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## Predatory Protectors? Conflict and Cooperation in the Suppression of the German Peasants' Revolt of 1525

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Although the primary burden of suppressing the 1525 German peasants' revolt was assumed by the Swabian League, many individual princes raised military forces and mounted campaigns on their own against the rebels, with varying degrees of success. For those princes who did so, the rebellion offered opportunities to assert their authority over disputed areas and jurisdictions at the expense of rulers, primarily ecclesiastical princes and prelates, who had no such forces available due to financial difficulties and the speed with which the revolt had spread. The ground for exploiting such opportunities was usually the need to "protect" the power and authority of the rulers involved. The result was frequently the opposite. Thus, despite many attempts to arrange cooperation among the princes in the areas of the uprising, the suppression campaigns often resulted in increased tension between rulers and major disputes over allegedly protective actions taken against the rebels by princes at the expense of their neighbors.

MOST MODERN RESEARCH into the great German Peasants' Revolt of 1525 has concentrated almost exclusively upon the rebels. The motives, ideas, grievances, demands, policies, goals, organization, and actions of the peasants have been analyzed exhaustively and repeatedly. The failure of the rebellion has been explained primarily by focusing upon the alleged weaknesses of the rebels, ranging from lack of unity and cooperation to the absence of experienced leadership.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the successful campaigns to suppress the rebellion, waged primarily by the territorial princes confronted with the revolt, have received relatively little recent attention.<sup>2</sup> Yet the strains created by these campaigns and by the differing responses of ruling

<sup>1</sup>Cf. James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants' War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 34.

<sup>2</sup>Tom Scott and Bob Scribner provide the best short narrative of the suppression campaigns in English in the introduction to their document collection, *The German Peasants' War: A History in Documents* (New York: Humanities Press, 1991), 19–53. G. Franz, *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg*, 10th ed. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), is still the most complete discussion of the campaigns. For studies of individual campaigns, it is usually necessary to turn to much older and more limited regional works such as J. Jörg, *Deutschland in der Revolutionsperiode, 1522–1526* (Freiburg: Herder, 1851); C. Jäger, *Markgraf Casimir und der Bauernkrieg in den südlichen Grenzämtern des Fürstentums unterhalb des Gebirgs* (Nuremberg: Kgl. Bayer. Hofbuchdruckerei/G.P.J. Bieling-Dietz, 1892), or W. Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg und der Kanzler Dr. Leonhard von Eck, das Haupt des schwäbischen Bundes* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1883) which, though useful, are not always as accurate as they could be. (To use Vogt's nevertheless valuable book as an example, Leonhard von Eck was neither chancellor nor the head of the Swabian League.)

authorities to the rebel threat often significantly altered political relationships in the areas affected by the revolt.

The Swabian League, the alliance which eventually assumed principal responsibility for suppressing the rebellion, did not have the resources to meet simultaneous revolts in the lands of many of its members. Therefore, each petty ruler was thrown upon his own resources. Each felt that his needs were greatest. Each frantically requested aid from neighboring rulers to put down the revolt, while refusing similar requests from others. Cooperation against the rebels was often attempted, but only occasionally effectively achieved because of differing priorities, disagreements over strategy, and suspicions about other rulers' intentions. Existing mutual aid alliances were frequently disregarded or "reinterpreted" to the advantage of the stronger participant. Some rulers adopted a hard-line policy; some opened negotiations with the rebels or even joined them under duress; some fled; some did nothing, relying upon the good offices of others to save them from the rebellions. Some even saw the revolt as an opportunity to settle old scores with their neighbors, or to seize the initiative in expanding their territorial and jurisdictional claims. Although they often justified their measures by the alleged need to protect their weaker neighbors, their actions were more predatory aggression than protective assistance. By the time the smoke had cleared, the revolt had been successfully suppressed, but serious issues among the victors often remained unsettled.

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Since the peasants' revolt was not confined to the territories of a single ruler, initial responsibility for its suppression fell upon the Swabian League, a peace-keeping alliance which included many of the territorial princes, imperial cities, imperial prelates, and imperial nobles of southern and central German lands. The League, which included in its constitution articles explicitly empowering it to act against rebellion in the territories of its members,<sup>3</sup> could require members to contribute military forces to a League army. The size of each member's contribution was determined by negotiation when the member joined the League, taking into account his financial and military resources. Most members strove to reduce the size of their required contribution and complained bitterly about the potential burden which would result should the League's full military forces be called up.<sup>4</sup>

In the fall of 1524 when it first took formal notice of the spreading disorders among the peasants of the Black Forest region, the Swabian League Council had extended its emergency response system, which empowered a special nine-member committee to mobilize the League's forces in fractional increments, to

<sup>3</sup>Johann Philipp Datt, *Volumen rerum Germanicarum novum sive de pace imperii publica* (Ulm: Kühnen, 1698), 408, 414.

<sup>4</sup>For a complete discussion of the League's military and constitutional structure, see T. F. Sea, "The Swabian League and Government in the Holy Roman Empire of the Early Sixteenth Century," in *Aspects of Late Medieval Government and Society. Essays presented to J. R. Lander*, ed. J. G. Rowe (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 247–76.

cover instances of peasant disobedience. Nevertheless, despite appeals for aid from Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in late 1524, the emergency committee was reluctant to issue mobilization orders until the entire League Council had considered the situation. It was not until the second week of February 1525 that the first one-third mobilization was ordered. A second one-third followed the next week as the situation worsened rapidly. A third one-third, levied in money instead of troops to speed up the process, occurred at the end of the first week in March, with a final one-third being called at the end of March just before hostilities broke out. Members were also assessed in late February for a special payment of 25,000 gulden to finance the recruitment of mercenaries in addition to members' troops. Thus, by the end of March 1525, League members had been required to assume major financial and military burdens in order to suppress the rebellion. The vast majority of these burdens fell upon the sixteen princely League members.<sup>5</sup>

Most of these League members had sent troop contingents to the League before the revolt had spread to their lands. The rapid growth of the peasant movement took them completely by surprise. The immediate response was to demand the return of their forces from the League army. This the Swabian League Council steadfastly refused to allow, arguing that the best hope for effectively subduing the rebellions lay in maintaining the League forces intact. Requests for the return of their troops from the count palatine, the princes of the Upper Palatinate, Landgrave Philip of Hesse, and Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach were all turned down with little ceremony in spite of the vehement protests of these princes' representatives.<sup>6</sup> Thwarted in their attempts to regain the forces which

<sup>5</sup>Princes' troops accounted for approximately two-thirds of the required military contributions of League members. If all League members had responded in full to the successive mobilization orders of four one-thirds, the League army would have consisted of about 1,800 horse and 11,000 foot. See K. Klüpfel, ed., *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Schwäbischen Bundes (1488–1533)*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Literar. Verein, 1846, 1853), 2:60–62, for the troop assessments of individual League members in early 1526 (Klüpfel misdates this document to 1512, but the inclusion of the archbishop of Salzburg, who joined the League in late 1525, means that the list can only come from that time or later. Also the list includes a changed assessment for the bishop of Würzburg, which occurred in September 1525. Cf. W. Vogt, ed., "Die Correspondenz des schwäbischen Bundeshauptmanns Ulrich Artzt von Augsburg aus die Jahren 1524–27: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs in Schwaben," *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für Schwaben und Neuburg* 6 (1879), 7 (1880), 9 (1882), 10 (1883); here 10 (1883): no. 675. The actual response was far from perfect, with the numbers for the League army probably ranging from 1,400 to 1,500 horse and about 6,000 to 7,000 foot. The best account of the Swabian League's policies and operations during this key period is Horst Karl, "Der Schwäbische Bund," *Der Bauernkrieg in Oberschwaben*, ed. Elmar L. Kuhn (Tübingen: Bibliotheca Academica Verlag, 2000), 421–43, esp. 425–30. Less useful is C. Greiner, "Die Politik des Schwäbischen Bundes während des Bauernkrieges 1524/1525 bis zum Vertrag von Weingarten," *Zeitschrift des Historischen Vereins für Schwaben und Neuburg* 68 (1974): 7–94. For the rationale behind the League's actions, cf. Thomas F. Sea, "The Swabian League and Peasant Disobedience before the German Peasants' War of 1525," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30 (1999): 89–111.

<sup>6</sup>Count palatine: Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 7:260–61, no. 193; Upper Palatinate: Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 6:385, no. 143 (refusal); Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Abteilung 2, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, Munich (hereafter, BGStA); K. Blau 341/11b, 202 (request); Hesse: O. Merx, "Der Bauernkrieg in den Stiftern Fulda und Hersfeld und Landgraf Philipp der Grossmütige," *Zeitschrift des*

they had raised with considerable expense and difficulty, and increasingly discontented with the inability of the Swabian League to come to their aid immediately, many princes sought help from their neighbors by attempting to create new agreements and alliances for mutual aid.

Cooperation between neighboring princes was common from the beginning of the rebellion, of course. Officials of the dukes of Bavaria, for example, were ordered to coordinate their patrols with those of the archduke of Austria, the Upper Palatinate princes, and, to a lesser extent, with the forces of Margrave Casimir.<sup>7</sup> Upon his foray into the territories of the bishop of Augsburg to punish the rebels, Duke Ludwig of Bavaria was met by representatives of the bishop and cathedral chapter who pointed out to him the villages which had remained faithful or voluntarily returned to obedience, so that only those who were still in rebellion would be punished.<sup>8</sup> The count palatine and the archbishop of Trier combined their forces to march against the rebels in May.<sup>9</sup> Landgrave Philip of Hesse, Elector Johann of Saxony, and Duke George of Saxony reached an agreement for common patrols to prevent further uprisings after they had defeated the peasants at Mühlhausen.<sup>10</sup> Occasionally, cooperation between princes even took the form of financial aid, as in the loans of the archbishop of Salzburg to the dukes of Bavaria for the support of their troops.<sup>11</sup>

However, the results obtained from such measures were haphazard and ineffective. Traditional distrust and rivalries hindered complete cooperation between princes, and the uncertainties of the situation created additional suspicions. Thus, Bavarian League Council representative Leonhard von Eck warned the dukes of Bavaria not to help Margrave Casimir, as he was suspected of having taken no action against the rebellion at first in the hope of benefiting from the difficulties of neighboring ecclesiastical princes.<sup>12</sup> The dukes themselves instructed their commanders to respond to calls for help from the Upper Palatinate or Brandenburg-Ansbach, but to ignore any such requests from the counts of Öttingen.<sup>13</sup> The Upper Palatinate princes presented formal complaints to the Swabian League Council about the failure of their neighbors to help as required in the League's

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*Vereins für hessische Geschichte und Landeskunde*, n.f. 28 (1904): 296 (Philip argued that he "shouldn't be required to put out the fire in someone else's lands when his own were burning"); Brandenburg: Bavarian Hauptstaatsarchiv, Abteilung I: Allgemeines Staatsarchiv, Munich (hereafter BHStA), Kriegs-akten 72, fol. 68 (Casimir also urged the dukes of Bavaria to recall their troops from the League forces).

<sup>7</sup>With Austria: BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 114, 184, 215–16, 316. With the Upper Palatinate: BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 148–49; Kriegsakten 70, fols. 11–13. Regarding help for Margrave Casimir, see BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 246, 267; Kriegsakten 73, fols. 13, 15.

<sup>8</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fol. 355. See also Kriegsakten 71, fols. 168–69, for earlier cooperation attempts between Bavaria and the bishop.

<sup>9</sup>K. Hartfelder, *Zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Südwestdeutschland* (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta, 1884), 191.

<sup>10</sup>Scott and Scribner, eds., *German Peasants' War*, 169, no. 62.

<sup>11</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 292–94; Kriegsakten 74, fols. 5, 281–83, 288–90.

<sup>12</sup>Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 456.

<sup>13</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fols. 238–39.

constitution.<sup>14</sup> Austrian troops intended for use against the rebels were actually expelled from the Bavarian city of Rosenheim by ducal command, although they had originally been allowed into the city.<sup>15</sup> In the chaotic conditions which prevailed during the rebellion, some more organized plans for cooperative efforts were obviously necessary.

Several princes, realizing this, came forward with plans for meetings to reach agreement on concerted actions among themselves against the uprisings. One of the first such proposals came from Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in late March, while the Swabian League was still debating whether to act against the rebels. Writing to the dukes of Bavaria, Ferdinand argued that the dilatoriness of the League Council made it necessary for the princes to meet personally to review their alternatives in dealing with the rebellion.<sup>16</sup> The importance attached to such a meeting, proposed for the town of Muhlendorff in early April, was shown by Ferdinand's insistence upon the personal presence of the princes whom he contacted, so that policy decisions reached could be implemented immediately.<sup>17</sup> Personal attendance effectively restricted the participation in the meeting to the princes from only a limited area. Still further limitations were established by not contacting princes who had no effective military forces of their own. Thus, as plans for the Muhlendorff meeting evolved, only Archduke Ferdinand, the dukes of Bavaria, the princes of the Upper Palatinate, and Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg were included. Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach was notified of the planned meeting, but declined to attend because of his involvement in similar plans among the Franconian princes.<sup>18</sup> No real effort was made to include the two ecclesiastical princes in this area, the bishops of Eichstätt and Augsburg.<sup>19</sup>

As the uprisings spread in early April and the forces of the Swabian League began military action against the rebels in Upper Swabia, the difficulties of a personal meeting of princes became more and more apparent. Ferdinand, alarmed by the successes of the Lake Constance rebels in his Swabian territories, confessed that he found Muhlendorff "uncomfortable" as a meeting place and suggested that the meeting be moved to the Bavarian city of Rosenheim.<sup>20</sup> The change would have entailed a much longer journey for the Upper Palatinate princes and Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg, which, in view of the increasing number of disturbances in their own lands, was unacceptable to these princes, although Philip of the Upper Palatinate declared his willingness to attend. Even the dukes of Bavaria felt that they could not spare the time from supervision of their own security mea-

<sup>14</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fols. 35–36.

<sup>15</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 12–14.

<sup>16</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fol. 105.

<sup>17</sup>The dukes of Bavaria proposed a gathering of trusted counselors instead (BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 35–37), but Ferdinand argued constantly for personal attendance of the princes (BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 123–25).

<sup>18</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 188–89.

<sup>19</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 31, 184–85, 190–91. The intent of the dukes of Bavaria to levy a special impost upon the clergy was perhaps one of the reasons.

<sup>20</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 194, 199.



sures. Thus, by mid-April the plans for a meeting of these princes had been temporarily shelved.<sup>21</sup>

The need for some sort of cooperation was still recognized, however, and negotiations continued. Duke Philip of the Upper Palatinate called a meeting of advisers at Donauwörth in early May, which was attended by representatives of the dukes of Bavaria, Duke Philip, Margrave Casimir, and by Count Ludwig of Öttingen in person. A decision was taken at this meeting to act in concert against a rebel Haufen near the city of Nördlingen, but the decision was never carried out because of the reticence of Bavaria and Brandenburg-Ansbach about committing their troops. A proposal from Margrave Casimir for the raising of a large force from all those who had sent representatives to the meeting was also accepted, subject to the approval of the princes concerned, although most of the advisers apparently felt that there was little chance of ever realizing such a force. In fact, no action was taken.<sup>22</sup>

Later in May, a second meeting of the advisers of these princes was proposed to consider cooperative measures for the punishment of defeated rebels, to which the bishop of Eichstätt was invited because some of the action had taken place in his lands. Both Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria and Margrave Casimir rejected such a meeting on the grounds of the continued seriousness of the situation and the need for a full discussion of the issue of punishment. Instead, they suggested that a personal meeting of the princes in early June might be more fruitful. Accordingly, a meeting was set for the Bavarian city of Ingolstadt on 12 June.<sup>23</sup>

Only Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg and Duke Philip of the Upper Palatinate appeared for this scheduled assembly of princes. They were met by representatives of Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria, who persuaded them to travel to Munich to discuss their opinions with the duke personally. The discussions among the three Wittelsbach princes produced the decision to send a special embassy to Charles V, depicting the dangers, difficulties, and expenses encountered in the suppression of the rebellion and arguing that Archduke Ferdinand had not acted effectively to provide leadership against the rebels. Charles was to be asked to return to the empire immediately to deal with the problems connected with the final suppression and punishment of the rebels, or at least to send a fully empowered representative.<sup>24</sup>

Princes from other regions also attempted to establish some basis for cooperation. Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg, alarmed by the spread of rebellion in the

<sup>21</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 192–93, 201–2, 205, 215, 217, 219, 221–24.

<sup>22</sup>Casimir's proposal called for 4,000 men from Bavaria, 2,000 from Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg, 2,000 from the Upper Palatinate, and 500 from the counts of Öttingen, to be combined with his own forces to attack the rebels before Nördlingen and then to move into Franconia. Given the desperate military and financial state of the princes involved, such a plan was patently impossible. See the report of Bavarian representative Hans Ratz; BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fols. 311–12.

<sup>23</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fols. 166–68, 172–73, 176–77, 179; Kriegsakten 73, fols. 238–40.

<sup>24</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fols. 194–95, 204–5. Ferdinand was invited to this meeting, but was apparently not even represented; Kriegsakten 70, fols. 177–80. Cf. the instructions for this embassy; BHStA, Kriegsakten 75, fols. 273–75.

territories of the imperial city of Rothenburg ob der Tauber, invited the bishops of Würzburg, Bamberg, and Eichstätt, as well as the lesser magnates of Henneberg, Castel, Wertheim, Hohenlohe, and Limburg to send representatives to a meeting in Neuenstadt (an der Aisch) on 3 April to discuss possible preventive measures.<sup>25</sup> At this first meeting it was decided to take immediate mobilization measures and to inform each other where troops were stationed, so that maximum use could be made of the resources available. Those princes, like the bishop of Eichstätt, who claimed to have no troops and to be unable to raise any, were to take alternative action to contribute to the common effort, although the exact nature of such contributions was not specified. In addition, the princes of Mainz, the Palatinate, Saxony, and Hesse were to be written to, inviting their cooperation. Provisions for further meetings to coordinate efforts were also made.<sup>26</sup>

A second meeting at Neustadt on 7–8 April produced mostly confusion, as the representatives of the three ecclesiastical princes proved unable to give definite information upon the number, commanders, and stationing of the troops which the bishops intended to raise. Perhaps because of this, the representatives of Margrave Casimir presented a plan for a joint army under Casimir's command, to be financed primarily by the three bishops. With this force, Casimir hoped to be able to move immediately against the rebels in Franconia and follow up the advantages gained from the victories of the Swabian League forces in Upper Swabia.<sup>27</sup>

The third Neustadt meeting (11–12 April) illustrated the difficulties of reaching an agreement for concerted action. None of the three bishops was willing to commit completely to Margrave Casimir's proposal. The bishop of Würzburg refused to grant his representatives plenary authority, as had been requested, on the grounds that matters were too uncertain in his lands to allow him to commit himself. The representatives of the bishop of Bamberg did not appear at all, as the bishop wrote that he had been able to raise only 25 horse, and the uprising was spreading rapidly in his territories. Thus, the plans for a joint action had to be scrapped, and the princely representatives agreed only upon the sending of an appeal to the Swabian League Council for immediate military aid. Given the state of the Swabian League's own resources, this was little more than a gesture, as the princely representatives were undoubtedly aware.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the bishop of Würzburg refused to participate in the mission to the Swabian League Council because he had already requested aid and been disappointed.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>L. Fries, *Die Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken von Magister Lorenz Fries*, ed. A. Schäffler and T. Henner (Würzburg: Verein von Unterfranken, 1883), 14–16.

<sup>26</sup>Fries, *Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, 30–32.

<sup>27</sup>Fries, *Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, 48–51; Theodor Neuhofer, *Gabriel von Eyb, Fürstbischof von Eichstätt 1455–1535* (Eichstätt i. Bay.: Ph. Bronner [P. Seitz] and M. Daentler GmbH, 1934), 113.

<sup>28</sup>A strong sense of the injustice of the treatment they had received pervades the instructions drawn up for the presentation to the League Council from the Franconian princes. However, distrust among themselves, especially with regard to the intentions of Margrave Casimir, is also present. Fries, *Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, 69–76.

<sup>29</sup>Fries, *Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, 92–93.



A fourth assembly of princely advisers at Neustadt was held on 23 and 24 April. Besides representatives of the four Franconian princes, counselors from the Upper Palatinate and the archbishop of Mainz were also present. Once again no agreement was reached, as the representatives of each prince protested their lord's lack of money and inability to raise foot troops. Once again it was decided to send a special mission to the Swabian League Council depicting the plight of the Franconian princes and demanding that the League's forces turn northward immediately.<sup>30</sup> This embassy, carried out by representatives of the princes of Brandenburg-Ansbach, Eichstätt, and Würzburg, helped produce a decision by the League Council to turn its forces into Württemberg and then into Franconia, plus permission to recruit 500 horse and 6,000 foot at League expense.<sup>31</sup> While Margrave Casimir had some hopes of raising these troops in Bohemia, the project failed for lack of ready money.<sup>32</sup>

Other princes also attempted to establish cooperative arrangements among themselves by means of similar meetings. In mid-April, Landgrave Philip of Hesse, the count palatine, and the archbishop of Trier raised the possibility of a personal meeting to discuss countermeasures, but decided that the situation was too urgent to allow them to spare the time.<sup>33</sup> At the same time the count palatine refused to participate in the Neustadt meetings because he had already agreed to send representatives to discussions called by the Württemberg regency and by the Rhenish electors.<sup>34</sup> The former meeting resulted in a proposal from the count for a joint campaign against the peasants composed of troops which he and the Württemberg government could recruit from the Netherlands, plus those of Landgrave Philip of Hesse.<sup>35</sup> This plan was rejected by Württemberg because of lack of money.<sup>36</sup>

Few of these plans for mutual action against the rebels on the part of the princes produced tangible results. The distrust and suspicion which existed among them was too great to be overcome even in the face of the serious threat represented by the revolt. Furthermore, the frequent failure of such attempts demonstrated that many princes saw the uprising as an opportunity to take advantage of weaknesses on the part of other rulers. Inequalities in the counterinsurgency forces which could be mustered by individual princes presented certain opportunities to those with superior military resources. Concessions could be demanded from other princes in return for help. "Military necessity" could be urged as an excuse for all sorts of encroachments upon the territory and jurisdiction of weaker neighbors. The presence of a fully mobilized armed force was a handy tool in

<sup>30</sup>Fries, *Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, 138–43.

<sup>31</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 7:331, no. 327; 343, no. 348. For the difficulties caused by this decision, see the account of the scribe of the League commander, Jörg Truchsess: F. L. Baumann, ed., *Quellen zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Oberschwaben* (Tübingen, 1876), 570–74.

<sup>32</sup>Fries, *Bauernkrieges in Ostfranken*, 176–80.

<sup>33</sup>BGStA, K. Blau 103/3d, nos. 210–12.

<sup>34</sup>BGStA, K. Blau 103/3d, nos. 208–9.

<sup>35</sup>K. Hartfelder, ed., "Akten zur Geschichte des Bauernkrieges in Süddeutschland," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 39 (1882): 388–90, no. 21.

<sup>36</sup>Baden-Württemberg Hauptstaatsarchiv, Stuttgart (hereafter WHStA), H54, Bü. 10, no. 15.

negotiations over long-standing disputes. In a few instances, large-scale political and territorial-dynastic gains could even be hoped for.

Acts of aggression by one prince against another during the Peasants' War generally assumed the form of a "protective" infringement upon the rights or territory of a prince who was unable to assume the task of protection himself. Such an infringement could be justified upon several grounds, the most frequent being the desire to prevent the rebellion from spreading and/or the strategic needs of protecting the lands and rights of the infringing prince. Once such an incursion had occurred, its continuance could often be justified on the basis of the need to compensate for the costs of the "protection" extended, or for the damages sustained at the hands of the rebels.

The most frequent victims of these strong-arm tactics were the ecclesiastical princes and minor imperial prelates. Since these rulers usually had few troops of their own, and many felt that the rebellion was directed primarily against them, it seemed logical to other princes that the clergy should help to bear a major part of the costs of defending their secular right to rule. The territories of ecclesiastical princes and prelates which were most likely to fall victim to the "protective" aggression of other princes were those which bordered upon the lands of major secular territories. The most frequent perpetrators of such attacks were the princes who could command significant armed forces of their own. These secular princes, once it was established that the ecclesiastical ruler lacked the resources to defend his own lands, were only too ready to invoke their duty to "protect" the territories involved, with or without the consent of the legitimate ruler. The degree of aggression ranged from minor appropriation of legal rights and jurisdictions to attempted wholesale seizure of territory.

Typical of the incursions against the territories of ecclesiastical princes was the occupation of the city of Füssen, controlled by the bishop of Augsburg, by Austrian troops at the beginning of April. This small town on the Lech river in the Allgäu was strategically important to the suppression of the rebellion, since it controlled Austrian access to the rebellious areas and offered a possible point of entry into Bavaria for the rebels. The bishop of Augsburg visited Füssen in person in late February, assuring the jittery town officials that he would protect Füssen against the rebellious peasants.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the dukes of Bavaria proposed a cooperative program of defense for the area to Hans Marschall von Pappenheim, the bishop's *Pfleger* in Füssen, as early as 25 February, and received a favorable answer.<sup>38</sup>

In late March, when it became obvious that the Oberallgäu rebels might intend to move against Füssen, the bishop of Augsburg revealed in response to the town's frantic plea for aid that he did not possess enough forces of his own to adequately garrison the town. The bishop told the Füssener to turn to Archduke Ferdinand, who had promised to aid the town "as though it were his own," a

<sup>37</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 420–21.

<sup>38</sup>BHStA, *Kriegsakten* 71, fol. 97.

recommendation with which the town immediately complied.<sup>39</sup> The town sent an urgent request to the dukes of Bavaria for additional troops, which the dukes refused on the grounds of their own greater need, also suggesting that Archduke Ferdinand might be willing to send aid.<sup>40</sup> Von Pappenheim reported on 10 April that the Austrian commander, Niclas Jurisitsch, had responded to his call with a small force of cavalry.<sup>41</sup>

However, the Austrian commander apparently insisted, as a condition of his defense of the town, that the arms of the bishop of Augsburg be removed from the city gates and replaced with those of the Habsburgs. In addition, the entire town was required to swear allegiance to Ferdinand. The citizenry, alarmed by the imminent danger from the rebels, saw no other alternative and renounced their allegiance to the bishop. Austrian troops then occupied the town and the rebels were dissuaded from their intention to attack.<sup>42</sup>

With this occupation of Füssen, Ferdinand gained an important addition to his possessions in the Allgäu. But he also succeeded in alienating not only the bishop of Augsburg, but also many of the lesser rulers in the area, as well as the council of the Swabian League. It was widely supposed that the occupation was only the first step in a large-scale Austrian move into the Allgäu.<sup>43</sup> The bishop of Augsburg had trouble persuading some of his other subjects that they should not also turn their defense over to the Habsburgs.<sup>44</sup> Bavarian counselor Eck, writing from the Swabian League Council, spoke of the possibility that the League would use its own forces to dislodge Habsburg troops from Füssen.<sup>45</sup>

The presence of Austrian troops in Füssen became a major issue in the latter stages of the campaign against the rebels. Lesser rulers in the Allgäu area were not content to let matters stand, insisting that the Swabian League Council take action, and on 9 July the bishop of Augsburg filed a complaint against Füssen with the Swabian League.<sup>46</sup> As it became apparent that other major League members, in particular the dukes of Bavaria, would not oppose the expulsion of the archduke's forces once the threat from the rebels was past, the League Council ordered Füssen to return to obedience to the bishop of Augsburg, sending League commander

<sup>39</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 393–94; 428–32.

<sup>40</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 54–55.

<sup>41</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 301–2.

<sup>42</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 434–54. Although this version of the events in Füssen, provided by the town scribe, Martin Furtenbach, was obviously intended to exonerate the town officials from charges of breaching their allegiance to the bishop of Augsburg, it is clear that the Austrian commander, who had arrived in the vicinity of the town on 6 April, refused to garrison Füssen for almost five days until it accepted Archduke Ferdinand as town overlord, and the replacement of the bishop's arms with those of Austria/Tyrol as the external proof thereof; see esp. 450–54.

<sup>43</sup>See Ulrich Artzt's letter to the Augsburg city council in May (Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 7:368–69, no. 397) and that of Sebastian Ilsung to Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria right after the event (BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fol. 343).

<sup>44</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fols. 186–87; cf. also Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 408n1.

<sup>45</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fols. 4–3 (bound in reverse).

<sup>46</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 461–62.

Jörg Truchsess to enforce the command.<sup>47</sup> Archduke Ferdinand made an abortive attempt to prevent action by reminding Truchsess that he was still in Austrian service and by arguing that the entire affair had been motivated by a desire to prevent the town from being overrun by the rebels, but eventually he surrendered the town into the custody of the League Council in return for its promise to mediate a compromise between the archduke and the bishop of Augsburg over the costs of defending Füssen.<sup>48</sup> In November 1525 the council negotiated a settlement between the two princes, which awarded Archduke Ferdinand the substantial sum of 5,000 gulden as compensation for the garrisoning of Füssen and returned the city to allegiance to the bishop, without any punishment for its actions during the rebellion.<sup>49</sup>

Sometimes encroachments upon the rights of other princes were more successful, as in the case of the hapless Bishop Gabriel von Eyb of Eichstätt, whose territories and jurisdictions were repeatedly infringed upon by neighboring princes. The bishop had immediately fired off requests for help when the revolt spread to his jurisdictions, writing the next day to the Swabian League, Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach, the princes of the Upper Palatinate, Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg, the city of Nuremberg, and the Bavarian *Pfleger* in Ingolstadt.<sup>50</sup> The dukes of Bavaria insisted upon a direct request for aid from the bishop, demanding concessions with regard to emergency levies upon the clergy which the bishop had long resisted but was now forced to agree to in return for the promise of Bavarian help.<sup>51</sup> The dukes then asserted their willingness to help protect the territories of the bishop of Eichstätt on the northern borders of Bavaria, and began shifting troops and munitions from their western borders to the Eichstätt borders, at the same time warning their own peasants in the border areas to remain calm.<sup>52</sup>

In the meantime, Bavarian commanders along the Danube had been approached by the towns of Berching and Beilngries, subject to the bishop's authority, asking to be taken into Bavarian protection.<sup>53</sup> Plans were formulated in the Bavarian chancery for the occupation of the two towns along the border, at the discretion of the commanders on the spot.<sup>54</sup> Bavarian forces moved into Eichstätt

<sup>47</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 408, 460–61.

<sup>48</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 465–68. See also K. Walchner and J. Bodent, *Biographie des Truchsessens Georg II von Waldburg* (Constance: J. M. Bannhard's Witwe, 1832), 324–25, Beilage 42a–b.

<sup>49</sup>Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 410–11, 469–71. Knöringer (Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 406–7) reports the cost of garrisoning Füssen as 40,000 g., but this is obviously an error.

<sup>50</sup>Neuhofer, *Gabriel von Eyb*, 152.

<sup>51</sup>Josef Seger, "Der Bauernkrieg im Hochstift Eichstätt," *Eichstätter Studien* 38 (1997): 228–29. Relations between Bavaria and the bishop had been strained for some time over the question of the jurisdiction claimed by the Bavarian high court of Hirschberg and over the Bavarian quest to establish the dukes' younger brother, Ernst, as coadjutor in Eichstätt.

<sup>52</sup>Seger, "Bauernkrieg im Hochstift Eichstätt," 221–27.

<sup>53</sup>Seger, "Bauernkrieg im Hochstift Eichstätt," 192.

<sup>54</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fols. 71–72, 76, 78, 84; Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 282–83.

territories, occupying Beilngries (but not Berching, which had been occupied first by the troops of Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg), dispersing small bands of rebels and exacting fines and other punishments from the Eichstätt subjects. Representatives from the dukes appeared before the bishop shortly thereafter, demanding a loan of 12,000 gulden to cover the costs of defending Eichstätt territory and implying that the dukes would find other means of compensation when the bishop refused the Bavarian request. Shortly thereafter, Bavarian troops began exacting *Brandschatzung* payments from the bishop's subjects in the areas they occupied.<sup>55</sup> Ignoring the strong protests registered by the bishop and the possible support of the Swabian League Council for the bishop's position, the Bavarian dukes seemed determined either to annex Eichstätt territory or to recoup their expenses by devastating the countryside.<sup>56</sup>

Although the bishop of Eichstätt sent an immediate complaint to the Swabian League Council, the council lacked the means to do anything about the Bavarian incursion right away. Instead, Bavarian plundering was halted through the energetic intervention of Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg, whose forces had played the major role in subduing the rebellion in this area. Citing an agreement reached between himself and the bishop of Eichstätt, as well as other rulers in the area, Duke Friedrich demanded that each ruler be allowed to punish his own subjects as he saw fit. The Bavarian dukes, faced with this kind of opposition, backed down and ordered the plundering to cease, although they asked for assurances that stringent punishment would be meted out to the ringleaders. They also argued that they were within their rights in what they had done, since they held legal rights in the area concerned (specifically high justice).<sup>57</sup> Ill feelings between Bavaria and Eichstätt over this incident continued long after the Peasants' War was over.<sup>58</sup>

The bishop of Eichstätt also had difficulties with Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach, although the situation here was less clear than with the dukes of Bavaria. Before the rebellion had reached his own territories, Bishop Gabriel had refused both a request from the Swabian League to aid the margrave and the margrave's direct plea for help on the grounds that he had no resources available. Shortly thereafter, the margrave's troops occupied the episcopal town of Herrieden without asking the bishop's permission. Margrave Casimir argued that he had the right to take this action because of the agreement among the princes of the area

<sup>55</sup>Neuhofer, *Gabriel von Eyb*, 155–56. *Brandschatzung* was exacted from villages and towns by military forces in return for their not burning and plundering.

<sup>56</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fols. 152–53, 156–57. The Bavarian dukes may have had some idea of responding to expressions from the rebels about the desirability of secularizing the bishopric. See Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 462.

<sup>57</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fols. 126–27, and esp. fols. 166–68, as well as Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 286. Duke Friedrich of the Palatinate had demanded and received a 1,000 fl. payment from the bishop for his services. Cf. Jäger, *Markgraf Casimir*, 29; Seger, "Bauernkrieg im Hochstift Eichstätt," 238.

<sup>58</sup>See, for example, the heated exchange between Duke Wilhelm and Bishop Gabriel at the November 1525 assembly of the Swabian League. Edelgard Metzger, *Leonhard von Eck, 1480–1550* (München: Oldenbourg, 1980), 121n3.

that key places would be garrisoned by those who had the capacity to do so. Bishop Gabriel reluctantly agreed to provide the Brandenburg troops with supplies from his stores in Herrieden, in the hope of preventing the margrave from asserting further claims upon the town. He also hurriedly sent troops to the town of Spalt, where he feared that Casimir also had designs.<sup>59</sup> Although Margrave Casimir eventually withdrew his forces, he later levied a special tax on Eichstätt clergy in his lands on the grounds that he had protected them during the peasants' revolt. The bishop of Eichstätt (along with the bishops of Augsburg, Würzburg, and Bamberg, whose clergy were similarly treated) protested in vain against this measure.<sup>60</sup>

Traditional enmities between rulers often resulted in openly hostile acts during the disorders of the rebellion. The abbot of Kaisheim and the princes of the Upper Palatinate had long been engaged in a series of disputes over legal rights and jurisdictions in their intertwined territories. After the outbreak of the rebellion, the commander of the Upper Palatinate forces, Reinhardt von Neuneck, began what appeared to be a deliberate campaign of harassment against the monastery.<sup>61</sup> Stopping frequently at the abbey with his force of over 150 horse, Neuneck repeatedly demanded the traditional right to be supplied with food, drink, and lodging. After the abbot of Kaisheim left for Ulm to serve on the Swabian League Council in mid-April, he gave instructions that the force was to be refused further supplies, as it was being supported by the League anyway. Neuneck was mightily offended by this refusal and vowed to visit the monastery again in a manner which would not be soon forgotten, whereupon most of the monks left for Donauwörth.

After the defeat of the rebels in the area, the monks of Kaisheim returned to the monastery. Two days after their return, on 23 May, Neuneck appeared before the monastery with a considerable force of horse and foot, demanding immediate surrender on pain of attack. After negotiations, the monks agreed to let Neuneck in, on condition that no harm would be done to them or their property. The Upper Palatinate troops began at once to plunder the wine cellar of the monastery and Neuneck forced the monks to swear allegiance to the Upper Palatinate to prevent further plunder.

The abbot of Kaisheim presented an immediate appeal to the Swabian League Council, which sent a strong remonstrance to the princes of the Upper Palatinate. They in return claimed that the whole thing had been done without their knowl-

<sup>59</sup>Neuhofer, *Gabriel von Eyb*, 113–14; Seger, "Bauernkrieg im Hochstift Eichstätt": 173–75.

<sup>60</sup>K. Schornbaum, *Die Stellung des Markgrafen Kasimir zur reformatorischen Bewegung in den Jahren 1524–1527* (Nuremberg, 1900), 92–94. Gottfried Krodel, "State and Church in Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach 1524–1526," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 5 (1968): 161, argues that Casimir deliberately exploited the peasants' revolt to extend his authority over the clergy. See also C. Scott Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Society: The Parishes of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach, 1528–1603* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21. Casimir's hostility towards the episcopate in general emerged clearly at the Reichstag of Speyer in 1526: Walter Friedensburg, *Der Reichstag zu Speyer 1526* (Berlin, 1887; repr., Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1970), 64, 103.

<sup>61</sup>On von Neuneck's checkered career, see W. Hermann, "Reinhard von Neuneck: Ein adliges "Dienerleben" der deutschen Renaissance," *Hohenzollerische Heimat* 37 (1987): 42–47; 38 (1988): 9–13.



edge. Nevertheless, the League Council required the Upper Palatinate princes to set Kaisheim free in writing from all forced oaths and allegiances.<sup>62</sup>

Reinhardt von Neuneck and the forces of the Upper Palatinate also figured in an apparent attempt to secularize or at least acquire some control over the provosty of Ellwangen, held in 1525 by Heinrich, the brother of the count palatine. The city of Ellwangen, which had surrendered to the rebels after the provost had fled, was retaken by Neuneck, who forced the citizens to swear an oath of allegiance to the count palatine, Dukes Ott-Heinrich and Philip of the Upper Palatinate, and the provost, thereby including additional rulers in the provost's territories.<sup>63</sup> In a later letter, Neuneck justified his actions on the grounds that the provost had not properly garrisoned his city against the rebels, causing the princes of the Upper Palatinate considerable costs and trouble in their effort to retake it.<sup>64</sup> This oath as well as was later rescinded through the intervention of the Swabian League Council.<sup>65</sup>

When the Cistercian monastery of Waldsassen was seized by its peasants in early May, Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg, who had long been engaged in disputes with the abbot over claims to imperial status and who had already demanded that the abbey deliver its plate to him and open its fortified places to ducal troops for protection against the rebellion, immediately began negotiations with the rebels. After making concessions to the peasants involving their obligations, Duke Friedrich with the consent of the rebels asserted his alleged rights as protector of the monastery, placing his officials in positions of authority and demanding oaths of allegiance from Waldsassen's subjects. Some of the monks who attempted to resist these measures were imprisoned and charged with incitement to rebellion. The abbot, who had fled Waldsassen immediately before the uprising, protested strongly, but his objections were ignored. The matter eventually ended up before the *Reichskammergericht*, which issued several orders in 1526 commanding the return of the monastic lands to the abbot and the release of the incarcerated monks. Duke Friedrich protested vehemently that he had acted to fulfill his protective obligations, and would surrender authority accordingly when his services were no longer needed. His officials did not withdraw from some Waldsassen holdings until November 1526.<sup>66</sup>

Major princes were not the only aggressors against ecclesiastical rulers. Lesser magnates as well seized the opportunities presented by the rebellion. For example, during the spread of the rebellion into Franconia, Count Georg von Wertheim occupied the bishop of Würzburg's territory of Rothenfels. In his later explanation

<sup>62</sup>The entire Kaisheim episode is recounted in Knebel's *Donauwörther Chronik*, reprinted in Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 262–66.

<sup>63</sup>BGStA, K. Blau 341/11b, 242–43.

<sup>64</sup>WHStA, H54, Bü. 54, nos. 13–14.

<sup>65</sup>L. Müller, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Bauernkriegs im Riess und seinen Umländen," *Zeitschrift des historischen Vereins für Schwaben und Neuburg* 16 (1889): 153–54.

<sup>66</sup>Rudolf Langhammer, *Waldsassen. Kloster und Stadt* (Waldsassen: Kommissionsverlag Albert Angerer, 1936), 1:184–88. See also J. B. Goetz, *Die religiöse Bewegung in der Oberpfalz 1520 bis 1560* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herdersche, 1914), 61–70, for a clearer account of the aftermath of the seizure.

of his actions, the count claimed that he had offered to help defend the territories of the bishop in return for 6,000 fl. and the right to hold any lands he reconquered until he had been compensated for his expenses during the campaign (which he had estimated, in advance, as 14,000 fl.). When the bishop refused this type of blackmail, the count had gone ahead with the occupation anyway, arguing that the security of his own holdings demanded it. In the furor over the count's alleged cooperation with the rebels after the rebellion, this occupation, too, was ended.<sup>67</sup>

The bishop of Würzburg was also threatened by the machinations of Count Wilhelm von Henneberg, who sought at first to use the rebellion against the bishop. When his plans in this direction failed, the count offered his services to the bishop as recruiter and commander and received a considerable sum from the bishop to use in recruiting Landsknechte in Saxony. Before the bishop received any benefit from the count's help, however, Count Wilhelm reached an agreement with the rebels and refused to participate in a campaign against them, although he apparently kept the money. Henneberg was also in secret contact with Margrave Casimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach during this period, discussing the possibility of secularizing the bishopric of Würzburg. In the last stages of the suppression campaign, Count Wilhelm seized the episcopal city of Mellrichstadt, ostensibly as the representative of the bishop, but actually to hold the city as a pawn against future claims for compensation.<sup>68</sup>

Occasionally some princes were willing to conclude agreements with the rebels at the expense of other rulers. A typical example of this kind of maneuvering was the struggle between the dukes of Bavaria and the archduke of Austria for possession of the archbishopric of Salzburg. The archbishop of Salzburg lost control of his diocese in late May as the rebels seized the city of Salzburg. By virtue of the Regensburg Convention, signed in 1524 by the rulers of several southern principalities, both Bavaria and Austria were pledged to help the archbishop regain his territories. An immediate plea for help went out to these princes.<sup>69</sup> Both Bavaria and Austria, however, were more interested in exploiting the situation than in rescuing the archbishop. Both informed Archbishop Lang that their "help" would consist of peaceful mediation proceedings between his subjects and himself, a procedure that the archbishop viewed with a jaundiced eye from the start.<sup>70</sup> Since the Bavarian and Austrian offers of mediation were coupled with assurances to the rebels that they had no intention of attacking them, Lang concluded that he could expect no real aid from his neighbors.<sup>71</sup> He sought to counteract the threat from these princes by appealing to other princes for aid and by attempting to involve the Swabian League Council, even though Salzburg was not a member of the League.

<sup>67</sup>Rolf Kern, "Die Beteiligung George II von Wertheim am Bauernkrieg," *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 55 (1901): 122.

<sup>68</sup>Manfred Meyer, "Zur Haltung des Adels im Bauernkrieg. Die Politik Wilhelms von Henneberg gegenüber Bauern, Fürsten, Klerus, und Städte," *Jahrbuch für Regionalgeschichte* 4 (1972): 200–224, passim, but esp. 201–14, 222–23.

<sup>69</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 19, 29–30.

<sup>70</sup>See the Bavarian answer of 31 May 1525: BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 47–49, 102–3.

<sup>71</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fol. 34.

He also made sure that as many people as possible were aware of the allegedly evil intentions of Bavaria and Austria towards himself. For example, in a letter written in June 1525 to the archbishop of Trier, the Salzburg chancellor Nicholas Ribeisen charged that the rebels intended to do away with all *Obrigkeit* except for a single ruler, perhaps Archduke Ferdinand, as many suspected.<sup>72</sup>

The exact intentions of the two princes toward Salzburg were unclear. Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria was apparently led to believe that the rebels in Salzburg would not have been averse to deposing the archbishop and electing a secular prince to rule over them.<sup>73</sup> Barring that, there was a possibility that the duke's brother, Ernst, bishop of Passau, could be chosen as coadjutor of the see.<sup>74</sup> Either course would have brought the rich archbishopric into the Wittelsbach sphere of influence. At the very least, Bavaria hoped to win concessions on her borders with Salzburg, and several cities and villages were occupied without the archbishop's consent. Habsburg goals with regard to Salzburg were even less clear. The primary aim was undoubtedly to block any Bavarian gains in the area, although Archduke Ferdinand too may have had some hopes of seizing control of the archbishopric. The hitch was that these goals could only be realized by agreement with the rebels and the archbishop.

While both princes were willing to use the rebel threat to force concessions from Lang, neither could afford the appearance of collaboration which would result from a unilateral agreement with the rebels at the archbishop's expense. Neither Austria nor Bavaria wanted to use force to subdue the rebellion in Salzburg, even if they had had the troops, since that would have involved returning the see to Lang once peace had been restored. Furthermore, the rivalry between the two princely dynasties allowed Lang to stall for time while gathering support from other areas. In this complex situation, the interference of the Swabian League Council proved decisive.

The response of the League Council to Archbishop Lang's appeal for help against his subjects was not entirely uniform. A decision to extend the aid of the Swabian League's forces to Salzburg was made on 21 June, partly because of the influence of Bavarian League Councillor Eck (who opposed the plans of his duke with regard to Salzburg as impractical and destructive of the general principle of *Obrigkeit*, since an agreement with the rebels was involved) and partly because of the League Council's need for ready cash, which the archbishop proved willing to supply.<sup>75</sup> However, the council lacked the resources to do anything immediately, and opposition to involving the League forces in "foreign" ventures was fairly

<sup>72</sup>F. X. Kraus, ed., "Beiträge zur Geschichte des deutschen Bauernkriegs," *Annalen des Vereins für Nassauische Alterthumskunde und Geschichtsforschung* 12 (1873): 98–99, no. 84.

<sup>73</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fol. 83.

<sup>74</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fol. 162.

<sup>75</sup>For Eck's strong opposition to Bavarian machinations in Salzburg, see his fiery letter of 7 June to Duke Wilhelm: Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 460–64. On the possible role of financial exigencies in the Swabian League Council's decision, see Ulrich Artzt's opinion that the council should have asked for more; Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 10:19–21. no. 520. The agreement itself may be found in BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 195–96.

strong. As late as mid-July the Nuremberg city council was still urging its League representatives to block any League action in Salzburg.<sup>76</sup>

The possibility of League action put additional pressure upon Bavarian and Austrian policies. Shortly after the League Council decision to intervene, the two princes decided to proceed with the occupation of certain border areas, assuring each other that this was not for the purpose of permanent annexation.<sup>77</sup> The dukes of Bavaria were placed in a particularly difficult position, because part of their forces had been accepted into the pay of the Swabian League Council, which was obviously counting upon them to help in the League rescue mission to Salzburg.<sup>78</sup> They still had hopes, however, that the Salzburg rebels could be induced to ask to be taken into Bavarian protection, or at the very least into the joint protection of Austria and Bavaria, which would gain additional time for possible advantages to be won.<sup>79</sup>

At length the Bavarian dukes, aware that time was running out and fearful of the intentions of Archduke Ferdinand, began to fall back upon the Swabian League Council for advice and support.<sup>80</sup> The council warned Duke Wilhelm that it would not do to depose a prince of the empire through any kind of agreement with rebels, and proposed instead that the archdiocese be taken into the League's protection.<sup>81</sup> Henceforth, Bavaria used its League membership as an excuse to avoid extending any aid to the archduke.<sup>82</sup> A force under Jörg von Frundsberg was raised to go to the aid of Archbishop Lang after the second uprising in the Allgäu had been subdued.

In the confused situation which resulted, Archduke Ferdinand sought desperately to block Swabian League interference by arguing that it might cause an alliance between the rebels of Salzburg and the Tyrol. He also deplored the fact that the League Council was willing to extend aid to a non-League member before helping him restore order in his own lands.<sup>83</sup> Bavarian policy vacillated between continued hopes of obtaining the coadjutorship for themselves and a desire to make sure that the Habsburgs did not achieve any significant advantages in Salzburg. Thus, while Duke Wilhelm insisted upon being assured of adequate League support if he decided to move against the Salzburg rebels, he also continued to negotiate with the rebels over the possibility of establishing a joint protectorate with Austria. Frundsberg's troops were held up at the Bavarian border as part of this policy.<sup>84</sup> Archbishop Lang maintained his stalling tactics by appearing to

<sup>76</sup>Bavarian Staatsarchiv, Nuremberg: Briefbücher no. 90, 105–6.

<sup>77</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 233–35.

<sup>78</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fol. 255; Kriegsakten 74, fol. 20.

<sup>79</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 69–72.

<sup>80</sup>The turning point appears to have come in early July. See Duke Wilhelm's letter of 9 July to Eck: BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 274–75.

<sup>81</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fols. 282, 284.

<sup>82</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fol. 296; Kriegsakten 75, fol. 159.

<sup>83</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 10:59–60, no. 606.

<sup>84</sup>The vacillations in Bavarian policy can be followed through the letters exchanged between the ducal brothers in late July, and through their correspondence with Eck and the archbishop. BHStA,

cooperate with the Bavarian-Austrian mediation while demanding that the League be included in any protective agreement.

Even after Lang had thrown off all pretense of cooperation by opening fire upon the rebels from his castle of Hohensalzburg, Duke Ludwig of Bavaria made it clear to the rebels that they still had a chance of Bavarian support if they were willing to reach a satisfactory agreement.<sup>85</sup> Only after all possibilities for gain had been exhausted did Bavaria join in the campaign against the Salzburg rebels. In the end, Lang had been the only beneficiary of the rivalry between his two powerful neighbors, and the Swabian League had been the factor which allowed him to come out ahead. However, had not Austrian and Bavarian policies tended to counteract each other, Salzburg might well have been annexed despite the implications of concluding an agreement with the rebels. The invasion of Salzburg by League armies under the pro forma command of Duke Ludwig of Bavaria and the subsequent conclusion of an agreement between Archbishop Lang and his subjects would not have been possible had Austria and Bavaria been united in their opposition to League intervention.<sup>86</sup>

Salzburg was not a member of the Swabian League. Therefore, the Swabian League Council had to be somewhat circumspect in its intervention to protect the rights of the archbishop against encroachment. However, when princely actions threatened an attack upon the rights of a broad segment of League members, the League Council could act decisively. This was the case with the so-called Füssen Agreement between Archduke Ferdinand and the Allgäu rebels.

The renewed rebellion in the Allgäu in early May caught the League Council off guard, since this area had supposedly been pacified by the Weingarten Agreement in April and League forces had left the region. Thus, the League Council could do little about Archduke Ferdinand's decision to reopen negotiations with the rebels in Füssen in mid-May. The exact intentions of the archduke at this point were unclear, although it is possible that he feared an alliance between the Allgäu rebels and those of Salzburg and the Tyrol.<sup>87</sup> As the negotiations progressed, however, the possibility of extending Habsburg control in Allgäu at the expense of the

Kriegsakten 76, fols. 303–4, 335, 337, 340, 354–57, 372; Kriegsakten 77, fols. 12–13, 30, 37–39, 40–41, 56–57, 106; BGStA, K. Schwarz 5171, fols. 341–44. See also Eck's astonished, then embittered, reactions to his masters' policy: Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 477–81.

<sup>85</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 77, fols. 61–62. Cf. fols. 63–64, which is basically a copy of the same letter, but addressed to Archbishop Lang. It omits any mention of the Bavarian role in holding up Frundsberg's forces at the border.

<sup>86</sup>For a fuller account of the Salzburg revolt, cf. Peter Blickle, "Landschaft und Bauernkrieg im Erzstift Salzburg 1525/1526," *Salzburg Dokumentationen* 19, ed. Eberhard Zwick (Salzburg: Landespressebüro, 1977), 89–110, which concentrates more upon the actions of the rebels; Albert Hollaender, "Die vierundzwanzig Artikel gemeiner Landschaft Salzburg, 1525," *Mitteilungen: Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde* 72 (1932): 65–88, and Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 292–341 (which is unfortunately sometimes somewhat inaccurate in describing the princes' policies).

<sup>87</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 7:348–49, no. 361; F. L. Baumann, *Geschichte des Allgäus* (Kempten: Jos. Kosel, 1895), 3:87.

smaller political rulers in the area arose, the primary obstacle being once again the probability of opposition from Bavaria.

When Bavarian opposition was temporarily removed by an invasion of Bavarian territory by the rebels on 11 May, Habsburg representatives were able to proceed with the assurance that the badly frightened Bavarian dukes would possibly even acquiesce in a negotiated agreement.<sup>88</sup> The draft Füssen Agreement which resulted provided that the rebels would return to their homes, give up all captured places and property and release all prisoners, and aid in the prevention of further rebellion through information and, if necessary, action. They could defend themselves if attacked. In return, Ferdinand pledged to mediate personally all grievances still in existence between the rebels and their *Herrschaften* at a mediation day in the city of Kaufbeuren on 30 June. Additionally, the archduke abolished the status of villein (*Leibeigenschaft*) in the area concerned, insofar as he had the power to do so as *Statthalter* of the empire and subject to the approval of Charles V when he returned to the empire. Ferdinand also promised to see that no further punishment for participation in the rebellion would be meted out by the *Herrschaften* involved. If renewed rebellion broke out the entire agreement was to be invalid, but an uprising by only a few rebels was specifically declared not to bring this provision into effect, if the rest helped to restore order.<sup>89</sup> The draft agreement also provided for a truce to extend until the Kaufbeuren mediation day, in which the Bavarian dukes were associated. Bavaria agreed to release any prisoners which its forces held, but did not commit itself upon the agreement as a whole.<sup>90</sup>

Copies of the proposed agreement were supplied to the Swabian League Council and to various other interested parties in the area. Although the limitations upon the archducal concessions to the rebels would seem to deprive them of much of their effect, rumors of the impending agreement had leaked out in advance of the actual text, making the concessions appear much more serious than they actually were. Thus, the initial reaction in the League Council was overwhelmingly unfavorable. Ulrich Artzt, writing to the Augsburg council before the actual text of the agreement had arrived, expressed the general consternation:

In my opinion, the handwriting is on the wall. Perhaps the articles will be that he [the archduke] has accepted them [the rebels] into his protection. Thus he gets land and people at one fell swoop. Thus they will no longer owe allegiance nor dues, also the princes and cities will be suppressed.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>88</sup>Cf. the swift change in the attitudes of the Bavarian dukes from their adamant refusal of even a truce on 11–12 May (BHStA, Kriegsakten 73, fols. 232, 257) to ready acceptance of the same on 20 May (BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 15, 19).

<sup>89</sup>See Baumann's discussion of the agreement in *Geschichte des Allgäus*, 3:96–97.

<sup>90</sup>See the separate truce agreement between Bavaria and the rebels: BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 16–17.

<sup>91</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 7:366, no. 393.



The League Council sent an immediate message to Archduke Ferdinand declaring that the acceptance of any such agreement would be expressly contrary to the constitution of the League.<sup>92</sup> An urgent message was also dispatched to the war councillors with the League army, arguing that dissolution of the League might result if the agreement was allowed to go through and calling them back to Ulm for consultation.<sup>93</sup>

League Council opposition to the proposed terms of agreement increased as objections poured in from Swabian League members in the areas concerned. For example, Count Wolf von Montfort and Rothenfels, besieged in his castle in the Allgäu, sent a letter of defiance to the League, declaring that he would not be bound by any such agreement and urging the League Council to do everything in its power to prevent its realization.<sup>94</sup> The *Statthalter* of the abbot of Kempten wrote that the articles of the agreement were being presented in his area as if the League Council had approved them, although he didn't believe it.<sup>95</sup> It was alleged that certain discrepancies existed between copies of the agreement, depending upon who was to see them.<sup>96</sup> At length the League Council accepted the truce provision of the agreement only, together with a two-week extension requested by Ferdinand in late May.<sup>97</sup>

The opposition of the League Council and the *Herrschaften* in Allgäu forced changes in the proposed agreement, although Habsburg representatives went ahead with the signing. In its final form, the Füssen Agreement still promised mediation, but with the addition of representatives from three cities to be selected by the rebels. The controversial article on the abolition of *Leibeigenschaft* was eliminated, only to be replaced by two concessions which the League Council considered much more damaging. All property and places held by the rebels were to remain in their hands until the mediation, and they were not to render dues and services during this period.<sup>98</sup>

The Füssen Agreement in its final form was explicitly rejected by the League Council, although the truce was allowed to stand since League forces were still far from the area.<sup>99</sup> For a while, it appeared that the League Council might even be willing to send representatives to the mediation day, without committing itself to

<sup>92</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 7:364–65, no. 391. The Bavarian representative to the League Council, Johann Weissenfelder, reported the deep feelings of distrust of the archduke's intentions, which prevailed in the council: BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 77–78.

<sup>93</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 9:6, no. 413.

<sup>94</sup>Baumann, ed., *Akten*, 299–300, no. 331.

<sup>95</sup>Gerwig Blarer, *Briefe und Akten*, vol. 1, 1518–47, ed. H. Günter (Stuttgart, 1914), 65–66, no. 92.

<sup>96</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 43–45, 123. Vogt, *Die bayerische Politik im Bauernkrieg*, 241, argues that the discrepancies were invented by the League Council to arouse Bavarian suspicions of Habsburg intentions.

<sup>97</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 76, fol. 60.

<sup>98</sup>Baumann, *Geschichte des Allgäus*, 3:103. Baumann notes the ambiguity of these two articles but argues that this was the interpretation placed on them by the League Council and the Allgäu *Herrschaften*.

<sup>99</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 243–44.

any final agreement.<sup>100</sup> However, it soon became apparent to Ferdinand that the League Council was planning to take action against rebels in areas included in the truce.<sup>101</sup> It is probable that the League Council sent a garrison to aid in putting down the radical party in Memmingen with the express intention of inciting the rebels to break the truce, which they did by besieging the city on 12 June.<sup>102</sup>

The dukes of Bavaria, dismayed at the interpretation being placed upon their acceptance of the truce portion of the Füssen Agreement, took pains to make clear that this was all they had accepted.<sup>103</sup> The League Council, assured of Bavarian support once the truce had expired, proceeded with its plans for attack. On 2 July it informed Ferdinand that League forces would take action against the rebels even though they had withdrawn from before Memmingen, declaring:

If your princely Highness' subjects intend to enter into any kind of an understanding with the Allgäuers, or undertake to force your princely Highness into any kind of unjust disadvantageous agreement through which your princely Highness' person is threatened or other exactions are demanded (according to your princely judgment), we would be truly sorry, and we ask that anything that happens to affect the situation be communicated to us so that the League may do what it owes you.<sup>104</sup>

The Allgäu rebels were defeated a second time despite Habsburg efforts to deflect the League forces at the last minute. The Füssen Agreement was abrogated, and the rights of other rulers in the Allgäu area were secured.

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Similar examples abound of princely aggression during the peasants' revolt against fellow holders of rulership rights, primarily ecclesiastical princes and institutions. Justifying their actions on the basis of the need to defend the principles of order and *Obrigkeit*, those princes who had managed to overcome the financial and military strains which made mobilization against the rebels difficult stepped into the gap left by their less able or less fortunate compatriots to take advantage of the situation and attempt to gain significant jurisdictional and territorial rights. It was, they argued, a ruler's duty to defend his rights, and if he couldn't do so, even in an extreme case like that presented by the revolt, others must take over for him and reap the rewards and reputation which their actions deserved.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>100</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 263–64, 265–67, 269–70.

<sup>101</sup>Vogt, ed., "Correspondenz," 9:39, no. 491; 10:1–3, no. 494.

<sup>102</sup>Baumann, *Geschichte des Allgäus*, 110–14.

<sup>103</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 74, fols. 294–96, 306.

<sup>104</sup>BHStA, Kriegsakten 75, fol. 118.

<sup>105</sup>See Leonhard von Eck's advice upon the importance of strictness in maintaining a prince's "reputation": Metzger, *Eck*, 24.

The need to act on their own, instead of being able to rely upon help from the Swabian League, also created considerable dissatisfaction and resentment with the policies of that alliance among the princes who acted. Increasingly, the assemblies of princely advisers, while failing to produce effective cooperative agreements among their principals, produced instead condemnations of the alleged inequality of the League Council's actions during the peasant revolt. Other rulers, it was charged, were being helped at the princes' expense, tying up badly needed troops and money. Furthermore, the tone assumed in the discussions of some of the plans for cooperation was openly hostile to the alleged inadequacies of the responses to the rebellion of other rulers and ruling groups. Most frequently, this hostility was directed against the councils of the imperial free cities, who were felt to be less than enthusiastic about the suppression campaign, and even occasionally charged with giving aid and comfort to the enemy.<sup>106</sup>

Some of the princely incursions during the peasants' revolt were quickly rescinded, either voluntarily or as the result of diplomatic or legal pressures. Others eventually became permanent, although often after long and bitter legal wrangling at meetings of the Swabian League, the imperial diets, and before various courts. Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg was eventually able to assert his control over the abbey of Waldsassen, but not until 1548 after hearings before the Reichsregiment.<sup>107</sup> The question of the coadjutorship of the Salzburg archbishopric, which the dukes of Bavaria thought had been settled in 1525, was not resolved in Bavaria's favor until 1540.<sup>108</sup> Jurisdictional conflict between Bavaria and Eichstätt continued throughout the reign of Bishop Gabriel von Eyb.<sup>109</sup> Margrave Kasimir of Brandenburg-Ansbach had to answer frequent charges from his episcopal neighbors before the Swabian League Council about his actions during and immediately after the peasant uprising.<sup>110</sup> The general complaints of the ecclesiastical estates at the imperial diet of Speyer in 1526 indicate how widespread such problems had been.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>106</sup>For example, see the comments of Margrave Casimir in a letter of 9 April 1525 to Duke Friedrich of Palatine-Amberg, charging that the rebellion originated in the cities (BHStA, Kriegsakten 72, fols. 186–89) as well as the similar suspicions of Duke Friedrich himself (BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fols. 145–46, 149) and of Duke Wilhelm of Bavaria (BHStA, Kriegsakten 70, fol. 132). The surrender of Heilbronn to the rebels played a major role in creating such suspicions among the princes, since it was widely believed that there had been no need for the city to give in. Cf. P. Harer, *Wahrhafte und gründliche Beschreibung des Bauernkriegs*, ed. G. Franz, Schriften der Pfälzischen Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Wissenschaften 25 (Kaiserslautern, 1936), 32–33.

<sup>107</sup>Goetz, *Die religiöse Bewegung in der Oberpfalz*, 63–70; Langhammer, *Waldsassen*, 90.

<sup>108</sup>Helmut Rankl, *Das vorreformatorische landesherrlich Kirchenregiment in Bayern (1378–1526)* (Munich: Kommissionsbuchhandlung R. Wölfl, 1971), 131.

<sup>109</sup>Neuhofer, *Gabriel von Eyb*, 156–58.

<sup>110</sup>Schornbaum, *Stellung des Markgrafen Kasimir*, 93–94, 98, 106.

<sup>111</sup>Friedenburg, *Reichstag zu Speyer*, 148, 157–58.

Notwithstanding such postrevolt legal wrangling, princes who had acted decisively during the rebellion usually earned general approbation, while those seen as less effective often found their positions weakened, at least temporarily.<sup>112</sup> In the end, ambitious and aggressive princes who saw the peasant rising as an opportunity to gain at the expense of their colleagues often emerged from the rebellion as victors not only against the rebels, but also against their ecclesiastical compatriots. They were truly predatory protectors.

<sup>112</sup>E.g., Knebel's praise of Bavarian firmness against the rebels: Baumann, ed., *Quellen ... Oberschwaben*, 254. Paula Fichtner, *Ferdinand I of Austria: The Politics of Dynasticism in the Age of the Reformation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 30, points out that Archduke Ferdinand's reputation among other princes may have been damaged by his failure to take immediate action to end the rebellion in the Tyrol, while ecclesiastical princes like the bishop of Eichstätt who had played only minor roles in the defense of their own territories often found their jurisdictions increasingly under attack.