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THE POLITICAL STRATEGY OF NUNCIO ANTONIO CAETANI IN THE MAZE OF THE IMPERIAL COURT (1607–1611)*

Abstract

The archbishop of Capua, Antonio Caetani (1566–1624), was an eminent member of a Roman aristocratic family. From 1607 to 1611, he resided at the Imperial court of Prague as Apostolic Nuncio in the service to Pope Paul V, where he witnessed the turmoil that gradually overwhelmed Bohemia, ruled at that point by Emperor Rudolf II of the House of Habsburg. Caetani moved in an orbit characterised by various coexisting political, local, confessional and social forces. His negotiations within the maze of the court were characterised by a wise and cautious approach of not interfering openly in Imperial affairs: a sort of ‘wait-and-see’ policy that was almost inevitable. This was firstly because of the Imperial ministers, who, instead of acting as a conduit to reach the ears of the sovereign, were actually considered obstructive and unhelpful because of their private aims, personal resentments, and often-outright hostility. Secondly, Caetani’s mission was hampered by the Rudolf II’s suspicious nature: the Emperor feared papal intrusion in Imperial affairs. The papal nuncios did not merely embody the pope; they were also political subjects within networks of interpersonal relationships. Within these networks, they could practice their diplomatic roles, and also carry out (their own) personal affairs. Below, I will attempt to demonstrate how Caetani’s political strategy failed to establish fruitful relations with the courtiers and the Emperor.

Keywords: Antonio Caetani, councillors, courts, diplomacy, Imperial, nunciature, policy

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The archbishop of Capua, Antonio Caetani (1566–1624),¹ was an eminent member of a Roman aristocratic family. The Caetani's domain was the Duchy of Sermoneta, located in the southern reaches of the Papal States. From 1607 to 1618, he served Pope Paul V as a papal nuncio. He was first posted to Prague, where he served for some three years. Here he witnessed the turmoil that overwhelmed Bohemia and Emperor Rudolf II of the House of Habsburg.² Subsequently, he was posted to Madrid for almost eight years, at the court of Philip III,³ where he witnessed the rise and fall of the king's favourite, the Duke of Lerma.

These nunciatures were imbued with difficulties. However, the challenge was worth the potential reward. Caetani's negotiations would have allowed the archbishop to achieve significant renown, setting him on the way to a brilliant political and ecclesiastical career, especially as it was commonplace for the Pope to grant a cardinal's *biretta* to nuncios upon the completion of their service.⁴ According to the words of Giovanni Stefano Ferrero (Bishop of Vercelli) in his final *relazione*,⁵ the Imperial court was the place where the major interests of Christendom were negotiated and discussed. 'Germany [...] could become the place of universal ruins [...]' Ferrero claimed, because 'it is the most corrupted part [of

¹ Georg Lutz, 'Caetani, Antonio', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)*, 88 vols (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1960–), XVI (1973), 120–25; Paolo Periatì, 'Antonio Caetani: L'Ascesa Politica e le Nunziature Apostoliche (1607–1618)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Università degli Studi Roma Tre, 2015). See also: Cristoforo Caetani, *Vita del Sig. Card. Antonio Caetani*, 1624: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Barberiniani Latini (Barb. Lat.), 6030, fols 1^r–77^v.

² See: *Epistulae et Acta Antonii Caetanii, 1607–1611. Epistulae et Acta Nuntiorum Apostolicorum apud Imperatorem, 1592–1628*, ed. by Milena Linhartová, 3 vols (Prague: Sumptibus Ministerii Scholarum et Instructionis Publicae, Typographia Rei Publicae, 1932–1946).

³ See: Periatì, 'Antonio Caetani', pp. 121–219.

⁴ See: Mario Belardini, 'Antonio Bolognetti, Nunzio di Gregorio XIII', *Cheiron*, 30 (1999), 171–200.

⁵ See: *Die Prager Nuntiaturs des Giovanni Stefano Ferreri und die Wiener Nuntiaturs des Giacomo Serra 1603–1606. Abteilung: 17. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Arnold O. Meyer, 2 vols (Berlin: Bath, 1913), II, pp. 338–62; Linhartová, I, pp. 314–27; *Le Istruzioni Generali di Paolo V ai Diplomatici Pontifici: 1605–1621*, ed. by Silvano Giordano, 3 vols (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003), I, pp. 517–38.

Christendom], where the most important princes of Europe advance their interests.⁶ Ferrero warned the Nuncio that he would be fighting against insurmountable obstacles when advancing any of his requests. On the other hand, Madrid was considered one of the most prestigious courts of Europe and, consequently, postings there were the most coveted. According to the well-known opinion of Antonio's uncle Camillo Caetani, Patriarch of Alexandria, who had resided as nuncio at Philip II's court from 1593 to 1600,⁷ this nunciature was extremely important, and many considered it 'the cardinalate of those who could not be cardinal.'⁸ In fact, this office could have become a double-edged sword for the nuncios, if they did not satisfy the wishes of the papacy and the interests of the Church.⁹

Prior to his impressive diplomatic appointments, the young Caetani had lingered in a form of limbo in the last decade of the sixteenth century. He was part of the entourage of his uncle, Cardinal Enrico Caetani, during an apostolic mission in Warsaw (1596–1597), and following his return to Italy, he began to manage the finances of the Caetanis *casa*. At the same time, he frequented the court of Rome while waiting for a post in service to the Church, manifesting an increased impatience because of the uncertainty of his future prospects.¹⁰ However, the turning point in Caetani's career was the election of Camillo Borghese as Pope Paul V in 1605. Caetani was appointed archbishop of Capua¹¹

⁶ Giordano Bruno, I, p. 518: 'La Germania [...] può divenire la piazza delle miserie universali [...], perché questa è la più corrotta parte e ci hanno interesse tutti i maggiori principi di Europa.'

⁷ Maria A. Visceglia, *Roma Papale e Spagna: Diplomatici, Nobili e Religiosi tra Due Corti* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2010), pp. 49–92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55: 'Il cardinalato di chi non può essere cardinale.' See also: *Die Hauptinstruktionen Clemens' VIII für die Nuntien und Legaten an den Europäischen Fürstenhofen (1502–1605)*, ed. by Klaus Jaitner, 2 vols (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984), I, p. 180.

⁹ See: Paolo Periatì, 'The Pope, the King and the Family: Triple Loyalty and Diplomatic Negotiations of the Apostolic Nuncio Antonio Caetani at the Court of Madrid (1611–1618)', *Librosdelacorte*, 8, no. 12 (2016), 7–24.

¹⁰ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Camillo Caetani, 11 July 1597: Archivio Caetani (AC), Fondazione Camillo Caetani, Miscellanea (Misc.), 75303, [n. fol].

¹¹ Archivio Segreto Vaticano (ASV), Secretaria Brevium (Sec. Brev.), Registra (reg.) 399, fols 289^r–90^r.

and the Pope selected him for the nunciature to Germany only one year later.¹²

According to the thoughts of the controversial philosopher Giordano Bruno, the Empire constituted a multitude of divided states because of the ‘misshapen’¹³ Protestant Reformation. Accordingly, the Christian devotional cycle that had begun with St Paul would finally be completed by turning on its head, and reaching ‘[...] the lowest point in the universal wheel.’¹⁴ Fifty years after the ‘Religious and Profane Peace’ of Augsburg in 1555, the political and religious environment of the Holy Roman Empire was characterised by ‘[...] a complicated situation, [with princes] being [allied] with and [ranged] against each other, typical of a policy [...] which was secular as well as confessional.’¹⁵ Therefore, the natural solution was a coexistence of various political, local, confessional and social forces.¹⁶ The most striking examples were the lands under the Crown of

¹² See: Linhartová, I, pp. 1–2; Cristoforo Caetani, *Vita del Sig. Card. Antonio Caetani*, 1624: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6030, fol. 21^v; ASV, Sec. Brev., reg. 418, fol. 452^r.

¹³ Giordano Bruno, *Spaccio della Bestia Trionfante*, ed. by Michele Ciliberto (Milan: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 41: ‘diffomatissima’.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41: ‘[...] il punto più basso della ruota universale.’

¹⁵ Reinhard Koselleck, *Futuro Passato: Per una Semantica dei Tempi Storici*, trans. by A. Marietti Solmi (Genoa: Marietti, 1986), p. 16: ‘[...] un complicato stare con e contro l’altro, tipico di una politica [...] insieme temporale e confessionale.’

¹⁶ See: Wolfgang Reinhard, ‘Zwang zur Konfessionalisierung? Prolegomena zu einer Theorie des Konfessionellen Zeitalters’, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 10 (1983), 257–77; Winfried Schulze, ‘Concordia, Discordia, Tolerantia: Deutsche Politik im Konfessionellen Zeitalter’, in *Neue Studien zur Frühneuzeitlichen Reichsgeschichte*, ed. by Johannes Kunisch (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987), pp. 43–79; *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. by Robert J. W. Evans and Trevor V. Thomas (New York: St Martin’s, 1991); Heinz Schilling, *Konfessioneller Fundamentalismus: Religion als Politischer Faktor im Europäischen Mächtesystem um 1600*, (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007); Heinz Schilling, *Konfessionalisierung und Staatsinteressen: Internationale Beziehungen 1559–1660* (Paderbon: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2007); Christophe Duhamelle, ‘L’Invention de la Coexistence Confessionnelle dans le Saint-Empire (1555–1648)’, in *Les Affrontements Religieux en Europe (1500–1650)*, ed. by Lucien Bély and others (Paris: Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2009), pp. 223–43; *A Companion to the Reformation in Central Europe*, ed. by Howard Louthan and Graeme Murdock (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Peter H. Wilson, *Heart of Europe: A History of the Holy Roman Empire* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2016).

St Wenceslas: as provinces with their own historical, cultural, linguistic and administrative identities, they were a confessional melting pot.¹⁷ Here, the noblemen were the most jealous defenders of local privileges against the centralizing policies of the Habsburg dynasty.¹⁸ Therefore, in 1605, the potential political and religious collapse of the Kingdom of Bohemia could have threatened the entire Holy Roman Empire, as well as the Imperial Majesty, ostensibly the secular guardian of the Catholic faith. Consequently, the universal authority of the papacy would have been gravely damaged, the worst possible scenario from a Roman point of view.¹⁹

¹⁷ Robert J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576–1612* (Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 34. See: Joachim Bahlcke, *Regionalismus und Staatsintegration im Widerstreit: Die Länder der Böhmisches Krone im Ersten Jahrhundert der Habsburgerherrschaft (1526–1619)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994). On the confessional melting pot, see: Arnold O. Meyer, 'Zur Geschichte der Gegenreformation in Schlesien', *ZVGSchlesien*, 38 (1904), 343–71; Ferdinand Hrejsa, *Česká Konfese, její Vznik, Podstata a Dejiny* (Prague: Nákl. České Akademie Císaře Františka Josefa pro Vědy, Slovesnost a Umění, 1912); Jaroslav Pánek, 'The Question of Tolerance in Bohemia and Moravia in the Age of the Reformation', trans. by Petr Charvat, in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*, ed. by Ole P. Grill and Bob Scribner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 231–48; *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice*, ed. by Zdeněk V. David and David R. Holeton, 3 vols (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2000); Joachim Bahlcke, *Katholische Kirche und Kultur in Böhmen* (Berlin: LIT, 2005); Francesco Gui and Denisa De Angelis, *Boemia e Moravia nel Cuore dell'Europa* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2009).

¹⁸ See: Ferdinand Seibt, *Die Böhmisches Länder zwischen Ost und West: Festschrift für Karl Bosl* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983); Jaroslav Pánek, 'Das Politische System des Böhmisches Staates im Ersten Jahrhundert der Habsburgischen Herrschaft (1526–1620)', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 97 (1989), 53–82; Jaroslav Pánek, *Poslední Rožmberkové. Velmoži České Renesance* (Prague: Panorama, 1989); Petr Vorel, *Ríšské Snemy a Jejich Vliv na Vývoj Zemí Koruny České v Letech 1526–1618* (Pardubice: Východočeské Muzeum, 2005); Petr Mařa, *Svět České Aristokracie (1500–1700)* (Prague: Lidové Noviny, 2005); Petr Mařa, 'Constructing and Crossing Confessional Boundaries: The High Nobility and the Reformation of Bohemia', in *Diversity and Dissent: Negotiating Religious Difference in Central Europe, 1500–1800*, ed. by Howard Louthan and others (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), pp. 10–29.

¹⁹ See: Karel Stloukal, *Papežská Politika a Císarsky Dvur Pražsky na Predelu XVI a XVII Veku* (Prague: Kom. Řivnáče, 1925); *Gli Archivi della Santa Sede e il Mondo*

For these reasons, the main goal of Caetani's negotiations was to achieve a pacific and universally acceptable solution regarding the election of the King of the Romans, thus maintaining the Bohemian and the Hungarian lands under Habsburg rule. Matters had reached an impasse, because of the well-known 'Brother Crisis', i.e. the conflict between the heirless Emperor Rudolf and his younger brother Matthias concerning the succession to the Imperial throne.²⁰ In addition, the main issues that Caetani had to manage during his mission in Prague were in accordance with the broader mission of the Catholic Reformation. Namely, he was required to put into effect the decrees of the Council of Trent (1545–1563); and to consolidate the restyling of the Catholic Church's image through the reformation of the religious orders and the clergy. Generally, in cooperation with the secular Catholic authorities, he had to preserve the Church's ecclesiastical jurisdiction and prevent any concessions concerning freedom of worship, as well as the bestowal of public offices upon Protestants.²¹ But the nuncios to the Imperial

Asburgico nella Prima Età Moderna, ed. by Matteo Sanfilippo and others (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2004); Alexander Koller, 'Die Böhmisches Länder im Spiegel der Berichte der Nuntien und Kurialen Instruktionen', in *Společnost v Zemích Habsburské Monarchie a Její Obraz v Pramenech (1526–1740)*, ed. by Václav Bůžek (České Budějovice: Jihočeská Univerzita v Českých Budějovicích (JUCB), 2006), pp. 175–91.

²⁰ See: Hans Sturmberger, 'Die Anfänge des Bruderzwistes in Habsburg', *Mitteilungen des Oberösterreichischen Landesarchivs*, 5 (1957), 143–88; Karl Vocelka, 'Matthias contra Rudolf: Zur Politischen Propaganda in der Zeit des Bruderzwistes', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 10 (1983), 341–51; Bernd Rill, *Kaiser Matthias: Bruderzwist und Glaubenskampf* (Graz: Styria, 1999); Tomáš Černušák, 'La Riconciliazione tra gli Asburgo – Parte del Programma della Diplomazia Papale nell'Anno 1608', *Bollettino dell'Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma* (Rome/Prague: Commissione per l'Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma, 2009), 339–43; Stefan Ehrenpreis, 'Rudolfs II. Ratgeber zur Zeit des Bruderzwistes', *Opera Historica*, 14 (2010), 91–101; Tomáš Černušák, 'The Papal Policy and Development of the 'Brothers Crisis' in Nuncio Antonio Caetani's Correspondence', in *Ein Bruderzwist im Hause Habsburg (1608–1611)*, ed. by Václav Bůžek (České Budějovice: JUCB, 2010), pp. 211–24.

²¹ See: Letter from Scipione Borghese to Antonio Caetani, *Instructio Antonio Caetano, archiepiscopo Capuano, nuntium apud curiam imperialem designato*, 23 May 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 4–19; Giordano, I, pp. 438–58. On these topics, see: *Das Papsttum, die Christenheit und die Staaten Europas, 1592–1605*, ed. by Georg Lutz and Stefano Andretta (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1994); Ronnie Po-Chia Hsia, *The World of Catholic Renewal 1540–1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); *Die*

lands had further facilities to fight unorthodoxy: for example, they had the power to remit the sin of heresy and allow the reading of prohibited books, and they could also allow marriages between people of different religions, upon the conversion of the non-Catholic partner.

The apostolic nuncios did not merely embody the pope; they were also political subjects within networks of interpersonal relationships, and they played a major part in building these networks, where they could fulfil their diplomatic roles, and also carry out their own personal affairs.²² To quote Hillard von Thiessen, ‘they were, and acted as, heads of their families, patrons of their clients and friends of their friends.’²³ Therefore, it was thanks to personal friendships based on the networks created by the diplomats at court, that allowed the construction and expansion of political relationships between states.²⁴ In the forthcoming pages, I will demonstrate how Caetani’s approach to the political

Aussenbeziehungen der Römischen Kurie unter Paul V Borghese (1605–1621), ed. by Alexander Koller (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2008); Irene Fosi, ‘Frontiere Inquisitoriali nel Sacro Romano Impero’, in *Papato e Politica Internazionale nella Prima Età Moderna*, ed. by Maria A. Visceglia (Rome: Viella, 2013), pp. 257–74; *Il Papato e le Chiese Locali*, ed. by Péter Tusor and Matteo Sanfilippo (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2014), pp. 33–54; Andrew Drenas, ‘The Standard-Bearer of the Roman Church: Lorenzo da Brindisi (1559–1619) and Capuchin Missions in the Holy Roman Empire’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2014).

²² Hillard von Thiessen, ‘Switching Roles in Negotiation: Levels of Diplomatic Communication Between Pope Paul V Borghese (1605–1621) and the Ambassadors of Philip III’, in *Paroles de Négociateur: L’Entretien dans la Pratique Diplomatique de la Fin du Moyen Âge à la Fin du XIXe Siècle*, ed. by Stefano Andretta and others (Rome: Publications de l’École Française de Rome, 2010), pp. 151–72 (pp. 156–57).

²³ Thiessen, ‘Switching Roles in Negotiation’, pp. 151–72 (p. 153).

²⁴ See: Daniela Frigo, *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); ‘La Corte in Europa: Fedeltà, Favori, Pratiche di Governo’, ed. by Marzio A. Romani, special issue of *Cheiron*, 1 (1983); *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, 1450–1650*, ed. by Ronald G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); Christian Wieland, *Fürsten, Freunde, Diplomaten: Die Römisch-Florentinischen Beziehungen unter Paul V. 1605–1621* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004); Hillard von Thiessen and Christian Windler, ‘Nähe in der Ferne: Personale Verflechtung in den Aussenbeziehungen der Frühen Neuzeit’, *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 36 (2005), 233–65.

and religious climate at the Imperial court. I will also show how his political strategy generally failed in establishing fruitful relations with the ministers and the Emperor.

‘THROUGHOUT GERMANY
THERE STANDS A BAD STORM’²⁵

At Spilimbergo, on 28 May 1607,²⁶ the archbishop of Capua Antonio Caetani restored his strength before resuming his journey towards the Imperial court. Here, in the calmness of the valley at the foot of the Carnic Alps, his rest was undisturbed by the clash of Turkish blades, the heresy of Protestants’ sermons, and gossips and scandalmongers. Only in Prague – where he would arrive two weeks later²⁷ – would he immediately and clearly see the challenges that the tortuous political maze of the Imperial court would present.

Even before Caetani had had time to acclimatize to life in Prague, he became aware of the scale of the problems ahead. Among the jousts, banquets, heavy drinking, hunts and fireworks which accompanied Christian II, Elector of Saxony’s²⁸ official visit to the Emperor, the Lutheran theologian Polykarp Leyser²⁹ delivered a public sermon encouraging ‘[...] the audience to pray to God for the ruin of the Turks and of His Holiness [...]’.³⁰ Upon learning of this, the Nuncio was horrified, and immediately asked the Emperor to intervene, so that ‘[...] such an abomination will never be repeated [...]’.³¹ But despite

²⁵ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 22 September 1608: ASV, Fondo Borghese (FB), II, 148, fol. 49: ‘Per tutta la Germania si apparecchia un brutto temporale.’

²⁶ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Pietro Caetani, 28 May 1607: AC, Misc., 52951, [n. fol.]

²⁷ Caetani arrived in Prague on 12 June 1607. See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Pietro Caetani, 25 June 1607: AC, Misc., 50052, [n. fol.]

²⁸ Christa Schille, ‘Christian II.’, *Neue Deutsche Biographie (NDB)*, 3 (1957), 231.

²⁹ Theodor Mahlmann, ‘Leyser, Polykarp von’, *NDB*, 14 (1985), 436–37.

³⁰ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 9 July 1607 in Linhartova, I, p. 52: ‘[...] gl’auditori che preghino Dio per la depressione del Turco e di Sua Santità [...]’.

³¹ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 16 July 1607 in *ibid.*, I, p. 61: ‘[...] si reiterasse una abominazione simile [...]’.

the Imperial intercession, Leyser refused to desist from his anti-papal polemic. On the contrary, three days after his first sermon, the Lutheran clergyman reappeared, preaching to an even bigger audience.

Preserving the dignity of the Apostolic See was no simple task.³² From the first, Caetani understood that he would need to ‘[...] be truthful in speaking and advance his reasons little by little and in opportune circumstances, so as not to provoke too much hatred’³³ towards the Roman Curia. ‘I will have to be well-armed [...]’, he explained, and talk cautiously, as if he was ‘on a sword’s edge’³⁴ to ensure that his intentions could be carried out with the support of Rudolf II’s ministers. Caetani considered these latter to be difficult obstacles in his quest to have the Emperor’s ear, instead of being his conduits. He believed that this was firstly because of their personal interests, and secondly because of the difficulty in gaining and maintaining the Emperor’s confidence: they were afraid of Rudolf’s volatile personality. Therefore, the Nuncio could lose his path³⁵ at any moment, thus causing the negotiations to come to a standstill. However, the courtiers had a crucial role. It was necessary for the nuncio to forge confidential relationships with the members of the Privy Council,³⁶ and this was because Rudolf often preferred to make decisions autonomously. In doing so, the Emperor would speak directly

³² Jochen Kohler, ‘Der Breittag der Prager Nuntiatur zur Festigung des Katholizismus in Ostmitteleuropa’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 93 (1973), 336–46; Tomáš Černušák, ‘The Papal Policy in the Bohemian Lands during Antonius Caetani’s Nunciature (1607–1609)’, *Folia Historica Bohemica*, 25, no. 1 (2010), 7–22; Tomáš Černušák, ‘The Prague Nunciature and the Beginnings of the German Catholic League’, *The Czech Historical Review*, 1 (2010), 114–26; Tomáš Černušák, ‘The Papal Diplomats’ Tactics of Achieving Their Political Aims in Bohemia in 1608–1609’, *Časopis Matice Moravské*, 130 (2011), 29–40; Perlati, ‘Antonio Caetani’, pp. 1–120.

³³ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 2 July 1607 in Linhartova, I, p. 37: ‘[...] parlare con fondamento et instillare questa verità a poco a poco et in congiunture che generi minor odio.’

³⁴ Ibid., I, p. 39: ‘Mi bisognerà stare molto armato [...] sopra un fil di spada.’

³⁵ Ibid., I, p. 39.

³⁶ See: Jaroslava Hausenblasová, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II.: Eine Edition der Hofstaatsverzeichnisse 1576–1612*, (Prague: Artefactum, 2002), p. 78. See also: Henry F. Schwarz and John I. Coddington, *The Imperial Privy Council in the Seventeenth Century: With a Supplement: The Social Structure of the Imperial Privy Council, 1600–1674* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943).

with his closest councillors and confidants – usually ‘[...] those who were independent from foreign influences [...]’³⁷ and the complications that the diplomatic representatives of these forces – such as the papal nuncio – brought in their train. Rudolf had a notorious reputation as an introverted and solitary individual with unpredictable mood swings. Caetani often described him as being a melancholic, suspicious person with an afflicted nature,³⁸ as well as a malevolent and vengeful lover,³⁹ a sovereign who was ‘[...] inaccessible, and did not want to be troubled or disturbed.’⁴⁰

Therefore, the nuncio’s moves in the diplomatic game of chess at the court of Prague were informed by his awareness that he would need to cultivate the most important Imperial ministers and advisers. Caetani proved himself an astute observer, and collected swathes of information on the personalities of the ministers, their personal, political and religious interests, as well as their relationship with the Emperor (those who

³⁷ Evans, *Rudolf II and His World*, p. 87.

³⁸ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 7 January 1608 in Linhartova, II, p. 7.

³⁹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 2 July 1607 in *ibid.*, I, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 4 February 1608 in *ibid.*, I, p. 89: ‘[...] inaccessible, né vuole fastidii.’ See: Karel Stloukal, ‘Portrét Rudolfa II z Roku 1600’, *Od Právěku k Dnešku: Sborník Prací z Dejin Ceskoslovenských*, 2 (1930), 1–14; Joseph Matoušek, ‘K Problému Osobnosti Rudolfa II Poznámky o Pramenech, Literatuře a Metodě’, in *K Dějinám Ceskoslovenským v Období Humanismu: Sborník Prací Věnovaných Dru Janu Bedřichu Novákovi k 60. Narozeninám*, ed. by Bedřich Jenšovský and Bedřich Mendl (Prague: Československá Archivní Společnost, 1932), pp. 343–62; Philippe Erlanger, *L’Empereur Insolite: Rodolphe II de Habsbourg, 1552–1612* (Paris: Michel, 1971); Karl Vocelka, *Die Politische Propaganda Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1576–1612)* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981); Josef Janáček, *Rudolf II a Jeho Doba* (Prague: Svoboda, 1987); Jaroslav Pánek, ‘K Povaze Vlády Rudolfa II v Českém Království’, *Folia Historica Bohemica*, 18 (1997), 71–98; Tomáš Černušák, ‘Main Stereotypes in the Correspondence of the Papal Nuncio Caetani from the Years 1608–1609 and Their Transformation’, *Studia Historica Brunensia*, 58, no. 1 (2011), 11–23; Václav Bůžek and Pavel Marek, ‘Nemoci, smrt a pohřby Rudolfa II.’, *Český Časopis Historický*, 111, no. 1 (2013), 1–30 (pp. 1, 29); Tomáš Černušák, ‘Un Pazzo sul Trono o un Sovrano con una Visione? Personalità e Politica dell’Imperatore Rodolfo II alla Luce delle Relazioni dei Nunzi Apostolici degli Anni 1608–1609’, *Bollettino dell’Istituto Storico Ceco di Roma*, 9 (2014), 61–74.

benefited from his confidence, as well as those who, conversely, had fallen from grace and no longer had access to the Imperial chambers).⁴¹ According to the nuncio, private aims and personal resentments, political and confessional divisions, or dissimulation, outright hostility and lack of personality were the distinctive traits that characterised the bureaucratic sloth and the ineptitude of the Imperial court.⁴² He was a harsh critic, claiming that despite his best efforts, at the court of Prague '[...] what is settled on one day, the next day is already ruined.'⁴³ In addition, Caetani defined the Privy Council as worthless,⁴⁴ emphasising the mediocre quality of its representatives: the councillors were '[...] weak and hesitant, each of them embroiled in a multitude of interests',⁴⁵ or, to borrow the metaphor of the Florentine ambassador Giovan Francesco Guidi, the ministers were '[...] more constrained than chicks in straw.'⁴⁶

The difficulties governing interaction with the courtiers made the Emperor even more inaccessible to the nuncio. According to a letter

⁴¹ See: *Relazione finale di Antonio Caetani nunzio all'Imperatore*, December 1610 in Giordano, II, pp. 765–70.

⁴² About the Imperial court see: Hausenblasová, *Der Hof Kaiser Rudolfs II.*, pp. 115–16. See also: Josef Polišíenský, 'Faction, Patronage and the Arts at the Court of Rudolph II', in *Prag um 1600: Kunst und Kultur am Hofe Rudolfs II.*, ed. by Jürgen Schultze (Freren: Luca, 1988), pp. 249–53; Stefan Ehrenpreis, 'Der Reichshofrat im System der Hofbehörden Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1576–1612): Organisation, Arbeitsabläufe, Entscheidungsprozesse', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 45 (1997), 187–205; Heinz Noflatscher, 'Regiment aus der Kammer? Einflussreiche Kleingruppen am Hof Rudolfs II', in *Der Fall des Günstlings: Hofparteien in Europa vom XIII bis zum XVII Jahrhundert*, ed. by Jan Hirschbiegel and Werner Paravicini (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2004), pp. 209–34; Stefan Ehrenpreis, *Kaiserliche Gerichtsbarkeit und Konfessionskonflikt: Der Reichshofrat unter Rudolf II. 1576–1616* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006). See also: Jesef A. Riegger, 'Aula Rudolphi II. Kaiserlicher Hoff Statt.', *Archiv der Geschichte und Statistik Inbes*, 2 (1793), 193–262; Roderigo Alidosi, *Relazione di Germania e della Corte di Rodolfo II Imperatore negli Anni 1605–1607*, ed. by Giuseppe Campori (Modena: Cappelli, 1872).

⁴³ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 14 January 1608 in Linhartova, II, p. 29: '[...] quel che s'acconcia un dì, l'altro si sconcia.'

⁴⁴ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 4 February 1608 in Linhartova, I, p. 89.

⁴⁵ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 14 January 1608 in *ibid.*, I, p. 24: '[...] deboli et inresoluti, dei quali ciascheduno è involto in mille interessi.'

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II, p. 109: '[...] più impastoiati che pulcini nella stoppa.'

dated 11 February 1608, Caetani was doing everything in his power to avoid any kind of interference with the most delicate issues, so as not to provoke suspicions concerning papal intrusions in Imperial affairs. He was only too conscious that he should not cross the invisible red line that could have caused the collapse of all negotiations, and he prudently⁴⁷ elected to bide his time.

However, the difficulties of this course of action were evident when the ministers repeatedly tried to involve Caetani in the making of decisions, or invited him to make suggestions – for instance, in order for the Imperial government to gain financial support from the Holy See.⁴⁸ His hesitations and negative answers were justified by his taking into account the impossibility of material papal support. Caetani strongly wished to avoid any commitment that might have resulted in his back against the wall, forcing him to intervene actively and openly in Imperial affairs. He attempted to overcome the courtiers' apprehension and the suspicion of the Emperor by clearly stating his reasons, without 'silence or dissimulation',⁴⁹ indeed, precisely as he claimed at the end of his nunciature. However, the consequences of this kind of behaviour for his relationships with the courtiers were disastrous, causing the Nuncio's role to be undermined. As a result, he failed to establish close relations with the councillors, even in affairs concerning papal interests;⁵⁰ for instance, he was not notified when Cardinal Franz Seraph von Dietrichstein was summoned to the court.⁵¹ In and of itself, Caetani judged the omission as being trivial, but at the

⁴⁷ On the political prudence as a distinctive feature of the diplomats, see: Daniela Frigo, 'Prudenza Politica e Conoscenza del Mondo: Un Secolo di Riflessione sulla Figura dell'Ambasciatore (1541–1643)', in *De l'Ambassadeur: Les Écrits Relatifs à l'Ambassadeur et à l'Art de Négocier du Moyen Âge au Début du XIXe Siècle*, ed. by Stefano Andretta, Stéphane Péquignot and Jean-Claude Waquet (Rome: Publications de l'École Française de Rome, 2015), pp. 227–69.

⁴⁸ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 11 January 1608 in Linhartova, II, pp. 84–90.

⁴⁹ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 10 January 1611: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6910, fol 20: '[...] di silentio, né di dissimulazione.'

⁵⁰ Černušák, 'Un Pazzo sul Trono', 61–74 (p. 63).

⁵¹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 11 February 1608 in Linhartova, II, p. 94.

same time, he regretted the ministers' attempt to communicate with the Roman Curia without his involvement, thus diminishing his office and stature.

Moreover, Rudolf II himself manifested a distinct distrust towards Nuncio Caetani. As stated above, this suspicious attitude originated in his determination to avoid papal interference in Imperial affairs. The Emperor and the Pope differed on a number of significant issues. They disputed the status of imperial and papal fiefs on the Italian peninsula; Paul V refused to provide financial assistance to continue the war with the Ottomans; but perhaps most importantly, the Emperor feared potential papal support for the election of his brother Matthias as the King of the Romans. Rudolf's paranoid aversion to Rome was notorious, not least because of his almost expelling the friars of the Capuchin order from the Imperial lands, because of a nightmare he had had in which they had attempted to kill him.⁵² More prosaically, he disliked the papal emissaries to his court, an attitude that was clearly revealed when he denied Caetani the right to participate in person at the Diet of Regensburg in 1608. The nuncio was obliged to send in his stead Felice Milensio, vicar of the Augustinians,⁵³ as an observer. As regards Rudolf's fears concerning his brother Archduke Matthias' succession, the Emperor was warned that Caetani had received official documents from the Curia relating to the question of the succession to the Imperial throne, for communication to the German bishops.⁵⁴

The nuncio's difficulties were further exacerbated when he tried to contest and prevent the concession of the title of 'Illustrious' to Alof de Wignacourt, Grand Master of the Knights Hospitallers. Caetani's predecessor had already had to navigate this complicated matter, since it concerned questions of honour and precedence.⁵⁵ According to the

⁵² See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 2 July 1607 in *ibid.*, II, p. 39. See: Evans, *Rudolf II and His World*, pp. 127, 156.

⁵³ Linhartova, II, p. 8. See: Anton Pieper, 'Der Augustiner Felice Milensio als Päpstlicher Berichterstatter am Regensburg Reichstag 1608', *Römische Quartalschrift*, 5 (1891), 55–61, 151–58; Rotraud Becker, 'Milensio, Felice', *DBI*, 74 (2010), 471–75.

⁵⁴ See: Černušák, 'Un Pazzo sul Trono', 61–74 (pp. 68–69).

⁵⁵ See: Letter from Lanfranco Margotti to Antonio Caetani, 30 June 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 33–34.

latter, the decision of the Emperor to grant such a significant honour to the Grand Master – whose power derived from the Holy See – would have entailed the Pope having to consider the leader of the Hospitallers as having equal status to the cardinals. As a consequence, an intolerable discrepancy within the Church hierarchy would have been created, and would have infringed upon the Sacred College's prerogatives and responsibilities. Accordingly, the Cardinal-Nephew, Scipione Borghese,⁵⁶ ordered Caetani to oppose unreservedly the concession of the title of 'Illustrious' to the Grand Master. If Rudolf could not – or would not – revoke the award, it was therefore to be accorded to the cardinals as well as to the Grand Master. The nuncio complained vociferously about the Imperial ministers' behaviour, revealing his concerns about the general apathy that impeded the conduct of diplomatic business at the court of Prague:

The negotiations are at the hilt and I have no more strength to support them, because no one is willing to take up the challenge of dealing with His Majesty. [...] I could not do anything but they [*the ministers*, Ed.] kept staring at each other and shrugging their shoulders [...]. Therefore, whatever the reason, they tried to disabuse me of every hope of success [...].⁵⁷

According to Caetani, the Vice Chancellor and privy councillor Leopold von Stralendorf⁵⁸ could no longer be considered a suitable intermediary with the Emperor, because the nuncio suspected that he was in favour of the Grand Master. Caetani asserted that Stralendorf had received gifts in exchange for his support of Wignacourt. Moreover, the Dutch jurist Johann Anton Barwitz (aka *Barvitius*), secretary of

⁵⁶ Valerio Castronovo, 'Borghese Caffarelli, Scipione', *DBI*, 12 (1971), 620–24; Volker Reinhardt, *Kardinal Scipione Borghese (1605–1633): Vermögen, Finanzen und Sozialer Aufstieg eines Papstnepoten* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1984).

⁵⁷ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 27 August 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 139–40: 'Il negotio cammina verso l'estremo et io non ho più forza di sostenerlo per esser preclusa la strada di chi voglia pigliar l'impresa di trattare seriamente con Sua Maestà. [...] non ho potuto impetrare altro se non un guardarsi l'un l'altro, et un stringersi in su le spalle [...]. Insomma o sia una, o una altra causa, hanno procurato sradicarmi affatto dall'animo ogni speranza del buon successo [...]'.
⁵⁸ Felix Stieve, 'Leopold Stralendorf, Freiherr von (Seit 1607)', *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie (ADB)*, 36 (1893), 493–95.

the Imperial council and a privy councillor,⁵⁹ refused to co-operate with Caetani, as did the privy councillor Andreas Hannewaldt von Eckersdorf.⁶⁰ This latter declined to bear one of the nuncio's letters to the Emperor, because he was only too aware that its contents would not have been well-received. Moreover, Hannewaldt strongly condemned the nuncio's persistence, stressing the Pope's insensitivity towards the Emperor, and emphasizing once again the absence of any sort of papal financial aid for the war against the Ottomans. Finally, Hannewaldt reproached Caetani for the attempt he had made to gain Stralendorf's confidence, instead of his own.⁶¹

That said, in conversations with the nuncio many councillors had professed to understand the Pope's reasons for opposing the concession of the title to the Grand Master. But whether or not they genuinely sympathised with the papal position, none of them had the slightest intention of openly sustaining it before the Emperor:⁶²

I did not fail to diligently inform all the councillors, and I managed to bring over to my side Attems,⁶³ Mollart⁶⁴ and Barvitiu, who are of the opinion that it would be best to postpone the privilege for the Grand Master. On the contrary, Stralendorf and Hannewaldt are opposed to this course, and they are the ones who have the ear of His Majesty on a daily basis, who is angry because His Holiness wants to impose his reasons on him.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Arno Duch, 'Barvitiu, Johann Anton', *NDB*, 1 (1953), 615; Evans, *Rudolf II and His World*, pp. 97–98.

⁶⁰ Franziska Landfried, 'Hannewaldt von Eckersdorf, Andreas', *NDB*, 7 (1966), 621.

⁶¹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 13 August 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 116–17.

⁶² See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 24 September 1607 in *ibid.*, I, p. 193.

⁶³ Hermann von Attems, privy councillor. See: Schwarz and Coddington, *The Imperial Privy Council*, pp. 199–200.

⁶⁴ Ernst von Mollart, *Obersthofmarschall*. See: Felix Stieve, 'Mollart, Ernst Freiherr von', *ADB*, 22 (1885), 117–18.

⁶⁵ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 1 October 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 208–09: 'Io non ho mancato di nuovo informare tutti i consiglieri diligentemente et ho tirato dalla mia parte l'Atmis, il Molart et il Barvitiu, che tutti sono stati di parere che almeno si sopraseda il privilegio del Gran maestro [...]. A questo ostano lo Stralendorf et l'Anibald, che sono i due che hanno quotidianamente

The twin problem was always the same: the firm resolve of Rudolf II and the stubbornness and apathy of the courtiers. Therefore, there was nothing to do but to keep the negotiations alive, but '[...] without any demonstration of anxiety, which would serve as a means [for the courtiers, Ed.] to ask for something in return.'⁶⁶

Despite these conflicts, and according to the recent research of Tomáš Černušák – who is publishing the remaining volumes of the correspondence of the nunciature⁶⁷ – ‘we cannot claim that there was no form of communication between the Emperor and the papacy as regards his representative.’⁶⁸ Indeed, some kind of collaboration between the papal emissary and the sovereign did exist, in certain circumstances. For instance, they managed to reach agreement on the election of Ferenc Forgách (Bishop of Nitria)⁶⁹ as archbishop of Strigonia (Esztergom), and then on his elevation to the cardinalate. The instability within and outwith the borders of the Empire was exacerbated by the Ottomans’ presence in the Balkans, as well as by the Magyar aristocracy’s demands for political autonomy and freedom of worship.⁷⁰ This situation neces-

gl’orecchi di Sua Maestà [...], la quale ha a male che Sua Santità voglia in questo particolare mettergli legge [...].’

⁶⁶ Letter from Scipione Borghese to Antonio Caetani, 8 March 1608 in *ibid.*, I, p. 157: ‘[...] non mostrì tanta ansietà, che habbia a servir per mezzo di dimandar altro in ricompensa.’

⁶⁷ *Epistulae et Acta Antonii Caetani 1607–1611: Pars IV. September 1608–Junius 1609. Epistulae et Acta Nuntiorum Apostolicorum apud Imperatorem 1592–1628*, ed. by Tomáš Černušák (Prague: Academia, 2013).

⁶⁸ Černušák, ‘Un Pazzo sul Trono’, 61–74 (pp. 69–70): ‘Non si può tuttavia affermare che da parte dell’imperatore non esistesse nei confronti del papato, rispett. del suo rappresentante [...], una certa forma di comunicazione.’

⁶⁹ See: Kálmán Ackermann, *Cardinal and Archbishop of Esztergom, Ferenc Forgách: Biographical Studies to the Age of Counter-Reformation* (Budapest: Heiler és Kószol Kö- és Könyvnyomdai Műintézet, 1918).

⁷⁰ See: Robert J. W. Evans, ‘Bohemia, the Emperor and the Porte, 1550–1600’, *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 3 (1970), 85–106; Walter Leitsch, ‘Rudolph II und Sudosteuropa, 1593–1606’, *East European Quarterly*, 6 (1974), 301–20; Jan P. Niederkorn, *Die Europäischen Mächte und der ‘Lange Türkenkrieg’ Kaiser Rudolfs II. (1593–1606)* (Vienna: VÖAW, 1993); Géza Pálffy, *The Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century*, trans. by Thomas J. and Helen D. DeKornfeld (New York: Hungarian Studies and Publications, 2009); Gábor Ágoston, ‘La Frontière Militaire Ottomane en Hongrie’, *Histoire, Économie et Société*, 35, no. 3 (2015), 36–53.

sitated the choice of an ecclesiastical representative who would be able to confront local political forces, as well as protecting Catholics and stimulating pastoral activity in the Transdanubian regions.⁷¹ Caetani played a crucial part in ensuring that Forgách became an archbishop and subsequently a cardinal within a few months, thereby defeating other candidates who were recommended by members of the court, as well as external contenders.

Among these candidates was Cesare Speciano, Bishop of Cremona,⁷² who was supported by Barwitz and Stralendorf, as well as by the Spanish Ambassador Guillen de San Clemente and the Imperial *kammerdiener* Philipp Lang.⁷³ However, the Imperial privy councillor Karl von Liechtenstein confided to Caetani that Rudolf's preferred choice for the archdiocese of Strigonia was⁷⁴ the former Nuncio Ferrero. This revelation embarrassed Caetani,⁷⁵ since he no longer trusted his

⁷¹ See: Mihály Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn 1521–1978: Ungarns Reformationskirchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 2 vols (Vienna: Böhlau, 1977); Joachim Bahlcke, 'Calvinism and Estate Liberation Movements in Bohemia and Hungary (1570–1620)', in *The Reformation in Eastern and Central Europe*, ed. by Karin Maag (London: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 72–92; *Frontiers of Faith: Religious Exchange and the Constitution of Religious Identities, 1400–1750*, ed. by Eszter Andor and István G. Tóth (Budapest: Central European University, 2001); István G. Tóth, 'Old and New Faith in Hungary, Turkish Hungary, and Transylvania', in *A Companion to the Reformation World*, ed. by Ronnie Po-chia Hsia (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 205–20; *A Divided Hungary in Europe: Exchanges, Networks and Representations, 1541–1699*, ed. by Gábor Almási and others, 3 vols (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015).

⁷² Natale Mosconi, *La Nunziatura di Praga di Cesare Speciano*, 4 vols (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1966); Alena Pazderová, 'La Boemia Multiconfessionale e la Nunziatura di Cesare Speciano a Praga', in *Kaiser Hof, Papst Hof 16.–18. Jahrhundert*, ed. by Alexander Koller and others (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2006), pp. 25–32.

⁷³ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 17 June 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 20–28. See also: Friedrich von Hurter, *Philipp Lang Kammerdiener Kaiser Rudolphs II: Eine Criminal-Geschichte aus dem Angang des Siebzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Schaffhausen: Hurter, 1851); Felix Stieve, 'Lang, Philipp', *ADB*, 17 (1883), 617–18.

⁷⁴ Karel Sloukal, 'Karel z Lichtenštejna a Jeho Účast ve Vládě Rudolfa II (1569–1607)', *Český Časopis Historický*, 18 (1912), 21–37; Herbert Haupt, 'Liechtenstein, Karl I. Fürst von und zu', *NDB*, 14 (1985), 515–17.

⁷⁵ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 17 June 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 20–28.

predecessor. Furthermore, Mark Sittich von Hohenems (Altemps)⁷⁶ enjoyed considerable support at the Imperial court. Both Wolf Dietrich von Raitenau (archbishop of Salzburg), and the Imperial councillor Paul Sixt von Trautson recommended von Hohenems as a suitable archbishop.⁷⁷ Caetani, for his part, tentatively expounded the virtues of Sigismund Báthory, Prince of Transylvania – who was a close friend and confidant of his⁷⁸ – but Báthory's candidature was not appreciated by the Emperor, because the latter feared that Báthory was aiming at the Crown of Hungary.⁷⁹ Therefore, Caetani suggested the name of Ferenc Forgách, prominent member of the Hungarian nobility, and judged to be a good Catholic and devoted prelate.⁸⁰ Thanks to the nuncio's mediation, and with Paul V's agreement, Forgách was duly elected as archbishop of Strigonia and Primate of Hungary.⁸¹ The dignity also conferred upon him the role of Chancellor and Lieutenant of Hungary (conceded by the Emperor), which entailed significant secular power. Consequently, the Magyar aristocracy immediately protested the granting of these titles to Forgách, and claimed that it contravened the rights and privileges granted to the Hungarians by the Treaty of Vienna in 1606.⁸²

Meanwhile, Speciano's death had left only four names in the running for a cardinal's *biretta*. In addition to Ferrero and Forgách, there were two new candidates for the Imperial nomination: Giovanni della Torre

⁷⁶ Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg from 1612 to 1619.

⁷⁷ Franz von Krones, 'Trautson, Paul Sixt Freiherr', *ADB*, 38 (1894), 522–24.

⁷⁸ Cristoforo Caetani, *Vita del Sig. Card. Antonio Caetani*, 1624: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6030, fol. 34^v.

⁷⁹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 17 June 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 20–28.

⁸⁰ See: Letter from Scipione Borghese to Antonio Caetani, 28 July 1607 in *ibid.*, I, pp. 83–87.

⁸¹ Giordano, I, pp. 443–44. See also: Letter from Rudolf II to Scipione Borghese, 10 July 1607 in Linhartova, I, pp. 55–56.

⁸² Graeme Muddock, *Calvinism on the Frontier 1600–1660: International Calvinism and the Reformed Church in Hungary and Transylvania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 29–33; 'Einigkeit und Frieden Sollen auf Seiten Jeder Partei Sein': *Die Friedensschlüsse von Wien (23.06.1606) und Zsitvatorok (15.11.1606)*, ed. by János Barta and others (Debrecen: KLT, 2007).

(Bishop of Veglia)⁸³ and Girolamo Portia (Bishop of Adria).⁸⁴ Caetani praised to Rudolf Forgách's capacities in the fight against heresy, as well as his political ability. As a result, Rudolf agreed to support the new archbishop, although the Emperor was concerned that Forgách's election might lead him to yearn for greater glories.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, with the Emperor's approval,⁸⁶ Forgách was appointed cardinal during the Consistory of 10 December 1607. It is undeniable that the support Caetani gave to the prelate was both a wise move and a personal success. But Forgách's rise to pre-eminence was not without its consequences. In the Transdanubian region, the Hungarian rebels vehemently continued their protests against Imperial authority.⁸⁷ One of the causes that had re-ignited the this conflagration was the Cardinal's rapid accumulation of ecclesiastical and secular powers.⁸⁸

In Prague, Caetani's political strategy within the maze of the court was characterised by a prudent and cautious attitude. The nuncio was convinced that his best policy was to wait for events to take their course⁸⁹ while avoiding having the conduct of his affairs called into question or scrutinised by the Imperial court. But as a matter of fact, this course of action proved ineffective. Clear evidence of this failure is the political turmoil that reigned in Bohemia during the months prior to Rudolf II's concession of the *Letter of Majesty* in 1609.⁹⁰ This chaos is obvious in the

⁸³ Today Krk. See: Stefano Andretta, 'Della Torre, Giovanni', *DBI*, 37 (1989), 567–70.

⁸⁴ *Nuntiaturen des Giovanni Delfino und des Bartolomeo Portia (1577–1578)*, ed. by Alexander Koller (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003).

⁸⁵ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 6 September 1607 in Linhartova, I, p. 161.

⁸⁶ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 21 January 1608 in *ibid.*, II, p. 42.

⁸⁷ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 14 January 1608 in *ibid.*, II, pp. 24–27.

⁸⁸ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 18 February 1608 in *ibid.*, II, pp. 108–09.

⁸⁹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 10 March 1608 in *ibid.*, II, p. 163.

⁹⁰ See: Anton Gindely, *Geschichte der Ertheilung des Böhmisches Majestätsbriefes von 1609* (Prague: Carl Bellman, 1868); Tomáš Černušák, 'Nuncio Caetani and His Defence of Catholic Interests in the Time Before the Letter of Majesty of

nuncio's correspondence. Throughout, Caetani appeared surprised and, above all, discouraged, as he was a passive witness of such a tragic and worrying event for Catholicism in the Empire. The freedom of worship granted to the Bohemians demonstrated that the nuncio could not force Paul V's wishes upon the Emperor and his ministers, as he simply did not have enough political weight, or a strong enough faction, at the Imperial court to advance the Pope's position on the *Letter of Majesty*.

Since the summer of 1608, Caetani had been trying to persuade the Emperor to hold out against the demands of the Bohemian nobility, who were to convene in Prague to attend the Diet of the Kingdom, and were threatening to travel to the capital in arms. The nuncio understood that these religious demands masked political purposes, not least the nobles' desire for more power in decision-making, and financial contributions for the defence of the Empire.⁹¹ Caetani entrusted his requests to the new Spanish Ambassador Baltasar de Zúñiga⁹², since the Imperial chambers were off-limits to Caetani himself. Zúñiga was Caetani's most important interlocutor with Rudolf, and was a man with whom the nuncio would enjoy a close relationship in subsequent years, during his nunciature in Madrid.⁹³ The last attempt began at sunrise one day in mid-June 1609, when Caetani, the Archduke Leopold⁹⁴ and the Spanish ambassador secretly gathered in the convent of the Capuchin friars to plot a course of action. They decided that the Archduke would write a persuasive letter to the Emperor, while Caetani and Zúñiga would try to speak directly to the ministers in order to break the impasse.⁹⁵

Rudolf II (1608–1609)', *Časopis Matice Moravské*, 128, no. 1 (2009), 35–46; Jaroslava Hausenblasová and others, *Religion und Politik im Frühneuzeitlichen Böhmen: Der Majestätsbrief Kaiser Rudolfs II von 1609* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2014).

⁹¹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 11 May 1609: ASV, FB, II, 169, fol. 19.

⁹² Rubén G. Cuerva, *Baltasar de Zúñiga: Una Encrucijada de la Monarquía Hispana (1561–1622)* (Madrid: Polifemo, 2012).

⁹³ See: Letters from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 25 January 1613 and 15 March 1613: ASV, FB, II, 264, fols. 22^v, 60^v.

⁹⁴ Franz von Krones, 'Leopold V. Ferdinand', *ADB*, 18 (1883), 398–402. He was a cousin of Rudolf II. Son of Charles II, Archduke of Austria (1540–1590).

⁹⁵ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 22 June 1609: ASV, FB, II, 169, fol. 125^v.

Their implorations, however, went unheeded. In his *relazione*, Caetani could do no more than simply condemn the lack of secular forces with the power to defend the Imperial authority and the Catholic religion.⁹⁶ In the first place, he emphasised that Rudolf II – who was nicknamed the ‘stucco King’,⁹⁷ i.e. no one could persuade him – lacked the energy required for the burdens of government.⁹⁸ Secondly, he claimed that the Catholics appeared aboullic and hopeless, even the most fervent among them; and thirdly, in his dispatches, he once again stressed the ministers’ usual hesitance. According to the nuncio, Hannewaldt and Stralendorf suggested acquiescing to the rebels’ demands in order to stop their progress; on the other hand, Attems and Hegenmüller⁹⁹ were favourably disposed toward the use of armed force; Barwitz, meanwhile, was indecisive.¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Caetani was already picturing in his mind the worst possible fate for the Holy Roman Empire, torturing himself with fears of what might happen to the bishops and the Catholic princes should the Imperial vassals obtain freedom of worship in a kingdom under direct Habsburg rule.¹⁰¹ He freely admitted that he could do nothing to prevent the storm from coming; he could only keep the Catholic churches of Bohemia open, say Masses as required, and organize processions. When the Silesians joined the Bohemian rebels in 1609, the only remedy against such a ‘cursed League of the Devil’¹⁰² was to wait for the help of God:

⁹⁶ *Relazione finale di Antonio Caetani nunzio all’Imperatore*, December 1610 in Giordano, II, pp. 765–70.

⁹⁷ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 20 April 1609: ASV, FB, II, 160, fol. 245^v: ‘Re di stucco’.

⁹⁸ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 28 July 1608 in Linhartova, III, p. 144.

⁹⁹ Johann Ruprecht von Hegenmüller, privy councillor. See: Schwarz and Coddington, *The Imperial Privy Council*, pp. 246–47.

¹⁰⁰ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 11 May 1609: ASV, FB, II, 169, fol. 19^r.

¹⁰¹ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 2 February 1609: ASV, FB, II, 160, fol. 73.

¹⁰² Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 1 June 1609: ASV, FB, II, 169, fol. 78^r: ‘maledetta Lega del Demonio’.

[...] in so many storms and waves of these peoples, where the use of the sail and the oars of political advice would not be useful, the best path is to straighten the wheel, and do what is convenient; as to the rest, we must be carried away by the storm, because in no other way can the sailors lead themselves to a safe harbour in hopeless and desperate situations. Therefore, in this case, where we are defending the cause of God, we must not doubt his divine help.¹⁰³

This was a stark warning, borne out of fear and desperation. However, in the Empire at large, the papal nuncio was not alone in his fears for the future of Catholicism. During the following year, Caetani would particularly dedicate his time to negotiations for the creation of a Catholic League, whose main aim it was to counteract the nascent Evangelical Union in the German lands. It also seems that he asked to be replaced, as he claimed to be ill and thus physically unable to withstand the freezing conditions of a Bohemian winter.¹⁰⁴ But at the same time, he was aware that he was essentially being ignored at court for too long, and that he had already lost any possible margin for manoeuvre. The nuncio vehemently denounced the slanderers who had tried to damage his reputation with the objective of destroying his credibility – just as the Archduke Leopold had done, in accusing Caetani of being an enemy of the House of Austria and a friend of the French.¹⁰⁵

After some hesitation, the Pope decided to appoint a new nuncio in September 1610,¹⁰⁶ and Caetani finally conceded defeat, poetically giving vent to all his sorrow:

¹⁰³ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 9 March 1609: ASV, FB, II, 160, fol. 149: '[...] in tante procelle et ondeggiamento di questi popoli, dove usar la vela et i remi dei consigli politici non sarebbe cosa sicura, il meglio è avviar dritti il timone e con fare quel che conviene, e del resto lasciarsi portar dalla tempesta, perché neanche d'altra maniera nei casi ultimi e disperati i marinari si conducono a buon porto, senza che in questo caso, nel qual si difende la causa Dio benedetto, non si deve diffidar del suo divino aiuto.'

¹⁰⁴ Cristoforo Caetani, *Vita del Sig. Card. Antonio Caetani*, 1624: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6030, fols 33^v–34^r.

¹⁰⁵ See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 10 January 1611: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6910, fols 20^r–22^v.

¹⁰⁶ See: Letter from Scipione Borghese to Antonio Caetani, 18 September 1610: ASV, Segreteria di Stato (SS), Nunziature Diverse (ND), 8, fol. 278.

It pains me to the soul to leave these things now so intricate that only God can dissolve them, but inasmuch here the truth is so much abhorred, I gladly leave the field and surrender, because, to prevent from going to ruin those who wish to is perhaps a superhuman act, and it needs the help of the Divine power.¹⁰⁷

Despite all the setbacks he had encountered, Paul V and Scipione Borghese judged the nuncio's political action positively. They were fully aware of the difficulties of operating in the labyrinth of the Imperial court. Moreover, Caetani's failure in Prague did not mean the end of his career as a papal diplomat. In 1611, he was chosen to act as the Pope's representative at the court of Madrid. The main reason for this choice was due to his family's affinity with the crown of Castile.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, his *casa's* network of Spanish relatives would have smoothed his path at court far more than his experience in Prague. That is why, all things considered, the lack of co-operation between the nuncio and the courtiers was the most important reason why he had failed to further papal objectives in Prague, and furthermore, had not been able to gain the Emperor's confidence. As shown in this article, the nuncio's difficulties in establishing positive relations with the councilors, his decision to refrain from open interference in Imperial affairs, and Rudolf II's opposition, are elements that, in sum, compromised the creation of a strong network of friends and confidants at court, which would have allowed him greater latitude and provided for greater success.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 10 January 1611: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6910, fol. 27: 'A me duole nell'anima lasciar queste cose hormai tanto inviluppate, che solo Dio può disciorglierle, ma poiché qui la verità è tanto abhorrita, cedo volentieri dal campo e m'arrendo, perché procurar che chi vuol andar in ruina non vi vada è opera forse sopra humana, e richiede il mero aiuto della Divina potenza.' Caetani officially ended his service when the new nuncio Giovan Battista Salvago, Bishop of Sarzana, was received by the Emperor. See: Letter from Antonio Caetani to Scipione Borghese, 24 January 1611: BAV, Barb. Lat., 6910, fol. 40'.

¹⁰⁸ Gianvittorio Signorotto, 'Aristocrazie Italiane e Monarchia Cattolica nel XVII Secolo: Il Destino Spagnolo del Duca di Sermoneta', *Annali di Storia Moderna e Contemporanea*, 2 (1996), 57–77; Periatì, 'The Pope, the King and the Family', 7–24.

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