portugal, Aragon as well as Sixtus IV to notify the members of the alliance of the marriages.⁷⁷ Federico was staying with Charles the Bold in the following years, until 1476. As an eyewitness account justifies, he was also at the camp at Neuss and fought in the Burgundian army.⁷⁸ By the end of 1474, according to the great scheme of Burgundy-Hungary and Naples Federico would become the *grand duc d'Occident*, his sister, Beatrice would marry the great ruler of Central Europe, and Naples and Aragon would be able to withstand the French attempts for territorial growths, while the

⁷⁰ Teke, „Az itáliai államok és Mátyás,” 252; 258.

⁷¹ Horváth, „Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája,” 84; *Magyar Diplomáciai Emlékek Mátyás király korából, 1458–90*, [Diplomati monuments from the age of Matthias] ed. I. Nagy–A. Nyáry, 4 vols. *Monumenta Hungariae Historica*, IV. Acta externa, Budapest 1875–1878, (hereafter MDE) II: no. 166.; Teke, „Az itáliai államok és Mátyás,” 255.

⁷² Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 59., 73.

⁷³ A. Berzeviczy, *Beatrix királyné 1457–1508*. [Queen Beatrice] *Magyar Történelmi Életrajzok*, Budapest 1908. [<http://mek.oszk.hu/05800/05825> – 28 Oct 2010]

⁷⁴ Horváth, „Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája,” 84.

⁷⁵ Calmette, „Le projet de mariage bourgignon-napolitain,” 463–465.

⁷⁶ Berzeviczy, *Beatrix királyné*, [<http://mek.oszk.hu/05800/05825>].

⁷⁷ K. Stolle, *Thüringisch-Erfurtische Chronik*. hrsg. L. F. Hesse, Stuttgart 1854, 81; CSP Milan, I: 192.

⁷⁸ Haynin, *Mémoires de Jean*, II: 184.

king of England would, conjointly with the Duke of Burgundy lay a campaign into France as well as into the Habsburgs' imperial fiefs.⁷⁹ It was a symbolic act that Duke Charles had Federico seated on his left hand when he received the homage of Lorraine in Nancy on 18 December 1475.⁸⁰

Matthias and Charles were acting in concord. At this time Matthias contracted a peace with Władisław Jagiello (Ófalu, February 1474), but as it was in no time betrayed by the Poles as Władisław entered into an alliance with Frederick two weeks afterwards, Matthias announced that he would launch a campaign into Silesia in June. For this reason he reconfirmed his alliance with the Wettins, and set out to the siege of Breslau.⁸¹ Frederick, fearing of isolation, begged for a personal meeting with Charles. Although he refused all the demands of Burgundy at Trier, needed to gain time. He needed the Jagiellonians again, and enticed them to betray the peace with Hungary a few weeks after they had signed it.

Matthias also sought for other allies and sent an embassy to Duke Charles' ally and brother-in-law, Edward IV of England in June 1474. In 1471 Edward concluded an offensive alliance with Burgundy versus Louis XI.⁸² From 1472 onwards Charles was expecting Edward to go on a campaign.⁸³ In July 1474 a scheme of invasion was set up "to recover the realm of France".⁸⁴ It was agreed that Charles would back Edward's claim for the throne of France and in return, he, as King of France grant territories to the Duke.⁸⁵ In July 1475 English troops landed in Normandy, which had a shocking influence on the European power constellation.⁸⁶ To widen the alliance system with Burgundy's partners in December 1474 Edward IV sent an embassy to the King of Hungary and proposed an alliance.⁸⁷ We have no data on Matthias's answer to the king, but we should assume that there was a positive reply, since Hungary was listed at the treaty between Louis XI and Edward IV at Picquigny in August 1475 as an ally of England and Burgundy.⁸⁸ At the beginning of 1474 King Ferrante reconfirmed his military alliance with Burgundy as well as was supplying soldiers to the Burgundian theatre of war from Italy.⁸⁹ More

⁷⁹ See also E. Pontieri, "Su le mancate nozze tra Federico d'Aragona e Maria di Borgogna," *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane* 63 (1939), 78–112.

⁸⁰ Federico was working in the Burgundian military machinery, mostly with Charles himself until April–May 1476. Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 170.; 309.; 381., or, until September 1476: E. Kovács, Magyarország, 235.; Berzeviczy, *Beatrix királyné* [http://mek.oszk.hu//05800/05825]. He did not take part at the wedding of Matthias and Beatrice but was substituted with his brother, Francesco. *Aragóniai Beatrix*, no. 21.

⁸¹ MKL I: nos. 208.; 216–217.

⁸² 29 February 1472: Public Record Office/The National Archives, Kew, Surrey, England. Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt: Diplomatic Documents E 30/1073/11.; 11 December 1472: PRO Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt: Diplomatic Documents E 30/1073/15.

⁸³ Th. Rymer, ed., *Foedera, conventiones, literae, et cujuscunque generis acta publica inter reges Angliae*. 20 vols. London 1704–1735, XI: 804–809.

⁸⁴ June 1474: PRO Exchequer, Treasury of Receipt: Diplomatic Documents E 30/1073/15.

⁸⁵ Rymer, *Foedera*, XI: 810; 813.

⁸⁶ Ch. Ross, *Edward IV*. Los Angeles 1974, 226ff.

⁸⁷ Rymer, *Foedera*, XI: 834.

⁸⁸ „quod in praesentibus Treugis, Abstinttiis Guerrarum, Ligis et Confoederationibus comprehendatur Alligati, et Confoederati hincinde postea nominatur, Ex parte Serenissimi Principi Anglie Regis, Rex Hungariae”: 29 August 1475. Rymer, *Foedera*, XII: 17.

⁸⁹ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 81.

or less parallelly with the Hungarian embassy to Naples in the summer of 1474, Edward IV issued orders to treat with Naples.⁹⁰ Edward wished to make King Ferrante acknowledge his rights to the French crown and support his campaign in Normandy. On 15 August 1475, a few days after the Hungarian envoys contracted the *matrimonium per procuram* at the Castel Nuovo, Ferrante reconfirmed his alliance with Edward IV. He was also made Knight of the Garter.⁹¹

At the same time, Burgundy sought to have her old relationships revived and involved in her alliance system. John II of Aragon also confirmed his friendship, and the English-Burgundian rapprochement with Ferrara was also resumed.⁹² A Veronese chronicler noted that in September 1474 perpetual fraternity was proclaimed between Charles and the kings of Naples, Hungary and England. Charles sent a gift of a mantle of crimson velvet *a la borgognona* to Ercole d'Este, who also accepted Ferrante's order, the "Armellino".⁹³ By the autumn of 1474 Hungary and Burgundy had been connected in a firm alliance framework.⁹⁴

The king of Hungary needed to reconfirm his alliances in the new situation. In the autumn of 1474 he renewed his alliance with Ernest, Elector of Saxony. On 2 December Matthias commissioned an envoy to treat with Ernest in a secret matter, which may have been the support to be given to the Duke of Burgundy at the siege of Neuss. The *Thüringisch-Erfurtische Chronik* reports that in January 1475 Charles and Matthias agreed to partition the Empire. Charles was to conquer and keep the towns and bishoprics along the Rhine and become king of the Romans, while Matthias was to have Breslau and Bohemia as Elector.⁹⁵ In return, the Duke will guarantee that the Electors safeguard Hungary against any aggression from Poland. In May another Hungarian embassy arrived at Neuss seeking an alliance against Frederick and a full-scale Burgundian embassy set out for Hungary on 1 August 1475.⁹⁶ Charles needed the support of Hungary as he suffered the first defeat at the hands of the Swiss at Héricourt in November 1474.⁹⁷ What is more, in January 1475 the Swiss contracted an offensive alliance against Burgundy with France.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, as the military situation at the siege came to a standstill, and as

⁹⁰ Rymer, *Foedera*, XI. 816.

⁹¹ CSP Milan, 108.; 115.

⁹² Rymer, *Foedera*, XI: 775; *The Historical Collections of a Citizen of London in the Fifteenth Century*. ed. J. Gairdner, London 1876, 235.

⁹³ R. Walsh, *Charles the Bold and Italy 1467-1477: Politics and Personnel*. Liverpool 2005, 289.

⁹⁴ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 135.

⁹⁵ „Der koning von Vungern hatte sich mit deme herzoge von Burgundien verbunden vnd vortragen, das der herzoge von Burgundien der solde vnder der gestalt das bisthum zu Koln gewinne, vnd jn neme den Ryn strom, die bisthume vnd die stete, So wolde der koning von Vngern gewynne der Stadt Bresla vnd die Slesiere Behemer land, Vnde wann er das gewonne; was sie des Landes gehorende hetten zu der kron zu Behemen; Vnd der herzoge von Burgundien solde eyn romischer konig verde. Also meynten die zweite hern das rich vnd die dutzen fursten vnd das richs stete vnder sich zu brengen vnde das were alles also ergangen, hette der konig von Vngern recht genommen, vnd das die Poln nicht also starg gewest weren.“ *Thüringisch-Erfurtische Chronik*, 91.

⁹⁶ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 341.

⁹⁷ Ross, *Edward IV*, 224.

⁹⁸ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 292.

Charles being tied up and his armies being at war from June 1474 to June 1475, he could not give support to the English in Normandy.⁹⁹ Edward was bound to sign a peace with France on 29 August 1475. As a consequence, on 13 September Charles was also bound to contract a treaty with Louis XI at Soleuvre, and, was forced to agree on a peace – but *not an alliance* with the Emperor on 17 November. However, he still listed Hungary as his ally: the treaty with the Habsburgs did not break the alliance between Hungary and Burgundy.¹⁰⁰ Some works state that in vain Matthias tried to make Burgundy his ally and involve him in the war against the Habsburgs since as Burgundy contracted with Frederick III in November 1475 in Nancy, the attempts got void, and the alliance annulled. Nehring, and partly Zsuzsa Teke stipulate that Matthias was not able to prevent the alliance of Charles with the Emperor in 1475.¹⁰¹ Péter E. Kovács also states that the November 1475 agreement between Burgundy and the Habsburgs “prevented the further approach between Matthias and Charles”, and thus “the king of Hungary had not much hope to make benefit of the situation”.¹⁰² I would not agree. Hoensch also speaks of an alliance with Frederick, though finds that it did not touch the alliance of Charles with Matthias, which was still alive even afterwards.¹⁰³ It is true that the alliance was firmly working even after the treaty of Nancy. In October 1475 another Hungarian embassy was to treat for a reconfirmation of the alliance with Charles, at this time specifically against the Emperor. The parties sent embassies to one another in the spring of 1476 to reconfirm the anti-Habsburg league, since, as Matthias wrote, Frederick enticed the Swiss against the Duke (see below the king’s letter of 7 May 1476). Then came as a final shock that the Swiss attacked him again at the end of 1475. The Duke needed Matthias’ support more than ever.

The Burgundian–Hungarian–Neapolitan–English alliance had to have an anti-Habsburg colour as well, since the partners were right to guess that France would seek for the help of Frederick III, or, if it had not already sought his assistance even before the negotiations of Matthias and Charles. It was more than inevitable for Charles himself to reconfirm his alliances since a few days after the Nancy treaty with Burgundy the king of France, the only hope of the Habsburgs, betrayed the treaty with Burgundy – signed in Compiègne, in June 1474 – and allied with Frederick III on 31 December 1475 at Andernach.¹⁰⁴ A united front of France and the Habsburgs was born – which demanded the union of Burgundy and his potential allies, Hungary as well. Moreover, the activization of Louis XI – recruiting Swissmen in October – made the king of Hungary to intervene for his own concerns as well.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the flight of Johann Beckensloer, Archbishop of Esztergom to the Emperor enraged Matthias and gave a good reason to reopen the hostilities at the beginning of 1476. Charles came to the understanding that he was unable to fight a two-front war, unable to give military assistance to the English against

⁹⁹ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 97.

¹⁰⁰ Nehring, *Matthias*, 74. 156n.

¹⁰¹ Teke, „Az itáliai államok és Mátyás,” 260.

¹⁰² E. Kovács, *Matthias*, 116.

¹⁰³ Hoensch, *Matthias Corvinus*, 153.

¹⁰⁴ Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 319; Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ Horváth, „Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája,” 86.

France and defend his "empire" and allies from Friesland to Savoy. He was in need of strong, powerful allies. That is why he was renewing the negotiations with Hungary even in 1475. After the fiasco of Neuss, Matthias was trying to get new allies to join the Burgundian-Neapolitan coalition. In December 1475 he sent an envoy to the Margrave of Mantua, Ludovico III Gonzaga.¹⁰⁶ He wished to assure himself from the commitment of Milan and authorized the same envoy to treat with Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza as well.¹⁰⁷ It was a success to have Milan, a traditional French ally detached from the Valois bloc. On 30 January 1475 Milan allied with Burgundy against France in the League of Moncalieri.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, a few weeks later there was even talk of a visit of Lodovico Sforza to Charles to seal the alliance himself.¹⁰⁹ Matthias had long been striving to have Milan on his side, and similarly, from the late 1460s Charles had been negotiating to seek the possibilities for a Milanese alliance.¹¹⁰ In 1464-1465 it was an alternative that Matthias marry Duke Francesco's daughter, Ippolita.¹¹¹ The year 1469 saw a rapprochement: the king of Hungary sent an envoy to Francesco Sforza.¹¹² Milan also found a partner in Hungary in his desire to prevent the Habsburg-Burgundian marriage in 1471-1473.¹¹³ The contacts were eased by matrimonial ties: Ippolita Sforza married Ferrante's son, Alfonso, Beatrice's brother. Duke Galeazzo's son, Gian Galeazzo married Isabella of Naples, granddaughter of Ferrante. Another daughter of Galeazzo Maria married Alfonso d'Este, son of Ercole I d'Este and Leonora of Naples. Matthias sent an envoy to Milan, and contracted a military alliance in 1473 largely against Venice.¹¹⁴ In 1474-1475 an ever greater number of embassies followed on another between the Corvinian and the Sforza court. Almost resident ambassadors were stationed in both courts.¹¹⁵ Milan fitted into the old scheme of Burgundian diplomacy: the alliances with Sigismund of Tyrol, Savoy, and Milan Burgundy could operate an axis between the Netherlands and Italy, and supported by Naples and its Italian partners, Ferrara and Mantova it would aspire to reactivate the old Kingdom of Arlate. As a faithful Burgundian partner, England also moved towards Milan. In 1476 Edward sought to marry the Prince of Wales to a daughter of Duke Galeazzo. (The Duke's widow had already been proposed by Milan to the Prince, at the same time with Matthias's marriage negotiations.) It is partly because of the Milanese bond that Venice had an antagonism towards Burgundy, but the Milanese-Venetian conflict was also a prime factor that moved Duke Charles to a common platform with Hungary. Galeazzo Maria Sforza had already proposed an alliance against Venice and France to Hungary in 1471, but up until 1475, and the formation of a Burgundi-

¹⁰⁶ MKL I: no. 226.

¹⁰⁷ MKL I: no. 227.

¹⁰⁸ Comines, III: 356-362.

¹⁰⁹ *Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais sur les campagnes de Charles le Hardi, de 1465 à 1477*. 2 vols. ed. le Fr. de Gingis La Sarra, Paris 1858, I: 77; 254.

¹¹⁰ Galeazzo Maria was made knight of the Golden Fleece. Vaughan, *Philip the Bold*, 74-75.

¹¹¹ MDE II: nos. 189.; 202.; E. Kovács, *Magyarország*, 230-231.; E. Kovács, *Corvin János*, 961.

¹¹² MDE II: no. 72.

¹¹³ Teke, „Az itáliai államok és Mátyás,” 256-257.

¹¹⁴ MDE II: nos. 176.; 177.; MKL I. No. 200.

¹¹⁵ E. Kovács, *Corvin János*, 959.; MDE II. No. 191.; MKL I. No. 227.

an-Hungarian axis did not renounce his pro-French standpoint. It was Matthias's rapprochement with Charles that moved him out of the neutral position. Florence did also enter the coalition against Venice. When in 1472 Louis XI asked Lorenzo de Medici to mediate for the marriage between his nephew, Philibert, Duke of Savoy and Eleonore, daughter of Ferrante, as well as between the dauphin, Charles and Beatrice of Aragon, Il Magnifico rejected it and declared that he supported the Burgundian side and thus prevented the French diplomacy from trying to detach Naples from the English-Burgundian connection.

Matthias feared that after the success Frederick III gained in the field of diplomacy, the former allies of the Burgundian party would leave the coalition, that is why he sent another ambassador to Brandenburg, to treat with Albert Achilles. However, he did not succeed sine the prince changed sides and took to support the Habsburgs in 1474–1475. In the autumn of 1474 Matthias, mainly because of their disputes in the Glogau conflict also broke with Brandenburg.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Matthias in the early months of 1476, after the fiasco of Neuss sensed danger and warned Charles the Bold not to engage into a long lasting campaign against the Swiss. Sigimund of Tyrol changed sides and chose to support the Swiss against Burgundy. Louis XI realized the importance of the Swiss and in June 1474 intervened for a peace between them and the Emperor.¹¹⁷ With the Duke of Lorraine, René II joining the French–Habsburg–Swiss alliance, Burgundy got dangerously isolated. The spring of 1476 saw a Burgundian embassy to Buda, with which the Duke wished to renew and reconfirm their alliance.¹¹⁸ In May 1476 Matthias dispatched an envoy to the Duke, and in his letter, as a “prophet” was able to predict Charles’ fate. He fortold the dangers: the duke was now trying to accomplish something quite beyond his resources.¹¹⁹ He felt out what the Emperor was trying to forge and turn the Swiss against Burgundy: the *Eidgenossen* having *semper presidia imperii*. The King expressed that he could not sufficiently wonder that how Charles should have been so gravely deceived by the Emperor, after having once been seduced by him and he let himself again be snared into “a labyrinth of loss and disgrace”.¹²⁰ He warned the Prince: “you will have the empire against you, if you attack that invincible people, and you cannot win over them”.¹²¹ “We exhort you to pause before incurring heavier losses and greater dangers”. “You will either never escape, or escape only with damage and shame [...] you are exposed to the loss of your life [...] and all your people will be slain”.¹²² Matthias also forecast

¹¹⁶ Fraknói, *Hohenzollernek*, 23-5.

¹¹⁷ Segesser, *Die Beziehungen der Schweizer*, 69.

¹¹⁸ J. Teleki, *Hunyadiak kora Magyarországon*. 12 vols. [The age of the Hunyadis in Hungary] Pest 1852–1863, IV: 470–472.

¹¹⁹ 7 May 1476. MKL, II: no. 239.; MDE II: no. 212. English translation: Putnam, *Charles the Bold*, 421.

¹²⁰ „*Mirari satis non possumus, quod ita notorie decepta vestra fraternitatis, tantoque cum damno et dedecore prius seducta, nunc quoque ad talem labyrinthum trahi se permisit, ex quo vix aut nunquam exire possit, aut summis cum jacturis cum verecundia illi sit exeundum*”.

¹²¹ „*cum populo illo indomito insuperabilique bella agere conduceret, quos intellexerit forte sicut solet bellorum eventus esse dubius vincere posse, vinci non metueret*”.

¹²² „*Per quam et regna et bona et personam ipsam suam certis periculis exposituram noverat [...] homines illi exterminarentur*”.

the judgment: "it will be turned into a tale how a mighty prince was overcome by rustics whom there would have been no honour in conquering, while to be conquered by them would be an eternal disgrace".¹²³ His warning was futile. A few weeks later, on 22 June 1476 the Duke suffered a crushing defeat "from the hands of peasants" on the battlefield of Murten. In vain did Matthias propose to give assistance in making peace with the Swiss.¹²⁴

Frederick and Władysław again contracted an alliance against Matthias in December 1476. The king of Hungary was not in the position to give support to the duke of Burgundy. That is why chose to confirm his alliance with the Saxon princes. He also applied for the help of the Imperial princes and asked for the mediation of Elector Ernest.¹²⁵ However, in his letter of 15 March 1476 to Pope Sixtus IV in which he expressed his disapproval about the schemes of Louis XI and the Emperor to convene a universal synod to elect a new pope against Sixtus, Matthias listed the Duke as his ally, *principem ducem Burgundie, fratre meo carissimom ac singulari confederato*, of whom he would not believe that he would join this scheme, based on the confederation of his with Matthias, *nullomodo credere possum, prersertim si nostre mutue confederationis memor esse voluerit*.¹²⁶ Matthias would not accept the Venetian sources' news that Burgundy chose to form a league against Sixtus with his enemies, the Emperor and the king of France, instead, in the autumn of 1476 he sent an envoy to Burgundy to make it certain what the standpoint of Charles was. (The envoy, Georg von Stein might have also been on another Burgundian embassy before that year.)¹²⁷ In addition, Matthias asked Charles to join the anti-league in defence of the pope, led by Naples. He was to arouse the Duke that he was not to trust Frederick III. He was also to invite Charles, then, the king of England for the wedding of Matthias to be held in December.¹²⁸ The envoy was also to write to the Pope himself from Burgundy as soon as he could get assured about the authenticity of the news, hopefully assuring the pope that the Duke was not intending to enter into a league against the Holy See.¹²⁹ Beyond all that, the King did also send a special envoy to the Holy See to inform the Pope of his negotiation in the regard.¹³⁰ Sixtus IV was important for Matthias since he was ready to defend the cause of Hungary against the Jagiellonians, and in March 1476 sent a legate to Hungary in this regard. Matthias was working hard to have the alliance operate and did his best to warn Duke Charles not to enter the alliance against the pope. A few weeks later he sent ambassadors to Florence to make the Medicis enter the coalition.¹³¹

In the spring of 1476 Hungary and England did not at all abandon the Bur-

¹²³ „tantum principem a rusticis superatum, quos vicisse nullus aut parvus ad modum honor, a quibus vinci turpe semper fuit”.

¹²⁴ *Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais*, II: 126.

¹²⁵ 2 October 1476. MKL II: no. 242.; 15 November 1476. MKL II: no. 245.

¹²⁶ MKL I: no. 233.

¹²⁷ V. Fraknói, *Magyarország egyházi és politikai összeköttetései a római Szent-Székkal*. [Hungary's relations to the Holy See] 3 vols. Budapest 1901, I: 154.

¹²⁸ *Scriptores rerum Silesicarum*. Schlesischer Geschichtsschreiber. hrsg. v. G. A. Stenzel, 17 vols. Breslau 1835-1902, XIII: 179.

¹²⁹ *Scriptores rerum Silesicarum*, XIV: 8.

¹³⁰ Fraknói, *Magyarország*, 154.

¹³¹ MKL I: no. 236.

gundian alliance. Galeazzo Maria Sforza did not forsake the Burgundian alliance either – yet it was a tragic news for the coalition that he was killed at Christmas 1476.¹³² Milan was also notified of the efforts of Matthias to save the Burgundian alliance as his envoy reported of the king's letters to the Duke.¹³³ England also sent a new envoy to Milanese in October 1475.¹³⁴ King Ferrante also had an envoy dispatched to Burgundy and England.¹³⁵ Matthias was working to keep the alliance system alive.¹³⁶ The Milanese ambassador in Buda several times reported of the schemes of Corvinus to invite the Duke of Burgundy to his wedding.¹³⁷ He also found it important to inform the Duke of Milan that the Neapolitan ambassador was to be commissioned to go to Burgundy, as a joint-Neapolitan-Hungarian envoy and have discussions with Duke Charles. At the time, in mid-May 1476 Matthias had not yet been informed of the defeat of the Duke at Grandson. Charles also made all effort to keep the alliance alive: he tried hard to make peace with Sigismund of Tyrol, and when he succeeded in an agreement in January 1476 he still had Hungary listed amongst his allies.¹³⁸

Matthias still felt responsible for his ally, and did not wish him to perish at the hands of Swiss mercenaries. Nevertheless, even as he had learnt of the Prince's fiasco, on 10 June 1476, he made an attempt to save time for Burgundy and bring forward peace between Charles and the Swiss: in a letter written to the *Eidgenossenschaft* he offered his help and sent a mediator.¹³⁹ This letter might have been dispatched by the Neapolitan ambassador, the Archbishop of Bari, and the former report of the Milanese envoy refers to his mission to Burgundy in June 1476. However, we have no further knowledge of this embassy. Even amidst the preparations for the siege of Szabács in 1476 Matthias was planning to send the joint Neapolitan-Hungarian envoy, the Archbishop of Bari with letters to the Duke of Burgundy. On the basis of the report of the Milanese ambassador, the archbishop – who was staying in Hungary from late autumn 1476¹⁴⁰ – was waiting to be able to report the capture of the Bosnian stronghold and he was going to leave “*subito*”, *immediately* for Burgundy on 20 February 1477. The wording refers to the delay in the despatch of the ambassador, who was going to be charged to travel to

¹³² E. Kovács, *Corvin János*, 962.

¹³³ *Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais*, II: 202–203.

¹³⁴ CSP Milan, 217.

¹³⁵ CSP Milan, 221.

¹³⁶ Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 122.

¹³⁷ „Ultra le potenzie d'Italia, che sono invitate alle noze et cosi l'Imperatore et tutti Duca, Conti e Baroni de Alemagna e invitato ancora el Duca de Borgogna”: 19 May 1476: MDE II: no. 114.

¹³⁸ Horváth, “Mátyás király nyugati diplomáciája,” 87.

¹³⁹ „So hoffen wir durch erber zimlich wege di sachen zwischen eu zu früntlichen vrtage zu bringen; und getrauen, zwieveln auch nicht daran, ir werdet uns solchen gütlichen handel nit abslaen, und eu in solchen sweren leufften und anligen der Cristenheit als frumen cristen lewten in sulchen geschwinden lewffen der ganzen Cristenheit wol gepüret, auffrechtlich hallten und zimlich wege nicht verschlachen. Das wollen wir gen eu und den ewrn, wo esz u schulden kumpt, gnedlich erkennen”: 10 June 1476: MKL I: no. 240.

¹⁴⁰ Alphonse of Calabria to Archbishop d' Ayello: 2 October 1476: MDE II: no. 227.; MDE II: no. 229.

the Duke as early as December 1476, but his commission was several times cancelled for some reasons, probably because of the December 1476 Ottoman campaign into Transylvania.¹⁴¹ The King must have had no knowledge of the death of the Duke at Nancy, that is why he was going to assure him that after the campaign in Bosnia he was now free to turn to the affairs in the West and mediate for the concerns of Burgundy.

The battles of Grandson and Murten, however, changed everything in the political constellation. The Emperor was again ready to turn against Matthias with Władysław Jagiello in December 1476. Under the minority of the new duke, Gian Galeazzo, Milan approached Louis XI again, and Charles was on the way of total isolation. A way out was a treaty with the Habsburgs: on 6 May 1476 Charles agreed on the betrothal of Mary and Maximilian.¹⁴² After the defeat of Murten in June 1476 Charles seemed to withdraw from his alliances and lived only for warfare, though Edward IV and Matthias decided to keep their commitments.

A most interesting evidence is Matthias' letter of 30 May 1477.¹⁴³ It shows that at the time the king could have had no idea of the death of Charles the Bold, since he was speaking of his alliance which "he was about to conclude with his brother", the Duke. He wrote this letter to the Eidgenossenschaft, proving that he had not had an alliance against the king of France, with whom the Swiss were allied. He says that he sent the envoy to the Duke of Burgundy, that is, he must be alive for the time being! It must have been known by the end of May in Hungary that the Duke had died months before in January, which means that the dating of the letter is dubious, it should have been issued before that date, earlier, perhaps the previous year. It says "an Freitag vor dem sunbtig Trinitatis", and "in the 20th year of our rule", that is, seemingly, there is no problem with this. However, we learn that the envoy Matthias sent to the Duke, Georg von Stein, was at that time staying at the court of Burgundy, and the alliance was being firm with Burgundy. It fits into the context of the year of 1476, since during that year Matthias was seeking for support in aid of Burgundy, throughout the Empire from the Nuremberg Reichstag and William of Thuringia to Ernest of Saxony (November 1476) against Frederick III and Władysław Jagiello, since the latter invaded Glogau and broke the truce. That is why he would have also needed reciprocally the support of Burgundy in 1476, and still at the beginning of 1477, thus, the embassy of Stein should be put to late 1476 or early 1477. I am on the opinion that the copy in the Luzern Archives might have been misdated and the letter is to be dated to the autumn of 1476, to the mission of Stein, to Burgundy and his letter to Pope Sixtus IV. As it says that the Hungarian envoy was staying at the court of Burgundy, and the alliance was being firm, it fits into the year 1476.

¹⁴¹ „Lo Archivesvovo de Barri Oratore a Buda della Mastra del Re da Napoli ha havuto lettere de partirse de li e subito andare dal Duca de Borgogna, havuto chl abbia la licentia el Re de Hungaria, quale credo havere fra 20-di se parte, et va in Borgogna.” MDE II: no. 239.

¹⁴² Paravicini, *Merész Károly*, 122.

¹⁴³ „[...] sunder so senndten wir den edeln unsern lieben getrewen Jörgen von Stein unsern ratt vordem zu unsern bruder dem herzog von Burgund nit wider den gannanten künig [France] noch ew.” 30 May 1477. MKL I: no. 250.

In certain periods Matthias's diplomatic interests were not restricted to Central Europe but the king was able to look further than Austria and Bohemia and run a leading role in the theatre of the European „grand policie". In the context of the overlapping Burgundian-Neapolitan-Hungarian interest circles Prince Federico was going to become the *grand duc d'Occident*, his sister, Beatrice was to marry the great ruler of Central Europe. Naples would be able to withstand France, while England and Burgundy lay a campaign into France and the Habsburgs' fiefs. According to the interpretation of Karl Nehring, Charles "was not convinced that an alliance with Matthias would work at all".¹⁴⁴ As opposed to a number of attempts from Hungary to have him involved in a league, Charles gave no positive answer through 1474. Professor Nehring found that the Hungarian diplomacy overestimated its own role and political authority in Europe, since it expected that the influence of Matthias over Duke Charles would result in the failure of the proposed marriage negotiations between Frederick III and Burgundy. Nehring finds, Charles was even thinking in terms of a Habsburg-league, together with the Elector of Brandenburg and Poland against Matthias. I think that it is also to be revised on the basis of documents from the Burgundian and English diplomatic machinery. Charles did not contract an alliance on 17 November 1475 with the Habsburgs, but a peace. He did not abandon the Hungarian, English and Aragonese alliances of his, on the contrary, he trusted and wished to rely on them even afterwards. The Duke, perhaps even before the Trier meeting, but undoubtedly after it, was full-heartedly convinced of the positive effects of a Hungarian alliance and did himself support a league with Naples, Aragon, Hungary and England. Had he not been committed to the cause of an anti-Habsburg and anti-Valois confederation, he would not have included his ally, Edward IV of England in the coalition and would not have strive to make contacts between England and Hungary as well as England and his allies, Naples and Aragon.

¹⁴⁴ Nehring, *Matthias*, 68-69.