Anhalt and his network of powerful and cultured friends. When, in 1618, they rashly decided to resist the emperor, without dobut they expected the mobilization of massive foreign support for their cause, much as had been done in 1616 and 1617 for Venice. But there was a fatal flaw in their calculations. Although viewed from Amberg, or Prague, a correspondent with similar tastes and beliefs might appear a political ally in peacetime, events were to show that there was a wide gap between intent and action when it came to war; and likewise it became clear that, whereas support for an independent state was permissible among the nations of Europe, support for rebels was not.

CHAPTER II

The indecisive war, 1618–1629

The events of the 1620s present historians of the Thirty Years' War with their greatest problem. On the one hand, the unprecedented success of the Catholic powers must be explained; on the other, the tortuous course of the Protestants' road to defeat must also be analysed. The latter task is the more difficult, because of the fragmentation of the Protestants' efforts. Until 1621, to be sure, there was a single focus to the struggle – the question of Bohemia; but, in that year, the war between Spain and the Dutch Republic resumed and Protestant Sweden attacked Catholic Poland. Although the progress of both these new conflicts was intimately connected with the evolution of the war in Germany, on the whole, until the end of the decade, they were conducted separately. Furthermore, in 1624, France intervened for the first time: she became involved in two of the existing wars, and she started an entirely new one of her own, in northern Italy and the Alpine valleys. But her participation was always intermittent and unpredictable. First there were the internal disorders caused by dissident nobles and militant Protestants; then there were the struggles of various power-groups for control of affairs. Both made a consistent foreign policy almost impossible to implement.

But France by no means stood alone in inconsistency. Most of the states which intervened in the war at this time also felt doubt about their grounds for doing so. Some political leaders perceived an international conspiracy ranged against them, drawn up along confessional lines and aimed at extirpating not only their liberty but also the entire religion to which they belonged. Others, however, claimed that the war was fought only for the sake of Frederick of the Palatinate – either to win him the title 'king of Bohemia' or, later, to win back his Electoral status. Factions which espoused these rival views could be found at almost every court of Europe. In France, the Catholic extremists (known as the *dévots*) called for intervention in favour of the emperor in order

to stem the Protestant tide, while in England, the Puritan leaders in Parliament urged their reluctant king to fight manfully for 'the Protestant cause'.[1] It was the same elsewhere: in Spain, in the Netherlands, in Sweden, in the princely courts of Germany (even in those of the principal antagonists, Frederick and Ferdinand) the interventionists and the isolationists wrestled. And since both interpretations were justifiable, and indeed seemed from time to time to be justified by events, no individual faction was able to monopolize the foreign policy of its government for long. That is why the course of European diplomacy in the 1620s (and to a lesser extent in the 1630s) is littered with repudiated negotiations and unratified treaties. That is also why the history of the first decade of the Thirty Years' War, which will be surveyed in this chapter mainly from the Protestants' standpoint, is so impossibly complicated.

i The war for Bohemia

The Defensors appointed in 1609 to maintain the precarious religious balance in Bohemia summoned a meeting of the Estates of the realm for 5 March 1618 to discuss the regents' anti-Protestant policies. There was particular concern about the grant of crown lands (protected by the Letter of Majesty) to Catholic prelates (who were apparently not bound by the Letter). Since 132 'royal' parishes had been transferred to the archbishop of Prague alone since 1611, the status of such lands under the Letter of Majesty was a question of some significance. The Prague assembly accordingly sent an urgent petition to the emperor asking for a change of policy. Matthias refused, and instead called on the delegates to disperse. Although they did so, it was agreed that a further meeting should be held in two months to consider developments. On 23 May, after only two days of debate, the assembly was again ordered to disperse at once. Since the command, which appeared to be unconstitutional (such meetings were certainly permitted by the royal concessions of 1609 and 1611), emanated from the council of regents which sat in the Hradschin, the incensed delegates marched to the palace, entered the council chamber, and (in conscious imitation of the events that began the Hussite revolution in 1418) hurled two of the most outspoken Catholic regents, and their secretary, out of the window. Next, the delegates appointed a provisional government of thirty-six Directors and authorized the levy of a small army, as had been done in 1611. For the third time in ten years, the Bohemians were in revolt.

News of the 'defenestration of Prague' struck most European courts like a bolt from the blue. All the diplomats attached to the Imperial court had followed Matthias from Prague to Vienna at the end of 1617, and so their dispatches over the winter contained scarcely a hint of the worsening crisis in Bohemia. When they heard the news, they tended to overreact. The Spanish ambassador, Count Oñate (who had only been in that post for one year), believed at first that 'The gravity of the offence, and the ease with which they have attained their object, will make them resolve to finish off what they have begun.' And his letters to Madrid – where news of the defenestration only arrived on 6 July – continued to exude an atmosphere of panic. By January 1619 Oñate had decided that only the arrival of a substantial Spanish army could save Bohemia: 'It seems to be necessary for Your Majesty to consider which will be of greater service to you,' he chided, 'the loss of these provinces or the dispatch of an army of fifteen to twenty thousand men to settle the matter.'[1]

It is unlikely that even these desperate pleas would have produced a favourable response in Madrid, had the king's council not come under the domination, at just this time, of the formidable Don Balthasar de Zúñiga. After distinguished service in the army (including the Armada campaign) and a long spell as ambassador in Brussels, Paris, Rome and (latterly) Vienna, Zúñiga had returned to Madrid in 1617, where he began to speak with unimpeachable authority concerning the affairs of northern Europe. Although his brief period of power appears, in the history books, as no more than an interlude between the more colourful supremacies of Lerma and Olivares, from early in 1618 until his death late in 1622 Zúñiga's first-hand knowledge of the terrain and the personalities involved were used to justify his own innovative foreign policy and to defeat that of his rivals, led by the duke of Lerma. For twenty years the duke had managed both Philip III and his government, but now his grip was failing. First he had yielded the role of royal favourite to his own son; now his decisions on Spain's overseas policies were being questioned. The man who had amassed a personal fortune of 44 million thalers (equivalent to Philip III's entire income for five years), and had built two palaces and founded eleven monasteries, three university chairs and two collegiate churches, was now publicly attacked for corruption. One of his principal advisers was arrested for

murder and malversation of public funds. As protection against similar misfortunes, Lerma in the spring of 1618 decided to enter the church (securing a cardinalate), and he became anxious to retire from secular office. But before he went, he tried to salvage a project dear to his heart: the dispatch of a major naval expedition to Algiers.

The pirate kingdom of Algiers had been a thorn in Spain's side for almost a century, but in the early seventeenth century piratical attacks on shipping and raids on coastal settlements attained an unprecedented ferocity. The Madrid government therefore agreed that a major North African campaign would be undertaken in 1618; but now Zúñiga called for aid to Vienna instead. Clearly Spain could not afford both campaigns, especially not with the costly wars over Mantua and the uzkoks: a major decision on priorities became unavoidable. In July 1618, Lerma and his allies tried to prevent the dispatch of 200,000 thalers to the emperor, on the (entirely plausible) grounds that it would encourage him to take a firmer stand which might result in a prolonged war. Lerma lost. He lost again in September when, despite strong opposition, another 500,000 thalers were dispatched to Vienna; and he lost finally in January 1619 when the king reluctantly decided that the Algiers campaign would have to be abandoned in favour of aid to Vienna:

> Because it would be impossible to commit ourselves to both enterprises, and because of the risks involved, . . . if the aid to Bohemia is delayed, . . . it seems unavoidable that we must see to the latter.[2]

In May 1619 a force of 7,000 veterans from the Spanish Army of Flanders therefore marched across the Empire to Vienna, and by the end of Philip's reign (in March 1621) some 40,000 of his troops were assisting the Austrian Habsburgs. There was also a steady supply of money: 3.4 million thalers by July 1619; 6 million by the end of 1624.[3]

Spain's decisive stance, which was fully endorsed by the Archdukes in Brussels, encouraged the German Catholics to sink their differences and reactivate their League under the sole direction of Maximilian of Bavaria. Some Catholic princes declared their sympathies at once. The archbishop of Salzburg, for example, entertained Archduke Ferdinand in July 1619, on his way to the Electoral meeting at Frankfurt, with a military display, a waterfolly, a performance of Peri's *Orfeo* and – most important of all – a loan of 40,000 thalers.[4] But most other Catholics still hesitated to declare their support for Ferdinand in his struggle

against the Bohemian rebels: most hoped to remain neutral, and only renewed fears that a 'Protestant international' existed forced their hand.

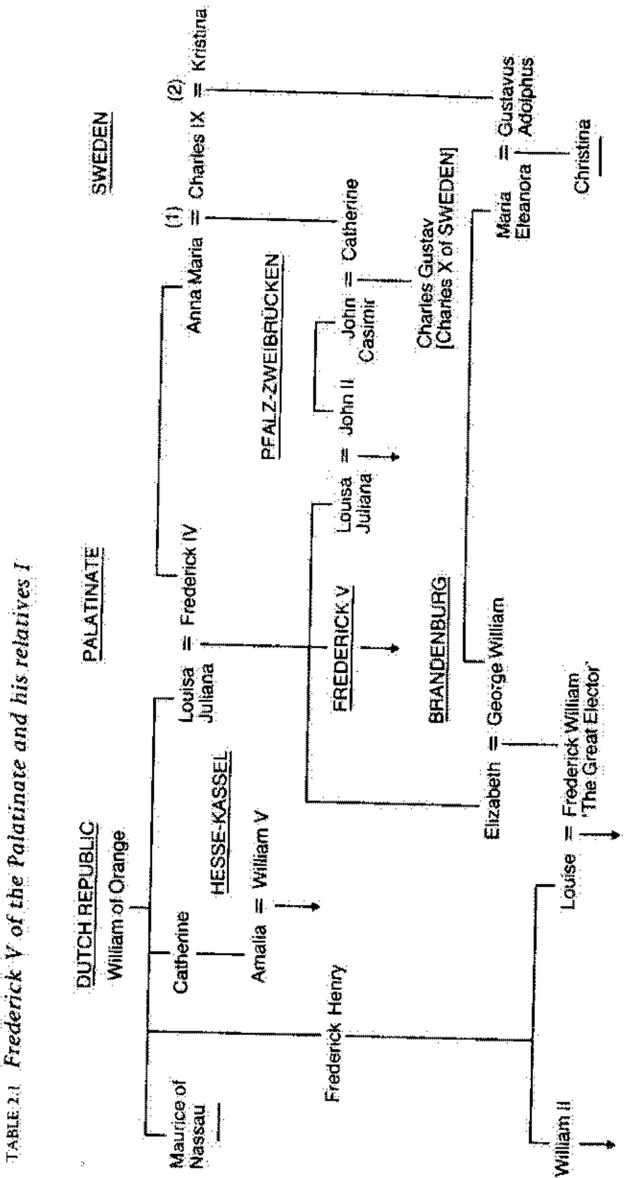
The wars over the uzkoks and Mantua, which were drawing to a close at the time of the defenestration of Prague, had already created important links between various anti-Habsburg powers. The news from Bohemia kept them in being. The duke of Savoy wrote, as soon as he heard the news, to the Elector Palatine to offer the services of the regiment Mansfeld had raised for him, through the good offices of the Protestant Union, the previous year. In August 1618 Frederick gratefully accepted and the Savoyard troops moved to Germany to await developments.[5] For a considerable period, they waited alone. The Protestant leaders – Frederick, Anhalt, Ansbach – were as surprised by the events in Bohemia as everyone else. Although they had considered the possibility of the Elector Palatine becoming king of Bohemia after Matthias, the pre-election of Ferdinand by the Estates seemed to settle the question of who ruled in Prague for at least another generation. Now, in mid-June, the Bohemian Estates wrote to the Protestant Union, asking to be admitted as full members and requesting military assistance. They hinted that the reward for timely aid would be the election of the Union's leader – Frederick – as their king, in place of Ferdinand. Unfortunately, this same hint was dropped to more than one aspirant – the hopes of the duke of Savoy, Bethlen Gabor of Transylvania, the Elector of Saxony and Frederick of the Palatinate were all raised – and the Bohemians' duplicity was gleefully made public by the Habsburgs, who seem to have intercepted and deciphered almost every letter leaving Prague for a foreign destination. But, for a time, indiscretion was immaterial: the rebellion prospered. In the summer of 1618, Lusatia, Silesia and Upper Austria joined Bohemia; and, in the summer of 1619, so did Moravia and Lower Austria. Only Hungary stood aloof, but the forces of Bethlen Gabor could be relied on to overcome loyalist elements there. In September 1618 Mansfeld and the duke of Savoy's regiment captured the stronghold of Pilsen. In May 1619 the army of the confederates, under Heinrich Matthias, Count Thurn (who had played a leading role in the defenestration) marched on Vienna and laid siege to it. At the same time, Christian of Anhalt visited Turin and persuaded the duke of Savoy to increase his financial support for the cause, while the Dutch and Venetian Republics talked about a mutual defence pact against Spain. But these successes alarmed the Catholics, and by June 1619 Ferdinand had secured enough support to permit an invasion of Bohemia.

The end of the uzkok war had freed the troops of the archduke for service further north, and throughout 1618 units were marched up to garrison the few towns that remained loyal. But there were still only 13,000 men, one-third of them in Spanish pay, and Ferdinand's principal commander, Count Bucquoy, urged his master to raise troops abroad – in the Spanish Netherlands (where Bucquoy had served his apprenticeship), in Lorraine, in Italy, in Croatia. Now, in the summer of 1619, with the aid of the subsidies from Spain and the papacy, the Imperial army numbered some 30,000 men, with reinforcements promised from Tuscany, Spanish Lombardy and the Spanish Netherlands. On 10 June, Bucquoy routed Mansfeld and his regiment at Záblatí in southern Bohemia, and cut off communications between Prague and Thurn's army around Vienna. The siege was lifted almost at once. Almost as serious for the rebel cause as these strategic reverses was the loss of their principal foreign supporter. Mansfeld's field chancery was captured by the Imperialists, revealing in detail the duke of Savoy's dealings with the Bohemians, the Dutch, the Venetians and the English. The embarrassed duke – already aware that he would not be elected king of Bohemia – hastily ended his subsidies (which had already cost him almost 40,000 thalers). But the rebellion continued without him. On 31 July 1619 the Estates of the crown of Bohemia signed a mutual pact of 100 articles, which created a federal union; shortly afterwards they signed a special treaty of alliance with the Estates of Upper and Lower Austria. On 22 August, the confederates solemnly deposed Ferdinand as their king and, despite support in some quarters for the rulers of Transylvania and Saxony, on the 26th they decided by an overwhelming majority to offer the crown to Frederick of the Palatinate.

It was in many ways an odd choice. Although part of Frederick's inheritance – the Upper Palatinate – bordered on Bohemia, it was a part he had rarely visited. Moreover Frederick was neither wealthy nor experienced. In 1622 a hostile observer, beleaguered for the Protestant cause in Frankenthal, questioned the wisdom of electing 'a man who had never seen either a battle or a corpse, . . . a prince who knew more about gardening than fighting'.[6] But three years previously this had seemed irrelevant: Frederick was one of the best-connected princes in Protestant Europe (see Table 2). It any ruler could mobilize confessional support, it was he.

Nonetheless, in August and September 1619, the young Elector was in a quandary, and his counsellors prepared conflicting papers of advice concerning the Bohemians' offer. The native

TABLE 2.1 *Frederick V of the Palatinate and his relatives I*



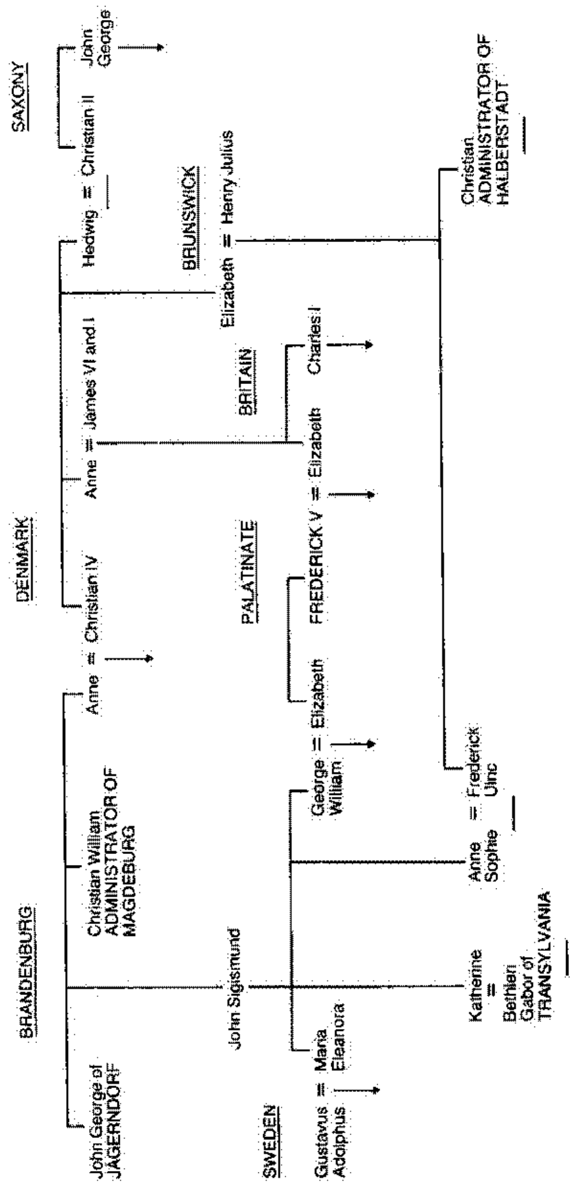


TABLE 2.2 *Frederick V of the Palatinate and his relatives II*

Palatine advisers on the whole concluded that, although there were several reasons in favour of acceptance, there were even more reasons against – including the probability that 'acceptance would begin a general religious war'. But the others, led by Anhalt and Camerarius, argued that war would come in any case: a general war seemed inevitable on the termination of the Twelve Years' Truce in the Netherlands, while everywhere there was evidence of a militant Catholic alliance, aimed at the destruction of Protestantism throughout central Europe. If the Bohemian revolt were suppressed, Camerarius and his friends argued, the kingdom's religious liberty would be ended; how long after that could the Protestants of Germany feel safe? It was a weighty consideration which was shared by many responsible foreign observers. Dudley Carleton, England's ambassador in The Hague, observed in September 1619 that 'this business of Bohemia is like to put all Christendom in combustion', and noted the Dutch leaders' deduction that 'since the revolution of the world is like to carry us out of this peaceable time, it is better to begin the change with advantage than with disadvantage'. For, if Bohemia were to be 'neglected and by consequence suppressed, the princes of the religion adjoining are like to bear the burden of a victorious army . . . Where it will stay', he added gloomily, 'God knows, being pushed on by the Jesuits and commanded by the new emperor, who flatters himself with prophecies of extirpating the reformed religion and restoring the Roman Church to the ancient greatness.'[7]

But by then the cause of Bohemia was again making good headway. Late in August, overcoming his chagrin at not being elected, Bethlen Gabor began the conquest of Habsburg Hungary. On 5 September he captured Košiče, the capital of the eastern division of the kingdom, and was chosen 'protector of Hungary' by the Diet. News of this success seems to have tipped the scales for Frederick. Although he was, as he confessed to his wife at this time, 'in agony about what to do', on 28 September he accepted the Bohemian crown. The opportunity, he proclaimed, 'is a divine calling which I must not disobey. My only end is to serve God and His church.' And, for a time, it seemed as if the Lord had heard His servant. On 13 October, Bethlen defeated the last Habsburg army in Hungary, commanded by Ferdinand's brother Leopold, and soon afterwards entered the capital, Bratislava. From there, in November, the Transylvanians moved up the Danube, joining forces with Thurn's army in November to lay siege to Vienna a second time. Offers of further support arrived from several quarters. In December an envoy arrived in Bratislava

from the new Turkish sultan, Osman II, offering military aid against the Habsburgs; and, after long arguments about the freedom of trade in the Adriatic, the Venetian and Dutch Republics signed a fifteen-year alliance during which each side promised to pay the other 30,000 thalers a month in case of attack.[8]

The political situation was now clearly out of hand, and many statesmen feared for the future. On 28 August 1619, at Frankfurt, the seven Imperial Electors decided to play safe and unanimously chose Archduke Ferdinand as the next Holy Roman Emperor. It was the most significant election since that of Charles V, exactly a century earlier, and the first since then to be seriously disputed. John George of Saxony, whose borders adjoined Bohemia and the Upper Palatinate, only agreed to vote for Ferdinand when, a week before the election, he was given a guarantee by the Brussels government that 'in case the Elector should be molested by the Bohemians, he will be aided and assisted by the troops that His Majesty [Philip III of Spain] has in Germany and, if it should be necessary, but some of the troops in this army also'.[9]

Some experienced observers hoped that the events at Frankfurt would bring about an end to the crisis in the Empire – and, indeed, in September the Army of Flanders stood down the troops which had been mobilized along the German frontier during the election. But Frederick's simultaneous acceptance of the Bohemian crown re-established the tension. So, from Frankfurt, Emperor Ferdinand went down to Munich, accompanied by the Spanish ambassador, Count Oñate, and a senior official of the Elector of Cologne, to discuss with Maximilian of Bavaria what assistance the newly reconstituted Catholic League could give to the Habsburg cause. Since the German Catholics were not prepared to intervene except with Spanish aid, the initiative rested almost entirely with Oñate; and he acted decisively. Without waiting to receive instructions from Madrid or Brussels, the ambassador promised the immediate dispatch of 1,000 cavalry troopers from the Netherlands to join the League, the transfer of substantial reinforcements from Spanish Italy to Austria, and the intervention in the Rhineland of a major army from the Low Countries. But Maximilian demanded still more, in return for a promise to commit the army of the League fully against Bohemia. So the ingenious Oñate persuaded Ferdinand to offer the duke not only a cash indemnity and a guarantee that the Habsburgs would play no part in League affairs, but also possession of any part of the Palatinate conquered by the League, and a promise that the Electoral dignity would be transferred from Frederick of the

Palatine to Bavaria. Since both men belonged to the Wittelsbach family, Oñate argued, and since Bavaria had some claim in law to both the land and the title, the transfer could be effected relatively easily. More practically, he added, Maximilian's armies would probably not make enough headway against the Protestant alliance to be able to claim these further rewards. So the treaty of Munich was signed on 8 October 1619, and on 5 December the leaders of the Catholic League authorized the levy of 25,000 troops, to be used as Maximilian thought fit.

Much had been promised by Oñate in the name of Spain, at a time when the governments in Madrid and Brussels were increasingly concerned with preparations for a new war with the Dutch. Zúñiga, at least, candidly admitted that he no longer knew whether the Twelve Years' Truce should be renewed or not. 'To convince ourselves that we can conquer the Dutch is to seek the impossible, to delude ourselves,' he lamented in April 1619, as he struggled to make the right decision.

> To those who put all blame for our troubles on to the Truce, and foresee great benefits from breaking it, we can say for certain that whether we end it or not we shall always be at a disadvantage. Affairs can get to a certain stage where every decision taken is for the worst, not through lack of good advice but because the situation is so desperate that no remedy can conceivably be found.

Spain's chief minister was scarcely more optimistic when he looked at the position in Germany:

> The situation demands [he claimed] that we should make all those supreme efforts that are normally made when one is confronted by total disaster, attempting to raise all possible resources to provide the archduke with what he is asking for, and attending to all the other matters in so far as it is humanly possible.

These and many other expressions of profound and complete disillusion in the last years of Philip III's reign read like quotations from a Calderonian tragedy.[10] For Zúñiga saw his dilemma all too clearly: unless Spain intervened massively in support for Ferdinand, the rebels would win, giving the Protestants control of the Empire and undermining Spain's position in Italy and the Netherlands; and yet, if massive aid were forthcoming, it might well provoke another conflict that would last as long as the Low Countries' War, if not (as some argued) for ever.[11]

But it was now too late for Spain to withdraw from Germany.

An agitated dispatch from Oñate, besieged in Vienna for a second time by the Transylvanian and confederate armies, arrived in Madrid early in 1620. The letter insisted yet again that, if the Austrian Habsburgs were to be saved, aid for Ferdinand was required on an unprecedented scale. Once more the ambassador's agitated voice could not be ignored, and it seemed to Philip III's council that the most effective way to take the pressure off Vienna was to mount a diversionary attack on the Rhine Palatinate. This would, in addition, make it more likely that the terms of the 'Oñate treaty' with Ferdinand would be implemented, delivering Alsace to Spain; and it would free the army of the League to campaign in Bohemia without fear of an attack from the rear. Accordingly, after some debate on size and timing, it was decided that, in the spring of 1620, an army of 20,000 veterans would march under the personal command of Ambrosio Spínola, from the Low Countries into the Palatinate. A crucial step in turning 'the revolt of Bohemia' into 'the Thirty Years' War' had been taken.

It was ironic that, because of the postal delays between Austria and Spain, Philip III's fateful decision was taken some time after the threat to Vienna had been lifted. On 27 November 1619, Bethlen Gabor received news that a large army from Poland had entered Upper Hungary and had cut his communications with Transylvania. In fact the report was greatly exaggerated, but it was enough to ruin the siege of Vienna: Bethlen hurried back to Hungary, so Thurn had to return to Bohemia. Although the Hungarian Diet at Bratislava elected the Transylvanian their 'prince' on 15 January 1620, his situation remained unfavourable. Bethlen had supported a large army for five months, although his principality was poor (it exported only cattle, salt and quicksilver, and a substantial portion of its wealth was surrendered every year in tribute to the sultan). To some, the prince's campaign had always seemed 'a torrent without a source'; and without urgent financial assistance from the rebel government in Prague, it was doomed to dry up.[12] But the confederates' resources were as depleted as Bethlen's own: they could not pay the 400,000 thalers that he demanded. Moreover the prince's chief asset had always been his vaunted role as mediator of Turkish aid to Ferdinand's enemies. Now Habsburg diplomats had persuaded the sultan to withdraw his support from the confederate cause, while the outbreak of hostilities between the Turks and Poland in 1619–21 prevented any Ottoman campaign up the Danube. So when an Imperial delegation offered a nine months' truce, which left Bethlen in temporary possession of his Hungarian conquests, the

prince was pleased to accept (20 January 1620).

The neutralization of Transylvania was just one part of a careful campaign to isolate the rebels. Not only had Spain been persuaded to contribute men and money on a grand scale to the emperor (and, after April 1620, to the League, too); aid was also received from several Italian princes. The pope arranged a monthly subsidy of 8,000 thalers to Vienna from July 1618 and, by the end of the year 1620, 304,000 thalers had been dispatched; over the same period a further 204,000 were sent to the army of the League. Genoa also sent financial contributions and Tuscany sent troops. To be sure, Savoy and Venice were hostile but, alone, these two powers could do little. The only cause for alarm, in Habsburg eyes, was the promise of Dutch aid to Bohemia.

On several occasions in 1618 the States-General, the ruling body of the Dutch Republic, debated whether to accede to the confederates' request for assistance; but each time they declined. Their caution was well-founded: throughout the year, the Republic was paralysed by the struggle between the Estates of Holland, led by their Advocate, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, and the Estates of the other provinces, led by Maurice of Nassau, the captain-general. Early in 1619 with Oldenbarnevelt arrested and his supporters scattered, the purged States-General resolved to provide a monthly subsidy of 25,000 thalers – but only for three months, and only as long as the Bohemians kept on fighting and the Dutch Republic remained at peace. In the event, the subsidy was continued (with great reluctance, and in the teeth of opposition from one or more of the inland provinces) until December 1620; but the States-General refused until it was too late to send troops into Germany either to aid Frederick of the Palatinate or to protect the Union. Worse still, although the States agreed that 'they will take such course by way of diversion that the Spanish troops in those provinces under the Archduke shall not be spared or have commodity to be employed into Germany', in fact they did nothing of the sort. Until almost the last moment they were fooled by Spínola into believing that his army's destination was Prague and not the Palatinate; and, when they realized the truth, the lack of support from England and the Protestant Union prevented any effective counteraction.[13]

After some hesitation, James I made public his distaste for the Bohemian venture of his son-in-law in the autumn of 1619. He refused to support attempts to collect money for Frederick's cause; he attempted to set himself up as a mediator between the two sides; and he urged the Union to remain aloof. But the Union was already in disarray. At a meeting in June 1619, the members

resolved to raise an army of 11,000 men, but simply for defence against the League – 'to protect liberty and law' and 'to maintain our religion like true patriots'. But they would go no further, because 'one should not oppose the House of Austria lightly', especially not 'without either troops or money from England'.[14] At a further meeting of the Union in November, only the margraves of Ansbach and Baden supported Frederick's decision to accept the Bohemian crown (although others expressed readiness to defend themselves against the League). Other Protestant princes were equally cautious. Apart from the dukes of Saxe-Weimar, only the Calvinist Elector of Brandenburg offered encouragement, and he died at Christmas 1619. His young successor, George William, even though married to Frederick's sister, was unable to persuade the Lutheran Estates to continue his father's defiant policy. Since Brandenburg's public debt was one of the largest in Germany, without new taxes prudence was the only policy. The finances of John George of Saxony were scarcely better, a fact which the Catholic princes exploited to the full. At an Electoral meeting at Mühlhausen, called early in 1620 to prevent the 'Bohemian fire' from spreading into Germany, the Catholic Electors (including Ferdinand) promised that there would be no attempt to regain by force the secularized church lands in the Upper or Lower Saxon Circles until the princes in possession had received a legal hearing – always provided that those princes loyally supported the emperor. John George seemed reassured by the 'Mühlhausen guarantee' (20 March 1620), and so the emperor followed it with the offer of Lusatia as a pledge if the Elector would raise an army and capture it from the rebels. John George immediately agreed.

The final blow to the Protestant cause was dealt by France. Louis XIII had suffered rebellion and difficulties himself at the hands of his Protestant subjects, and he was therefore at first full of sympathy for Ferdinand's plight. At one point he impetuously offered to lead an army to aid his cousin. Although this resolve did not last, a high-powered diplomatic mission, led by the duke of Angoulême, was dispatched to Germany instead. Angoulême made first for Ulm, where the army of the League, under Maximilian of Bavaria's personal command, jockeyed for position with the troops of the Union under the margrave of Ansbach. Angoulême persuaded the two commanders to sign an undertaking to desist from mutual hostilities at once, and to withdraw their forces (the treaty of Ulm, 3 July 1620). He expected to negotiate a similar agreement between the emperor and Frederick, and moved on to Vienna; but here he was unsuccessful.

The cease-fire agreed at Ulm had given the emperor a decisive advantage, and he intended to use it: the Union army was compelled to meet Spínola's approaching host from the Netherlands; but the forces of the League, by contrast, were free to assist Ferdinand in the east. Accordingly, on 17 July, just a fortnight after the treaty of Ulm, an army of 30,000 League troops (which included many notable volunteers, the philosopher Descartes among them) was led by Count Tilly into Upper Austria. Within two weeks, the duchy had fallen and Tilly joined forces with the Imperialists under Bucquoy, now masters of Lower Austria. In the north, the Saxons occupied Lusatia with scarcely a blow (only Bautzen resisted – see Plate 4); while, in the west, Spínola made a leisurely progress through the Palatinate. The Union forces were heavily outnumbered and only small contingents reached them from England and the Netherlands. Small wonder that the duke of Angoulême's efforts to interest Ferdinand in peace talks fell flat: there was 'nothing more to be gained from treaties', the duke was informed, since the emperor was 'resolved to secure complete obedience from his subjects, and this could only be assured by the sword'.[15] Accordingly the troops under Tilly and Bucquoy, with the duke of Bavaria in attendance, advanced inexorably into Bohemia, seeking a decisive engagement with the enemy's main army (jointly commanded by Anhalt, Mansfeld and Thurn). On 8 November 1620 the rebels made a desperate stand on the White Mountain, just beyond the walls of Prague. It took only an hour for the Catholics to secure a total victory. The revolt of Bohemia was over.

ii Europe and the Palatine war

> The loss of soldiers was not much unequal, but the loss of cannon, the baggage, reputation, is the Imperialists' victory who, as it seems, hold Bohemia now by conquest, and all immunities [and] privileges [are now] void. And if a new establishment by petition shall be obtained, it will be only the Law of the Conqueror, who doth already finely call those of the [Protestant] Religion to account for what they have, and put it into safe keeping; so that they taste already their condition to come.[1]