

The Pope, the King, and the Bishops

Papal Nuncio Angelo Pecchinoli and the Limits of Papal Power in the late Fifteenth Century

Abstract

Angelo Pecchinoli became a papal nuncio with the powers of a legate *de latere* in summer 1488 and he was sent to the court of Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary and Bohemia. His mission had a number of elements that could be categorised and analysed very well, because there is a number of documents that were preserved. There are not only his instructions and faculties, but also his reports, which survive – for the late fifteenth century – in a relatively high number. Also, other documents are preserved and when taken into account together, they give us a chance to analyse the tasks of the nuncio in detail. The topics are manifold and include the discussions on the crusade and the relation to Ottoman Turks, local church problems, *libertas ecclesie*, indulgences and many others. All together these create a clear picture of the functioning of a late medieval legation.

The reform of the Church in the High Middle Ages and the emancipation of the papacy finally revealed papal claims to universal power within the Church. The popes started to intervene in episcopal powers in their individual dioceses. Judicial authority was soon contested, and still in the thirteenth century there were those who opposed the papal assertion of “iudex ordinarius omnium”. The papal intrusion into episcopal power went as far as claiming the sole right to make decisions about bishops and their dioceses.¹ The

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1 Cfr. on reform Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century, Spirituality and Social Change*, Manchester-New York 2005; Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy, The Western Church from 1050 to 1250*, Oxford 1989; John A. Watt, *The Theory of Papal Monarchy in the Thirteenth Century, The Contribution of the Canonists*, New York 1965; for the bishops Robert L. Benson, *The Bishop-Elect. A Study in Medieval Ecclesiastical Office*, Princeton, N.J. 1968; Kenneth

legates, with the delegated power of their office of legation or with mandated power with special cases reserved for the papal curia, could solve matters before the bishops in the name of the Apostolic See.²

The late fifteenth century still bore the aftermath of the Church reform of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and even though the papacy lost ground against secular lords in terms of secular power, the authority within the Church remained untouched and even strengthened after the successful struggle against Conciliarism.³ The pope was still, and maybe even more so, the head of the Church, and carefully protected the “*libertas ecclesiastica*”. A new turning point came only with the general European Reformation and the Council of Trent.⁴

It is impossible to outline all the details and nuances of the carefully drafted canon law which described the situation of the papal government of the Church, but one of the tools the popes had at their disposal since the eleventh century were the papal legates. Through them, popes could solve a number of problems and situations related to bishops, as they had to be approached with the direct authority of the Apostolic See, best conveyed through the legates *de latere*, who, by definition, were cardinals. The second half of the fifteenth century saw a new development in the dispatching of bishops (mostly curial bishops) as nuncios with the power of legates *de latere*. Thus, effectively, the position

Pennington, *Pope and Bishops. The Papal Monarchy in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, [Philadelphia] 1984; cfr. also id., *Johannes Teutonicus and Papal Legates*, in: *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 21 (1983), pp. 183–194.

2 For the powers and legal status of the legates, see Antonín Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation. Between the Councils and the Reformation*, Rome 2017, pp. 17–102. For legates and the reserved powers of the pope, see Robert C. Figueira, *Papal Reserved Powers and the Limitations of Legatine Authority*, in: James Ross Sweeney/Stanley Chodorow (Eds.), *Popes, Teachers, and Canon Law in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca 1989, pp. 191–211; id., ‘*Legatus apostolice sedis*’. The Pope’s ‘Alter Ego’ According to Thirteenth-Century Canon Law, in: *Studi medievali*, III ser. 27 (1986), pp. 527–574.

3 Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition, Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church 1300–1870*, Oxford 2003; Phillip H. Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance (1414–1418)*, Leiden-New York-Köln 1994, pp. 104–137; Antony Black, *Council and Commune, The Conciliar Movement and the Fifteenth-Century Heritage*, London-Shepherdstown 1979; John A. F. Thomson, *Popes and Princes, 1417–1517, Politics and polity in the Late Medieval Church*, London 1980, pp. 13–28.

4 Kenneth Pennington, *Ecclesiastical Liberty on the Eve of the Reformation*, in: Nelson H. Minnich (Ed.), *Alla ricerca di soluzioni. Nuova luce sul concilio lateranense V. Studi per i 500 anni del Concilio*, Città del Vaticano 2019, pp. 77–94.

from the legal point of view was the same as legates *de latere*; from the technical point of view they did not carry the same dignity and ceremonial standards.⁵

This study aims to analyse the legation of such a nuncio in relation to bishops. The jurisdictional powers of the nuncio are not discussed here, even though some of his jurisdictional practice is traceable. Here, we will rather focus on the relationship to the individual persons of the bishops, and their relation to the secular power. The nuncio, Bishop of Orte and Civita Castellana Angelo Pecchinoli, left Rome and the Papal Curia for the court of King Matthias Corvinus in September 1488. He stayed in the region, mostly in Buda or in Vienna, where the royal court also sojourned, even after the death of King Matthias in April 1490; he then witnessed the negotiations of the estates, barons and prelates, for the new king, who was elected on 18 July and crowned on 19 September 1490. Most probably, Angelo Pecchinoli left after the coronation of King Wladislas; his last preserved report from Hungary is dated on 24 July 1490.

Angelo Pecchinoli's legation is relatively well documented. The situation, of course, cannot be compared to the nuncios of the late sixteenth century with their almost perfect system of organisation of the reports, nevertheless, for the later fifteenth century, the number of preserved reports is quite high. These are mostly preserved in the "Collezione Podocataro" in the National library of Venice, the Marciana, but occasionally also in other places. Other documents, like faculties and instructions, form a sizeable dossier which can be used for analysing the nuncio's activities in his legation.⁶

It was only natural that Angelo Pecchinoli came in contact with many local bishops during his legation; he even substituted – as a nuncio with the powers of legate *de latere* – episcopal judgement in certain cases. However, some of his tasks in the kingdoms of Matthias Corvinus were related directly to the bishops and their problems. He distributed various graces to bishops, as in the cases of Orbán Nagylucsei, the bishop of Eger, and Tamás Bakóc, the bishop of Győr, who both fell into irregularity as they administered a Holy Service after being involved in bloodshed. The nuncio carried with him absolutions for both of them.⁷

He was also commissioned to resolve problematic nominations of bishops. One such case was the bishopric of Senj (Segna; Zengg) in Croatia. The interest of the Apostolic See arose due to the fact that the appointment of the bishop by the pope had not been respected and a collision of other nominations meant a compromise had to

5 Cfr. Kalous, *Late Medieval Papal Legation* (see note 2), pp. 24–39.

6 Cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 49–54. Recently published as Antonín Kalous (Ed.), *The Legation of Angelo Pecchinoli at the Court of the King of Hungary (1488–1490)*, Budapest-Rome 2021.

7 Vatican City, Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (= AAV), Arm. XXXIX 20, fol. 461r–462r.

be found. In his instructions, Angelo is informed that the pope made a provision of the church of Senj and he should persuade the king to allow that.⁸ Angelo informed the king that the pope had provided for the church five months after the see became vacant.⁹ Yet, after further discussion about the matter, even with the intruder himself, Angelo was unable to change anything.¹⁰ The then bishop, Paul of Bosnia was considered dead by the Curia and thus a new bishop was nominated. In Senj, however, Paul was still active (at least that is what can be ascertained from the sources);¹¹ nevertheless, the papal nomination of Andrea Campana came in December 1486. However, the king also appointed his candidate, Mihovil Božičević (Natalitius), who entered the bishopric with royal support. The pope yielded and even though Mihovil suggested to the nuncio that he would be happy to live with twenty-five florins per year with a minor bishopric of Otočac,¹² it was the pope who gave in and the king's man stayed in the office until the king's death. Only a year after Matthias died, the bishopric was handed over to Andrea Campana.¹³ This is just one brief example of the problems the nuncio was tasked to solve.

Most importantly, however, Angelo was asked to handle the cases of three bishops who were all in very different positions. First of them was Péter Váradi, Archbishop of Kalocsa, who was imprisoned by the king; the second was Jan Filipec, Bishop of Várad (Oradea), who was accused of heresy and rejected as in charge of a second bishopric, but supported by the king; and finally, the third was Agostino Luciani, who ran away

8 AAV, Miscellanea (= Misc.), Arm. II 56, fol. 169v.

9 Venezia, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (= BNM), Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 134r (thus, implicitly referring to Canon Law, which, however, mentioned three months as the limit, when the pope takes over, cfr. X 1.6.41 (can. 23 of Lateran IV) in *Corpus Iuris Canonici*, pars 2, *Decretalium collectiones*, ed. by Aemilius Friedberg, Graz 1959, col. 88).

10 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 136r.

11 Norbert C. Tóth / Richárd Horváth / Tibor Neumann / Tamás Pálósfalvi, *Magyarország világi archontológiája 1458–1526* [Secular Archontology of Hungary, 1458–1526], Budapest 2016, vol. 1, p. 58.

12 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 136r.

13 Cfr. Mile Bogović, *Moji pređasnici biskupi – u Senju, Otočcu, Krbavi, Modrušu, Vinodolu i Rijeci* [My predecessors bishops - in Senj, Otočac, Krbava, Modruš, Vinodol and Rijeka], in: *Senjski zbornik* 42–43 (2015–2016), pp. 5–198, here pp. 49–50; cfr. also Juraj Lokmer, *Katedrala uznesenja blažene djevice Marije u Senju i senjski biskupi do početka XVII. stoljeća* [The cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Senj and bishops of Senj until the early seventeenth century], in: *Senjski zbornik* 42–43 (2015–2016), pp. 235–326, here p. 289. My thanks belong to György Galamb for clarifications of the matter and a suggestion of literature.

from Italy and served as a bishop for the Utraquists of Bohemia. All three cases are very special, but they illustrate options the nuncio had for such situations.

Archbishop of Kalocsa Péter Váradi was a close collaborator of King Matthias Corvinus. He came from a burgher family of Várad, a bigger town with a wealthy bishopric. As a boy, he studied at the bishop's school and followed bishop János Vitéz of Zredna to Esztergom, when Vitéz became the Archbishop of Esztergom in 1465. After studying in Bologna and returning to Hungary, Péter entered the service of King Matthias as a scribe in the royal chancery; in 1474 he became the king's secretary and gained some ecclesiastical benefices. He probably came to the royal court after the 1471 conspiracy, and might have been involved in it to some extent, as the king's reference to Péter's crimes in his youth in Zagreb and closeness to János Vitéz could suggest. Nevertheless, in 1480 he became the Secret Chancellor (and one year later the High Chancellor) and the Archbishop of Kalocsa-Bács, thus one of the most important persons in the realm.¹⁴

In 1484, however, he was imprisoned by the king and kept in custody for six years. The reasons for this imprisonment were not really known to contemporaries and modern scholarship has not clearly identified the actual motives and explanations behind the harsh attitude of the king towards his once close servant. Antonio Bonfini, for example, wrote that it was a great surprise to all the barons;¹⁵ the reason given by him is the archbishop's resentment towards the excessive tax policy of the king. However, there might be other motives linked to the war against the Emperor, the relationship of the archbishop with the Queen (as Bonfini also remarked),¹⁶ the national interests of the archbishop, or the negotiations of the peace treaty with the Ottoman Turks.¹⁷

14 For Péter Váradi see János Véber, *Két korszak határán. Váradi Péter, humanista főpap, kalocsai érsek pályaképe* [On the border of two eras: The career of Péter Váradi, humanist prelate, archbishop of Kalocsa], Pécs-Budapest 2016 (early career, pp. 12–56); Vilmos Fraknói, *Váradi Péter kalocsai érsek élete 1480–1501* [The life of Péter Váradi, archbishop of Kalocsa 1480–1501], in: *Századok* 17 (1883), pp. 489–514, 729–749, 825–843 (early career, pp. 489–503); Rabán Gerézdi, *Egy Magyar humanista: Váradi Péter* [A Hungarian humanist: Péter Váradi], in: *Magyarságtudomány* 1 (1942), pp. 305–328, 532–563 (early career, pp. 305–328); József Udvardy, *A kalocsai érsekek életrajza (1000–1526)* [The biography of the archbishops of Kalocsa (1000–1526)], Köln 1991, pp. 335–402; cfr. also György Bónis, *A jogtudó értelmiség a Mohács előtti Magyarországon* [The judicial intelligentsia in Hungary before Mohács], Budapest 1971, pp. 229–230.

15 Antonio de Bonfinis, *Rerum Ungaricarum Decades*, vol. 4,1, Budapest 1941, p. 124.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 178: “Quin etiam paucis ante diebus Petrum Colociensem archiepiscopum consilii compotem et astutum, quem rex Mathias regine, ut aiunt, gratia sex annos in arce retinuerat, Corvinus adolescens instante apostolico legato invitis patribus et Beatrice liberavit liberatumque ample donavit et dignitatem una cum libertate restituit”.

17 For the overview, see Véber, *Két korszak* (see note 14), pp. 57–67.

The instructions of Angelo's legation reveal that the archbishop was imprisoned and needed to be freed by the nuncio.¹⁸ It was known at the papal curia that the archbishop was incarcerated after he enraged the king with "certain things", as it was referred to by an orator of the king. The same orator, János Vitéz the Younger, Bishop of Srem, asked for a nuncio to come to Hungary and administer justice to the king. The nuncio was supposed to try and alleviate the mind and decision of the king, who ought then release the archbishop from the prison.¹⁹ If these attempts to change the mind of the king were in vain, the nuncio was to try and interview the archbishop and report everything back to the pope, so that he (together with the cardinals) could pass judgement. The nuncio was also assigned to secure a proper place so that the judgement would not be later contested. This meant that everything needed to happen in a place outside or with minimal jurisdiction of the kingdom, i.e. Esztergom or Vienna, Wiener Neustadt, or a place in their vicinity. The archbishop should not be driven by fear and should feel free for the trial. Also, the king should remember that the archbishop is "christus domini" and that it was the king himself who promoted him to the position. Thus, if the king offered to give the archbishop to the nuncio, he should consent; first, however, he should agree with the king on clear conditions of custody. After the conditions were met, the nuncio would organise a trial with advocates and procurators of the archbishop, as well as notaries for the trial, who should be given proper compensation (even taken from the profits of the church of Kalocsa; and if they are not paid in due time, this should not hinder the jurisdiction).²⁰

The instructions were that the nuncio should even turn to the king to ask whether he would like to proceed against the archbishop "per viam accusationis vel inquisitionis". If proceeding by accusation, the accusation should be in proper legal form; if by inquisition, for which the nuncio was given a special commission by the pope, again this should be done according to proper procedure, including checking and agreeing on all the witnesses. When that is done, the archbishop might be condemned or absolved. The nuncio had the faculty to proceed against those who did not tell the truth and did not maintain

18 First we learn about Kalocsa, when the nuncio has a deal with the Papal Chamber that either he gets his salary from the Chamber directly, namely 100 florins per month, or he takes it from the revenues of the Archbishopric of Kalocsa, the archbishop of which is imprisoned, and in that case it should be 120 florins. Cfr. AAV, Camera Apostolica, Diversa Cameralia 46, fol. 188v, 195r-v.

19 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 155v-156r.

20 Ibid., fol. 156r-159v.

consistency in their reports, even if they were bishops!²¹ Finally, the nuncio was instructed to remind the king that he should not proceed against his prelates (referring to the Bible and quoting, “*nolite tangere christos meos*”), but relate and redirect the case to the papal curia. And the nuncio concluded: “These things greatly offend God and blacken the dignity and splendour of the king and consign it to oblivion.”²²

Angelo Pecchinoli, as a nuncio with the powers of a legate *de latere*, was clearly instructed here to take over the trial of the archbishop, as he should have been the one to organise – with papal authority – the administration of justice. This did not fall to the king; the nuncio was supposed to prudently and carefully speak to the queen, who should remind the king of the “*libertas ecclesiastica*.”²³ The king, however, knew of this well, when he sent his orator to Rome and asked for a nuncio. However, he still kept the archbishop in custody. This is also clear from the actual faculty that was given to the nuncio. Péter Váradi was imprisoned after he was suspected of working against the king’s state. It even claims that the king “desired truth and justice” and asked for a proper person, a nuncio, who would try the archbishop. The mandate then gave the nuncio the privileges which were already mentioned in the instructions.²⁴ This is what the nuncio left Rome with to deal with the matter in Hungary. The story, however, was not that simple and continued for the duration of Angelo’s stay at the court of King Matthias.

The nuncio first reported in January 1489 and summarized the previous months at the court. When the nuncio reminded the king about the fact that the archbishop was his own creation, the king explained that there was a legitimate reason for the archbishop’s incarceration. Péter Váradi knew king’s secrets and the king “would rather die than the secrets be revealed”, especially to the Emperor, with whom he was at war (the Emperor showed interest in the archbishop; as evidenced when he communicated with the pope, he knew that the main task of the nuncio was to release Péter Váradi).²⁵ The king narrated that the incarcerated archbishop had once asked for a confessor and gave him a letter written with the juice of an onion addressed to the papal curia. A priest was to carry it to Rome, but when he got drunk in a tavern he boasted of the archbishop’s letter.

21 Ibid., fol. 159v–160r; cfr. also the faculty in AAV, Registra Vaticana (= Reg. Vat.) 734, fol. 230r–231r.

22 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 160r–v: “Sunt enim hec, que Deum im primis magnopere offendunt, dignitatemque et fulgorem regii sui nominis obliterant et denigrant”. Earlier, Pecchinoli made a reference to the chant of King David, 1 Par 16,22 (also Ps 104,15, in Vulgata).

23 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 163v–164v.

24 AAV, Reg. Vat. 734, fol. 230r–231r.

25 Cfr. Venezia, Archivio di Stato (= ASVe), Collezione Podocataro, busta 5, no. 263.

Learning this, the king sent his people to get the letter, which he read then in front of a fire and saw all the secrets revealed. The nuncio repeated that the archbishop was the king's creation and implored him, "not to look at the crimes of the archbishop, but at the pope and the Apostolic See and the ecclesiastical liberty, which, it seems, the king always cultivated and venerated".²⁶ The nuncio further appealed to the king to hand the archbishop over to himself and the pope, who could talk to him as a man. The king could consent to give him over to Angelo, if only the crimes did not concern Matthias's state; the king stressed that Péter deserved to be in jail and moreover recounted the misdoings and crimes committed in Zagreb long time ago. The king again promised he would place the archbishop into the nuncio's hands, who could then keep him in Buda or in Esztergom, and the archbishop could defend himself as he wished because all he was accused of was known throughout the kingdom anyway.²⁷

When the nuncio reported all this, he believed he would be given the archbishop quite soon and could proceed according to his instructions. The nuncio also spoke to the queen, who negated the rumours that the archbishop was imprisoned due to her own instigations. She confirmed the reasons given by the king and explained she had even asked the king to restore the property of the archbishop's family.²⁸

Even though reports came to Rome in March 1489 that the archbishop was already released, as the pope mentioned in the second set of instructions for Angelo,²⁹ it was not true and the negotiations of the nuncio became protracted, although Angelo reported to Rome in April that he wanted to terminate the matter. Pecchinoli was promised by the king he could visit the archbishop in his prison and take him to Esztergom.³⁰

At a later discussion with the nuncio the king repeated he wanted only justice with the archbishop, but it was difficult to bring him to Esztergom (the king even found excuses and explained that the commander of the castle was absent, thus the archbishop could not leave). Moreover, Esztergom was full of Italians, Neapolitans, and Hungarians – Matthias even claimed the archbishop was much safer where he was now,

26 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 127v–128r: "Non intueatur, queso, maiestas vestra archiepiscopi delicta, sed dominum nostrum et sedem apostolicam et libertatem ecclesiasticam, quam semper maiestas vestra colere et venerari visa est. Meminerit, queso, quod ipse archiepiscopus est pontifex, est et christus Domini, quos Deus tangi prohibet".

27 Ibid., fol. 128r.

28 Ibid., fol. 128v.

29 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (= BAV), Vaticanus latinus (= Vat. lat.) 5641, fol. 99v.

30 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 118r.

that is, in Orava Castle in Northern Hungary. In Esztergom, he would surely try to speak or write to someone and that would be as bad as it was before.³¹ The nuncio was disappointed and explained he already reported everything back to Rome and now it would prove that either he lied or the king was inconsistent. When the king replied he had a good reason for refraining (for the time being) from his promise, the nuncio got to his knees and beseeched Matthias to release the archbishop. The king consented, but suggested Eger or Visegrád as places for Váradi to remain; the nuncio chose Visegrád, which was closer to Buda, even though he reminded the king that the instructions and faculties mentioned only Esztergom for the trial.³²

In June the nuncio finally reported that he brought the archbishop to Visegrád and asked the pope to provide him with a new location within the mandates for the trial, as both Vienna and Esztergom were clearly impossible. The archbishop was given a chaplain and a servant, but the nuncio did not want to speak in secret, as had been requested; only in the open.³³ Later in September, the archbishop was still in Visegrád and, as the nuncio heard, articles were collected and written down against him in preparation for the trial. However, when Angelo suggested he would proceed with the trial, the king declined and wanted to delay the start of it after a conference with the Emperor. The king even suggested that the archbishop could be sent to Bács, one of his churches in the south.³⁴ In January 1490, after the nuncio thanked the king in the name of the pope for the archbishop of Kalocsa, the king repeated that Angelo could start the case only after the meeting with the Emperor was over. Moreover, the archbishop's brother asked the nuncio to make sure he was not sent to Bács, but rather kept in Visegrád, for various reasons (he mentioned the unhealthy air in Bács in particular).³⁵

In April, the king died and the archbishop was released and restored to his province; he wrote a passionate letter of thanks to the pope for saving him and liberating him from the prison.³⁶ The nuncio reported of him only in relation to the negotiations about the successor of the deceased Matthias.³⁷ In July, the nuncio even referred to the archbishop's active role on the side of Matthias' natural son John Corvinus. After the election of

31 Ibid., fol. 141v.

32 Ibid., fol. 142r-v.

33 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 179v.

34 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 111v-112r.

35 Ibid., fol. 121r-v.

36 ASVe, Collezione Podocataro, busta 9, no. 781.

37 BNM, Lat. X 174 (= 3621), fol. 97r.

King Wladislas, however, Váradi was labelled as an enemy of the kingdom and “*pacis et quietis turbator*”. However, soon enough the king received him and others from the camp of John Corvinus to his grace and forgot about all the previous deeds.³⁸ He then followed his ecclesiastical career as the Archbishop of Kalocsa, under the new King Wladislas until his death in 1501. This case and the longer narration, which is based on the instructions and the reports of Angelo Pecchinoli, demonstrate the tedious – and often unsuccessful – work of a papal nuncio in opposition to a secular ruler, even in such a case where ecclesiastical liberty was at stake.

The second case to examine must have been very different from the point of view of the nuncio. However, Jan Filipec had a similar trajectory at the height of his career as his precursor, in the position of the Secret Chancellor Péter Váradi. He came from a burgher family of the little Moravian town Prostějov. After Matthias Corvinus secured the title of the king of Bohemia, Jan entered his service, and just like Péter Váradi, he advanced up the social ladder meanwhile acquiring several ecclesiastical benefices during his service in the chancery. The most important one came about in 1476, as the bishop of Várad. Since then, as a diplomat, he counted among the most important people of Matthias’ royal court (he travelled to Bohemia, Silesia, Italy, France, Austria, German lands) and later became the Secret Chancellor. In 1483, he was elected by the Olomouc chapter as Bishop of Olomouc, but never confirmed by the pope; with this nomination the Olomouc bishopric started to be a tool in the hands of the pope and the king, and after a series of bishops who never visited Olomouc the vacancy was filled by Stanislas Thurzo in 1497.³⁹

Angelo Pecchinoli, as nuncio with the powers of the legate *de latere*, came to Hungary with the task of providing the Olomouc bishopric to János Vitéz the Younger, the king’s orator in Rome at the Papal Curia. This, actually, is the earliest document speaking

38 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 116r–117r.

39 Cfr. Rudolf Grieger, Filipecz, Johann Bischof von Wardein, Diplomat der Könige Matthias und Wladislaw, Munich 1982; Antonín Kalous, Jan Filipec v diplomatických službách Matyáše Korvína [Jan Filipec in the diplomatic service of Matthias Corvinus], in: Časopis Matice moravské 125 (2006), pp. 3–32; id., Itinerář Jana Filipce (1431–1509) [The itinerary of Jan Filipec (1431–1509)], in: Sborník prací historických XXII, Acta Universitatis Palackianae Olomucensis, Facultas philosophica, Historica 34 (2008), pp. 17–43; id., Spor o biskupství olomoucké v letech 1482–1497 [The disputed bishopric of Olomouc in 1482–1497], in: Český časopis historický 105 (2007), pp. 1–39; cfr. also Vincze Bunyitay, A váradi püspökség története alapításától a jelenkorig [The bishopric of Várad (Oradea) from its foundation until the present], vol. 1: A váradi püspökök a püspökség alapításától 1566. évig [The bishops and the bishopric of Várad (Oradea) from the foundation until 1566], Nagyvárad 1883, pp. 308–331; Bónis, A jogtudó értelmiség (see note 14), p. 230.

about the legation: a breve sent to King Matthias notified the king that the bishop of Várad, Jan Filipec, was to give over Olomouc to the procurators of János Vitéz. It also mentioned that the ecclesiastical censures were postponed for three months at the request of Cardinal Roderigo Borgia. Another breve which instantly followed mentioned that the request for postponing the censures was expressed by Miklós Bacskai, the king's envoy, by Roderigo Borgia, and by János Vitéz himself, and they asked for a six-month suspension; the pope offered three months starting with the delivery date of the letter. Both the brevia end with a note that a nuncio was sent to the king to solve the matter.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Angelo Pecchinoli received a faculty to provide Jan Filipec with a licence to enter a religious order. After he gave up all his benefices, he would retire to an order of his choice.⁴¹

The instructions were, however, more detailed, and just like the case of the archbishop of Kalocsa, they started an ongoing case which the nuncio had to solve during his stay at the royal court of Buda and Vienna. The instructions first reiterate the fact that Jan Filipec, bishop of Várad, occupied the bishopric after the death of Prothasius of Boskovice and Černá Hora, the previous bishop, without any canonical provision. He ought then to relinquish all the estates of the bishopric including towns and castles to the hands of János Vitéz, bishop of Srem and the orator of King Matthias in Rome. If he refused, the nuncio was instructed to proceed against him and all his supporters with ecclesiastical censures (suspension from the sacraments, prohibition to enter a church, and interdict), and financial penalties.⁴² As in the case of Váradi, Angelo also received a mandate with all the faculties mentioned in the instructions.⁴³ That is not all, however, as the bishop of Várad was also suspected of heresy and thus another process was at hand. Together with this note, another mention of Jan's possible ingression to a religious order appeared in the instructions.⁴⁴ For dealing with the heresy of local prelates and especially the bishop of Várad, Angelo received another special mandate. There, the bishop's origin from heretical parents of Bohemia (recte Moravia) was recalled. After the nuncio came to Hungary, he was mandated to summon the bishop and all others to a public place and enquire about the nature of the allegation. Again, he was supposed to report

40 AAV, Arm. XXXIX 20, fol. 404v-405v, 542r-v.

41 Ibid., fol. 460v-461r.

42 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 164v-165v, 168v.

43 AAV, Reg. Vat. 734, fol. 238v-239v.

44 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 169v-170r.

back to the curia and send the notarial instrument of the investigation.⁴⁵ And finally, the name of the bishop appeared in relation to the two Moravian monasteries – Třebíč and Hradisko – which were secularised after the wars in Moravia and were to be returned to the respective abbots; the first one was in the possession of Jaroslav of Šternberk, the latter pawned to Jan Filipec. The nuncio was commissioned to secure the transition back to the hands of the abbots.⁴⁶ Clearly, a number of problems related to Jan Filipec existed in Angelo's portfolio.

The later reports of the nuncio about the bishop of Várad are quite elaborate and long, as the two had had a few discussions in person at the royal court. The nuncio started with a conversation with the king, however, and reported all what he had from the pope. Surprisingly, the king remarked right away that it was due to the “tricks and frauds” of the bishop that Duke John of Glogovia had rebelled against him and if the king was not notified of the treachery and conspiracy, both the lands, Moravia and Silesia, would be lost and would fall to heresy like Bohemia. The king, however, at the same time defended Jan Filipec as somebody who was greatly respected among the Moravians and Silesians (himself being a Moravian) and was thus irreplaceable in the king's service; especially because of the negotiations with the King of Bohemia, who supported the rebels. The king then asked the nuncio to suspend all the censures (so that the bishop of Várad could take part in the talks; otherwise the king would lose Moravia and Silesia), and to say nothing of the enquiry into the suspicion of heresy. The nuncio, in turn, reminded the king that he himself made the supplication to the pope to provide the Olomouc bishopric to the bishop of Srem, and that he himself wrote about the temerity of the bishop of Várad, who had invaded the bishopric of Olomouc and did not think good about the Catholic faith. Again, he said that the king had once wanted one thing and later wanted the other. The nuncio then pondered whether it was even possible that the king of Hungary could lose his negotiations even without the bishop of Várad, when his court was filled with excellent and most learned men, and also whether the king was sure the bishop would be trustworthy, when he had earlier proven to be a traitor. “For the love of God, think of someone else”, the nuncio even exclaimed. The discussion went on and on and the king supported his arguments and claimed the bishop would be trustworthy and he needed to be suspended of all accusations. The king confirmed, however, that when Filipec returned from his mission, the nuncio would be able to do with the bishop whatever he wanted.⁴⁷ Interestingly enough, here the king interfered

45 AAV, Reg. Vat. 734, fol. 236v–237v.

46 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 168r–169r; also a mandate AAV, Reg. Vat. 734, fol. 231v–232v.

47 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 129r–v.

with the dealings of the Church again and hindered the ecclesiastical process against a bishop in his service. However, it is also clear that the bishop must have fallen out of grace of the king, but soon his position with the sovereign was recovered. That is the only explanation for these discussions and the supplication for the provision of the Olomouc bishopric to the bishop of Srem. The king wanted to use ecclesiastical procedure against an untrustworthy servant. When he changed his mind, he opposed it.

Further still in his first report, Angelo Pecchinoli recounted a meeting with Jan Filipec himself. The nuncio described him as obstinate, but willing to submit to the will of the pope. Nevertheless, he wanted to return the church to the chapter from which he had obtained it, and asked about a financial settlement for all the money he invested into buying out the pawned towns and reconstructing the church of Olomouc. Furthermore, he spoke of the injustice and insult that the king suffered for returning a church, which Jan had held for a long time. Finally, he asked for a licence to enter a religious order, as this would also stop the allegations of heresy. The nuncio replied that the diocese cannot be gained by a lay master, but by the Apostolic See. The king could not give it, as it does not belong to the kingdom of Hungary; the provision by the chapter did not help either, because Filipec already had another bishopric and these were incompatible. The nuncio clarified why the provision was not possible. The bishop must concede the possession of the church to the highest authority, which does not recognise any other authority, namely to the Apostolic See. As for the financial settlement, the nuncio promised to consider it; and concerning the religious order, the bishop should carefully consider the step, because there was no way back. However, only when he relinquished all his benefices to the nuncio, he could be given the licence. The discussion went on and Filipec remarked that providing the church to bishop of Srem did not make sense either, as he already had a bishopric, which the nuncio rejected with the reference to the decision of the pope. Also, when Jan said he would re-pledge what he bought out, the nuncio forbade that and took three witnesses for this decision (Tamás Bakóc, the bishop of Győr and royal secretary; Miklós Bacskai; and the king's physician). He always supported his words with references to the authority of the Apostolic See. The bishop then left "intorto naso et fluctuante gucture".⁴⁸

Such a long narration reveals the number of problems the nuncio had to solve. In general, the nuncio took the authority of the Apostolic See as his support argument in any possible case. Olomouc was outside the scope of the patronage right of the King of

48 Ibid., fol. 129v–130v, the crucial part of the argumentation: "Nec est, quod iuramentum prestatum capitulo posset allegare, quia in omni contractu superioris auctoritas semper excipere et maxime talis superioris, qui non recognoscit superiorem, ut est sedes apostolica".

Hungary, so the pope should decide.⁴⁹ When the former bishop of Olomouc, Prothasius of Boskovice and Černá Hora, died in 1482, the king wrote immediately forbidding the chapter to elect anyone without his consultation. Later, they voted for Jan Filipec, surely on the king's suggestion.⁵⁰ But, even if the chapter in Olomouc had the right to elect the new bishop from 1207, bestowed upon them by King Přemysl I and confirmed by Pope Innocent III,⁵¹ the church should not be returned to it, but to the hands of the nuncio, who came – stressed again – with the authority of the Apostolic See. The problem of the bishop of Várad is exactly the fact that he already is the bishop of Várad, it means he tried to combine two incompatible benefices, which the canon law does not allow. However, the bishop of Srem, who was given the bishopric, already had another bishopric, as Jan Filipec remarked. He was later on transferred to the bishopric of Veszprém and did not keep Srem.⁵² Keeping two bishoprics was impossible in Central Europe, unlike at the Curia.

Still in his first report, the nuncio described another meeting with Jan Filipec, who came back from his mission in Silesia. After returning to the court, bishop of Várad celebrated the solemn vespers in front of the king, which was very much criticised by the nuncio, as the bishop was still not released from the censures and not absolved. As such he involved in sacraments, which should not have happened. Tamás Bakóc spoke to the nuncio and reported that the bishop of Várad (having confidence in the king) believed to be absolved. A discussion with the king led the nuncio to remind Matthias of how the bishop can be absolved: only by restitution of the church. The bishop of Várad, however, was not absolved and in the eyes of the nuncio was similar to the bunch of heretical barons who had accompanied him from Bohemia. The king persuaded the nuncio to suspend the censures for fifteen days because of negotiations of the bishop of Várad. Thereafter, the bishops of Várad and Győr came to the nuncio together with a procurator of the bishop of Srem showing they had an agreement. The nuncio consented to another prolongation of the suspension for January and February. In the same time, however, he wondered about the stubbornness of the bishop, who believed only in lay and secular power, “not having any reverence for the Apostolic See”. The nuncio also received a report on Jan Filipec by Konrad Altheimer, a canon of Olomouc, in which,

49 Cfr. Elemér Mályusz, *Das Konstanzer Konzil und das königliche Patronatsrecht in Ungarn*, Budapest 1959.

50 Kalous, *Spor* (see note 39), pp. 8–12.

51 *Codex diplomaticus et epistolarius regni Bohemiae*, ed. by Gustavus Friedrich, tom. 2, Prague 1912, pp. 52–55.

52 Tóth et al., *Magyarország világi archontológiája* (see note 11), pp. 47, 53.

he wrote, the pope could understand the “tyrandidem” of the man.⁵³ And finally, he reported that the procurators of the bishop of Srem did not dare to suggest anything, but the nuncio decided he would not suspend the censures any longer than February, if the bishopric of Olomouc is not to be returned. He thought it difficult to defy and humiliate the “untamable man”.⁵⁴

The first report of Angelo Pecchinoli had much to say about the bishop of Várad, but it also showed that the nuncio was not entirely successful. He always had to make concessions to the king, who claimed he needed the bishop in his negotiations in Silesia, Moravia, and Bohemia. He, however, actively collected information about Jan’s administration of the Olomouc bishopric.

In his following reports, Angelo Pecchinoli mentioned Jan Filipec either very briefly or not at all, because he was away on his diplomatic mission. However, on 17 April 1489, well after the date the suspension of the censures was to be lifted, he still informed the pope that he would prolong it. He was asked to do so by the procurators of the bishop of Srem on the orders, the nuncio explained, of King Matthias, who needed the bishop for the negotiations. At least, the nuncio sent an envoy and letters, which would show what the bishop thought of the Apostolic See and the pope himself.⁵⁵ The gist of the report is clear: the nuncio was not happy with the bishop, but could not do anything against the will of the king, whose negotiations he did not want to obstruct. Especially when talks were happening with the heretics and equilibrium in the Bohemian lands under the rule of King Matthias could have been endangered.

In May, the nuncio sent some more information he had obtained from the chapter of Olomouc. He spoke about the faith and devotion of the bishop towards the pope and how just his expenses were.⁵⁶ Even though the nuncio was previously not very happy with the bishop, now it seems he was not writing ironically, which may only confirm the good press which Jan Filipec had always had in Olomouc as he restored the diocese (not only the church and buying out the pledged property, but he also had the liturgical books printed, etc.).⁵⁷ Angelo even wrote about the bishop admiringly when recounting his return from the diplomatic mission in Bohemia, Saxony, and Brandenburg, in the

53 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 130v–131r.

54 Ibid., fol. 136v.

55 Ibid., fol. 118r–v.

56 Ibid., fol. 144v.

57 Kalous, *Spor* (see note 39), pp. 29–31.

end of June 1489. Reportedly, he had solved everything to the benefit, glory, and honour of the king.⁵⁸

In September, the nuncio reported on his activities in terms of the bishopric of Olomouc and instituting a deputy (*vicarius*) there. The king opposed this, as he claimed he had a breve from the pope, which clearly stated the nuncio should do nothing to change the current state of affairs. The king was now content with Jan Filipec having the bishopric of Olomouc, even though it had never been his wish, he explained. The nuncio still did not agree, but nothing happened at the moment, as the bishop of Várad was again active in negotiations, this time in Austria. The nuncio also knew that the bishop was supposed to go to Rome to clear himself of any allegation of heresy and (as the nuncio wrote earlier in the report) to solve the matters of Ancona, a papal city, which had defected to King Matthias. As for the revenues of the bishopric of Olomouc, the nuncio discussed this matter with the king, who said he had already appeased the feud between the two bishops (János Vitéz now being the bishop of Veszprém).⁵⁹ Even more now, the report demonstrates an inability to do anything about the bishop, who had royal support. In later reports, Angelo mentioned the bishop mostly in relation to the negotiations with the Emperor in Austria, and even more in relation to Ancona.

Angelo took up the topic of Olomouc for the last time in December 1489. He wanted to put a deputy in Olomouc, but the king still opposed this, claiming he had the aforementioned breve. However, the king never showed it to the nuncio, who asked for it several times. The nuncio again wrote of the difficult situation of the Olomouc clergy, who even spoke of tyranny (possibly referring to the then deputy) as they had to suffer under second “Totila, flagellum dei”. Supposedly, the deputy even boasted of a breve (probably from Raymund Peraudi, the papal nuncio at the imperial court), which solved all the problems in Olomouc. Angelo had even heard that the king intended to give the possession of the Veszprém bishopric to János Vitéz only after the possession of Olomouc was confirmed to Jan Filipec. The final comment Angelo addressed to the pope: “I surely know, that if your sanctity persists in the plan, that it does not want to give [Olomouc] to the bishop of Várad, his majesty will patiently tolerate that and will explain to the bishop of Várad that he did not leave anything untried”.⁶⁰

58 AAV, Misc., Arm. II 56, fol. 187r.

59 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 112v; on Ancona fol. 110v–111v. And Angelo repeats in further reports that Jan Filipec negotiates in Austria and is supposed to go to Rome.

60 BNM, Lat. X 178 (= 3625), fol. 167v: “Sed certe scio, quod si sanctitas vestra in proposito perseveret, quod Varadino nolit dare, sua maiestas patienter ferret, ac se ad Varadinum excusabit, quod intemptatum nihil reliquerit”.

Up to the death of Matthias Corvinus, the situation of Olomouc remained unresolved and the bishop of Várad fulfilled his service at court as one of its most accomplished diplomats. He continued his negotiations in Austria and when the king died, he was in Moravia, where he led talks about the possible succession of John Corvinus as the King of Bohemia. However, in the subsequent tumultuous times, he supported King Wladislas in his claim to the throne of Hungary. Together with Tamás Bakóc, the bishop of Győr, they were the most instrumental proponents of this candidature; and it proved successful. However, after this achievement, the bishop of Várad gave up all his secular and ecclesiastical positions and offices. On 10 June 1492, he entered the Franciscan friary at Wrocław (Breslavia; Breslau), and before he died he spend most of his time outside secular matters, only occasionally serving King Wladislas as a diplomat.⁶¹

The possession of the bishopric of Olomouc was, however, still contested. Surely in March 1490, but maybe even before (June 1489 perhaps), a new bishop of Olomouc was appointed. One curial bishop who was created cardinal in March 1489, Ardicino della Porta, acquired the bishopric, even though after the nomination the real administrator of Olomouc was still Jan Filipec. When Ardicino died in 1493, the bishopric was offered by Pope Alexander VI to his nephew Giovanni Borgia, even though the chapter voted for someone else. Giovanni then sold the possession of the bishopric to Stanislas Thurzo in January 1497. Only then the struggle for the bishopric of Olomouc was over.⁶²

Péter Váradi and Jan Filipec were bishops in Hungary, who had their dealings with the king, and this to a great extent formed their relationship with the papal nuncio. Bishop Agostino Luciani, the third case followed here, however, was in a completely different position. Agostino came from Vicenza and was ordained bishop in 1477, receiving the titular bishopric of Santorini (“Sanctuariensis”). He, however, lived at the court of Galeotto Pico della Mirandola, where he started to ordain Utraquist priests at a certain point, who came from Bohemia. The archdiocese of Prague had lived without a properly ordained archbishop since 1431 and even though the Compactata, the agreements between the Bohemians and the Council, stipulated that Utraquist priests should be ordained by the bishops of the country, they sought ordination somewhere else. The activities of the bishop were closely followed by church institutions and that is why he decided to accept the invitation he received from Bohemia. He entered the country in April 1482; and just as in the case of another troublesome bishop, Andrea Jamometić,

61 Kalous, *Itinerář* (see note 39), pp. 35–38.

62 *Id.*, *Spor* (see note 39), pp. 25–35.

who wanted to organise a new Council of Basel, papal diplomats were sent out to seize him and bring him back to Rome.⁶³

This task was set for the nuncios Bartolomeo da Ziliano and Bartolomeo Maraschi in 1483, but in vain. They were not successful, because at this point it was virtually impossible for papal nuncios or even legates *de latere* to execute any power in Utraquist Bohemia. Angelo Pecchinoli had had a similar task, even though there is no mention of the bishop of Mirandola (“Mirandolanus”), as he was called, at the start of his legation – neither in the instructions, nor in the mandates.

The nuncio came across the topic in a discussion with the king. When the king spoke beautifully about the pope (“it seemed like rivers or fertile streams”), he added that he incited the unfortunate bishop of Mirandola to flee from the heretics.⁶⁴ In the same letter, the nuncio repeated this information, which (this time) he had heard from multiple sources. The bishop could escape if he had assurance that he would not be burned at stake or incarcerated for life; and Angelo asked the king if he had any way to help him flee. As the nuncio did not have any instructions, at first he did not want to promise anything to the bishop; nevertheless, he considered it fundamental that Bishop Agostino flee, so Angelo finally promised all what was mentioned. The nuncio even compared the bishop to Sinon, the Greek soldier who was held captive in Troy and inspired the Trojans to drag the horse into the city.⁶⁵ This naturally aroused the interest of the Curia and a new set of instructions of March 1489 reacted to the news. The nuncio could do what he considered best with the “accursed” man. If he ran away, he should be kept in a safe place so that he does not escape again, because he could cause major scandals when loose. And, when he was captured, the pope should be consulted.⁶⁶

In further discussions, the king confirmed that if the bishop came to his court (as he wrote he would have liked to), he would not leave. “Be sure of that”, the king remarked

63 Josef Macek, *Víra a zbožnost jagellonského věku* [Faith and piety of the Jagiellonian age], Prague 2001, pp. 118–131; Antonín Kalous, *The Papacy and the Czech Lands between Reform and Reformation (1417–1526)*, in: Tomáš Černušák (Ed.), *The Papacy and the Czech Lands, A History of Mutual Relations*, Rome-Prague 2016, pp. 115–146, here p. 136; id., *Late Medieval Papal Legation* (see note 2), p. 197; for Andrea Jamometić, see Joseph Schlecht, *Andrea Zamometić und der Basler Konzilsversuch vom Jahre 1482*, Paderborn 1903; Jürgen Petersohn, *Ein Diplomat des Quattrocento, Angelo Geraldini (1422–1486)*, Tübingen 1985; id. (Ed.), *Diplomatische Berichte und Denkschriften des päpstlichen Legaten Angelo Geraldini aus der Zeit seiner Basel-Legation 1482–1483*, Stuttgart 1987.

64 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 128v.

65 Ibid., fol. 131r.

66 BAV, Vat. lat. 5641, fol. 99r.

to Angelo.⁶⁷ In the same report of May 1489, the nuncio attached letters from the Bishop Agostino, who corresponded with him, but only in a very general manner, as he feared interception of the letters. In letters from January, February, and March he spoke mostly about wanting to meet the nuncio in Vienna, and in the last letter about a Bohemian delegation that was supposed to be sent from the land diet to the nuncio.⁶⁸ Clearly, the runaway bishop wanted to solve his situation, which had proven quite unfortunate. However, he knew very well that his fate would not be lucky on the Catholic side either. That may be inferred from the last two references of the nuncio.

In December 1489, Angelo mentioned that he sent the letter of safe conduct from the pope to Agostino. He had also secured such a letter from the king. The bishop asked, however, for a postponement of ten weeks, as he wanted to empty some fish-ponds (sic!) and pledge a castle that was being given to him by the heretics. Agostino Luciani explained this in a letter to the nuncio and the king. Then, the runaway bishop was not happy about the letters of safe conduct, and asked for bulls and a letter from the Venetians. Two nuncios were sent to him from the pope, but they did not succeed either. One of them returned to the king, the other stayed with the bishop and got involved in the rites of heretical Bohemians.⁶⁹ Even though we do not have much information on the attempts to capture the bishop of Santorini, here it could be seen that new attempts were made by Angelo Pecchinoli. After the unsuccessful attempts of 1483, it seemed possible that the bishop might leave the heretics of his own free will. However, this never happened.

In his last report on Agostino in January 1490, the nuncio no longer suggested that Agostino might help against the heretics. The two nuncios from the pope had not been successful, and the bishop even became haughty and arrogant. The king thought that the people of Prague had learned about the plans for defection and pumped more money into the matter (to the bishop, and maybe also to the nuncios). Angelo asked for a licence to capture the bishop claiming he would bring him to the pope.⁷⁰ Then, the topic did not appear in the reports again, leaving another unsolved matter!

These three bishops were selected because of the interest of Angelo Pecchinoli. As the direct representative of the pope and the Curia, the papal nuncio with the power of the legate *de latere* had the highest authority in the region and carried mandates which allowed him to decide in matters of bishops which were otherwise reserved to the pope

67 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 141r.

68 Ibid., fol. 144v–146v.

69 BNM, Lat. X 178 (= 3625), fol. 167r–v.

70 BNM, Lat. X 175 (= 3622), fol. 121v.

himself. These three examples illustrate the interests of the pope and the Papal Curia, as well as their real powers in the region. The pope could not make the king free an imprisoned archbishop or to prosecute a bishop in favour. Bohemia, then, could also mean a safe hiding place for a disobedient bishop. The real power of the pope did not reach so far and so deep. Even though the activities of the papal nuncio were always supported by the argument of the power invested in him by the Apostolic See and always formally respected by the king, the nuncio could not make the non-cooperative secular ruler to do what the pope wished. In this respect, even though the *libertas ecclesiastica* is frequently mentioned and even though the leading position of the Supreme Pontiff within the Church is undisputed, enforcing the pope's will *in partibus* might still be very limited if it does not concur with the will of the secular power. So, before the German Reformation and before the Fifth Lateran Council, the power of the pope was still limited, even though the progress since the times of the great councils of the west (Constance and Basel) was striking.

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