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THE ROAD TO NAPLES.

**FLORENCE, THE BLACK BANDS AND THE ARMY OF
THE LEAGUE OF COGNAC
(1526-1528)**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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*' ... fit rumor in astris
et montagnarum culmina celsa tonant.
Numquid erunt Sguiceri? Numquid Vascona canaia?
Numquid gens verbis Italiana bravis?
Ista Todescorum numquid plebs apta bocalo?
Mandat descalzos num quoque Spagna suos?'*

Teofilo Folengo (1491-?), *Moschaea* T. II, vv. 40-44

To my family.

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of the Italian Black Bands, one of the most famous units of mercenary infantry of the sixteenth century, and of their relationships with their employer, the Florentine republic, from the death of their founder and first commander Giovanni de' Medici (1498-1526) to their disbandment after the surrender of the army of the League of Cognac, of which they were part, at Aversa, near Naples, on 30 August 1528.

In order to establish an adequate framework, the figure and the myth of Giovanni de' Medici – in memory of whom his men wore permanently the black bands of mourning – are examined at the beginning of the dissertation, and his role and place in the tactical and administrative developments that characterised the end of the Italian Wars reassessed. Particular attention has been paid to the analysis of the peculiarities of the Italian infantry at the end of the Italian Wars, such as its reliance on arquebuses rather than pikes and its specialization in assault and skirmish instead of shock tactics, and to the problems that these peculiarities created for states like Florence, which sought, unsuccessfully, to invert the pike-to-shot ratio and to transform the Black Bands from an expeditionary force into a defensive militia. Eventually, the last part of this thesis has been dedicated to the siege laid by the army of the League to Naples in 1528, one of the most important and less studied sieges of the sixteenth century, whose dramatic outcome shattered the residual hopes of the pro-French party after the battle of Pavia (1525) and made possible the establishment of Imperial hegemony in the greater part of the Italian peninsula.

With this dissertation I have tried to outline the changes that the organization and command of large bodies of mercenary infantry brought about not only in Florentine military and foreign policy, but, more generally, in Italian military entrepreneurship, and to explain how these latter changes contributed to the general European trend that brought about the birth of the *Tercios* and other regimental structures.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASF: Archivio di Stato, Firenze

ASMn: Archivio di Stato, Mantova

ASMo: Archivio di Stato, Modena

ASV: Archivio di Stato, Venezia

[]: writing in cipher

Introduction

'Amatemi quando sarò morto.'

Dying words of Giovanni de' Medici to the marquis of Mantua

During the so-called Italian Wars, that is between the end of the fifteenth century and the treaty of Câteau-Cambrésis (1559), Renaissance Italy underwent a series of radical changes. The social, economic, political and artistic dimensions of these transformations and their consequences across the centuries have been thoroughly investigated by Italian historiography, and are being constantly updated by new contributions. However, during the last decades the military dimension has been only hinted at. War has not been ignored outright, of course, but the different and multiform manifestations of the Italian military world have been examined as a system in its own right only rarely and, in the main, by foreign scholars.

The comprehensible, if excessively protracted, aversion from the subject of warfare shown by Italian historians since the end of the Second World War, and the widespread cultural reaction caused by the disastrous effects of Fascist military rhetoric, are only aspects of the problem¹; they do explain the 'fall from grace' of military history, but not the length of its exile. At least as far as the early modern period is concerned, the protraction of such a lack of interest is due to the shortage of some essential historiographical instruments. Even historians who only have to concern themselves with minor military matters are all too often confronted by a great divide between the issues raised by more modern historiographical trends and the inadequate.

¹ For a short overview on this subject, see P. del Negro, 'La storia militare dell'Italia moderna nello specchio della storiografia del Novecento', *Cheiron*, 1995, pp. 11-33, and the introduction to the book of Gregory Hanlon, *The twilight of a military tradition; Italian aristocrats and European conflicts, 1560-1800* (London, 1998).

old-fashioned nineteenth and early twentieth-century printed sources they are forced to rely on. Such a gap is too wide to be filled case by case.

The intellectual shortcomings, and, in some extreme cases, dishonesties of Risorgimento and nationalist military writers have been acknowledged, but, on the whole, they have not been replaced by anything else. The birth and the perpetuation until our own times of a historical ‘invention’ of the nineteenth century such as ‘Giovanni dalle Bande Nere’, is just a macroscopic example of the dangerous pervasiveness of those past errors. Even though they were rightly dismissed by ‘proper’ historians as relatively unimportant, Giovanni and his men have been constantly utilized as a sort of benchmark of Italian military achievements during the sixteenth century, and for almost two centuries the unchecked use of this benchmark has been a source of false or inadequate information.

This does *not* mean, of course, that all the achievements of Italian historiography in this field are inherently flawed. However, one of the remedies this situation does call for is a progressive and, above all, *constant* reappraisal of the traditional literary sources of early modern Italian military history. This can be achieved only through archival work carried out by historians interested mainly in military matters, who deem them to be worthy of study in their own right, where others would see in them merely a useful, but marginal, means to another end, something that must be seen through. To paraphrase the French writer Daniel Pennac, if we could see through everything, we would end up by seeing nothing at all.

Moreover, the problem is not limited to the older, traditional sources. Even though it was published after the war, the otherwise excellent and still formidable book of Piero Pieri on the Italian Wars, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana*,² shows all the

² Piero Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana* (Turin, 1952). Albeit it is not, strictly speaking, a product of Italian historiography, the still redoubtable book of Frederick Lewis Taylor, *The art of war in Italy, 1494-1529* (Wesport, 1973; first ed. 1921) deserves to be mentioned here: methodologically – if not

limitations of a cultural framework permeated with Crocean idealism and with teleology. What Pieri saw was an irreversible crisis, and not a phase of Italian history: since Italian pikemen could not resist foreign pikemen in the open field, the whole Italian military system was to be seen as inherently flawed. The tendency to confuse the concept of a military tradition with that of a nation was still strong. The new paths indicated by the works of Hale and Mallett³ have been left largely unexplored, and, in more recent years, the appeal of Gregory Hanlon⁴ for an investigation of the ‘twilight’ of the Italian military tradition following the ambitious guidelines of his *pré-enquête* has received a rather cold welcome.

At the beginning, the choice of the Black Bands as the topic of my dissertation was due mainly to the fact that, in comparison with the vast literature on the figure of Giovanni de’Medici, very little had been written on his unit. However, during the first year of my Ph.D. I had to live in Britain most of the time to follow the doctoral courses, and this heavily influenced my approach to my topic of research. In practice, I had to make some painful – but eventually rewarding – choices with regard to the Italian sources I could work on, and, at the same time, I had to make use of an overabundant supply of works on early modern military history in English, French and Spanish which was not directly related to my research. My initially frantic hunt for ‘something useful’ ended up by giving me a quite unique perspective and a new approach to the analysis of tactical and administrative developments at the end of the Italian Wars, and to question how closely Italy was integrated into the European picture.

The distinction between Giovanni and his soldiers was, in fact, somewhat artificial, since they were both expressions of the same trends in the evolution of the

in its scholarship – superior to Pieri’s, Taylor’s work nevertheless shows different, albeit far less evident, weaknesses.

³ Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and their masters* (London, 1974), Mallet and Hale, *The military Organization of a Renaissance State; Venice 1400-1617* (Cambridge, 1984).

⁴ Hanlon, *The Twilight of a military tradition*, pp. 356-358.

Italian military entrepreneurs⁵. This study begins with a consideration of the cultural framework surrounding the figure of Giovanni de' Medici. However, this dissertation is, principally, an initial attempt to identify the Italian features of a process that led to the birth, throughout Europe, of the first regimental structures, and to assess the degree of correlation between these structures and early modern Italian states.

From this point of view, the difficult relationship between Florence and the Black Bands is an ideal subject of investigation. Florence was a lesser power close to the area of operations, and therefore it was a perfect test case, for the republic considered carefully even 'trivial' matters concerning its soldiers and their requests. One could rightly object that the Black Bands are an inadequate sample, since they were not an army, and could never have become one. However, this does not pretend to be a study of 'war' and the Renaissance state, but rather of the 'instruments' of war.

The system of military entrepreneurship in Italy in the era of the regiments and of the *Tercios* has rarely been studied beyond its interactions with some Italian states, like Venice. The emphasis put on the 'side' of the state, whose role is too often seen as dominant, has produced a rather misleading picture of the role and of the range of activities of the Italian military entrepreneurs after their 'conversion' – during the last phase of the Italian Wars – from cavalry to infantry commanders and recruiters. The implications of such an important change have never been fully investigated. The enlistment and the administration of bodies of tactical infantry were very complex processes which presupposed the existence of a series of structures and infrastructures that had to exist apart from the state. However, the Italian commanders have been

⁵ This is a definition that I took from the work of Fritz Redlich, *The German military enterpriser and his workforce* 2 vol. (Wiesbaden, 1964), and that I prefer to the traditional, and more etymologically correct word *condottieri* which has become, in practice, the synonym of a figure with political as well as military ambitions.

studied, on the whole, from a different angle: as aristocrats involved in the wars of supremacy between Valois and Habsburg⁶.

Finally, I am aware of the doubts that my decision to focus this research on such a short period of time, and on a subject so restricted as the Black Bands, could raise. However, I was persuaded to do so not simply by the exceptional abundance of the archival sources on this topic, but also by their quality, especially in the case of the letters of the Florentine ambassadors and commissioners in the camp of the League. Moreover, having been practically ignored by Risorgimento and nationalist historians obsessed with the more 'patriotic' siege of Florence (1530), the case of the siege of Naples was a perfect example of the need to reappraise some of the literary sources on Italian military history.

Nevertheless, I have to concede how many times I have felt thrilled on recognizing in the official papers I was reading the very phrases subsequently utilized by Francesco Guicciardini and Benedetto Varchi in their historical works, as well as the emotion I have experienced on seeing come back to life, after a long and undeserved oblivion, and thanks to the descriptive powers of *commissario* Lorenzo Martelli, the soldiers of the Black Bands in all their grandeur and all their baseness. As the forgotten *motto* engraved on their armour boastfully stated, 'In dispecto tuo, Christo.'

⁶ Geoffrey Parker's *The army of Flanders and the Spanish Road (1567-1659); the logistics of Spanish victory and defeat in the Low Countries' wars* (Cambridge, 1972) is the only book that has given a different account of the support given to Spain's policy by Italian troops, but it has only scratched the surface. and the history of the Italian Tercios has yet to be written. I would like very much to be the one who does it.

Chapter I

Between Narrative and Document

1. The Invention of History: *Giovanni of the Black Bands*

'- Oh, che tu sia benedetto, bianco cavaliere! Ma dicci chi sei, e perché tieni chiusa la celata dell'elmo.-

- Il mio nome è al termine del mio viaggio.-'

Italo Calvino, *Il Cavaliere Inesistente*

The title of this first section could easily be misunderstood, but in the present case the word 'invention' must not be understood in its wider meaning that – both in English and Italian – is more closely associated with the concept of fiction rather than with the sense that the word originally had in Latin. In Latin *invenire* means 'to find', and indeed the *inventio*, the process of finding, is common to the historian and the novelist, since the historian 'invents' reality because he must both find the facts and select which of them to use¹. In the case of the Black Bands - and even more in the case of their founder Giovanni de' Medici - the criteria of that 'choice' through the centuries have a history of its own, and any attempt to simply ignore or deconstruct the legend by applying a rigid distinction between historiographical and literary invention would blur rather than clear our horizon. The departure point for our research, and indeed, its historical co-ordinates were defined by the name 'Giovanni of the Black Bands', which is in fact the result of an invention. The epithet 'of the Black Bands' is largely a posthumous creation.

¹ On the 'invention of history' from a literary point of view, see the introduction of Emmanuella Scarano to her book *Sette Assedi di Firenze* (Pisa, 1982), pp. 7-26.

According to Pietro Aretino², not considered a monument of truthfulness, Giovanni de' Medici held up a light in his hand to help the surgeon who was sawing off his leg - injured by a musket shot - without anaesthesia³. To begin the analysis of the focus of my research, the famous 'Medici Warrior' must undergo another amputation, far more complex than painful: we must separate his name from that of his mercenary company, the so-called Black Bands. This is rather difficult because Giovanni and the Black Bands have almost always been considered together as an indivisible whole, and not a binomial⁴.

Giovanni of the Black Bands, the hero, was a predestined saviour who systematically failed in his missions: he did not save the King of France from capture at Pavia⁵, Rome from being sacked and Italy from the 'final ruin'⁶. This tragic figure embodied - at different times and with different names - the *valore italico* at the disastrous end of the Italian Wars; martial prowess, courage and intelligence wasted in a losing battle against destiny and, obviously, treachery. However, it ought to be noted that the 'invention' of the name 'Giovanni of the Black Bands', now an integral part of Italian folklore⁷, is a typical example of the way in which nineteenth-century Italian

² Giuseppe de Sanctis' negative judgement on Pietro Aretino in his *Storia della Letteratura italiana*, (pp. 387-399) is still a good starting point, and the bibliography on the topic is huge. For a good recent biography: Paul Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino* (Roma, 1997). For a general overview: *Pietro Aretino, nel cinquecentenario della nascita (Atti del Convegno di Roma-Viterbo-Arezzo-Toronto-Los Angeles)*, 2 vol. (Roma, 1995)

³ Pietro Aretino, *Lettere* (Verona, 1960), p. 9.

⁴ So successful has this operation been that even today the few Italians who still remember the name of *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere* often do not know that he was actually a Medici.

⁵ Giovanni de' Medici was seriously wounded on 20 of February during a skirmish and had to leave the French army a few days before the decisive battle of Pavia (24 February). According to the first biographer of Giovanni, his nephew Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, Francis I, imprisoned in Pizzighettone, ascribed his defeat mainly to the wound of 'Signor Giovanni' and to the counterfeit payrolls of the mercenary troops, which made him presume he had more soldiers than he actually had. '*Pour achever le malheur, Dieu envoya la blessure au seigneur Jean, le quel à la verité entendoit plus à faire la guerre, que tous ceux qui étoient auprès du roy*', Blaise de Monluc, from his *Commentaires* quoted in *Vite d'uomini d'armi e d'affari del secolo XVI* (Firenze, 1866), p. 186.

⁶ The campaign of 1526-27 is well described in Piero Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana* (Torino, 1952) p.568 ff.

⁷ '*Messer Giovanni dalle Bande Nere dal lungo cavalcar noiato e stanco*

culture re-utilized earlier sources in dealing with contemporary issues⁸. It was the period of the *Risorgimento* and tragic national heroes needed to be created. Whether or not his Bands were really Black during his lifetime, ‘Giovanni of the Black Bands’ is a title given only posthumously, a projection of effects onto cause. For his contemporaries Giovanni was a Medici; his surname was so important that he neither needed nor admitted additions. His men were ‘the soldiers of Signor Giovanni de’Medici’, and were openly called ‘Black Bands’ only after the death of their master. If anything, his personal name was applied to his troops, who on one occasion were called the *gioanini*, the ‘Little Johns’⁹. In order to define the object of this research, nonetheless, we must first examine Giovanni’s myth, considering both its origins and the changes it underwent over time.

Three ‘traditions’ can be clearly identified: the late Renaissance historiographical¹⁰ and biographical¹¹ tradition, the nineteenth-century one - with its patriotic aims¹² and its

scese di cavallo e si mise a sedere’

These cheap and anonymous verses, disrespectful of metrical rules, were composed by the Florentines of old, who were disrespectful of everything but beauty, to celebrate the rather tardy and quite ugly statue of the long-dead *condottiere*, which still stands out among the *bancarelle*, the shops and the noisy *barbari* (that is the tourists, who mercifully ignore it) that crowd Piazza San Lorenzo, in front of the church that contains the Cappelle Medicee. The hyperactive, sober and illiterate Giovanni de’Medici is represented seated, with a broken lance in his hand and wearing Roman armour on a base covered with cheap decorative motifs. On the relationship between the Florentines and the statue of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere see Curzio Malaparte, *Maledetti toscani* (Milano, 1994) pp. 106-110: ‘Fra tutte le statue di Firenze, la statua di Giovanni dalle Bande Nere è quella che più si meriterebbe un par di ceffoni nel muso’

⁸ Giorgio Petrocchi, *Il Romanzo storico dell’Ottocento italiano* (Torino, 1967); Folco Portinari, *Le parabole del reale* (Torino, 1976); Emanuella Scarano, *Il romanzo della storia* (Pisa, 1986).

⁹ Marin Sanuto, *Diarii*. XXXVII, p. 458.

¹⁰ Francesco Guicciardini, Benedetto Varchi, Bernardo Segni, Iacopo Nardi, Filippo Nerli and Paolo Giovio are the most prominent representatives of the great age of sixteenth-century Renaissance historiography.

¹¹ The first ‘authorised’ biography of Giovanni de’Medici was written by his nephew Giovangirolamo de’Rossi and dedicated to the Duke of Tuscany Cosimo I, son of Giovanni, while his former secretary Giovambattista Tedaldi wrote and sent a short biographical outline to the historian Benedetto Varchi. The life of Giovanni de’Medici published by Scipione Ammirato in the third volume of his *Opuscoli, Ritratti d’uomini illustri di casa Medici* (Firenze, 1642) was basically a reworking of Rossi’s manuscript.

¹² Together with the revival of the sixteenth century historiography and the reissuing of the works of Benedetto Varchi and Iacopo Nardi, the manuscript of Giovangirolamo de’Rossi was published several times: Pompeo Litta, *Vita di Giovanni de’Medici celebre capitano delle Bande Nere* (Milano, 1833); Sebastiano Ciampi, *Notizie dei secoli XV e XVI sull’Italia, la Polonia e la Russia, raccolte e pubblicate da Sebastiano Ciampi* (Firenze, 1833); *Vite di uomini d’armi e d’affari del secolo XVI* (Firenze, 1866). The biography by Costantino Mini, *Storia delle Bande Nere e dei celebri capitani che vi militarono, corredata di documenti* (Firenze, 1851) which exhibits mystical tendencies, is a 19th century product.

love for historical novels¹³ - and finally its fascist appendage (when, needless to say, the colour black was all the rage), with its own 'invention' of an Italian military tradition¹⁴.

It must be admitted that Giovanni himself laid the foundations of his legend with the strange and deep link he established with Pietro Aretino (see Plate 1). Theirs was a mutually profitable relationship: Giovanni offered protection to this salacious literary blackmailer when nothing short of a small army could save him from his powerful enemies, and Aretino granted his revered 'Mars de' Medici'¹⁵ a sort of literary immortality, even though he refused to measure himself with the epic genre and, after Giovanni's death, declined to write an 'official' biography¹⁶ of the *condottiere*. The power and fame that Aretino enjoyed during his lifetime allowed him to be called the 'scourge of Princes' by the important friends of an important man like Giovanni de' Medici¹⁷, but his colourful reputation created problems for Giovanni's admirers in later centuries. For the Romantics the presence of the most vain and trivial representative of the Italian Renaissance by the side of one of its rare military heroes was plainly embarrassing, and was even more so for his fascist eulogizers. The invention of Giovanni

¹³ Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, *L'assedio di Firenze* (Parigi, 1836); Massimo d'Azeglio, *Niccolò de' Lapi, ovvero i Pallechi e i Piagnoni* (Milano, 1841). At a more general level: P. Ihring, 'La figura del condottiero nel romanzo storico risorgimentale', *Studi Italiani*, vii 1992, pp. 83-101.

¹⁴ Gregory Hanlon, *The Twilight of a Military Tradition* (London, 1998), pp. 1-9. The unhealthy passion for the colour black produced dire consequences with the publication of a series of new biographies: Alessandro Antonio Monti, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere* (Roma-Milano, 1928); Ettore Allodoli, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere* (Firenze, 1929); Bravetta, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere* (Torino, 1932); Carlotta Fratini, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere* (Milano, 1936). The biography of Monti was included in the series 'I prefascisti' (the Pre-Fascists). The final chapter of the book is even entitled 'Il precursore', 'The Forerunner', pp. 137-143. In 1936 the German movie director Luis Trenker directed two versions (one for Italy and one for Germany) of the film 'Condottieri' in which Giovanni appeared clearly as a pre-fascist. On 1 April 1942, the "Giussano-Class" cruiser "Giovanni dalle Bande Nere" was sunk by British submarine "Urge". By 1956, when Sergio Grieco directed the actor Vittorio Gassman as 'Giovanni dalle Bande Nere', the famous *condottiere* had become a man looking for a balance between love (for women) and the sword.

¹⁵Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, p. 570, letter to Girolama Fontanella, 6 July 1539; see also Luisa Mulas, 'L'Aretino e i Medici' in *Pietro Aretino nel Cinquecentario*, pp. 535-572; and Giuseppe Galasso, 'Pietro Aretino nel suo contesto storico: il papato, la Francia, l'Impero', *ibid.*, pp. 297-331.

¹⁶ Probably afraid of being ridiculed and conscious of his own limitations, the master of ridicule didn't reply to the letter of Maria Salviati, Giovanni's widow, who asked Pietro to celebrate with a biography 'li xiiii anni che sua signoria ha combattuto'.

of the Black Bands produced other inventions; for some it seemed best to reduce the importance of Pietro Aretino, others thought that he had been ennobled through his contact with the pure heroism of 'Giovanni d'Italia'¹⁸.

The way in which Giovanni's family name has been passed down through the centuries is even more telling. As the son of Giovanni de' Medici *Popolani*¹⁹ he was a member of the branch of the family that opposed Cosimo il Vecchio's rise to power and made an important contribution to the expulsion of the Medici in 1494. Even though Giovanni grew up under the watchful eye of the Salviati family (influential partisans of the Medicean party in Florence), the legitimate son of a *popolano* would have been always in a secondary position in respect to any descendant, even illegitimate, of Lorenzo the *Magnifico* and his brother Giuliano. Giovanni de' Medici's first true biographies were published after his son Cosimo had come to power as Duke of Florence and second *Pater Patriae* - after Cosimo *il Vecchio* - of the Florentine state. In the early modern tradition the troubled origins of Giovanni, his constant fight against the main branch of the family to obtain even the smallest space, his final defeat and heroic death while fighting to protect pope Clement VII (the most ungrateful relative of all) were exalted and exaggerated in order to give to his successful son the aura of the self-made man, legitimised by the final victory against all odds as well as by his blood. Even the circumstances of Giovanni's birth - he was born two days before the death of Charles VIII, 'la ruina d'Italia'²⁰, and the same night on which Savonarola was arrested²¹ - were

¹⁷Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni de' Medici detto delle Bande Nere* (Roma, 1996) p. 104. It ought to be noticed that the title is taken from Litta's edition and not from the manuscript.

¹⁸ Carlotta Fratini, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*. More recent biographies tend to emphasize the role and relevance of Pietro Aretino in Giovanni's life; see Joseph Jay Deiss, *Captains of Fortune* (London, 1966) pp. 245-287; Cesare Marchi, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere* (Milano, 1982).

¹⁹ Giovanni's branch of the family took the name of *Popolani* (of the people, 'del popolo') in 1494 to symbolise their reconciliation with the popular regime after the expulsion of Piero de' Medici, son of Lorenzo.

²⁰ Ammirato, *Ritratti*, p. 176.

²¹Rossi, *Vita*, p. 35.

made to be symbolic. However, the point of view of the nineteenth century was radically different: the Medici were tyrants who destroyed Florentine freedom²², and Duke Cosimo was the first and worst of them all. Even though their evaluations were more varied, twentieth-century writers were more interested in finding a line of continuity in the life of Giovanni de' Medici and in his deeds that could distinguish him from the other Medici. For the writers of the early modern period Giovanni 'the Brave'²³ was simply one individual, albeit an important one, in a longer series of Medici family members, glorifying and glorified by both his ancestors and descendants, while in Italian folklore of the nineteenth and early twentieth century he had become an outsider who won his true name through his victories and his death: *Giovanni of the Black Bands*.

It is possible that Giovanni's men put black bands of mourning on their armour and flags for the first time in 1521 after the death of pope Leo X (*al secolo* Giovanni de' Medici), patron of their master, but this gesture, temporary in any case, was emphasised at a later stage in order to make it a turning point in the life of the famous *condottiere* and to distinguish him at the beginning of his all too short career at least with a colour, given his 'wavering'²⁴ loyalty. For sixteenth-century historians and biographers, from Francesco Guicciardini to Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, one of the main characteristics of Giovanni de' Medici's life was its sad incompleteness: he died at twenty-eight, a very promising *future* leader of armies, killed when both his age and his experience were about to reach maturity. The musket (or falconet) shot fired by the cornered Landsknechts killed just the newly appointed and not totally accepted captain general of

²²Guerrazzi's historical novel *L'assedio di Firenze*, is typical in this sense. Only Giovanni of the Black Bands, brought to life by the flashbacks of one of his soldiers, is glorified in the sixth chapter, pp. 148-153. The mind of 'Lupo bombardiere', however, seems to recall the events of Giovanni's apotheosis and death as if they were quite distant in the past, when he (Lupo) was still a young lighthorseman and not a skilled artilleryman (a very strange career), though only three years had passed. Giovanni had to appear as a figure of the past, almost from another world.

²³'Giovanni il Valoroso'; Ammirato, *Ritratti di uomini illustri*, p. 176.

²⁴That is, by the nineteenth century's standards.

the League's infantry, not of its whole army. On the other hand the Giovanni of the Black Bands celebrated by the writers of the nineteenth century and afterwards was taken out of context to transform him into a fully-fledged heroic figure that had already reached the apex of his career.

In this effort the high point was reached by the French writer and art critic Pierre Gauthiez, who published in 1901 the best documented, and possibly the best known, biography²⁵ of Giovanni de' Medici. Even though it was never translated, the book received a warm welcome from the Italian critics and public. Gauthiez, with the 'benevolent contempt' towards the Italians typical of many *fin-de-siècle* French writers felt even more strongly the need to separate the hero – 'le dernier des grands tueurs d'hommes à l'arme blanche'²⁶, and not a commander of arquebusiers – not simply from other Italians but also from his family name, a synonym for dirty money and opportunism. After the death of Leo X Giovanni acquires his new name in a sort of investiture which makes him become entirely 'Jean des bandes noires', that is, Giovanni of the Black Bands²⁷. Furthermore, Gauthiez based his affirmations mainly on Martin du Bellay's *Mémoires*, according to which when Giovanni de' Medici entered French service shortly before Bicocca (1522) his flags were already black²⁸.

In the following years, due to growing Italian nationalism and especially during the Fascist regime, the reaction against Gauthiez's book was strong, but the new biographers

²⁵Pierre Gauthiez, *Jean des Bandes Noires* (Paris, 1901). It ought to be noticed that this book was written by Gauthiez after a biography of Pietro Aretino. He followed the general opinion and considered Aretino the *summa* of all the Italian vices and errors. "Je fus son (Giovanni's) père, son frère, son ami, son esclave"... il ne fut que son valet, et son buffon': such was the relation between Giovanni and Pietro Aretino according to Gauthiez.

²⁶'The last of the great slayers (the *condottieri*) with hand-to-hand weapons'; Gauthiez, *Jean*, p. 1.

²⁷It happens in the culminating point of the book, at the end of chapter three; 'Et dès lors, Jean de Medicis... devient pour le reste de sa vie, et dans la mémoire à venir, Jean des bandes noires. Comme tous les héros, son nom, son vrai nom, c'est lui qu'il s'est créé', Gauthiez, *Jean*, p. 165.

²⁸Martin du Bellay, *Mémoires de Martin et Guillaume du Bellay* (Paris, 1908), vol. I, book II, p. 216: '... vint au service du Roy le seigneur Jean de Medicis, parent du feu pape Leon, qui amena trois mille hommes de pied et deux cens chevaux, *desquels les enseignes estoient noires*, parce qu'ils portoient le dueil dudit feu pape Leon, du vivant duquel il avoit tousjours esté au service de la ligue contre le Roy...'. .

of Giovanni, albeit hostile to Gauthiez, did not differ much from his method and conclusions. In 1928 Ettore Allodoli concluded by considering a rather curious mistake made by ‘some historians, both ancient and modern ones’ who maintained that the bands darkened their flags and became widely known for this feature only after the death of Giovanni²⁹, thereby making of ‘Giovanni of the Black Bands’ an entirely posthumous title. We might mention that Bernardo Segni³⁰, Filippo Nerli³¹, Benedetto Varchi³², Francesco Guicciardini³³, Giovangirolamo de’Rossi³⁴, Marco Guazzo³⁵ and the French Blaise de Montluc³⁶ were among the ‘some historians’ who held the view Allodoli was criticising.

The positive judgement on the military effectiveness and skill of the men who decided to continue to follow the discipline and memory of the ‘signor Giovanni’ was unanimous, as well as the criticism of their rapacity and insolence³⁷. The agony of the anti-Imperialist League which the Bands served was long and the Sack of Rome was an epoch-shaping event: the two years during which the Bands survived before being destroyed at the siege of Naples (1528) were enough to invent a track and to allow a legend to be invented. The general collapse of morale that preceded the storming of Rome’s walls needed some sort of relief, if not healing: the historian Paolo Giovio in a

²⁹Ettore Allodoli, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*, p. 86; ‘... Curioso è in, proposito, l’errore di quegli storici (antichi e moderni, fra cui il Segni) che dicono le milizie di Giovanni essere state dette bande nere per la morte del loro capitano illustre, nel 1528 cioè: così che “Giovanni dalle bande nere” verrebbe ad essere un titolo puramente postumo’.

³⁰ Bernardo Segni, *Istorie Fiorentine dall’anno 1527 al 1555 scritte da Bernardo Segni* (Firenze 1857), p. 20.

³¹ Filippo Nerli, *Commentari dei fatti civili occorsi dentro la città di Firenze* (Trieste, 1859), vol. II, p. 23. Filippo Nerli was Giovanni’s brother-in-law.

³² Benedetto Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina* 3 vols. (Firenze, 1838-1841), book 2, p. 112, vol. 1.

³³ Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia* (Torino, 1971), book XVIII, chap. I, p. 1817. Messer Francesco was Lieutenant General of the papal forces when Giovanni died.

³⁴ Rossi, *Vita*, p. 92-94. Rossi was Giovanni’s half-nephew.

³⁵ Marco Guazzo, *Historie di messer Marco Guazzo* (Venezia, 1564), pp. 49-50.

³⁶ Blaise de Montluc, *Commentarii tradotti dal francese* (Firenze, 1636), p. 28. The young captain Blaise de Montluc fought side by side in the same trenches with the Black Bands during the siege of Naples.

³⁷ Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, book IV, XVI, pp. 243-244: ‘la migliore e più reputata fanteria e la più temuta che andasse in quei tempi attorno, si come ancora la più insolente, la più fastidiosa e la più rapace.’

letter shortly preceding the disaster celebrated the victorious defence of Frosinone, which was considered as an omen of future victories. Giovio writes that the ‘signor Joannin’s devils’ sang joyously during the siege and the Homeric slaughter of the humiliated Spaniards that followed their irresistible sortie. He compared also their commander Luca Antonio Cuppano, former lieutenant and ‘Right Eye’ of Giovanni de’Medici³⁸, to Patroclus³⁹ with a gilded arquebus. Several accounts of the Sack of Rome describe some companies of the Black Bands as the first line of defence on the walls of the Holy City; at the end of a furious melee, after having successfully repelled a first attack, Luca Antonio Cuppano’s arquebusiers were overwhelmed – thanks to a treacherous mist that covered the approach of the Imperialists – and massacred while their commander was badly wounded and captured⁴⁰. However, according to other accounts, the Imperialists’ victory was possible only after former members of the Black Bands, who joined the Spaniards a few days after having been discharged by the ‘avaricious’ Clement VII, confronted and defeated the loyalists of Cuppano⁴¹. The cold comfort of having been the final cause of their own ruin is a rhetorical and psychological expedient commonly utilised by the losers in the aftermath of any major defeat; in this case it gives the measure of the importance, symbolic at least, attached to the Bands, since this kind of ‘treason’ is traditionally always perpetrated at the higher levels by the most trusted person(s).

The historians of the sixteenth century, concerned more with the actual effectiveness of Giovanni de’Medici’s men on the battlefield and their adequacy compared with other examples of the ‘modern militia’ like the Landsknechts, had no problem in describing the Bands as formed largely of good arquebusiers proficient in

³⁸Pietro Aretino, *Lettere, il primo e il secondo libro* (1960), p. 282, 9 November 1537. The ‘left eye’ was, of course, Aretino himself.

³⁹ Marin Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLIV, p. 99. The letter was written by the historian 17 February 1527. On Giovio, Clement VII and the sack of Rome: T. C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 60-86.

⁴⁰Marin Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLV, pp. 144, 167.

skirmishes and siegeworks⁴² with a minority of light cavalrymen. For the official biographers the situation was different: in the two versions⁴³ (denominated 'A' and 'R') of the life written by Giovangirolamo de' Rossi - a nephew of Giovanni whose work for long influenced or conditioned writing on the topic - the space dedicated to the troops and to the more 'technical' side of warfare decreases to the benefit of its more adventurous and heroic aspects. In the final version Giovanni de' Medici is still considered the father of the light cavalry, but 'his' other military innovations like the mounted arquebusiers and the reform of the *lancie spezzate*⁴⁴ are ignored, while the rivalry with Clement VII and Giovanni's many romantic *affairs* are emphasised. The arquebusiers are always in the background, since the 'Gran Diavolo'⁴⁵ was a prominent figure of the 'militia of the modern times', but Giovanni had once again become a mounted hero whose discipline, strong will and physical prowess (twice in his life he ran an opponent through with his lance!) were wasted against the 'maladetto, abominoso ordigno'⁴⁶; that is, firearms and artillery. This was a part of the effort of ennobling the skirmishes - the kind of fighting in which Giovanni excelled - to the level of heroic struggles, since during the military career of Giovanni de' Medici only a few pitched battles were fought, and both at the Bicocca (1521) and Pavia (1525) he managed to be on the losing side.

⁴¹ Marin Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLV, pp. 187, 202.

⁴² '... gente buona e spedita per servirsene all'espugnazione delle terre, ed alle scaramucce, ed imboscate; nelle quali imprese le genti toscane, ed infra l'altre le nostre erano attissime tanto più, quanto le avevano capitani eccellenti, e molti soldati segnalati, e divenuti esperti nel mestiere delle armi sotto la disciplina di Giovanni de' Medici' Bernardo Segni, *Istorie Fiorentine*, p. 32.

⁴³ 'A' - edited recently in 1996 by Vanni Bramanti - is usually considered the final version, presented to the Duke Cosimo I with the biography of Giovanni as the first of a series of seventeen '*Vite*'. However, the more frequently used version is certainly 'R', used for the nineteenth-century editions. On this topic, see the introduction of Vanni Bramanti's edition of Giovangirolamo de' Rossi's *Vita di Giovanni de' Medici*,

⁴⁴ *Vite*, p. 80 for the 'lancie spezzate', p. 93 for the mounted arquebusiers.

⁴⁵ 'The Great Devil', the last of the many nicknames of Giovanni, allegedly given to him by the landsknechts that he was trying to stop before they could cross the Po in the days before the fatal wound of Governolo.

⁴⁶ 'O! curs'd device! base implement of death...' Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, bk. I, canto 9.

More technical information on the Bands was offered by the sources questioned on this topic by the historian Benedetto Varchi; from the accounts given by Giovanni's secretary Giovambattista Tedaldi and by an anonymous former captain (possibly Cuppano 'the Right Eye' himself) a less 'centralised' picture of the mercenary company's structure emerges. The leader appears surrounded by a staff of legal and diplomatic advisors, in addition to a well-paid network of spies, informers and scouts⁴⁷.

Another point common to all the traditions of the myth is that the semi-permanent court that accompanied Giovanni de' Medici in his wars was also a 'school', in the tradition of the more long-lived mercenary companies of the fifteenth century⁴⁸. For the early modern historians and biographers, those lucky enough to have been officers and 'apprentices of *signor Giovanni*', the lesser demons at the court of the *Gran Diavolo*, formed a distinctive elite of soldiers. Pietro Aretino, with his typical insolence, was able to say in 1535 that not only the noble pupils of Giovanni, but also his accountants and lackeys had become famous and appreciated captains⁴⁹. This historical invention gave rise to the myth of the *Italianità* - if not the *Toscanità* - of the Bands and the more intermittent success of Francesco Ferrucci⁵⁰ and Piero Strozzi⁵¹, two heroic figures who actually never met Giovanni de' Medici but owed much to his tactical innovations and to his 'apprentices'.

⁴⁷ Sebastiano Ciampi, *Notizie*, pp. 86-101, 101-108; *Vite*, pp. 156-182, 201-209.

⁴⁸ On the 'schools' and the mercenary companies of the fifteenth century: Michael Mallett, *Mercenaries and their Masters* (London, 1974) and Mario Del Treppo, 'Gli aspetti organizzativi, economici e sociali di una compagnia di ventura italiana', in *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 85 (1973), pp. 253-275.

⁴⁹ Pietro Aretino to Bino Signorelli, 28 September 1535, *Lettere*, p. 57. On the 'students' of Giovanni de' Medici's school: Ercole Ricotti, *Le compagnie di ventura in Italia* (Torino, 1845), pp. 207-304.

⁵⁰ Two useful collections of documents are: 'Vite di italiani illustri: vita di Francesco Ferrucci, Raccolta di opere e documenti riguardanti la Storia d'Italia, lettere di Francesco Ferrucci al Magistrato dei Dieci della Guerra e a Ceccotto Tosinghi', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Tomo IV, parte II Firenze, Viessesux 1853; *Francesco Ferruccio e la guerra di Firenze del 1529-1530* (Firenze, 1889). He is also the positive hero of Guerrazzi's *Assedio di Firenze*. Guerrazzi also wrote his biography: *Vita di Francesco Ferruccio* (Firenze, 1889).

⁵¹ Bernardo Segni (son of Bernardo), *Vita di Piero Strozzi*, published in *Vite d'uomini d'arme e d'affari*, p. 212 ff.; Brantome, *Vie du Marechal Strosse*, largely used by Ercole Ricotti in his *Storia delle compagnie di ventura*, pp. 289-301.

The Italian character of the Black Bands was obviously highly emphasised in the nineteenth century, during the Risorgimento, and the fact that some of the last remnants of the unit contributed significantly to the defence of the Florentine Republic (1527-30) - considered the last stand of Italian freedom⁵² against Habsburg hegemony - added myth to myth. After Giovanni of the Black Bands, regarded as the last spark of an already weakened spirit, Italian military historiography turns ‘a blind eye⁵³’ to the following period of Spanish supremacy, when the role of the Italian troops was considered too auxiliary to be worth studying. Notwithstanding the archival and documentary effort provoked by the popularity of the topic⁵⁴, no serious attempt to analyse the structure of the Black Bands was made; attention was dedicated to their best-known members, but not to the whole structure. Strict discipline and boldness became Giovanni de’Medici’s most significant features. There was even an attempt to establish a sort of idealistic link between the famous condottiere and Niccolò Machiavelli, on the ground that the Black Bands were modelled strictly on the precepts contained in Machiavelli’s *Art of War*⁵⁵; and the black clad ‘Medici Warrior’ excited the fantasy of Italian and even English historical novelists⁵⁶. Even the notorious anthropological school of Lombroso had to say something about Giovanni’s cranial measurements and his (bloody) childhood games, which were seen as evidence of the pathological deviance of the *condottiere*⁵⁷.

⁵²Francesco Guerrazzi, *L’assedio di Firenze*; Cecil Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic* (London, 1925); Bartolomeo Valori, *La Difesa della Repubblica Fiorentina* (Firenze, 1929)

⁵³Hanlon, *The Twilight*, p. 5; P. Del Negro, ‘La storia militare dell’Italia moderna nello specchio della storiografia del Novecento’, *Cheiron*, 1995, pp. 11-33.

⁵⁴Transcriptions of letters of Giovanni and his familiars were published in different moments in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*, Tomi VIII, 1859 (pp. 3-40) and IX (pp.3-29); Tomo VII, pp. 3-48; years 1902 (pp. 71-107) and 1903 (pp. 97-126).

⁵⁵Costantino Mini, *Giovanni dalle Bande Nere*, pp. 253-255.

⁵⁶Guerrazzi, *L’assedio di Firenze*; D’Azeglio, *Niccolò de’Lapi*; Christopher Hare, *The Romance of a Medici Warrior* (London, 1911)

⁵⁷Carlo Portigliotti, ‘La pazzia morale di Giovanni dalle Bande Nere’, *Archivio di psichiatria e scienze penali*, XXII, 1902, pp. 353-371. Gaetano Pieraccini, *La stirpe dei Medici di Cafaggiolo* (Firenze, 1947).

In more recent years Giovanni's biographers⁵⁸ have been unable to escape falling into hagiography, and have done little more than perpetuate the existing legend, although emphasising different aspects of his life and relying increasingly on Pietro Aretino, no longer considered an embarrassing figure.

A real effort at redefining of Giovanni de'Medici's figure within the broader picture of the Italian Wars and reassessing his tactical innovations - rather than his personality - was started by Frederick Taylor⁵⁹, even though his impartial work was mainly based on Giovangirolamo de' Rossi's biography. Better documented and more detailed was the image outlined by the historian Piero Pieri⁶⁰ who relegated the *condottiere* to a secondary position because of his lack of strategic perspective. However, Pieri's broad picture of the Italian 'military crisis' was still distorted by the long-lived Italian problem of not distinguishing between the concepts of military tradition and national spirit, too often considered to be synonyms.

The search for heroic characters of the past during the Risorgimento, the love for biographical encyclopaedias that had a revival during the fascism, and above all the specific attention dedicated to the army of the Piedmontese state - as the future unifying element of the country - were basically attempts to fragment, in order to digest more easily, what was judged as a very depressing overall picture of the Italian military world⁶¹, guilty of the capital sin of being merely an auxiliary element of the

⁵⁸ Such as Cesare Marchi and Joseph Jay Deiss.

⁵⁹ Frederick Lewis Taylor, *The Art of War in Italy, 1494-1529* (London, 1921- reprint West Point, 1973), pp. 12, 53- 55, 60, 62, 69, 76, 136, 179.

⁶⁰ Piero Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, pp. 514 n., 525, 540, 548, 552 e n., 557, 561 n., 574 e n., 575 e n., 576 n., 607, 608, 609 n.

⁶¹ On the topic see Piero Del Negro, *La storia militare dell'Italia moderna nello specchio della storiografia del Novecento*, *Cheiron*, 1995, pp. 11-33; Hanlon, *The Twilight*, pp. 1-8, while on the 'Piedmontese exception' see pp. 275-301.

armies of the European great powers during the sixteenth and seventeenth century (and beyond). As in fact it was⁶².

Auxiliary troops have always been a vital element of any great power's military structure; they represent often its everyday expression, pay the same price in battle, but share none of its privileges. They have no *grandeur* to mask their actions. When we talk about the Italian Wars and the sixteenth century, the figures of the German Landsknecht, the French *aventurier*, the proud Swiss pikeman and the stoic Spanish soldier have all an important role in the various national historiographical traditions; not so the Italian mercenary foot soldier. The greatly exaggerated charge that the Italian mercenaries ruined their own country and wasted their energies by fighting - although often skilfully - on both the French and the Imperialist side deprived them of a true definition, of features of their own.

This prejudice also prevented any analysis of the Black Bands as an independent topic and reduced them once more to an appendage of Giovanni. They were indeed an appendage; but the analysis of this appendage could give us the key to open more important doors than the one that guards the fascinating legend of the Great Devil.

⁶²About the 'Habsburg system': Hanlon, *The Twilight*. On the status and importance of the Italian troops in the Army of Flanders: Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, pp. 29-32, 43, 275, 277.

2. The Pike and the Arquebus: Giovanni de' Medici against Niccolò Machiavelli

'Ma è ben vero che le picche de' pazi rompeno spesso el disegno de le penne de li savii...'

Paolo Giovio to Domenichi, 14 February 1527

Even though we do not share the early modern passion for finding edifying symbologies and lines of continuity in every event, the two 'officially' attested encounters of Niccolò Machiavelli and Giovanni de' Medici are meaningful indeed. When, during a delicate diplomatic mission to Forlì in 1499, the Florentine secretary met the virile Caterina Sforza⁶³ in order to establish a defensive alliance against Cesare Borgia's growing military and political influence, the little child Giovanni was barely one year old and lay badly ill in a nearby room. His mother's state and his own life were both apparently doomed. The years of Giovanni's troubled childhood were the years of Machiavelli's hard work in the service of the first Florentine republic, whose end (1512) coincided with the beginning of the discontinuous and troubled rise of Giovanni de' Medici's star under cardinal Giovanni's watchful eye, and with the eclipse of the Florentine secretary's political influence⁶⁴. When, according to the tale of the Dominican monk Matteo Bandello⁶⁵, the two met again in 1526 under the besieged walls of Milan the world itself was different. On that occasion the young and successful Giovanni allegedly entrusted to the unfortunate and elderly Machiavelli, who at the moment was slowly and painfully trying to regain the favour of the Medici, three thousand of his highly trained men to put into practice what, in *messer Niccolò's* military papers, appeared to be not only easy but

⁶³ P. D. Pasolini, *Caterina Sforza* (Roma, 1893)

⁶⁴ On Machiavelli and his *vita contemplativa*, see Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* (Princeton, 1965) pp. 153-200.

also profitable. In the course of two long and exhausting hours under the July sun, Machiavelli showed his monumental inability to apply his own drill methods even to already experienced soldiers, and Giovanni disentangled the resulting muddle with a few peremptory orders. Whether this anecdote is true or not, and besides the understandable inadequacy of any theoretician - no matter how brilliant - when confronted with the hard laws of practicality, the *segretario* and the *condottiere* had two opposite visions of how to make and win a war; theirs was a dialogue between the pike and the arquebus.

Although the famous ‘bloodless battles’ of the earlier *condottieri* were mainly a humanist rhetorical (and highly successful) topos⁶⁶, the unreliability of mercenaries when confronted with the needs of a state-formulated policy - even a discontinuous one as in the case of Florence - was evident⁶⁷. Machiavelli’s answer to the repeated and crippling humiliations suffered by a series of Florentine mercenary armies under the walls of the rebellious Pisa⁶⁸ was the creation (1507) of the famous *Ordinanza*, a militia formed by Florentine subjects whose main weapon was the pike; the drill method of the new units was the same as that of the successful Swiss squares of pikemen⁶⁹, and the action of the ‘new army’ was meant to be a frontal and destructive one⁷⁰, opposed to the exaggerated tacticism of the *condottieri*. More than a weapon, the pike represented the state’s ambition and its need to have a self-sufficient army in order to pursue its own strategic agenda, an army composed of the most hard-working, politically reliable, sober and pious inhabitants of both *contado* and city that could counter with these *virtù* the *furore*

⁶⁵ Matteo Bandello, *Tutte le opere* (Milano, 1934), vol. I, novella XL. For an evaluation of the episode: Mallett, *Mercenaries and their masters*, pp. 258-259.

⁶⁶ Mallett, *Mercenaries*, pp. 1-5

⁶⁷ On the case of Florence: C. C. Bayley, *War and Society in Renaissance Florence* (Toronto, 1961). On Venice: Michael Mallett and John Rigby Hale, *The Military Organization of a Renaissance State; Venice c. 1400 to 1617* (Cambridge, 1984).

⁶⁸ Bayley, *War and Society*, pp. 241-315; Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, pp. 431-443.

⁶⁹ Douglas Miller, *The Swiss at War* (Oxford, 1981).

⁷⁰ Niccolò Machiavelli, ‘Provvisione prima per le fanterie’, in *Tutte le opere storiche, politiche e letterarie* (Milano, 1998), pp. 410-421; Pieri, *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare*, pp. 525-535.

oltramontano of the Swiss infantry on whom they were modelled. In the *Art of War* (1520), written during Machiavelli's forced retirement from the political scene, he argued that pikes should be outnumbered by shielded swordsmen⁷¹, but the basic concept remained of favouring the destructive action of the *arme bianche* in a hand-to-hand melee rather than the tactical advantages granted by gunpowder weapons⁷².

To the famous and bold Bartolomeo d'Alviano, a representative of the generation of *condottieri* that witnessed the 'golden age' described by Guicciardini at the beginning of his *Storia d'Italia*⁷³ and the escalation in the wars for supremacy between France and Spain in the peninsula, the battle of Marignano (1515) appeared like a battle of giants. Giovanni de' Medici was used to fighting among giants without being one; his tactic was based on that concept. He and his captains were the foreseeable product of twenty years of pitched battles and campaigning on Italian territory: a generation of 'young soldiers' whose military date of birth had come after Charles VIII's famous descent into Italy in 1494 and the introduction of so many new elements into Italian warfare. Giovanni was just born when Machiavelli and Guicciardini began to analyse the reasons and propose solutions for the general Italian crisis; the twelve companies⁷⁴ of infantry that after the death of their commander (1526) decided to remain loyal to *signor Giovanni's* discipline, and, by putting the sombre stripes of mourning on their corselets, flags and drums, claimed the name of Black Bands were, in their own way, a creation based on the observation of reality no less than the *Principe* and the *Ricordi* were⁷⁵.

Some changes induced by long decades of almost constant warfare in the peninsula were not limited to the higher levels of society nor were they strictly military in nature.

⁷¹ Machiavelli had been deeply impressed by the ability of Consalvo de Cordoba's shielded footsoldier to 'infiltrate' the wall of pikes during the clash of two squares.

⁷² Niccolò Machiavelli, 'Dell'Arte della guerra', *Tutte le opere*, pp. 295-6.

⁷³ Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, Chapter I, pp. 5-6.

⁷⁴ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLV, pp. 66, 278.

⁷⁵ See the introduction of Taylor, *The Art of War in Italy*, pp. 1-10.

They affected large areas like the Florentine state and implied a widespread change of attitude towards the ‘mestiere delle armi’ and the possibility of living at least a part of one’s life *al soldo*, that is as a mercenary soldier. One of Giovanni’s panegyrists’ recurrent themes was to assign to him the credit for the newborn military reputation of the Tuscan footsoldiers, especially the arquebusiers, which formed the backbone of his famous bands and were afterwards considered among the best Italian troops⁷⁶ available. Obviously these assessments have to be calibrated, but they do not to have to be discarded; Giovanni’s preference for having a high number of Tuscan soldiers and captains in the Black Bands was probably more the effect than the cause of their new ‘reputation’.

Machiavelli’s projects for the creation of a militia formed by the most loyal and hard-working men of the Florentine *contado*, destined to replace the expensive and untrustworthy mercenary troops, proved to be a striking failure at Prato⁷⁷ (1512) but the idea was constantly re-launched by the tenacious former *segretario* of the Ten and was taken up again - although discontinuously and without the energy that characterised its creation - even during the period of the Medici régime⁷⁸. Indeed it produced some long-term effects on the social fabric of the *contado*, but different and quite contrary to those desired by *ser* Niccolò. The Tuscan agricultural world had a pervasive and efficient system of social control, a system which extended from the wealthy Florentine owner of the land through the village priest, the *fattore* (bailiff) down to the head of each peasant family. The rural masses, formed largely of *métayers* (sharecroppers, *mezzadri*) and landless labourers, were far too different from the Swiss social and military model which

⁷⁶ *Vite*, p.152 ‘... imperò la nazione toscana ha molto da lodarsene... che i toscani siano reputati oggi tra i primi d’Italia, il che non era per lo addietro.’; in the same book the anonymous source of Benedetto Varchi wrote ‘... tanti fiorentini, poiché egli li conobbe della virtù e della militia, che prima no li voleva....’.

⁷⁷ Bayley, *War and Society*, pp. 268-284.

⁷⁸ Bayley, *War and Society*, pp 284-292.

inspired Machiavelli and that was based on a sort of huge seasonal migration towards the European battlegrounds. However, such a massive and prolonged contact with the soldierly world and the professional *connestabili* that guided the various *battaglioni* of the Florentine *ordinanza* gave to many Tuscan rural workers - who more than 'rebellious to (fatherly) authority'⁷⁹ were cadets pushed out of the *mezzadria* in a period of demographic increase and/or economic crisis - access to an expertise that at the time was highly in demand and that they decided to invest elsewhere as mercenary footsoldiers⁸⁰. As was to be expected, Pisa and its *contado* became, after the end of the war and the loss of its freedom, one of the most frequented Italian recruiting grounds⁸¹. Surely Machiavelli would not have been pleased at such 'side effects', but while civic humanism was living within the Orti Oricellari its final intense season, under the rule of Lorenzo the Medici duke of Urbino, Florentine society was experiencing the growing duality between the two models of the *cortigiano* and the *cittadino*⁸² which would end with the victory of the former over the latter. At a different level many Florentine subjects found that it was far easier to become 'soldiers' than 'militiamen', thus contributing to the creation of a sort of 'breeding ground' on whose resources Giovanni de' Medici in his brilliant but very short career used to draw but which he could never have hoped to create *ex novo*.

⁷⁹ This was the traditional accusation those who too eagerly joined the *militia* were charged with. However, the 'fatherly' authority was simply the last link of the chain, and a mean streak of rebellion has always been one of the components of the Tuscan rural world.

⁸⁰ The system of the '*mezzadria*', strongly (in some cases ruthlessly) supported by the church, maintained for centuries its control on every aspect of the Tuscan peasants' lives until it was literally broken up by the process of industrialisation in the early 1960's.

⁸¹ The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, bishop of Saintes, 16 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 44, f. 172 r.: '... le genti non potriano essere migliori perché sono fatte in Val di Nievole, in quel di Pisa et nel Lunigiana, onde escono le migliori fanterie di tutta Italia.'. On the fame of the Pisan soldiers and the transformations induced by the war on the Pisan society see also Michele Luzzati, *Una guerra di popolo* (Pisa, 1986).

⁸² A duality, whose utilisation as a system to consolidate the power of the Medici is efficaciously outlined in Federico Chabod's introduction to the fundamental book of Rudolf von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato* (Torino, 1970), first. ed. *Das florentinische Staatsbewußtsein in Übergang von der Republic zum Prinzipat* (Bern, 1955).

Lodovico Alamanni⁸³, a pro-Medici partisan, wrote that the young Florentines - the real hope of the Medici régime - had to be persuaded to wear the courtesan's cloak instead of the 'civilian' hood. Only two years before (Alamanni wrote his *Discorso* in 1516) the young Giovanni de' Medici started to ^{do} this very thing⁸⁴: as soon he was out of the sight and reach of his tutors and future parents-in-law Iacopo and Lucrezia Salviati he changed his clothes and went out to guzzle with the soldiers and other rebellious young Florentines.

Besides the image that his earliest biographer, Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, gave of Giovanni de' Medici as a horse-riding heroic leader in the style of Ariosto, the highest achievement of his military science was the successful utilization of a unit of light infantry composed mainly of arquebusiers that excelled in skirmishes, ambushes and sieges. He was also a celebrated commander of light cavalry, and indeed he combined light horsemen skilfully with his light infantry. However, Giovanni's utilisation of the unchivalrous arquebus was not, as Taylor says in his otherwise brilliant analysis of the *condottiere*⁸⁵, a deliberate choice nor an innovative one; in fact it was imposed by his personal role and - as we shall see in greater detail later on - dictated by the more general trend followed by both the Italian mercenary world and society. Unlike his distant relative Lorenzo de' Medici, the duke of Urbino, who simply played the part of the military leader as one of the traits required for a would-be prince, Giovanni de' Medici was a straightforward professional soldier whose utilization and deployment had to be easy and profitable.

⁸³Lodovico Alamanni, writer of the '*Discorso di Lodovico Alamanni sopra il fermare lo stato di Firenze nella devotione de' Medici*', published in Von Albertini, *Firenze...* appendix 4, pp. 377-384

⁸⁴*Vita di Giovanni* p. 202: '... cominciò a volere liberamente praticare a suo modo co'soldati e giovani dell'età sua più arditi della città, né a tenerlo a freno avea forza alcuna né ritegno dell'abito civile, quale i suoi suoceri gli feciono portare, perché il cappuccio lo dava a uno compagno, e da lui pigliava la berretta; il mantello a uso di cappa si accomodava e con quello coi compagni si ritrovava...'

⁸⁵On Giovanni's contribution to the development of the light cavalry and his tactics according to Taylor, see Taylor, *The Art of War*, pp. 68-80.

Even though it did not help to bring Renaissance Italy out of its 'crisis', the development of specialised units of light infantry and cavalry was the response of the various Italian states and élites not only to the needs created by their role in the wars of supremacy between France and Empire, but above all to the necessities of their domestic politics.

The implications of this situation were profound: Giovanni joined what we could define as the 'Spanish' tactical school, that had to learn how to obtain from the combined action of light cavalry and light infantry, increasingly equipped with gunpowder weapons, what their (initially) inferior heavy horsemen and pikemen could not achieve when put to the test against the French *gendarmerie* and the Swiss squares. Eventually this additional effort of coordination gave to the Habsburg forces the edge over their less flexible opponents.

The two divergent tactical formulations - the 'defensive' Spanish and the 'offensive' French - were born during the Wars of Italy and were modelled on different strategic⁸⁶ needs and resources. The greater availability of men allowed the Habsburg multi-lingual empire to maintain towards its enemies a political and military 'defensive' posture so well developed that it amounted in practice to an offensive one; to this France could oppose only the fact that its forces could be assembled more rapidly⁸⁷.

Already at an earlier stage of their confrontation the superior ability of the Spanish system to find more general solutions overcame the ability of the French one to implement more particular ones⁸⁸. Accompanied by the superiority of some of their

⁸⁶On the Spanish strategic doctrine: Simon Adams, 'Tactics or Politics? "The Military Revolution" and the Habsburg Hegemony', 1525-1648, in Clifford J. Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1995), pp. 253-272. More generally: Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road* (Cambridge, 1972). On the French side: John A. Lynn, 'Tactical Evolution in the French Army, 1550-1660', *French Historical Studies* 14 (1985).

⁸⁷Karl Brandt, *The Emperor Charles V* (London, 1985)

⁸⁸Jaime Vicens Vives, 'Estructura administrativa estatal en los siglos XVI y XVII', in *Rapports, IV Histoire Moderne (Comité international des sciences historiques. XI Congrès International des*

tactical and technical choices, the unwieldy but more constant pressure of the imperial armies prevailed over the potentially more intense but also more localized and short-lived efforts of the League of Cognac. The Wars did not simply change fighting techniques, they also changed Italian society, and even in this case the ‘Spanish tactics’ with their superior capacity for establishing long-lasting relationships with Italian military, political, economic and cultural élites - an indispensable element of the victory - proved more effective than ‘French’ ones. However, whatever political and psychological factors determined the French reaction, Francis I could at least count on the energies of a major power. A smaller state like Florence simply could not sustain large-scale attrition warfare⁸⁹.

It is true indeed that Machiavelli failed to understand the importance of gunpowder weapons, but his main political and military concern⁹⁰ was to avoid the return to the delaying tactics of the despised *condottieri* that these weapons seemed to announce. Florence’s main weak point was its highly mobile and highly vulnerable wealth, dispersed on the *banchi* all across Europe and endangered even by other people’s wars; a short resolute campaign was the best option in the real world as it was in the ideal one - the literary world of his *Art of War* – in which his fellow citizens abandoned their lucrative activities to adopt more ‘Roman’ military attitudes. Machiavelli’s prospective was the result of his fascinating, but weighty, heritage; his only care was Florence, and however brilliant his project was, the Florentines lacked the means to support a strong strategic

sciences historiques. Rapports, Goteborg-Stockolm-Uppsala 1960, trad. it. ‘La struttura amministrativa statale nei secoli XVI e XVII’, ed. E. Rotelli-P. Schiera, *Lo stato moderno, I: Dal Medioevo all’età moderna* (Bologna 1971), p. 233. For the life and the works of Jaime Vicens Vives: Stanley G. Payne, ‘Jaime Vicens Vives and the writing of Spanish History’, *The Journal of Modern History*, June 1962, N°2.

⁸⁹ Adams, ‘Tactics or Politics?’ p. 265.

⁹⁰ On the difficulty of distinguishing between political and military thought in Machiavelli, see the introduction to the English translation of his *Arte della Guerra* (Indianapolis, 1965) pp. ix-lxxx; Felix Gilbert, ‘Machiavelli: the Renaissance of the Art of War’ in Peter Paret (ed.) *Makers of Modern Strategy*.

initiative. The concept of the 'militia as a school of citizenship' had been timidly outlined by Domenico Cecchi⁹¹ and, in times of dire need (the siege of 1529-30), more directly by Machiavelli's successor Donato Giannotti⁹², but the concept of a citizenship enlarged even to the more loyal elements of the *contado* would have been in contrast with the very foundations of the Florentine soul. For these reasons in the early 1930s Antonio Gramsci⁹³ provocatively considered the Imperial army that crushed the last Republic as a positive step in the direction of the modern state. The final result was the creation of the Duchy (later Great Duchy) of Florence and its partial inclusion in the military 'Spanish system'⁹⁴. However, Gramsci was left alone in his 'idealization' of the Neapolitan mercenary captain Fabrizio Maramaldo⁹⁵ as the harbinger of a culture that was intrinsically more modern and promising than the fading communal tradition or, one might add, the Italian Renaissance.

More than the different tactical presuppositions on which the use of the pike or the arquebus was based, more than their different ages and more even than their different professions, what really divided Niccolò Machiavelli and Giovanni de' Medici were their horizons. The *segretario* was the highest expression of a Florentine class of citizens who, without having a famous name or a great wealth, considered the *onori* and *utili* as an essential part of their existence and themselves a basic element of the city's political life. The fall of Soderini in 1512 and the constitution of the Rome-Florence axis under two

⁹¹Bayley, *War and Society*, p. 239.

⁹²Ibid., pp. 312-315. On the figure of Donato Giannotti, last secretary of the Dieci of the last Florentine Republic: Giorgio Cadoni, *L'utopia repubblicana di Donato Giannotti* (Firenze, 1978), Giuseppe Bisaccia, *La Repubblica fiorentina di Donato Giannotti* (Firenze, 1978), Donato Giannotti, *Opere politiche* (Milano, 1974).

⁹³Antonio Gramsci. *Il Risorgimento* (Torino, 1954), p. 10. On Gramsci and Machiavelli: Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power* (Minneapolis, 1993).

⁹⁴On the 'Spanish system' from the military point of view: Gregory Hanlon, *The Twilight*, pp. 47-91; Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, passim.

⁹⁵Maramaldo was a soldier who followed the Imperialist cause faithfully during his whole military life and who killed (although many would instead say 'murdered', since Ferrucci at the moment was his prisoner and was already mortally wounded) Francesco Ferrucci, last defender of the Florentine freedom, with his own hands.

almost consecutive Medici popes projected the Florentine moneyed and political class onto the international scene, quickening the already pronounced decline of Machiavelli's world⁹⁶. Giovanni, born the barely legitimate son of Caterina Sforza and Giovanni de' Medici *Popolani*, cadet (see Table I) of two cadet families, brought up by the rich and powerful Salviati family, lived his short life as a part of this ephemeral political creation; even his marriage with Maria Salviati, daughter of Jacopo Salviati and Lucrezia de' Medici (the *Magnifico's* daughter) was meant to heal the breach between the two main branches of the family (see Table 1).

Giovanni de' Medici was a practical soldier and not the Alberigo da Barbiano of a new 'Italia liberata da' barbari'⁹⁷. He was welcome among the aristocratic commanders of the French and Imperialists armies alike not only because he was a valiant soldier, but because he was 'one of them', while his 'student' Francesco Ferrucci, the last champion of the Florentine republic and its traditional freedom, was not, since 'di mercatante s'era fatto soldato'⁹⁸.

Despite any posthumous attempt to link in some way his figure to one of the highest representatives of civic humanism, Giovanni de' Medici - who understood very little of letters and even less of Latin - found young Pietro Aretino's (1494-1556) jests and enthusiasm in debauchery more to his liking. 'Born in a hospital with the soul of a

⁹⁶ Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini*, pp. 105-152; Rudolf Von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato* (Torino, 1970).

⁹⁷On the myth of Alberigo da Barbiano and the revival of the *valore italico* in the fourteenth century: Mallett, *Mercenaries*, chapt. 2. On the origins of the last phase of Giovanni's myth - *Giovanni d'Italia* - there is the famous letter (1526) by Machiavelli to Francesco Guicciardini in which he reveals his idea that the Signor Giovanni 'audace, impetuoso, di gran concetti, pigliatore di gran partiti... farebbe girare il cervello agli Spagnuoli... potrebbe far mutare opinione al re di Francia e volgersi a lasciare l'accordo (with Charles V) e pigliare la guerra; e se questo rimedio non c'è, avendo a far guerra, non so quale sia.' *Vite*, pp. 186-7.

⁹⁸Jacopo Nardi, *Istorie della città di Firenze* (Firenze, 1888), IX, pp. 203-20. Nardi was the more 'republican' of his generation's Florentine historians. In his writings the final confrontation between the Florentine commander Francesco Ferrucci (the positive hero) and the Neapolitan *condottiere* Fabrizio Maramaldo (the archetypal villain) epitomises the end of a world.

king'⁹⁹, Aretino had the same level of understanding of the human soul, the same spirit of observation as Machiavelli and Guicciardini, but - to quote De Sanctis - while they just thought that the lever of the world was the appetite, Pietro was that appetite¹⁰⁰. Messer Niccolò wanted to be the servant of the state, Guicciardini of his *particolare*, Aretino of his pleasure. A poor 'classic' literate and an unscrupulous innovator, he made his acute critical consciousness and his hatred of pedantry into a flag against the literati. Counsellor and procurer of *Sua Altezza* Giovanni de' Medici, they were both really born in the *bel mondo* of Renaissance Rome, between popes and courtesans.

In this case the 'divine' Pietro Aretino represented one of the highest points - at least the most ostentatious, in the field of the vernacular - of this ephemeral world. Unlike Machiavelli who simply knew the names of the mercenaries' vices and flaws, Aretino had a first-hand experience of the brutal and pleasure-loving life of the soldiers; he knew how to talk to them, and even after the death of Giovanni de' Medici he kept in touch with many of his captains to whose minds he was able to recall the 'good old times' they had together.

The sack of Rome was much less of a tragedy for Aretino than for the men of letters, the Petrarchists that he criticized harshly as 'pedants', because of the vacuity of their ideas, of their ostentatious use of Latin and of their debates - besides the fact that Aretino had to leave the Renaissance Rome of Clement VII pursued by the hatred of the *intelligentsia* and having narrowly survived an assassination attempt¹⁰¹. His prodigious literary talent, which was made *ad hoc* for the people of his period, was more

⁹⁹ Only those who did not have a home - the destitute, the illegitimate and the sons of the whores - were born in '*spedali*'. Aretino's mother, Tita, although a part-time model, was not a prostitute. On the circumstances of Aretino's birth see Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino*, pp. 19-23. Paul Larivaille's book is the most complete and recent reconstruction of Aretino's career and literary works.

¹⁰⁰ Francesco de Sanctis, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana* (Milano, 1876), vol. 2, p. 99. The section dedicated to Pietro Aretino is heavily conditioned by Risorgimento ideology.

understandable to someone who, like the professional soldiers, had a very limited personal horizon¹⁰². ‘Sive bonum sive malum, fama est’: either good or bad, fame is fame; so stated the *impresa*¹⁰³ that the Imperialist *colonnello* Luigi Gonzaga, called also *Rodomonte* for his amazing physical strength, wanted to see embroidered on the flags of his company¹⁰⁴, one of the more (in)famous Italian units that helped to crush the desperate defence of the makeshift papal army and to sack the Holy City¹⁰⁵.

Aretino was considered for a long period by Italian literary critics as a striking example of the degeneration to which the Renaissance literary world was victim after a ‘golden age’ that had found its completion in the fortunate production of the first twenty years of the sixteenth century. That was the age for example of Ariosto, Bembo and Castiglione, as well as Machiavelli himself. The figurative arts after Michelangelo and Raffaello were included in this judgement, making of *Manierismo* an implicitly pejorative expression. Only in relatively recent times has Mannerism, either figurative or literary, been considered as the multi-faceted product of a culture in crisis, and not a mere degeneration¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰¹For Aretino’s political leanings: Galasso, ‘Pietro Aretino nel suo contesto storico: il papato, la Francia, l’Impero’; on Aretino’s periods of stay among Giovanni’s troops see Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino*, pp. 56-57, 81-86.

¹⁰²Aretino maintained with many former captains of Giovanni de’Medici (especially with Lucantonio Cuppano, Giovanni da Turino and Pier Maria de’Rossi) a long correspondance in every letter of which he remembered all the benefits received by the liberal condottiere and the happy days of their youth. He tried to take advantage of it with Giovanni’s son Cosimo I, duke of Florence, with uneven success; Aretino, *Lettere*. On the monumental ego of Pietro Aretino and on how he understood his relationship with the *Gran Diavolo*: Joanna Woods-Marsden, ‘Toward a history of art patronage in the Renaissance: the case of Pietro Aretino’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 1994, 24 (2), pp. 275-299.

¹⁰³Paolo Giovio, *Dialogo dell’imprese militari e amorose*, edited by Maria Luisa Doglio (Roma, 1978), pp. 37-8. An ‘impresa’, a sort of motto whose meaning had to be only partially open to the rest of the world, represented an original mixture of personal and political belief, and were variable as the fortune of the bearers or their psychology.

¹⁰⁴The ‘impresa’ was, however, considered quite inelegant, and was therefore changed into the more poetical ‘Alterutra clarescere fama’ (‘The most obscure deeds make fame shine’) by the historian Paolo Giovio himself, one of the papal courtiers who narrowly escaped in Castel Sant’Angelo the ‘Imperialist fury’ and the greedy hands of Luigi Gonzaga.

¹⁰⁵Luigi Gonzaga, son of Ludovico, was the Imperial commander who captured Lucantonio Cuppano; Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLV, p. 144.

¹⁰⁶On the relationship between Renaissance and Mannerism literature, see the introduction of Paul Larivaille to his book on Pietro Aretino, pp. 9-18. More generally: A. Blunt, *Le teorie artistiche in Italia*

Between the patently auxiliary role of the Italian powers at the resumption of the hostilities between France and Empire - this time at a European level - and disasters such as Pavia, the sack of Rome and the fall of Florence, the 1520s represented a watershed in Italian culture; it was in this period that a reality started to emerge that could hardly be considered compatible with the ideals of the early Italian Renaissance. The need for an adaptation in the face of the growing sense of uncertainty was not limited to artists, and the real community of tastes between the cadet Giovanni de' Medici, *condottiere* of soldiers, and the former lackey Pietro Aretino '*condottiere* of literature' - as he was called by his friend the painter Titian - was something more than the result of an opportunistic choice. Paul Larivaille's¹⁰⁷ attempt to link Aretino's professional and personal ethics to the influence of Machiavelli's moral thought through the figure Giovanni is very suggestive, if not entirely relevant. However, the connection underlined by Larivaille does exist: after all, Giovanni's attitude towards his imminent death and his serenity derived from having honestly fulfilled - as Machiavelli's ideal prince was required to do - all the duties of his cruel and inhuman craft¹⁰⁸, otherwise considered inherently sinful according to a purely Christian ethic. Even if Aretino did not read the *Principe*, he understood completely the necessity to lie to the entire world to be true to his role and his ambitions.

dal Rinascimento al Manierismo (Torino, 1965); Georg Weise, 'Manierismo e letteratura', *Rivista di Letterature Moderne e comparate*, XIII, 1960, pp. 5-52; Arnold Hauser, *Storia dell'arte II: Rinascimento, Manierismo, Barocco* (Torino, 1957).

¹⁰⁷ Paul Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino*, pp. 84-86.

¹⁰⁸ For the touching narration of Giovanni de' Medici's 'prodigious' agony, see Pietro Aretino's letter to Francesco degli Albizzi, *Lettere*, pp. 7-12. 'Venne poi a la confessione cristianamente, e vedendo il frate gli disse: Padre, per esser io professor d'armi son visso secondo il costume de i soldati... non feci mai cose indegne di me.' This phrase was almost a repetition of the one he had frequently pronounced before, while delirious because of the infected wound: 'Che sarà?... Io non feci mai tristitia niuna'. Even according to bishop of Pavia Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, Giovanni refused to discuss his sins in detail, committing his soul confidently to the mercy of God.

The impending danger of a long-lasting Habsburg predominance in the peninsula, an ‘atroce et vituperosa servitù’¹⁰⁹, produced, as a reaction, a wave of real patriotic sentiment¹¹⁰. It was however, as Chabod correctly states, an elitist and weak ‘national’ feeling, which was incapable of seriously affecting high politics and which was destined to pass through the next three centuries as a sort of subterranean river, emerging only sporadically. Nevertheless it existed, even though the innovative picture of Italy as a whole¹¹¹ had frequently to be reinforced by the idea of Italy as ‘utmost foundation of the Catholic faith’¹¹², against the Empire, whose aggression was made more sinister by the presence in its armies of the Lutheran heresy. The link was not fortuitous: faith was still a far stronger bonding agent than national feeling, and it was the Medicean alliance of Florentine money and Roman papal authority that granted to Italy for a decade, more or less, an appearance of stability.

The papal courtier and historian Paolo Giovio - an active Imperial supporter who had to see first his native city Como and then Rome sacked by Imperial armies - experienced that moment of general collapse as a deep discontinuity that made itself felt suddenly at all the levels of his world¹¹³. After his forced departure from the service of Clement VII, prisoner in Castel Sant’Angelo, Giovio become^a a welcome refugee on the island of Ischia within the walls of Vittoria Colonna’s castle, and spent the period corresponding to the campaign in Naples of 1528 trying to elaborate an answer to his

¹⁰⁹ *Scritti inediti di Francesco Guicciardini sopra la politica di Clemente VII dopo la battaglia di Pavia* (Firenze, 1940), p. 105.

¹¹⁰ Federico Chabod ‘Y-a-t’il un Etat de la Renaissance?’, *Scritti sul Rinascimento*, (Torino, 1967) pp. 593-623. On the history and structure of the imperial bureaucracy see also Chabod’s *Carlo V e il suo Impero* (Torino, 1985)

¹¹¹ Among many examples: the Eight to Alessandro de’Pazzi, Florentine ambassador to Venice, 7 February 1527, ASF, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, 10, f. 176 r.: ‘... non di meno essendo Italia tucto un corpo, ne seguita che debilitandosi li membri o qualunche di epsa, el corpo viene ad patire...’

¹¹² Ibid. f. 176 v. ‘... confidando nella clementia di Dio che non sia per abandonare né la sua Sancta Chiesa né la povera Italia, secondo noi maximo fondamento della fede; et pensando pure che la prospera fortuna mostransi fin qui a Cesare habbi ad voltarsi...’

¹¹³ Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio*, p. 89.

personal grief, which was also the grief of his learned interlocutors, the representatives of the Italian humanist tradition. In Giovio's case the staunch defense of Latin against the vernacular language was one of the bases of his Italian patriotism: the wars had vastly contributed to the dissipation of precious cultural energies, slowing down any further development of the once-promising Italian society¹¹⁴.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 98-99

3. The Origins of the Black Bands

‘I soldati del famoso padre di voi, oppressi dalla fatica continua, da la penuria delle cose, da la tardità de le paghe, dai moti de le sue furie e da la frequenza del combattere, lo maledivano, lo biastemavano, lo dispregiavano, lo rifiutavano e lo rinegavano; intanto, datoli a l’arme, scordatisi di ogni fastidio, facevano a gara in accrescergli gloria col proprio sangue’

Pietro Aretino to Duke of Florence Cosimo de’Medici

Despite all the attempts made by his biographers, and also by some historians, to transform him into a sort of ‘force of Nature’¹¹⁵, whose only natural outcome was war, Giovanni de’Medici was not born with a sword in his hand, nor was he somebody who can be viewed outside of his social and historical context. Obviously the course of his life and his choices were deeply influenced by his impressive and almost innate faculties and defects, but his personal background was not radically different from that of his fellow military entrepreneurs, from whom he stood out more for his surname than for his different status, which became higher only posthumously. The choice of becoming a military enterpriser was always the result of a compromise between ambition and need mediated by circumstances. In the case of Giovanni the choice was almost compulsory, since not even the heavy risks that he took as a military professional enabled him to make his own way among his Riario half-brothers and Medici relatives who thronged the papal court begging for ecclesiastical benefits and civil appointments¹¹⁶.

A similar principle should be applied to the focus of our research. A means and not an end, Giovanni’s workforce - only a part of which was to become the Black Bands -

¹¹⁵ ‘Egli è morto uno sforzo di Natura’. So sang Pietro Aretino in the funeral poem in Giovanni’s honour; Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, p. 13.

¹¹⁶ His few successes in this field are due to the frenetic and sometimes humiliating Roman activity of Giovanni’s docile and unhappy wife, Maria Salviati de’Medici, granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnifico, daughter of the influential Jacopo, the chief of the powerful Florentine Salviati family, and sister of a cardinal.

was only one (although very important) of the aspects of a larger network of interests that was not merely military in nature, the result of a slow, difficult and discontinuous process of aggregation centred on the figure of Giovanni de' Medici. Therefore it would be a mistake to limit the area of research by trying to define the Bands too precisely, reducing it to a unit that in its heyday had - with its 3000-3500 soldiers - the size of a Landsknecht regiment. Although in one sense very convenient, the term 'regiment' would be misleading.

The future 'Great Devil' had his period of military apprenticeship during the nepotistic wars of Urbino¹¹⁷ (1516-1517), fought by the pope against the duke Francesco Maria della Rovere to give to Lorenzo de' Medici the seignory of that city. During the conflicts Giovanni followed Lorenzo as a simple *gentiluomo* of his retinue¹¹⁸. Given the scarce consideration in which the Medici duke of Urbino was held as an unsuccessful soldier and statesman who prevailed over his enemies only thanks to the influence of the pope and Florentine money, this period of Giovanni's life was considered by his early biographers as unimportant or used as an ideal background for the comparison between the promising young *condottiere* and his unwarlike relative Lorenzo.

More recent and thorough studies¹¹⁹ on Florentine history have outlined the importance of the intricate network of personal and political allegiances that supported the Medici regime and surrounded the figure of Lorenzo duke of Urbino. In this detailed picture Giovanni is ignored or considered as definitely marginal, and rightly so; at the

¹¹⁷ Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, p. 525; Ricotti, *Storia delle Compagnie*, pp. 254-258.

¹¹⁸ Benedetto Varchi's anonymous source - unlike other biographers - saw nothing wrong in the fact that his master had been a simple 'gentiluomo' and a member of a retinue; 'Venne poi la grandezza delli signori illustrissimi Iuliano et Lorenzo, i quali esso Signore (Giovanni) molto osservava. Con messer Iuliano si messe a servire per uno de'suoi gentiluomini... e poi col signor Lorenzo similmente nella guerra d'Urbino...' *Vite*, p. 203

¹¹⁹ Von Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*; Devonshire-Jones, *Francesco Vettori: Florentine Citizen and Medici Servant* (London, 1972); J. N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic* (Oxford, 1983); Humfrey Butters, *Governors and Government in early sixteenth Century Florence; 1502-1519* (Oxford, 1985).

very best he was one of those that the touchy *cittadini* of Florence contemptuously dubbed ‘spadacini’. They had already enough problems in dealing with the aristocratic attitudes of Lorenzo, and at least he was a descendent of the *Magnifico*. Many of the names of the more prominent Florentine adherents - that is those from the main branches of their families - of the circles and *compagnie* that developed around the new duke of Urbino and other important members of the Medici family, are well known, but they were just the tip of the iceberg. A large number of young men from less influential, poorer or collateral Florentine families (together with some from the cities and towns of the Florentine dominions) were welcomed at the court of Lorenzo as pages or *galuppi*.

Living between Florence, Urbino and Rome some of them - probably the more violent ones and those who had less to offer Lorenzo and his party - joined Giovanni’s personal circle or considered service in the fledgling *casa* of the young Medici ‘del popolo’ as an acceptable and satisfactory alternative after the death of the duke of Urbino. This was true in the case of the violent Giano (Giuliano) di Niccolò Strozzi¹²⁰, one of the captains of the Black Bands immediately after the death of Giovanni, who had been a ‘gentiluomo’ in Lorenzo’s retinue, but it was also true of Bernardo di Giovanni Strozzi¹²¹ (1502-1533), nicknamed *Cattivanza*, of Ivo Biliotti, called the *Straccaguerra* and of the unlucky Pandolfo Puccini, to name just the most famous ones. This sublevel made up of the younger and more volatile elements in Florentine society, whose minds

¹²⁰ ASF, Carte Stroziane, Terza Serie, 36, *Vite di uomini illustri della casa degli Strozzi*, ff. 241-242, written by Lorenzo di Filippo di Matteo di Simone Strozzi; ‘Era ne’ tempi suoi de’più gagliardi et de’meglio disposti giovani della città nostra, non trovando chi negli esercitii del corpo lo pareggiassi. Fu gentil’huomo del domino Lorenzo de’Medici, il quale tenne di lui più conto che d’alcun altro che havessi apresso di sé, e parendo al signor Giovanni de’Medici - capitano di quella eccellenza che fu noto a tutto il mondo - che egli meritasse nella militia ogni grado, lo honorò di bandiera de’suoi huomini d’arme...’. See also Litta, *Famiglie*, dispensa 68, tav. L.

¹²¹On Bernardo di Giovanni Strozzi see ASF, Carte Stroziane, Terza Serie, 36, *Vite di uomini illustri*, f. 248: ‘Bernardo di Giovanni chiamato Cattivanza, molto giovannetto combatté da fante a piè a corpo a corpo talmente che il signor Giovanni amatore di tutti gli huomini coraggiosi e valenti lo accolse nel numero dei suoi favoriti...’

were ‘naturally drawn to thoughts of pay’¹²², together with their counterparts from the Papal States, probably offered Giovanni the first draft of the roll from which he would soon choose his captains, his *homini da bene*, his *lancie spezzate*.

Owing to the composition of the first nucleus of professional soldiers (both counsellors and bodyguards) that surrounded Giovanni during his violent quarrels with the warlike Roman aristocracy¹²³, the bulk of his first companies of footsoldiers was made up of Corsicans¹²⁴, a *nazione* that although destined to become a minority, remained a fixed element in the life of the Black Bands. Equally constant, probably, was their role as Giovanni’s ‘personal guard’, bound to their master and his family, in comparison with other Italian troops, by a less fortuitous and temporary link.

The presence of such a large number of Corsicans in Giovanni’s retinue was not surprising, since the relationship between the reliable footsoldiers from poor, oppressed and disease-ridden Corsica – in this period under the administration of the Genoese *Banco di San Giorgio* – and Florence (and especially the Medici family) went a long way back in time¹²⁵. It presents also some interesting similarities with the connection existing between Venice and its Albanian stradiots. The successful deployment of the Corsican soldiers was not the result of one of Giovanni’s famous ‘innovations’¹²⁶, but the fact that they were so closely associated with the name of the *condottiere* is significant in itself. Such a profitable relationship was inherited by Florence through the acquisition of Pisa

¹²² Ibid. ‘... Gualterotto di Niccolao Strozzi. (one of the defenders of Arezzo in 1529)... volontariamente drizzò l’animo al soldo di cui era tanto vago’.

¹²³ The brawl (fought with pikes, halberds and swords) between a mob of Roman *bravi* headed by Camillo Orsini and Giovanni with his Corsican bodyguards on the bridge of Castel Santangelo was notorious.

¹²⁴ *Vite*, p. 91 ‘Tutto il carico toccò alle sue genti, che per la maggior parte erano còrsi’.

¹²⁵ Giovanni Livi, ‘Delle relazioni dei còrsi colla Repubblica Fiorentina’, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, ser. IV. Tome XIII, 1894, pp. 415-436. Of course the significant presence of the Corsicans (‘ces hommes au sombre courage’) delighted the French writer Pierre Gauthiez. One of the most famous tragic champions of Corsica’s centuries-long struggle for freedom, Sampiero da Bastelica, had been in his youth a soldier of Giovanni de’Medici.

(1406), once master of Corsica, and subsequently cultivated by Lorenzo the Magnifico and the Medici. However, by 1520 the highly regarded Corsican footsoldiers were fighting on the side of every power involved in the conflict.

The death of Lorenzo de' Medici (4 May 1519) made Giovanni – the only warlike relative left to the pope – a valuable commodity; many of the 'legendary' deeds ascribed to him, especially those related to his bloodthirsty nature, took place in this period, during which he ruthlessly enforced papal authority on the rebellious aristocracy of the Marches¹²⁷. In 1521 Giovanni joined the papal and Imperial forces in the successful campaign that ended with the capture of Parma, Piacenza - the two cities which Leo X wanted to regain for the Papal State – and Milan, and the complete retreat of the French army. During the struggle for Piacenza the young *condottiere* experienced, on the Imperial side, large-scale warfare for the first time and this probably induced a first qualitative leap in his excessively juvenile and 'personal' style of leadership. One of Giovanni's features that most excited the fantasy and the approval of Romantics and Fascists alike was his habit of personally executing the undisciplined and the coward without a trial¹²⁸; however, his secretary Giovambattista Tedaldi wrote that it was during his twenty-third year of life that Giovanni learned to curb his juvenile impetuosity and included in his *casa* an *auditore* - a judge-advocate¹²⁹. This fact represents the basic difference between an informal 'princely' retinue and the institutionalised *societas* of soldiers on which full-fledged military entrepreneurship was based. By this period the

¹²⁶ According to the anonymous source of Varchi it was Giovanni who revealed to the world the valour of the Tuscan, Roman and Corsican troops. *Vite*, p. 205. It is interesting, however, to see how the presence of the Corsicans was so easily associated with the figure of Giovanni de' Medici.

¹²⁷ Rossi, *Vita*, p. 43.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 106: 'Ebbe in uso ne' suoi primi anni d'ammazzare i soldati di sua mano quando erravano, ma ravvistosi poi che non dava loro tanto timore quanto faceva col castigarli per via della giustizia, mutò pensiero'.

¹²⁹ Discorso di Giovambattista Tedaldi, in *Vite*, pp. 86-101. 'Col XXIII anno finì quella caldezza et vivacità che per dire il vero sino allora non piccola in lui era stata... da quel tempo in qua tenne continuamente un Auditore il più eccellente e famoso potessi avere...'

administrative structure of Giovanni's company had already been established with two principal components, the chancellery and the treasury, run respectively by Giovambattista Tedaldi¹³⁰ and Francesco degli Albizzi¹³¹; other figures of the *casa* were Francesco Suasio, the administrator of Giovanni's household¹³², Bartolomeo Raimondi¹³³ and Gabriele Cesano¹³⁴.

According to Varchi's anonymous and practical witness, Giovanni started to 'serve the Spaniards' in 1521 'con conditione onorata' under the command of the captain Paolo Luzzasco. The true meaning of the words 'conditione onorata' is quite uncertain, since Luzzasco is generally remembered as one of the best lieutenants of Giovanni, and not *vice versa*. Whatever the conditions in which the lieutenancy arose or developed afterwards, Giovanni's social standing was not so high that he could always be considered as an undisputed leader by everybody but his biographers. Luzzasco himself came to be regarded as one of the best soldiers of his time, and at the beginning of Giovanni's career the lieutenants must have had a greater space and autonomy than afterwards. Even Giovangirolamo de' Rossi had to admit that the break with the pro-Spanish Luzzasco in 1522 - when the young Medici shifted his loyalty from the Empire

¹³⁰ Under duke Cosimo I de' Medici, Giovanni's son, Giovambattista Tedaldi became ducal governor of Pisa, Arezzo and Pistoia.

¹³¹ Francesco degli Albizzi (1486-1556) had been in the service of Giovanni since 1519. He discreetly opposed the French condotta in 1522. After the death of his master he became captain of the fortress of San Lorenzo in 1526, podestà of Borgo San Lorenzo in 1532 and captain of the Pistoiese Mountain in 1540. In 1555 he was one of the Otto di Guardia.

¹³² Suasio's duties ranged from the care of the condottiere's estates in the Mugello and Rome, the purchase of good horses, the welfare of Giovanni's wife and of his beloved hunting dogs.

¹³³ 'Il Signore volse sempre avere appresso di sé qualche uomo qualificato e di esperienza di lettere... come fu messer Gabriello Cesano e messer Bartolommeo Raimondi, uomini grandi e di rara eccellenza', *Vite*, p. 180.

¹³⁴ Gabriele Cesano (1490-1568); according to Benvenuto Cellini he was 'Tanto brutto e tanto dispiacevole', while for Pietro Aretino he was '... una persona honestissima, di cor sincero, di animo libero, di mente giusta, di prudentia utile, di dottrina chiara, di fede stabile e d'ingegno facile'. Cesano was a Pisan lawyer and man of letters, in the service of Giovanni de' Medici since 1522. After his death the pro-French Cesano served the cardinal Ippolito de' Medici who died presumably poisoned in 1535, then the cardinal Ippolito d'Este. Confessor of queen of France Caterina de' Medici, he became eventually bishop of Saluzzo. He was also a friend of Pietro Aretino whose gigantic conceit must have been gratified indeed on the day Cesano exclaimed publicly 'Voi sete il migliore uomo del mondo' (p.

to France - was a turning point in the life of Giovanni, who had to show that he had 'made' his former associate¹³⁵.

The death of Leo X (1 December 1521) has often been considered the official birthday of the Black Bands - whether or not his soldiers wore the black bands of mourning on their corselets - since for the first time Giovanni was left on his own, while the French *condotta*¹³⁶ and his clumsy 'volte-face' just before the battle of Bicocca won him the reputation of a *condottiere* who changed his allegiance with excessive ease. In fact, Giovanni de' Medici was an excellent tactician, a formidable soldier-maker and a worshipped leader, but his ability as a military enterpriser doing business on his own account and risk¹³⁷, at a time when the margins of autonomy were narrowing, was less evident. However, the old Italian saying 'O Franza o Spagna purché se magna' was strictly true only for the rank and file soldiers; at this juncture for those who, like Giovanni and Aretino¹³⁸, were looking for a political upheaval that would open new spaces in their respective fields of interests, the best choice was 'Franza' and not 'Spagna'.

748). He was an Accademico Intronato. His only surviving literary work is a book on the '*Ethica secondo la dottrina d'Aristotile*'; C. Tolomei (ed.), *Il Cesano de la lingua toscana* (Firenze, 1974).

¹³⁵ 'Credevansi per alcuni... che esso signore (Giovanni) non fosse per fare più cosa notabile nel mestiero dell'arme per la perdita di un tanto uomo.' Rossi, *Vita*, p. 106. Every biography of Giovanni de' Medici contains the famous episode in which the bold *condottiere*, seeing his lieutenant and friend Paolo Luzzasco surrounded by the Venetian troops that were holding him prisoner, turned his horse and charged almost alone against the enemy, brandishing his mace and shouting like a madman and eventually freeing Luzzasco. Rossi, *Vita*, p. 48 and *Vite*, p. 204

¹³⁶ According to Rossi, the *condotta* amounted to eight thousand *scudi di provvisione*, four thousand foot and four hundred horsemen. However, according to the anonymous source (presumably a soldier and a direct witness) of Benedetto Varchi - and also according to Sanuto - Francis I paid Giovanni for three hundred light cavalymen and two thousand foot, more or less the same troops with which he had left Tuscany.

¹³⁷ Fritz Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser and his Work Force* (Wiesbaden, 1964), vol. 1, p. 37. To quote Redlich, the enterpriser doing business on his own account and risk raised '... the troops with the military enterpriser's own funds and on his own credit without being charged to do so by a war lord'. This kind of figure, like the old-fashioned *condottieri*, was however already disappearing both in Germany and Italy.

¹³⁸ Giuseppe Galasso, 'Pietro Aretino nel suo contesto storico: il papato, la Francia, l'Impero', in *Pietro Aretino nel Cinquecento*, pp. 297-331.

Despite any attempt to transform Giovanni of the Black Bands into a sort of ‘lone wolf’, a creature devoted to war and ignorant of the compromises and intrigues of politics, he was an integral, if unsuccessful, part of the patronage systems that characterised Italian society, realities experienced on a daily basis by rulers and subjects that were only partially (and often superficially) influenced by the more evident struggle between France and the Empire. Giovanni had not only life-long enmities, but also influential and binding *amicizie*, such as those with the duke of Urbino, Francesco della Rovere, and with Malatesta Baglioni, and a family relationship with the powerful Vitelli family¹³⁹. The famous circle of captains, *lancie spezzate* and *homini da bene* (the so-called ‘school’ of Giovanni de’Medici) was only the inner layer of a complex and open structure which represented a normal rather than an exceptional feature of late Renaissance Italian military entrepreneurship. Each contractor, each *capo di colonnello*¹⁴⁰ like Guido Rangoni or the count of Caiazzo had his own circle, whose representatives at the time were not considered inferior to Giovanni’s.

One of the reasons for the negative judgement expressed by both Ricotti and Oman¹⁴¹ on the Italian mercenary companies of the sixteenth century - with the significant exception of the Black Bands - was their short-lived character, especially in comparison with their predecessors, like the *bracceschi* and *sforzeschi* of the fifteenth century who, as in the case of Micheletto degli Attendoli, remained together for decades. A large body of infantry could not be the result of a more or less casual association of minor companies; Giovanni was not a ‘primus inter pares’ among his captains, and the organizational chart of his bands resembled more a pyramid than a tree, like the company

¹³⁹ Rossi, *Vita*, p. 100. Giovangirolamo de’Rossi wrote that Giovanni needed powerful friends for an eventual takeover of power in Florence. In fact, Giovanni needed friends as anybody else in his position and, as in the case of Malatesta, his *amicitia* with the duke of Urbino resembled more a ‘friendly’ tutorship than anything else.

¹⁴⁰On the birth of the *colonna* and *colonnello* - that indicated both the commander and his troops - see Mallett, *Mercenaries*, pp. 150-151.

of Micheletto's¹⁴² men-at-arms. Things had changed even among the ranks of the cavalrymen, whose link with the leader remained personal rather than that of a unit as in the case of the infantry, but whose individual bargaining power weakened as that of their commanders grew; the *compagnaggio*¹⁴³ and the social mobility allowed by large bodies of heavy cavalry decreased in step with the decline in their numbers and tactical importance. As a reaction against the unchivalrous arquebus the men-at-arms did not simply encase themselves in heavier armour, they also made their 'social order' less penetrable, giving up many personal prerogatives to the group and therefore to the commanders. In the fifteenth century the *lancie spezzate* (broken lances) were remnants of disbanded mercenary units directly employed by a state or another master without being part of any other sub-unit of the army¹⁴⁴; in Giovanni's period the future captains, either of infantry or cavalry, often started their careers not as *compagni* but directly as *lancie spezzate* of a warlord, learning their craft and receiving the *soldo* directly from the hands of their master. This process was also greatly accelerated, as we shall see, by the success of different sorts of mounted troops.

Besides being one of the unavoidable aspects of their auxiliary role, the constant breaking-up and re-forming of the Italian infantry companies did not occur in a purely *ad hoc* fashion, but was the product of a well-structured system of permanent groups of military enterprisers.

¹⁴¹Charles Oman, *A History of the art of war in the sixteenth century* (London, 1937).

¹⁴²Del Treppo, 'Gli aspetti organizzativi, economici e sociali di una compagnia di ventura italiana', pp. 253-275, 260-264.

¹⁴³The *compagnaggio* was one of the consequences of the theoretical equality of all the men-at-arms, in a period in which, for instance, Micheletto's company (with his 561 *lance* in total) was made up of 87 sub-companies with their own condottieri. A *homo d'arme* was fully entitled to create more of his kind, that is *compagni* who - whatever their origins before the '*adoubement*' - had all the rights and prerogatives of the other men-at-arms associated in the *compagnia*. This was also the way other companies were born, when one of the '*già compagni*' decided to become himself a full-fledged condottiere, albeit with only five or six *lance* under his direct command. Del Treppo, 'Gli aspetti organizzativi' pp. 270-272.

¹⁴⁴See Mallett, *Mercenaries*, pp. 112-114.

The death of Giovanni (30 November 1526) made his troops the most chaotic element in an already confused picture. The sudden disappearance of the *Gran Diavolo* and the crossing of the river Po by the Imperialists caused the collapse of the morale and the tactical initiative of the League's army. The mayhem of which the papal forces were victim is well outlined in the passionate *Oratio Defensoria*¹⁴⁵ written by Francesco Guicciardini to clear himself from the avalanche of accusations that fell upon him after the sack of Rome. Freed from the only man who had been able to enforce on them at least his personal authority, if not the discipline dreamed of by Machiavelli, during the following weeks and months the infantry companies that had served Giovanni went out of control. Without abandoning the League's army, they refused inspections, elected their own commanders and eventually 'feciono certa unione insieme'¹⁴⁶, that is established that 'coalition of the captains' which was to become the uneasy interlocutor of the Florentine Republic during the following year. The Black Bands were born.

According to Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, on his deathbed Giovanni named as his successor Pier Maria de' Rossi¹⁴⁷, son of his half-sister Bianca Riario and of the late count of San Secondo Troilo de' Rossi (who died in 1521). Giovanni had acted as a sort of 'protector' of the rights and lands of Bianca against the pretensions of the other branches of the Parmesan family sponsored by Clement VII, and it was probably he who favoured the marriage of one of Bianca's daughters, Angela, to the powerful *condottiere* Vitello Vitelli. Pier Maria, Bianca's eldest son, had been one of Giovanni's lieutenants and followers but, notwithstanding Giovangirolamo's biased account, Pier Maria appears

¹⁴⁵ Francesco Guicciardini, *Opere* (Torino, 1970), pp. 590-604.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.* p. 599: 'Le Bande Nere, che feciono male assai, erano avvezze sotto el signor Giovanni che dava loro molta licenza e morto lui augumentorno, perché stettono molti mesi o senza capi o con capi a loro modo... anzi volendo dare loro un capo, non lo vollono accettare e feciono certa unione insieme, che per essere nella necessità ci bisognò avere pazienza. Non è el più altiero né el manco ragionevole animale che el soldato quando conosce il tempo suo.'

to have been simply one of the competitors in the contest that raged for months inside the Black Bands and above them.

After a meeting in Bologna with all the captains of the Bands, Francesco Guicciardini persuaded them to follow the bishop of Casale¹⁴⁸ to Tuscany along with the other papal forces - that is, the two *colonnelli* of infantry led by count Guido Rangoni and the count of Caiazzo Roberto Sanseverino¹⁴⁹, and the Mantuan heavy cavalry - to protect Florence against the advance of the Imperial army. At the same time the detachment (1500 hand-picked soldiers) sent by Giovanni shortly before his death under the command of Lucantonio Cuppano and the treasurer Francesco degli Albizzi was fighting in the territory of the Papal State against the forces of the viceroy of Naples. By this time the Black Bands were already an unit composed solely of infantry, since after the death of the *Gran Diavolo* his cavalry company was claimed by the marquis of Saluzzo for his brother¹⁵⁰, and many of his *lancie spezzate* had joined the Mantuan cavalry company of Paolo Luzzasco. Owing to the chaotic general context and to the almost complete lack of control by any institution, the period of relative 'freedom' that went from January to April 1527 - possibly the most interesting part of the life of the Black Bands - is also the most difficult one to investigate.

By the beginning of May 1527 Giovanni's 'orphans' were in Tuscany, leaving behind them the usual trail of destruction¹⁵¹; here, on the eve of the sack of Rome, they underwent a sort of initial re-organization. The twelve companies were divided into three

¹⁴⁷ Rossi, *Vita*, p. 94. After having been brought up at the French court, on the death of his father in 1521 Pier Maria went back to Italy and was named 'senatore' of the Milanese state by Francis I; see Litta, dispensa 34, tav. IV.

¹⁴⁸ Bernardino Castellari della Barba, bishop of Casale.

¹⁴⁹ 'Uomo senza ragione, senza vergogna e senza religione' according to Francesco Guicciardini, still frightened by the memory of the assassination attempt against his person made by the violent *condottiere*, Roberto di Giovanfrancesco Sanseverino was one of Giovanni's friends.

¹⁵⁰ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLIII, p. 674, 24 December: 'La compagnia da cavallo del signor Joanin domandata per il marchese di Saluzo, è stà promessa al fratello Francesco...'.

colonnelli for the first time, an initiative that did not entail the disbandment of the unit; seven companies were given to Pier Maria de' Rossi, three to Azzo da Correggio count of Casalpò (nicknamed the *Contazzo*), while the two remaining ones, made up of Corsicans, refused to follow a commander who was not already experienced and renowned¹⁵². Paolo Luzzasco was considered the best candidate. However, given the situation of financial weakness and constant political uncertainty in which Guicciardini and the partisans of the Medici were finding themselves, it is hard to say to what extent these provisions were really applied. On 6 May Rome fell into Imperial hands, the pope himself was besieged in Castel Santangelo and the League's army, that was not far from the Holy City, had neither the resources nor the determination to do something; eleven days later the cardinal of Cortona, Alessandro and Ippolito de' Medici had to leave Florence where, in a few weeks, the magistracies that symbolised the republic were to be reconstituted¹⁵³.

On 23 May Lucantonio Cuppano, freed by Luigi Gonzaga, joined his fellows captains¹⁵⁴, but the situation of the League's army was deteriorating daily, and not simply from the tactical point of view, since the choice between the Florentine republic and the Medici was not confined to Florentine citizens alone. For instance, the *condotta* of the *capitano generale* of the papal forces, the marquis of Mantua, had been signed and paid jointly by Florence and the pope¹⁵⁵. On 1 June Pier Maria de' Rossi and Alessandro Vitelli

¹⁵¹ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLV, p. 75: 'Quelli fo del signor Zanin di Medici, che si chiama la banda negra, sono da 2500 et più tosto manco, et sono pezo che turchi. Hanno sachizato in Valdarno tre castelli di fiorentini, et forzato femene, et fatto altre cose crudelissime...'

¹⁵² Benedetto Agnello to the marquis of Mantua, 3 May 1527. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 874, f. 96 r/v: 'Perché ditti còrsi sono molto superbi né hanno voluto andare sotto l'obedientia d'alcuno dicendo che se hanno da haver capitano voleno una persona signalata, et che habbia reso bon conto di sé per altro tempo...'

¹⁵³ Von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al principato*, pp. 104-11.

¹⁵⁴ Benedetto Agnello to the marquis of Mantua, 23 may 1527. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, busta 874,: 'Luca Antonio allievo del quondam signor Joanni de' Medici è ventuo in campo qui, liberato dal signor Aloysi Gonzaga, del qual dice il maggior bene del mondo laudandolo di animosità et di liberalità sopra ogni altro...'

¹⁵⁵ ASF, Otto di Pratica, Ricordanze, 3, f. 102 r.

deserted and went to Rome with a mixed troops of two hundred infantrymen and cavalrymen¹⁵⁶; Guido Rangoni, formally in charge of the Black Bands, went back to his hometown Modena; and the count of Caiazzo allegedly tried to kill the papal lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini.

Financially exhausted by having sustained the cost of the pope's war and determined to look after its own interests, but not to abandon the League, Florence decided to cut its losses and to pay only four thousand foot. In order to relieve the discredited and dispirited Guicciardini, Raffaele Girolami was sent by the newly-elected *Dieci di Balìa* to the camp as a new *commissario generale*.

¹⁵⁶Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLV, p. 278, Carlo Nuvoioni to the marquis of Mantua; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chapt. IX, p. 1865. Alessandro Vitelli was considered by Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, one of Giovanni's pupils; after the death of Vitello Vitelli he married Bianca de' Rossi. Pier Maria served the Imperialists for a long period, distinguishing himself during the siege of Florence, the campaign of 1532 in Germany and the expedition against Tunis. In 1542 he returned to French service and became a knight of St. Michel and general of the Italian foot, fighting in Flanders, relieving besieged Lanrecy and fighting against the English at Boulogne. He died in Italy in 1547.

PLATE 1



Titian. *Portrait of Pietro Aretino.*
1545. Palazzo Pitti, Galleria
Palatina, Florence,



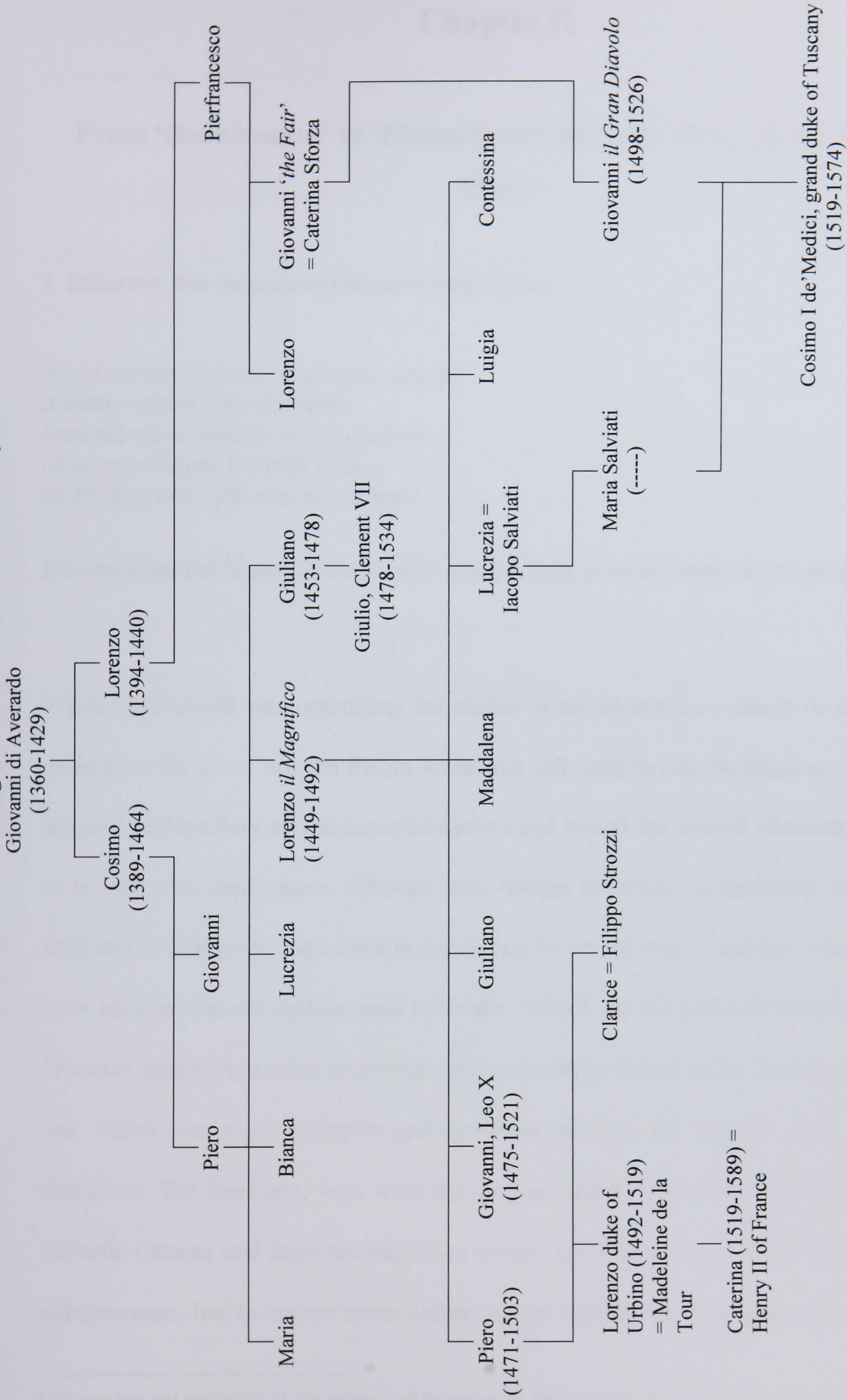
**Gian Paolo Pace. *Portrait of Giovanni dalle
Bande Nere.*** Museo degli Uffizi, Florence

‘Giovanni is constructed as gazing intensely at, and listening raptly to, the utterance of his secretary and counsellor, who, placed on his heraldic dexter, appears to speak as he moves toward his lord. The pose given Aretino... must therefore be understood as purposeful, rather than arbitrary, with the satirist taking the active role in this pictorial encounter’.

Joanna Woods-Marsden, ‘Toward a history of art patronage in the Renaissance: the case of Pietro Aretino’, *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 24, 1994, pp. 275-299.

According to some historians, these two paintings, both gifts of Pietro Aretino to duke Cosimo I de’Medici, were intended to be paired portraits, destined to ‘inspire’ the munificence of the fortunate son of ‘sua alterezza’ Giovanni . Whether this is true or not, Aretino decidedly was impudent enough to consider Giovanni himself, and not only his portrait, as a pendant.

Table I : Genealogical Table of the Medici Family



It ought to be remembered that in this table only the two main branches of the Medici family are represented, whose rivalry the marriage of Giovanni de' Medici and Maria Salviati was meant to heal.

Chapter II

From 'Renaissance' to 'Mannerism': the Last Phase of the Italian Wars.

1. Infantry: the 'scaramuciatore archibugiero'.

*'O miseri noi che con verghogna andami
a nostre stanze così vituperosi
lassando dece milli de nostri alamani
ch'en sepeliti per li campi e fossi
de portare arme più non ne parlami...'*

Excerpt from the 'Lamento de Svizari' coming back from the battle of Bicocca.

While Machiavelli was organising the militia of the Florentine *contado* or writing his treatise on the art of war the Italian scene was still open to experimentation; pikemen's squares¹ and artillery still represented factors that biased the tactical situation in favour of an offensive deployment, although their margin of action - respectively in the open field and in siegecraft - was steadily decreasing. In the infantry's case this was due to the slow process that set against each other the 'school' of the Swiss footsoldiers, which favoured aggressive tactics involving rapid and mainly frontal action, and the 'Imperial' one, which was more defensive and sacrificed speed to the benefits of an increased firepower. The Germans, who were the first to benefit from direct contact² with the Helvetic cantons and from the migration of the first wave of successful Swiss military entrepreneurs, had to endure many defeats before winning the bloody feud that opposed

¹ On the general evolution of the square and its structure: Hall, *Weapons and Warfare*. pp 32 ff. , 164-190, Frederick Taylor, *The Art of War*, pp. 29-61, Eltis, *The Military Revolution*, pp. 44-60. The bibliography on the topic is, however, huge.

them to their Swiss teachers. These facts have been already studied and well outlined by historians like Taylor and Pieri, and there is very little that I could add to this picture.

However, the period that stretched from the reopening of hostilities in 1520 to the end of the siege of Florence (1530) represents also a critical moment of transition, at the end of which, after the hard lessons of Bicocca (1522) and Pavia (1525), the balance between the offensive and defensive modes was far more stable. In fact it could be said that if a ‘mannerist³’ style of warfare in the sixteenth century ever existed, as Parker says, contrasting it to the ‘baroque’ style of the seventeenth century⁴, it has its origins in this last phase of the Italian Wars. As in the case of literary and figurative mannerism, we have to be careful of the danger represented by the application of a teleological perspective to the changes in progress in the military world. The idea of an ‘unstoppable’ movement - towards the pike and the musket, for instance – led historians such as Pieri to consider everything else as a sort of rearguard battle, the resistance of a dying world. Changes never actually follow a linear progression.

Although Pavia caused more spectacular political effects, Bicocca produced a real shock for those who, up to that fateful day, were considered the best heavy infantry, that is the Swiss, and showed how vulnerable even the more aggressive formation of pikemen could become when faced by effective field fortifications and fire discipline. The success of the Swiss and of large bodies of heavy infantry during the first phase of the Italian wars persuaded Machiavelli that this was the right social and tactical model to adopt when organizing the militia and writing his *Art of War*. It is interesting to see

²The first Landsknechts were from the regions near the Swiss border like the Vorarlberg and the Rhine basin. For the origins of the Landsknechts, Redlich, *The German Military enterpriser*, pp. 14-18 and Baumann, *I lanzichenecchi*, pp. 23-45.

³ By Mannerism here I mean the late Renaissance’s artistic tendency based on the imitation of a highly successful model (for instance in painting the *canone* was Michelangelo Buonarroti) and the search for an original style - a *maniera* - consisting in subtle variations and complications rather than on innovations. In the ‘military art’ the *canone* was in this phase being defined by the Imperial - Spanish ‘school’. On mannerism see also Peter Burke, *The European Renaissance* (Oxford, 1998) pp. 101-102.

how two of *messer* Niccolò's disciples, the Spaniard Diego de Salazar⁵ and the French Raymond Beccarie de Pavie, *baron* de Fourquevaux (1509-1574)⁶, constructed their works from very different perspectives during the ensuing years.

The *Tratado de re militari* of Diego de Salazar, published in 1537, retains a strict formal and stylistic adhesion to the Machiavellian original, as well as the dialogic structure, though the place of Fabrizio Colonna is taken by the *Gran Capitàn* Consalvo Fernandez de Cordova and the setting is Spanish⁷. Many of the elements of the *Art of War*, such as the imaginary battle fought and won by the new army in the third book, are introduced again with only a few variations, and the book by itself possesses very little 'literary' value. In Salazar's book Consalvo de Cordova is not faithful to the tactical beliefs that had made him so famous and had influenced the Italian and Spanish military world. Like Fabrizio Colonna in the hands of Machiavelli, he becomes an authoritative spokesman⁸. If anything, with the counterparts of the *veliti extraordinarii* organized into the square and the resulting increase in the percentage of pikemen, the action of the six thousand men of Salazar's legion is even more 'frontal' and destructive than that of

⁴ Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 18.

⁵ Diego de Salazar, *Tratado de Re Militari, hecho a manera de dialogo, que passo entre los illustrissimos Señores don Conçalo Fernandez de Cordova llamado Gran Capitan, Duque de Sessa, etf. y Don Pedro Manrique de Lara, Duque de Najera: en el qual se contienen muchos Exemplos de grandes Principes, y señores: y excellentes avisos, figuras de guerra muy provechoso para Cavalleros, Capitanes, y Soldados* (Zaragoza, 1537).

⁶ Raymond Beccarie de Pavie, Baron de Fourquevaux, *Instructions sur les faict de la guerre* (Paris, 1548). The book was erroneously attributed to Guillaume du Bellay. On the figure of the Baron de Fourquevaux: Abel Lefranc, 'L'armée française a la Renaissance. Un reformateur militaire au XVI siecle. Raymond de Fourquevaux', *Revue du Seizieme Siecle*, Tome III, 1915, p. 46. Please note that from now on in the notes I will refer to the Italian translation of the book made by Mambrino Roseo da Fabriano, published with the title *Tre Libri della Disciplina Militare* (Venezia, 1550). For a thorough analysis, from the literary point of view, of the similarities between the *Arte della Guerra* and the *Instructions* see the section on the 'Armi proprie' in Procacci, *Machiavelli nella cultura europea*, pp. 183-212.

⁷ On the life and wars of the Gran Capitan Consalvo de Cordova: H. Perez del Pulgar, *Cronica llamada la dos conquistas del Reyno de Napoles...* (Zaragoza, 1559), and Paolo Giovio, *Le vite del Gran Capitano e del Marchese di Pescara* (Bari, 1931).

⁸ I do not quite agree with the point of view of prof. Raffale Puddu, who finds at least some points in common between Salazar and Consalvo de Cordova. Raffaele Puddu, *Il soldato gentiluomo* (Bologna, 1982), pp. 16-18. See also the section dedicated to the land force in Francisco-Felipe Olesa Muñido, *La organizacion naval de los estados Mediterraneos y en especial de España durante los siglos XVI y XVII*, 2 voll. (Madrid, 1969), pp. 803-843.

Machiavelli's, where they were supposed to flank the main body⁹. However, between the two theoretical armies there are some important differences: (see Table II) the number of the pikemen is increased from two to three thousand, while the shield bearers of messer Niccolò are reduced to two thousand. Moreover, the big 'Roman' shields of the 'scudati' are replaced by the smaller and more modern *rodels*¹⁰ (bucklers) like the ones that, during the battle of Ravenna, had allowed the Spanish swordsmen to open a breach in the wall of pikes of the German Black Legion¹¹ - a fact that left a vivid impression on contemporaries and had inspired Machiavelli. The remaining one thousand footsoldiers were equipped with arquebuses.

However, besides the variations and the years between the work of the Florentine secretary and that of Diego de Salazar, we can still consider the latter as a 'Renaissance' plagiarism. On the other hand, the *Instructions sur les faits de la guerre* belong not only to a different period, but also to a different generation. *Monsieur de Fourquevaux* did not cast his work in dialogue form, although he followed the logical guidelines of Machiavelli¹², from a French point of view, and expressed his patriotic disapproval of the failure of the reform of the French Provincial Legions¹³, launched after 1534. He criticised the inadequacies of the *arrière-ban* - as Machiavelli had criticised the scarce military virtues of Florence's citizens - and proposed reforms of it to address the widespread bewilderment caused by the still painful memories of the French mistakes

⁹Salazar, *Tratado de re militari*, f. 15 v.

¹⁰On the weapons of Salazar's Legion, see *Tratado*, f. 12 v. The *rodeleros* were equipped with sword, buckler and 'dardos', that is some kind of missile weapon like the javelin.

¹¹Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book 10, chap. XIII.

¹²Even Fourquevaux utilizes the idea of the imaginary battle: *Tre libri*, chap. XII, pp. 67 v. - 70 v.

¹³The composition of a Legion was explained in the *Familiare institution pour les légionnaires en suivant les ordonnances faites sur ce par le roi composé nouvellement* (Lyon, 1536). On the French army in sixteenth century see Philippe Contamine (ed.) *Histoire Militaire de la France, vol. 1 Dés origins a 1715* (Paris, 1992), pp. 233-256, and also John Lynn, 'Tactical Evolution in the French Army, 1560-1660', *French Historical Studies* 14 (1985), pp. 176-191 and Knecht, *The Rise and Fall of Renaissance France*, pp. 174-175.

and defeats in the Italian Wars. In fact, the French, just like the Italians, failed to create a heavy infantry¹⁴.

Even though the organization and deployment of a modern 'legion' of six thousand men is once again the nucleus of the work, its framework is rather different. *Monsieur de Fourquevaux* based his highly partial criticism of the excessive use of mercenaries in the French armies on the contention that the conditions that required the employment of specialised troops like the Landsknechts no longer obtained. The parts of the battle array that had once been considered most formidable were no longer the 'battle' (as it was referred to the traditional tripartite subdivision of an army) or the guard of the artillery, but the vanguard and rearguard, regularly engaged in gruelling assaults and skirmishes. These were all duties that the Landsknechts and the Swiss refused to perform, and since battles were so rare, they simply collected their wages, leaving all the dangerous tasks to the French soldiers¹⁵. Notwithstanding his evident reservations about the effectiveness of the arquebusiers¹⁶, Fourquevaux acknowledged the role of skirmishers and, unlike Machiavelli and Salazar, included in his book a plan for the reform of mounted troops¹⁷.

The formal model of the *Instructions* was the *Art of War*, but, in practice, the spirit of the book is closer to that of the *Provvisione prima per le fanterie*¹⁸ (1506), that is less a rhetorical exercise and more a serious proposal for military reform. Even though their battle array was a variation of the one proposed by Machiavelli¹⁹, Fourquevaux's 'legionnaires' (see Table II) were equipped in a quite common and 'modern' way:

¹⁴ Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, book I, p. 20. According to the writer, the first to imitate successfully the Swiss were the Germans, then the Spaniards '... gli italiani vi si son dati appresso, et noi (the French) ultimamente, ma così di lontano che quanto all'ordine non potremmo mai esser uguali a loro...'

¹⁵ Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, book I, pp. 7 v. – 9 r.

¹⁶ He stressed the accuracy and dependability of bows and crossbows; Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*... p. 19 v.

¹⁷ Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, book I, pp. 41v. – 49 v.

¹⁸ Machiavelli, *Tutte le opere*, 'Provvisione prima per le fanterie', pp. 410-421.

seventy-one percent of them were pikemen, ten percent halberdiers and nineteen percent arquebusiers. The pikemen respected the usual division between *ordinarii* and *estraordinarii*, these latter destined to the defence of the skirmishing arquebusiers without observing the classical Swiss *gevierte Ordnung* and fighting in a loose and ever-changing formation. This kind of disposition was at the time a common tactic, called by the Landsknechts *verlorene Haufe*, that is ‘forlorn hope’, while Fourquevaux called these skirmishers ‘enfants perdus’ – ‘fanti perduti’ in Italian²⁰. Finally, it ought to be noticed that, even inside this theoretical square, the more conventional halberdiers had taken the place of the shielded swordsmen. Fourquevaux was able to retain Machiavelli’s view that the Roman order of battle was superior to the Macedonian phalanx by arguing that when the *mêlée* was close the pikemen should drop their pikes and engage the enemy with swords and with the bucklers that they were meant to carry on their backs²¹.

While even the treatises were shifting from an ideal infantry of shield bearers and pikemen towards one made up of pikemen and shooters, another fundamental change had already taken place. Machiavelli, Salazar and Fourquevaux had recommended the creation of a ‘legion’ of six thousand men as a direct expression of the state, as its Roman model, according to their idealized vision of the classical world, had been. However, one of the main results of the 1520-1530 campaigns was the birth and the success of a type of unit which was not only far less numerous, three-four thousand men, but enjoyed also a high level of independence. The future lay with the regiment, not with the legion. The regiments’ smaller format was at the same time made possible

¹⁹ To compare the two figures, see Machiavelli, *Art of War* (Minneapolis, 1965), sheet 4 and Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 60.

²⁰ D. Miller and G. A. Embleton, *The Landsknechts* (London, 1997), p. 8. The name ‘forlorn hope’ indicated both the danger implicit in being in the first line and the lure they represented for the enemy. Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 54 r.

²¹ Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 54 v.

and required by the growing tactical and technical effectiveness of small firearms, a fact that enabled the number of troops to be significantly reduced without a corresponding loss in firepower, while their autonomy derived from the fact that they were expeditionary forces designed to act far from their homeland. This autonomy was not a new development, but the principle was sanctioned and rationalised in order to match the new strategic and political needs of the European powers at the end of the Italian wars. It could be said that the new tactical bodies were more similar to the Roman legions of the Imperial period, while Machiavelli and the humanists had taken as their model the legion of republican Rome.

With the re-organisation of the Habsburg forces in Italy that followed the conference of Bologna (1532) and the subsequent birth of the first three *Tercios viejos* of Spanish infantry, the Empire embraced this institution²². Such a choice probably was due more to the acceptance of the system of military entrepreneurship as it had been developing and to the geographical distribution of the Habsburg domains rather than to a decision freely arrived at, but it was a successful one. Unlike the Spanish *Tercios* and the *Landsknecht* regiments, the French provincial legions raised by Francis I (1534) failed to attract the ‘right kind’ of officers, that is those rich enough to sustain the tasks of a military entrepreneur²³. As it was understood by the king of France and by Florence, a hybrid between the Swiss model and older types of territorial defence, the ‘militia de’tempi moderni’ conserved all of the risks of the model, but none of its attractions.

More often than not, a reform is simply the acceptance and formalization of a process of merging of single companies and of whole *colonnelli* into bigger and

²² See Joaquin de Sotto y Montes, ‘Los grandes Tercios Viejos de la infantería española’, *Revista de Historia Militar*, 11, 1962; Julio Albi de la Cuesta, *De Pavia a Rocroi: los Tercios de infantería española en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Madrid, 1999); Olesa Muñido, *La organización naval*, pp. 812-819.

²³ On the failure of the French Legions see Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 9 r., and François de la Noue, *Discours politiques et militaires du Seigneur de la Noue* (Basel, 1597), pp. 272-284; Knecht, *The Rise*

permanent tactical and administrative bodies, a process which was already under way in 1528 and that involved Spanish, German, French and Italian infantry. The men of the *Tercio* of Naples, for instance, listed Pavia (1525) among their victories, even though the battle preceded the official date of birth of their unit. Italian troops were a part of this general trend: as we shall see in the next chapter, the Black Bands acted in defence of their interests and on the battlefield like a sort of protoregimental ensemble. The memory of their dead master was perhaps enough to give their force its individual character, a sense of unit awareness, that even now is usually associated with a collective structure such as a regiment²⁴, but, notwithstanding the arguments of Giovanni's eulogists, it was not enough to justify its existence.

Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino and *Capitano Generale* of the League of Cognac, and Giovanni de' Medici, at the time of his death *capitano generale* of the League's infantry, have been considered two antithetical types of soldiers, even by modern historiography: cautious to the point of idleness the first, rash and hyperactive the latter. However, such a comparison needs to be put in a quite different perspective. Giovanni and Francesco Maria formulated the strategy of the campaign of 1526-27 in Northern Italy together, and between the two there was not any irremediable contrast, nor were they incompatible personalities. Their common failures – Giovanni's heroic death cannot cancel his responsibilities – was due more to the lack of coordination between political and strategic choices²⁵ than to wrong tactical assumptions. For the Great Devil and for the duke of Urbino the fact that Italian troops

and Fall, pp. 174-175. At the end of the sixteenth century *monsieur* de la Noue proposed the constitution of regiments of two thousand men instead of the Legions of six thousand men of Francis I.

²⁴ For a few examples: Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 178. For a panegyric of the 'personal' traits of the *Tercios*, see the still useful – albeit outdated and partial – article of Sotto y Montes 'Los grandes Tercios Viejos'.

²⁵ For a general overview of the campaign that led to the sack of Rome, see Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, pp. 566-584.

could not successfully ‘cross pikes’ with German or Swiss *oltramontani* was taken for granted; the two *condottieri* had, however, completely different backgrounds.

Francesco Maria della Rovere, nephew of pope Julius II, belonged to the generation of soldiers that had fought in the Italian Wars since the beginning of their career; however, while he was fully aware of all the tactical and technical innovations that had been introduced in Italy and knew very well how to use them to achieve victory, young Giovanni de’Medici and his men were the *result* of those changes. The duke of Urbino was definitely a Renaissance figure: he believed that on the battlefield there were no fast rules (see Plate 2), and that each circumstance required a separate analysis and different provisions. He criticised the French for their tactical rigidity, considered adaptability the greatest asset of all and praised the imitation of nature’s wide variety of shapes²⁶; constancy had to be used only as a lure for the enemy, because ‘questa regola è verissima, che buona regola è non usare sempre la stessa regola’²⁷

However, the basic ingredients of the duke’s ‘piecemeal tactic’ were quite constant and tested; as far as infantry was concerned, he considered Italians and Spaniards equally good foot soldiers, but added that they could not do anything decisive without the help of Landsknechts or Swiss troops. The German soldiers were the best choice, since they not only retained their aggressiveness longer than their Swiss counterparts, but, during the last years – as della Rovere remarked to the Venetian Senate in 1532 – they had learned the only thing they lacked, that is how to skirmish in the ‘Spanish way’²⁸. Francesco della Rovere’s vision of the situation was not unusual: at this stage Swiss and Landsknechts were the still masters in the use of the pike, while

²⁶ Francesco Maria della Rovere, *Discorsi militari dell’eccellentissimo signore Francesco Maria della Rovere duca d’Urbino* (Ferrara, 1583); the first part of this varied collection of military *discorsi*, published posthumously, can be found in Sanuto, *Diarii*, LVI, pp. 171-175.

²⁷ Della Rovere, *Discorsi militari*, p. 32 r.

²⁸ Sanuto, *Diarii*, LVI, pp. 171-172; Della Rovere, *Discorsi Militari*, pp. 1-4. On the ‘Spanish way’ to skirmishing and its cultural consequences, see Puddu, *Il soldato gentiluomo*, pp. 13-35.

Italian and Spanish troops – notwithstanding the good performance of the latter at Ravenna – shared a different tactical niche. In November 1527 the Spaniards who occupied Rome refused to leave the city without the Germans, whom they viewed as their ‘bastions’²⁹, while the Ten’s envoy to the camp of the League defined the Italian troops there as skirmishers ‘par excellence’, accustomed to fighting in open order³⁰. Subsequent Italian military writers considered the Italian Wars a period in which – in contrast to the Netherlands, for instance – the pike did not dominate the scene at all levels, and *arme corte* like halberds, partisans, sword and buckler still played a significant role in the hands of skirmishing troops³¹.

In a bizarre parallelism it ought to be noticed that, organised in their squares, the Swiss and the Landsknechts were highly visible and easier to analyse, while the troops frequently defined as light infantry or skirmishers seem to be as elusive from a historiographical point of view as they had to be on the battlefield. The fact that their duties were ancillary ones led Pieri and more recent historians, whose studies and technical evaluations of weapons and tactics tend to focus on a few major battles, to dismiss these troops as a rather rudimentary phenomenon with a scarcely articulated organization. There is a tendency to forget that, albeit central, the square of pikemen was only one of the elements that composed the battle array. Skirmishing was not an occasional way of fighting, it was a system, a tactic of attrition which was largely practised – even though with different degrees of ability. Above all it was a system in which technical skills, stamina, ability to act independently and personal aggressiveness were more important than being able to maintain the formation. The duke of Alba

²⁹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 12 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125. f. 335 r.

³⁰ Palla Rucellai to the Eight, 12 May 1527, ASF, Otto di Pratica, Responsive, 50, f. 31 r. ‘... rivedute tutte le fanterie et trovatole circa 16 milia fanti buona gente che circa la terza parte erano Svizzeri et Lanzichenech, da stare forti alla campagna et il resto Italiani da scaramucciare et combattere sbandati per excellentia...’

³¹ Lelio Brancaccio, *I carichi militari* (Antwerp, 1610), p. 42.

thought that ‘any troops could fight a battle but it required trained veterans to win a skirmish’³². The army of the League had enough Swiss and Landsknecht units specialized in shock tactics, but lacked good assault troops³³ like the ‘*essercitatissime compaignie*’ of arquebusiers of the Black Bands³⁴. Since the 1527-28 campaign included an endless series of skirmishes, one blockade but no pitched battles, we have to give a closer look to skirmish warfare, whose central element was the ‘*archibuggiero scaramuciatore*’.

When adequately coordinated, the skirmishing shooters had already shown how deadly their action could be. At Romagnano (1524), the arquebusiers of Fernando de Avalos transformed two counterattacks of the retreating French army into a disaster³⁵. At the climax of the battle of Pavia (1525), the ‘*sparsi*’ arquebusiers of the marquis of Pescara opened fire on the thick ranks of the French heavy cavalry from the cover of the wood of Mirabello. When charged by the outraged *gendarmes* ‘*serrati insieme*’, the Spaniards followed Avalos’ ‘*nuovi precetti*’ and eluded their attack by feigning a retreat, and spreading ‘*senza ordine*’ all around the enemy while at the same subjecting the

³² Quotation from Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, p. 13. Parker correctly states that the War of Flanders forced the Spanish troops to engage in a real guerrilla war which called ‘... for troops with an unusual degree of endurance and experience... discipline and unit organization hardly mattered; the critical qualities were independent excellence and complete familiarity with the weapons’.

³³ ‘... *assai fanteria da combattere ferma, manca però loro gente dextra et ardità allo assalto come dicono essere quelle di Vostre Signorie*’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 424 r.

³⁴ Paolo Giovio, *La seconda parte dell’Historie del suo tempo di monsignor Paolo Giovio vescovo di Nocera, tradotte per M. Lodovico Domenichi* (Firenze, 1563), book 25, p. 67

³⁵ Romagnano was not a real battle, but is frequently mentioned as one because one of the victims of the steady fire of the Imperialist arquebusiers and musketeers was – quite appropriately – the famous *monsieur de Bayart*, ‘*le chevalier sans tache et reproche*’ who embodied all the knightly virtues. On 29 April, *monsieur de Bonnavet* guided the French heavy cavalry and four hundred Swiss in an attempt to recover the army’s ordnance, captured by the Imperialists. The *gendarmes* were forced to retreat after sustaining heavy losses, and the Swiss were annihilated by the elusive Spanish shooters. Bonnavet himself was badly wounded. Bayart tried to prevent the Spaniards from harassing the French rearguard and led another counterattack, during which the famous knight was killed by a musket shot. On Romagnano, see Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, pp. 549-550.

bewildered men-at-arms to a constant barrage of fire, at the end of which they were able to overwhelm them³⁶.

A 'typical' arquebusier was equipped with his main offensive weapon, that is the 'archibuso' – which was at most two and a half feet long – and he usually had a knife on his right side and a sword on his left. The only 'arme defensiva' an arquebusier normally carried was a bulletproof sallet or a morione³⁷. Following the old saying that 'lancia lunga et spada corta fa buon fante'³⁸, many Italian writers of military treatises encouraged the choice of a short thrusting sword, only slightly longer than the *katzbalger* ('mangler') of the Landsknechts, whose broad, double-edged blade was lighter, easier to draw and less cumbersome than the longer models usually carried by the footsoldiers, and could cut the shafts of the polearms³⁹. The sword was mainly a weapon of self-defence, but was also a symbol of the status of the soldier: it was the only *arma* that a *soldato privato* could carry while moving around inside his camp, and, in the case of an honourable surrender, sometimes it was the only weapon that the rank-and-file were allowed to keep. Moreover, the arquebusiers, especially during an assault, did not vanish with the smoke of their shots: during the violent *mêlées* and in the trenches outside Naples there was little space left for the pike, 'regina dell'arme', and in

³⁶ '....Ma gli spagnuoli naturalmente destri e coperti d'armi leggiere, si ritirarono tosto adietro, et aggirandosi intrno schernirono la furia de'cavalli, et accresciuti di numero, si come quegli ch'erano ammaestrati per lunga esprienza e per li nuovi precetti del marchese, senza ordina s'allargarono per tutto il campo. Era quel modo di combattere per sè nuovo e non più usato, ma sopra tutto mirabile, et crudele, perciocché preoccupando con gran vantaggio gli archibugieri, l'honorata virtù della cavalleria si perdeva affatto... et cavalieri senza poter vendicarsi erano per tutto abbattuti da fantaccini ignobili et privati...'. Paolo Giovio, *Delle Istorie del suo tempo di monsignor Paolo Giovio vescovo di Nocera, tradotte da M. Lodovico Domenichi. Prima parte.* (Venice, 1581), book 22, p. 506 v.

³⁷ Domenico Mora, *Il Soldato di messer Domenico Mora, bolognese, Gentilhomo Grisone et cavaliere accademico stordito* (Venice, 1570), p. 72. Domenico Mora fought for Venice against the Turks, and became first military commander and then governor of the island of Zante. After leaving Venetian service, he went to France during the Civil Wars. He took part in the successful siege of Avignon.

³⁸ Aurelio Cicuta, *Disciplina militare del signor cavaliere Aurelio Cicuta, divisa in tre libri* (Venice, 1572), p. 211. During his youth, Aurelio Cicuta had been an 'allievo' of the marquis of Pescara, the hero of Pavia.

³⁹ For instance, Aurelio Cicuta, *Disciplina militare*, p. 211. Cicuta criticised the swords of the Spaniards and of the French *frantoppini*, that is the *franc-taupins*, as the irregular Picard troops were called. The

close combat the soldiers used everything they had. In case of need, an arquebus could become an excellent club. Quickness, lightness and agility were to be the main characteristics of the arquebusier, who could be expected to fight in three principal roles: as skirmisher, as a part of the groups of shooters 'sbandati', or wings, that preceded and followed the square and, eventually, at the sides of the square itself as 'maniche' ('sleeves' – see Plate 3 and Table VII), which were also called 'guarnitioni'.

In the first case, the 'archibugiero scaramuciatore' was meant to be constantly in movement, walking crouched, hopping here and there like a 'saltarino', kneeling down to recharge his weapon, always ready to discharge it at the enemy's chest. During a skirmish there was seldom the occasion or the need to take careful aim before shooting, mainly because the enemy was so close, and there was little need of long-range weapons like the musket. Italian military writers of the second half of the sixteenth century were somewhat conservative in regard to the great diffusion of the musket, that was considered too heavy to be used in close combat; a good skirmisher had to be ready to fight for hours, maintaining the same rate of fire, from dawn to dusk, if necessary⁴⁰.

Captain Francesco Ferretti (1523-1600), a veteran of Mühlberg and of the French Civil Wars, believed that there were three circumstances in which skirmishing was appropriate⁴¹: to sound out your own fighting spirit and the enemy's intentions, to occupy and hold a pass, to stop the enemy from harassing your marching troops. The mechanism was the same in the three cases; what changed were the priorities, the times and the modes of the engagement. The officer in charge of the action was to select a percentage of arquebusiers adequate to the needs of the occasion from the various

frantoppina was a kind of sword that at half or three-quarters of its length became a long, pointed stiletto and was used mainly in close combat.

⁴⁰ On skirmishes: Cicuta, *Disciplina militare*, pp. 177, 209-211 and Domenico Mora, *Il Soldato*, pp. 72-75.

⁴¹ Francesco Ferretti, *Della osservanza militare del capitano Francesco Ferretti d'Ancona, cavallier dell'Ordine di Santo Stefano, libri due* (Venezia, 1577), pp. 65-70.

companies, and to give them accurate instructions on the purpose of the coming fight. In theory, the scheme was rather simple: the captain had to take possession of a tenable position and then to divide his men into five or six groups of at least fifty men each that, by attacking in waves, would first provoke the enemy and then put them under pressure, so ‘enlarging’ the skirmish. During their action, the arquebusiers were flanked by groups of ‘corsaletti’ – armoured footsoldiers – armed with short polearms. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Lelio Brancaccio (1560-1637), a veteran of the Netherlands who had been in command of one of these groups of armoured storm troops, considered these halberdiers an obsolete legacy of the past wars, when Italian^s and Spaniards still had not learned how to wield the pike with sufficient skill⁴².

The body of covering troops lined up behind them and the timely advance of other groups allowed the different teams of arquebusiers to retreat and to regroup after discharging their weapons and after the enemy counterattack. There, they would become a part of the ‘grossa spalla’, waiting for their turn to attack again. To further clarify this tactical scheme, Francesco Ferretti compared it explicitly to the *caracole*, which was the typical mode of attack of the *reiters*, the German mounted pistoleers who had come to prominence during the early days of his military career⁴³.

Possibly, the most dangerous duty required from arquebusiers and musketeers was when they were organised into the ‘ali’ (wings), also called ‘corna’, of a square (see Plate 2) during the preliminaries to a pitched battle. A characteristic of the ‘scaramuciatore archibugiero’, and one of his main advantages, was his adaptability to the different kinds of terrain and his use of natural or man-made shelters and obstacles. The wings were ‘sbandate’ and loose formations in which the skirmishers had to rely on the accuracy and on the long range of their weapons and – given their low rate of fire

⁴² Lelio Brancaccio, *I carichi militari*, p. 42.

and the open ground on which they usually fought – were more vulnerable to direct attacks from both cavalry and infantry. However, the wings followed, on a bigger scale, the same fighting mode of the groups of arquebusiers of the aforesaid skirmishes. Once the ‘ali’ had come into contact with the enemy, a different kind of caracole began: according to need, shooters from the square’s sleeves methodically exchanged their places with their weary colleagues ‘sbandati’, stirring up the fight. Moreover, since it had to mount an ‘elastic’ resistance, a wing in trouble could, and frequently did, re-enter the square. Captain Ferretti considered these formations typical of Italian and Spanish units, two ‘nationi’ that excelled as shooters⁴⁴. If successful, this tactic of attrition could even force an intact square of pikemen, whose arquebusiers had been overwhelmed or had suffered heavy losses, to retreat.

Organized into sleeves (see Table VIII), the shooters had no freedom of movement at all: they were the ‘garrisons’ (‘guarnitioni’) of the square and had to remain at its sides, maintaining the *ordinanza*, ready to take shelter under the pikes of their companions, who were usually *picche secche*, that is unarmoured pikemen. Unlike their colleagues on the wings, the arquebusiers in the sleeves followed a very strict fire discipline: they had to keep at bay enemies that, like the cavalry, were quick enough to outmanoeuvre the square before it could show them its ‘armoured’ front or rear. As a consequence, when the side was under attack they only opened fire at very short range, file after file kneeling down immediately to reload and to clear the line of fire, or rank after rank, following the technique of the caracole, when the square was attacked frontally⁴⁵.

⁴³ Ferretti, *Della osservanza militare*, p. 66.

⁴⁴ Ferretti, *Della osservanza militare*, p. 100

⁴⁵ Imperiale Cinuzzi, *La vera militar disciplina* (1604), pp. 48-52.

When Giovambattista Gotti da Messina (?-1559), former sergeant-major of Giovanni de' Medici and of the Black Bands, wrote his *Libro di ricordi intorno all'arte militare* between 1553 and 1559⁴⁶, this kind of battle array had already become common enough to be considered orthodox and proposable to somebody who, like Giovambattista's master Guidubaldo della Rovere, duke of Urbino, had as his long-term ally and employer a rather conservative power like the Venetian Republic⁴⁷. For the formation of the *battaglia*, Giovambattista thought that thirty per cent of the soldiers composing it should be arquebusiers, fifty-five per cent pikemen, and fifteen per cent halberdiers, while in 1548 Venice had prescribed that sixty per cent should be pikemen and ten per cent halberdiers⁴⁸. During the second half of the sixteenth century the majority of the writers of military treatises (see Table III) recommended a ratio of pike to shot of at least two to one, and many Italian and European powers tried constantly to raise the percentage of pikemen to that level.

However, as early as 1570 the Bolognese knight Domenico Mora (see Table III) in his book *Il soldato* had concluded that the tactical needs of a military unit and the interests of the state were, at least partially, divergent. Mora argued that 'nowadays' it was very difficult to fight a pitched battle: the soldiers of both sides could walk but could not fly, while 'pel contrario, la vista loro trapassa ogni velocità'; it was almost impossible to engage the enemy in close combat without conceding him time to prepare and so enjoy a considerable tactical advantage. As a consequence war had become a series of skirmishes and ambushes, and for every pikeman who fell, twenty arquebusiers

⁴⁶ Biblioteca centrale, Università degli Studi di Urbino, Giovambattista Gotti da Messina, *Libro di ricordi intorno all'arte militare dati da un suo sergente a Guidubaldo II della Rovere*, coll. Urbino 101. The manuscript book of Giovambattista da Messina is still unpublished. To see the results of a preliminary survey on his work, see *Infantry and Numbers: Giovambattista da Messina's Military Science*, Computing essay by Maurizio Arfaioli, University of Warwick, academic year 1998-1999.

⁴⁷ Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, pp. 319-320

⁴⁸ On the evolution of the Venetian infantry, *Ibid*, pp 350-366.

had lost their lives⁴⁹. In order to shift swiftly from the offensive to the defensive mode and *vice versa*, a military unit that acted according to purely tactical circumstances needed to be composed mostly of shooters, who should constitute at least two thirds of the whole, since they were far more versatile than pikemen. Only when a prince or a republic enlisted an army for the defence of their dominions, was the proportion of pike and shot to be inverted in favour of the pikemen; when the survival of the state was at stake, there was no time for long and exhausting ‘traccheggiamenti’ but only for a stiff resistance⁵⁰.

As we shall see in greater detail in the next chapter, the differences between the needs of a body of infantry specialized in assault tactics like the Black Bands and the priorities of a state practically under siege like Florence, could produce a very tense situation. Giovambattista Gotti wrote his *Libro di ricordi* having in mind the requirements of his master Guidobaldo della Rovere, but he had become famous as sergeant-major of Giovanni de’Medici, overseeing the training and to deployment of a very different kind of infantry. With a percentage of arquebusiers that varied from sixty to almost eighty per cent (see Table IV), the Black Bands clearly exhibited all the characteristics of an expeditionary force, and resisted all Florence’s attempts to invert the pike/shot ratio. Such a high proportion of shooters was not unusual: in the immediate aftermath of the League’s defeat at Naples the last effort of the allies to keep the Imperial army in southern Italy consisted in reuniting all the residual units in order to ‘fare una testa’ in Apulia, that is to assemble a force whose objective was to harass the enemy army, and not to confront it directly, gaining time while more decisive

⁴⁹ See Mora, *Il Soldato*, chapter XI, p. 88: ‘... che i soldati non volano, ma che vanno, et che pel contrario la vista loro trapassa ogni velocità, non si lasciano i capitani condurre a simili fattioni pericolose senza qualche vantaggio et tempo di pigliare forme resistibili...’

⁵⁰ ‘... a volte li principi fanno gli eserciti, sforzati da alcune potentie nemiche, principalmente per resistere a loro, et difendere il suo; onde hanno più bisogno di stare sopra la lor guardia, che di assalire et offendere

countermeasures were organized elsewhere⁵¹. The companies that formed this makeshift army were mainly Italian, and a precious detailed description of their structure has been left by the reports⁵² (Sheet V) of the Florentine paymaster Giuliano Ciati (Florence paid one third of the expenses). The six *colonnelli* show no regular pattern in the percentages of pike and shot but do show a really marked prevalence of the latter (Chart VI) and, inside this category, the prevalence of the more modern arquebuses over the *schiochetti*, an older and lighter weapon in which the lighted match was applied to the primer by hand rather than by a trigger, as in the case of the arquebus. The rest of the soldiers were equipped with pikes and ‘arme corte’. In 1527, young Blaise de Montluc, one of the Gascon captains under the command of Pedro Navarro during the siege of Naples, had enlisted about seven or eight hundred men, of whom four or five hundred were arquebusiers, a remarkable number since, according to him, in France at the time there were still not many of them⁵³. Only years later did Fourquevaux lament the fact that ‘nowadays everybody wants to be an arquebusier’⁵⁴, but the conversion of the Gascons from the crossbow to the arquebus was, in all probability, merely hastened by the French defeats in Italy.

In 1532 the duke of Urbino considered the percentage of shooters deployed by the Italian armies of the day too high, and therefore dangerous: he argued that the pike, and

I nemici... in questo caso potrà fare che i capitani ordinino le sue compagnie di un terzo d’archibugieri, et di due terzi di picche...’, Ibid., p. 93.

⁵¹ The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, Bishop of Saintes and Florentine ambassador in France, 6 October 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 45, f. 102 r. The Florentines, who agreed on the plan, were asked to contribute two thousand foot and one hundred horsemen to the force. However, after the loss of the Black Bands, they refused to send more troops to the Kingdom of Naples. The events of the League’s forces in Apulia are well outlined - from the Venetian point of view - in Vito Vitale, ‘L’impresa di Puglia degli anni 1528-1529’, *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, Tome XIII part II (1906) pp. 5-68

⁵² *Nota* of the troops paid in Barletta, Giuliano Ciati to the Ten, December 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 127, f. 266 r. – 267 v.

⁵³ Blaise de Montluc, *Commentaires et Lettres*, (Paris, 1864), I vol., p. 77: ‘Et luy mennay sept à huit cents hommes, dont il y en avoict quatre ou cinq cents harquebuziers, combien qu’en ce temps-là n’en y avoict encore guèeres en France...’. At the muster in Alessandria these men were equally divided between Montluc and *monsieur* d’Aussun, and according to Venetian sources at the beginning of the operations in Lombardy ‘Munleu’s’ and ‘Ansuno’s’ companies were respectively composed of three and four hundred foot; Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, p. 428.

not the arquebus, opened the road to victory⁵⁵. However, the proportions of shot and pike he criticised were typical of the new ‘mannerist’ tactics used during this phase of the conflict, while Francesco Maria della Rovere had learned his craft during the period of the great battles, like Fornovo, Agnadello and Ravenna, that at the beginning had been fought by the Italian powers as protagonists and not mere auxiliaries. The criteria according to which victory itself was judged had changed.

By the first half of the sixteenth century, Italian soldiers were widely considered as good skirmishers and as specialists in the use of the arquebus. In 1532 thousands of Italian arquebusiers were deployed outside Vienna against the Turks as a part of the famous ‘Hungarian Ordinance’⁵⁶; and in the Netherlands, where they fought from 1576 onwards, the Italian troops were judged to be second only to the Spaniards⁵⁷. On the other hand, their reputation as pikemen remained always quite low, and it was this disparity of performance combined with patriotic dreams of an Italian ‘renaissance’ which would begin on the battlefield, that probably encouraged Giulio Cesare Brancaccio (1515-1584) to expound in a rather curious book his rather unorthodox project of an army made up entirely of arquebusiers and cavalry. Addressing the ‘prencipi d’Italia’, Brancaccio went so far as to describe the pike as an useless and obsolete weapon, and the squares as cumbersome and rather illogical formations, which would be easily defeated by his ideal infantry, which was to be entirely composed of arquebusiers trained with a ‘secret’ method which, if correctly taught and applied, would start a chain reaction comparable to the one triggered by the Swiss pikemen, but

⁵⁴ ‘Tutta volta ciascun al tempo nostro vuol esser archibusiero’, Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 19 r.

⁵⁵ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, p. 174, from the speech delivered by Francesco Maria della Rovere in Venice in 1532. See also the *Discorsi Militari dell’eccellentissimo signore Francesco Maria della Rovere duca d’Urbino*, pp. 1-4; ‘... le vittorie tutte se aquistano più con le piche che con il archibusi, imperoché quelle rompeno li ordini, da che nasce la vittoria...’

⁵⁶ Paolo Giovio, *La seconda parte dell’Historie*, pp. 361-374; on the Hungarian Ordinance, see Embleton, *The Landsknechts*, p. 12.

⁵⁷ Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, pp. 29-30.

initiated, on this occasion, by Italians⁵⁸. Unfortunately for us, the writer did not explain the so-called 'secret' method that was to give the arquebusiers victory over the traditional pike and shot formations in an open field, since he kept it for the ears of the Italian princes and leading commanders of his days.

⁵⁸Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, *Il Brancatio della vera disciplina et arte militare, sopra i Commentari di Giulio Cesare, da lui ridotti in Compendio per la comodità de'soldati* (Venice, 1582).

2. Cavalry.

'... e' vagliono hoggi più 100 cavalli leggieri che 100 homini d'armi, et meno spesa.'

The Florentine *Commissario* Lorenzo Martelli to the Dieci. 1 November 1527.

It was a most pleasant sight, wrote Giovangirolamo de' Rossi, to see on a day of truce the Imperial army defending Milan (in 1526) and the League's forces that were besieging the city mixed together 'con tanto amore quanto se fossero stati uniti insieme' while the 'staff officers' from both sides met to parley. For the Imperial party there were Antonio de Leyva, the duke of Bourbon, Fernando de Alarçon, Alfonso de Avalos and Luigi 'the young' Gonzaga (alias Rodomonte), while the 'collegati' were represented by the papal lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini, the duke of Urbino, Vitello Vitelli, the count Guido Rangoni and Giovanni de' Medici. On this occasion a Spaniard challenged any representative from the League's army to a duel with lances 'a cavallo alla leggera', that is a duel between light horsemen. The challenge was accepted on behalf of Giovanni de' Medici by the standard bearer of his company of light cavalry, Pierantonio della Gisa from Verona, but the Spaniard - who was one-eyed - against the terms of the duel (and of 'buona guerra') killed the horse of his Italian opponent in the first clash. The question whether or not the Spaniard could be considered a 'homo da bene' was about to be permanently settled between the angry Giovanni de' Medici and the truculent Rodomonte Gonzaga when the others, including Guicciardini and Alfonso de Avalos, decided to stop them⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Rossi, *Vita*, pp. 82-83.

Challenges, between foot soldiers or mounted troops, were quite a common sight (especially during a truce or a siege), and a duel with lances is an indication of the level of autonomy attained by the light cavalry; as is the fact that the challenge was between a Spaniard and an Italian - two nationalities for long considered masters of the speciality. In fact the objective of Giovangirolamo de' Rossi was to identify the figure of Giovanni de' Medici as the 'father' of the Italian light cavalry, on the ground that he equipped all his men with Turkish horses and Burgundian sallets, rendering immediately obsolete the traditional men-at-arms, and was the first to mount his arquebusiers on untrained horses to speed up their deployment. However, once more a distinction is to be made between literary and historical originality. By 1526 there was already a well-established distinction between the stradiots, with their *capelletti* and their shields, and those equipped with helms and armour (and without shields) 'alla Italiana'⁶⁰.

The Burgundian 'lance' was composed of two mounted men: one equipped with cuirass, armlets, jambes, gorget, shoulder pieces, and a 'Burgundian' sallet (see Plate 5) also called *Borgognotta*⁶¹, and armed with lance and a sword and, or, a mace, the other a servant on a reserve horse⁶². Giovanni obviously was not the first to accept nor to employ this kind of cavalry sub-unit - which had been suggested in 1515 by his idol⁶³ Bartolomeo d'Alviano to his Venetian employers as a feasible solution to their shortage of good heavy horsemen- but the great emphasis put by many writers on this detail makes Giovanni's choice at least significant, if not original. In fact, it was a preference

⁶⁰ 'Erano nel campo de Vinitiani dintorno a mille cavai leggieri, fra li quali erano Albanesi e Greci co'cappelletti et con le targhe circa a cinquecento... Gli altri erano armati con l'elmo et con la corazza alla italiana...'. Paolo Giovio, *La seconda parte*, book 25, p. 63.

⁶¹The '*borgognotta*' according to the *Enciclopedia Ragionata delle Armi* (Milan, 1979) was a light sallet that became popular (more or less) after 1520, taking the place of the traditional '*caschetto*' of the Italian light cavalymen.

⁶²Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, pp. 330-331; confront with Fourquevaux, *Tre Libri*, p. 46

v.

⁶³Rossi, *Vita*, p. 99.

motivated by the interests and the tactical needs of an infantry commander rather than by the ambitions of a typical *condottiere di cavalli*.

In 1515 Bartolomeo d'Alviano, pessimistic about the quality of all the potential *capolancie* of heavy cavalry who could be enlisted, advised that the average age of the candidates should be reduced, since only the young cavalrymen could accept the 'Burgundian' solution – which was financially advantageous for the state, but whose social reputation was markedly inferior – and with time become good men-at-arms⁶⁴.

Things had changed, albeit to a limited extent, in 1527, when Florence started to deal with Carlo Nuvoloni, commander of the marquis of Mantua's men-at-arms. Since the marquis was about to withdraw his forces from the League's camp, the Ten were thinking about retaining the best of those available by stipulating a separate *condotta* with Nuvoloni, who was already a famous cavalry commander and was generally considered 'homo da bene', and 'more for the embers than for the smoke'⁶⁵. However, what Florence's troops needed, according to Orazio Baglioni, who was (a very relevant detail) its captain general of foot, were about three hundred light cavalrymen with Burgundian armour, rather than men-at-arms. The negotiations for the *condotta* failed for several different reasons, but Nuvoloni's straight answer shows the opinion of a successful professional on the topic. He was not, in principle, unwilling to accept such an appointment, but he pointed out that the command of a unit of men-at-arms was considered the culmination of one's career⁶⁶, a career started among the ranks of the light cavalry, which he eventually left thanks to his valour and good luck. The only way

⁶⁴Sanuto, *Diarii*, XX p. 151.

⁶⁵Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 24 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 245 r. The first idea was to agree on a mixed *condotta* of heavy and light cavalry.

⁶⁶Carlo Nuvoloni to the Florentine commissioner Lorenzo Martelli, 6 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 383 r.; 'Del mio particolare, dico che nel modo delli primi gradi che l'homo se aquista nella militia, lo havere compagnia de cavalli legieri dove de poi cum el bene operare o vero cum la bona sorte salise ad haver compagnia de homeni d'armi in greve, si come quel grado che è il supremo delli altri...'

to make such an investment profitable both for Florence and for him was to attract men (experienced veterans, and not simply young ones) who usually chose the career of a man-at-arms by ‘mongrelizing’ (‘abastardare’) the wages according to the equipment of the Burgundian horseman, considered already a mixture between a light cavalryman and the typical *homo d’arme*⁶⁷. This ideal ‘medium’ cavalrymen⁶⁸ could not easily accept the pay (in the case of Florence forty *ducati* per year) of their ‘lighter’ colleagues.

Giovanni de’Medici’s choice could have been that of a young man (after all he died at barely twenty-eight) but in practice, thanks to his family name, he was not as strictly tied as Carlo Nuvoloni was to a *cursus honorum*, while on the other hand the light cavalry offered the best support to the infantry troops. A Burgundian lancer represented an optimal compromise between the agility of a stradiot-like horseman and the capacity of penetration of a man-at-arms, and unlike the latter could pursue or escape an enemy, or prepare an ambush. However he was more vulnerable to the effects of the small firearms, as Giovanni’s death shows, and to fulfil all his potential required the same level of training and coordination as the heavy cavalry.

In this Giovanni was truly a representative of the ‘Imperial’ school, and after his death the Black Bands suffered badly because of the great tactical gap that there was in the League’s army between the French *gendarmes* and the Venetian stradiots, while the Spanish light horsemen were judged by the Florentine commissioner Marco del Nero ‘perfecti’ (perfects) in their role of support for the infantry⁶⁹. In April 1528 the Venetian

⁶⁷Ibid.: ‘Vero è che quando se volesse condurre gente della sorte che dico io, et che secundo che se abastardeno l’arme et cavalli così anchor si abastardase el pagamento che non fussero pagati in cavalli legieri né in tutto da homeni d’arme in greve, et fare la condotta in honesto et honorevole modo cum quella provesion che fusse honesta et ragionevole per la persona mia, ch’io non recusarei’

⁶⁸Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, p. 331-332.

⁶⁹ ‘...cosa che toglie assai di coraggio alla fanteria, conoscendo non si potere fidare nel soccorso de i cavalli, come saria necessario. Et come fanno gli spagnioli, che gli hanno perfetti et se ne servono assai...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten. 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131. f. 222 r.

captain of Brescia reported that there were two thousand Burgundian lancers in the Imperial relief army destined for Naples⁷⁰.

Indeed a process of ‘mongrelization’ must have been under way if in the following years the soldier-diplomat Fourquevaux felt the need to reaffirm the distinction between the real heavy cavalry and what in his time was often considered as such - that is well-armoured light cavalry, a result he thought of a dangerous tactical interference⁷¹. Given the little attention paid to these aspects of the war by *messer* Machiavelli, the part of Fourquevaux’s *Instruction* dedicated to cavalry is obviously the one with more original additions and shows clearly the great influence, even linguistic, that the Italian Wars had on the theory, if not on the practice, of French military culture. Fourquevaux attempted to lay down a real *cursus honorum*, a one-way career in the course of which the young cavalrymen would have without exception to pass through four different phases; whereas, as we have seen, in Italy the reality was limited to a certain ‘permeability’ between light and heavy cavalry. Starting from the bottom the phases were: mounted arquebusier, stradiot (‘estradiotz’ even in the French text), light horseman, man-at-arms⁷², which correspond broadly to the categories being examined here.

The mounted shooters, equipped with crossbow, arquebus or a *schoppietto*, were certainly some of the most common sorts of light horsemen during the Italian Wars⁷³, and one of the most frequently deployed, even though they never lost the function of bodyguards or ‘compensation’ given to a particular *condottiere*. Two hundred mounted crossbowmen were part of the condotta of the captain general of the League’s camp in

⁷⁰Sanuto, *Diari*, XLVII, p. 313.

⁷¹Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 46 r. ‘Questo ho specificato così per minuto per rispetto degli huomini d’arme del tempo presente, che voglion esser chiamati huomini d’arme et nondimeno sono armati et guarniti come son propriamente i cavai leggieri...’

⁷²For the detailed description of the time to be spent in each category, the equipment, the horses, the training, see Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, pp. 41v. - 49 v. , that is the whole Chapter VIII of the first book. Fourquevaux’s ideal unit of cavalry was formed by one hundred men-at-arms, one hundred light cavalrymen, fifty stradiots and fifty mounted arquebusiers.

Umbria in 1528, while forty were under the command of Malatesta Baglioni, an infantry commander⁷⁴. They had the advantage of mobility and of their long-range weapon, but lacked the manageability necessary to a coordinated cavalry action, not to mention their vulnerability in case of a melee. As Mallett correctly says, they were an expression of the cavalry's adaptation process to new tactical and financial circumstances; on the other hand the mounted arquebusiers for which Giovanni de' Medici was famous (and that Taylor considered as the forerunners of the Dragoons) had their origins in the infantry and its needs. The difference is only apparently thin, since it implies a re-thinking of tactics and priorities; there were no *hargulati* on Giovanni's payroll, but just simple arquebusiers - possibly an élite selected among the *homini da bene* - who occasionally mounted on horses (untrained animals captured or simply stolen) that were not included in the *condotta*.

The Greek and Albanians stradiots (and later on also the *Corvati*, the Croat light horsemen) had always been a highly visible feature of the Italian Wars (and a somewhat exotic one, given their origin and the enemies - the Turks - from whom they borrowed their tactics), and apparently even Fourquevaux had been impressed favourably enough by them to adopt the term 'estradiotz' in his book to refer to a category of mounted skirmishers and raiders especially effective against unarmoured enemies and their horses⁷⁵ rather than to a specific 'ethnic' group. Cruel and unpredictable, variable in performance⁷⁶ and mounted on their small Turkish horses, the stradiots formed in 1527 the bulk - together with the mounted crossbowmen and arquebusiers - of the Venetian

⁷³On the origins of the figure - at least in the Venetian military organisation - see Mallett and Hale, *The Military organization*, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁴For the complete roll of the League's forces in Lombardy and Tuscany (which meant also Umbria) see Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, pp. 428 -430.

⁷⁵Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 46 v.. 'Questi Stradiotti possan servire per le scaramucchie, et fan grande occisione di gente disarmate et di cavai con le loro zagaglie...'

⁷⁶For the origins of the 'stratioti' in the war of Ferrara and the battle of Fornovo in Venetian service see: Mallett, *Mercenaries*, pp. 152-153. See also Luigi da Porto's *Lettere storiche dal 1509 al 1528* (Florence,

light cavalry, and were not an unusual sight nor a monopoly of the *Serenissima* anymore, since there were bands of Albanian horsemen in Imperial service during the siege of Naples. During their decades-long activity in Italy the stradiots, with their exotic features like the shield and the Turkish bow, influenced the Italian military scene deeply. Lightly armoured, the stradiots were at this juncture also increasingly vulnerable thanks to the steadily rising number of arquebusiers⁷⁷. A remarkable example of the ‘second generation’ of stradiots were the captains Giannetto Albanese, one of the twelve original infantry commanders of the Black Bands, and Angelo Bastardo, who was Albanian but had always lived in Italy, and was both an infantry and cavalry commander⁷⁸. It is interesting to notice that Fourquevaux, who was quite conservative in his views about the offensive weapons appropriate for the cavalry - more or less always the same (that is lance, sword, mace) but in a different order of importance according to the speciality of the horseman - makes an exception for the ‘estradiotz’ by equipping them with a long ‘zagaglia’ with a blade at both ends⁷⁹.

The history and developments of the two last categories examined here, the more conventional Italian light cavalry and the heavy cavalry, were inextricably linked to each other, even though by the 1527-28 campaign they had already evolved into two separate tactical components. The figure of the *cavallo leggero* - such as, for instance, the Burgundian lancer - owed its origins to the progressive reduction in the number of the ‘veri armigeri’ (the real men-at-arms in heavy armour) and the contemporaneous

1857) and - for the episodes regarding the 1527-28 campaign - the letters of Andrea Civran, a provveditore of the stratioti, in Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII.

⁷⁷On the stradiots during this period see also Mallett and Hale, *The Organization*, p. 376-377.

⁷⁸‘...Agnolo Bastardo di natione albanese ma è sempre stato in Italia et hauto bona conditione a cavallo et a piè’, Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 169 r.

⁷⁹Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 46 v. ‘Gli stradiotti havran buoni cavalli et saranno armati come i cavali leggieri, eccetto delle braccia perché in luogo di bracciali et guanti di ferro, porteranno maniche e guanti di maglia, la spada larga ai fianchi. la mazza all’arcione, et una zagaglia in mano longa dieci o dodici piedi ferrata da tutti e due i lati di un ferro ben acuto et tagliente, overamente porteran la lancia come gli altri...’

enlargement and subsequent fragmentation of the traditional unit of Italian cavalry, the *lancia*, whose leader was the man-at-arms⁸⁰.

In the *condotta* that the Florentine Republic entered into in 1528 with Ercole d'Este, the son of the duke of Ferrara, as captain general of all their troops, the *lancie* of the two hundred 'homini d'arme in bianco' granted to the young *condottiere* were to be equipped with three horses: a warhorse or 'capolancia', a replacement mount or 'piacto', and a nag ('ronzino')⁸¹ - which means three horses and only one combatant. The traditional tripartite structure had included an additional, more lightly armoured, horseman but his absence, once simply tolerated when not objected to, had become normal. The *saccomanno*, or *sergente*, became a separate figure during the Wars, a light horseman with his own tactical features, and he was, moreover, was too expensive (forty ducats per year, while the average pay of the man-at-arms in Florentine service was one hundred ducats during this period) to simply retain his accustomed role as substitute⁸². However Ercole d'Este's *condotta* specified that at least half - or more, according to the will of the captain general - of the *homini d'arme* were to be converted into *cavalli leggeri* at a ratio of two light horsemen to one man-at-arms, whose pay was therefore to be equally divided. It was a sort of compromise between the need to safeguard the *reputazione* of young Ercole - whose rank had more a political than a military significance - and Florence's tactical needs.

The city had been abandoned by the Mantuan heavy cavalry and, as we shall see in detail, badly disappointed by the famous French *gens d'armes*, the *armerie* whose passivity and indiscipline demoralized the other troops besieging Naples. On the other hand, Orazio Baglioni's light horsemen performed well, and in the aftermath of the

⁸⁰See Mallett and Hale, *The Military organization*, pp. 69-71.

⁸¹ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 29 v. 'Item... che li preducti homini d'arme per tempo di guerra tenghino per ciascuno tre cavalli, cioè un capolancia, un piacto et un ronzino, li quali sia tenuto rescontrare per peli et segni così li homini d'arme come li cavalli'.

defeat in southern Italy the best advice the Ten could give, albeit indirectly, to Francis I was to leave his men-at-arms - who melted away when too far from the Alps - at home and to recruit Italian light cavalry and German infantry in order to reaffirm his rights in the peninsula⁸³.

Skirmish and attrition warfare was not suited to heavy cavalry because of its lack of mobility and the vulnerability of the complex tactical apparatus needed to keep the men-at-arms operational. However, this was a well-known fact which was hardly disputed by the defenders of the institution. Protected against the blows of any hand-wielded weapon and against most of the small firearms by his almost impenetrable shell, the *homo d'arme* was indeed relatively safe in the 'fortezza dell'armi proprie'⁸⁴. Even among the light cavalrymen the sight of armour pierced by a spear's thrust was rare, and even Giovanni's famous exploit - when he ran through a Spanish light horseman with his lance - of which Giovangirolamo de' Rossi claimed to have been a direct witness⁸⁵, was considered remarkable by the more practical and experienced treasurer Giovambattista Tedaldi, who noticed how the head of Giovanni's lance hit the unfortunate Spaniard in the 'falso' (the joint between two steel plates) of his body armour⁸⁶. During the melee the cavalrymen literally beat each other to death or into submission⁸⁷ with lances, maces and swords, but their cuirass was often not enough to withstand the arquebuses' bullets that - reduced to lead plates once they had penetrated

⁸²Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, pp. 367-370.

⁸³This judgement was recurrent in the Ten's letters, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 45, f. 132 v.

⁸⁴*Della necessità di conservare la cavalleria di grave armatura nello esercito veneziano, ricordo di Scipio Costanzo alla Signoria di Venezia* (Venice, 1868), pp. 11, 19. Quoted from Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, p. 369.

⁸⁵Rossi, *Vita*, p. 85. Even the name of the victim - a Spaniard called Amos- is recorded. Rossi claims that Giovanni did the same in 1520 or 1521 against a stradiot who had turned to banditism.

⁸⁶*Vite*, p. 174.

⁸⁷It is to Giovanni de' Medici's credit that he was never captured. His legendary endurance to pain was however put heavily to the test under the walls of Milan when, unsaddled and isolated, he was surrounded by the Spanish light horsemen who literally ruined his armour. *Vite*, p. 164.

the steel armour - the faithful Lucantonio Cuppano had sometimes to detach from the heavy leather coat of his lucky master Giovanni⁸⁸.

‘Come un forte per resistere a qualunche venisse loro all’incontro, et per rompere et fracassare tutti coloro che essi assaliranno’, the men-at-arms were able to apply or to withstand very localized but considerable force for limited periods of time; but, according to Fourquevaux, they were wasted in a skirmish⁸⁹. *Monsieur* the baron of Aigremont - who died during the siege of Naples in 1528 - blamed the frequent minor engagements of the Italian Wars for having taught the French *gens d’armes* to turn their backs to the enemy when manoeuvring during a skirmish, a bad habit that was then extended to circumstances (like a real battle) in which collective steadiness was required⁹⁰. Beyond any chivalrous consideration, Aigremont was surely aware of the simple fact that the heavy cavalry was plainly not mobile enough and in certain circumstances was easily outmanoeuvred, its strength was diluted and could not cause to the enemy the massive losses that alone justified the considerable effort of maintaining such an expensive and awkward corps d’élite. A fight between one man-at-arms and a single light cavalryman - that is at least one hundred ducats against forty - was already a loss, no matter what the final outcome was. Furthermore, the still unreformed⁹¹ French lances of 1527-28 were larger units (up to six men) and, according to the *Ordonnance* of 1498, in a company of one hundred lances there were two hundred mounted archers. Of these, one hundred and twenty were *francs-archers*, who were paid separately from the *homme d’armes* by the king’s treasurer (fifteen to twenty of them were actually crossbowmen), sixty-eight were *archers-sujets* and *twelve archers-sujets a volonté*, who

⁸⁸ *ibid.* p. 179.

⁸⁹ Fourquevaux, *Tre libri*, p. 48 v.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 49 r.

⁹¹ For the outcome of the post-Pavia (and post-Naples) cavalry reform, see *Histoire Militaire de la France*, vol. 1, p. 248; Hall, *Weapons*, p. 184-5. The ratio of mounted archers per man-at-arms was reduced to 1.5: 1 in 1534.

were paid less. Four horses for each man-at-arms and another four for the two mounted archers were, in theory, provided⁹².

In the army that crossed the Alps in 1527, the nine hundred heavy 'lances' under the command of some of the most illustrious names of the French aristocracy who followed Lautrec in his march towards Naples⁹³ were accompanied by a mere two hundred light horsemen led by the English Sir Robert Jerningham⁹⁴ (about whom more will be said in Chapters IV and V) and by the brother of Gregorio Casale, the Italian ambassador of the 'Serenissimo d'Anglia' Henry VIII in the camp of the League⁹⁵. Moreover, the general quality of the *gens d'armes* was not what it had been before Pavia, and Lautrec himself was, as we shall see, frequently and bitterly disappointed by his peers.

The period being considered here - immediately after Pavia and before the subsequent military reforms and events - is best viewed as a moment of transition, and is far too short to be really indicative of any general trend; but the historian who studies it is, for that reason, less likely to fall victim to the temptation to search for some simple teleological relationship between developments in military technology and the so-called 'death of chivalry'⁹⁶; the heavy cavalry retained its social prestige, so that belonging to it continued to offer the possibility of social mobility and promotion. One of the best examples comes from the Imperialist army that sacked Rome, one of the most successful armies of its time both tactically and financially: at the moment of leaving the

⁹² On the evolution of the 'lancia' during the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century, see Contamine *Histoire Militaire*, p. 223. See also Contamine, *La guerra*, p. 181-190 and Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, p. 229-233.

⁹³ Sanuto, *Diarii XLVIII*, p. 460, 462. For a detailed list of the companies of heavy cavalry, see Martin du Bellay, *Les Memoires de Messire Martin du Bellay, seigneur de Langey* (Paris, 1573), p. 107 r.

⁹⁴ Du Bellay, *Les Memoires*, p. 107 r. '... maistre Ierminghen Anglois gentilhomme de la chambre du Roy et du Roy d'Angleterre, ayant charge de deux cents chevaux legers, homme bien estimé et son Lieutenant Care, lesquels moururent audit voyage...'

⁹⁵ Again according to Marin Sanuto the light horsemen were four hundred, under the command of four commanders: Monsignor de Girlingan, the brother of Gregorio Casale, the captain de la Grua, the captain Castiglia. See the complete list of Lautrec's army in Sanuto, *Diarii XLVI*, p. 428.

Holy City the cavalry had to be re-organized since many new men-at-arms were coming from the light cavalry, whose ranks had been in their turn filled up by former foot soldiers⁹⁷. Although the tactical importance of heavy cavalry undoubtedly declined, there were several reasons for this⁹⁸.

Monsieur de Fourquevaux recommended the creation of an official 'training course' destined to create not simply a tactical, but also a social élite of men-at-arms, and for this reason he needed to define precisely what were in practice the somewhat blurred frontiers between the various categories of the cavalry. He dreamed of making the French state responsible for the already existing, but informal, *cursus honorum* and training of the *gens d'armes*. In Italy a profound process of re-definition and specification of the contours of the social élites was already under way⁹⁹.

After all, simple extinction is a rare phenomenon indeed, while transformation, 'mongrelization' ('abastardamento', to quote Carlo Nuvoloni) either social or tactical, is not.

⁹⁶See Hall, *Weapons and Warfare*, pp. 190-200.

⁹⁷'...perché molti che erano cavalli leggeri son fatti homini d'arme, et de li fanti sono fatti cavalli leggieri..' Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua. Archivio di Stato di Mantova, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 460 r.

⁹⁸Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620*, pp. 135-6.

⁹⁹ On the Tuscan area: Ann Katherine Isaacs, 'Impero, Francia, Medici: orientamenti politici e gruppi sociali a Siena nel primo Cinquecento' in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell'Europa del '500* (Firenze, 1983)

3. The Living, the Dead, the Seafarers.

‘Capitano mio bello, ora che avete i piedi sull’acqua vi conviene sapere che il mondo si divide in tre distinte famiglie d’uomini, i vivi, i morti e i naviganti. Fin che dall’acqua non scendete non saprete più se vi toccherà d’esser vivo o se vi toccherà d’esser morto. Sarete soltanto un navigatore, come noi della ciurma. Oramai siete dentro la nostra sorte, dentro la ventura del mare. A quella soltanto appartenete.’

A grizzled sailor speaking to a young infantry captain embarked on his galley.
Excerpt from the novel *‘La battaglia di Lepanto’*, by Gianni Granzotto.

On 18 March 1527 Orazio Baglioni, just recently (1 January) freed by the pope from his cell in Castel Sant’Angelo and currently in command of part of the landing forces of a seaborne military expedition against the coastal cities of the Kingdom of Naples¹⁰⁰, wrote to Rome announcing an unexpected victory against the Imperial forces at Salerno. Composed of a Venetian naval squadron of twenty-two galleys, three thousand soldiers under the command of *monsieur* de Vaudémont and two thousand Italian foot, twelve hundred of whom were arquebusiers, under the authority of Orazio¹⁰¹, the League’s ‘task force’ had already taken many unprotected cities of the Neapolitan *riviera* like Torre del Greco and Sorrento, and had gone as far as Salerno in its attempt to bring that costly war back onto the lands of the Empire. However Ferdinando Sanseverino, prince of Salerno, went to Naples to organise a counter-attack to take back the city, whose fortress was still resisting, and came back with two thousand five hundred men recruited in his *stato* and accompanied by an élite unit of three hundred Spaniards, two hundred and fifty of them arquebusiers. On 17 March Orazio was still holding the city, but his forces were reduced to four galleys ‘*alla spiaggia*’ - that is moored to the beach - and six

¹⁰⁰ Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, book XVIII, chapt. III

¹⁰¹ Galeotto de’Medici to the Eight, 18 February 1527, ASF, Otto di Pratica, responsive, 41, f. 77 r. The soldiers were recruited mainly between Liguria, Tuscany and Lazio. The fleet left the harbour of Civitavecchia on the 19 February.

hundred foot, since the rest of the fleet was chasing some ships loaded with sugar and wheat, the two basic ingredients of biscuit. Baglioni's situation was difficult, since the Imperialists could easily use the 'rocca' (the fortress) as a support and there was no way to re-embark his troops; however, to assault the League's troops the men of Sanseverino had to descend a tract of land on the slopes of a steep hill, on which it was very difficult to maintain an *ordinanza*, that is a proper combat formation. Even worse, the hill's ridge was well inside the maximum range (approximately eleven hundred metres) of the *falconetti*¹⁰² that composed the counter-boarding stern artillery of three of the galleys¹⁰³.

When the Imperialists launched their three-pronged attack on the sectors of San Francesco, San Lorenzo and San Niccolò they were greeted by Venetian ordnance, which had to suspend its fire only briefly before the enemy encountered the concentrated fire of Orazio's arquebusiers. The fight was intense and uncertain everywhere but in the small trough of San Lorenzo, where the League's troops were gradually forced to fall back under the enemy's mounting pressure (possibly that of the Spanish arquebusiers). After having sent reinforcements twice in vain, Baglioni took an all-or-nothing gamble and counter-attacked there with more arquebusiers and all of his *lancie spezzate*, his own élite troops. The Imperialist front collapsed suddenly and the forces of the prince started a disorderly retreat. Afraid of not being able to 'proseguire la vittoria' given the initially high number of prisoners, Orazio turned to bad war and ordered them to be killed¹⁰⁴. The rout was complete: two hundred and fifty of the enemy were dead while many more had been wounded or taken prisoners, or had lost their equipment, not to

¹⁰² The Falconet could be considered as a man-killing gun (its caliber was around 7 cm.), with a relatively high rate of fire. The main asset of a galley remained, however, its bow artillery which included heavier calibres. For a more detailed description and for a general overview of early modern Mediterranean navies, see Olesa Muñido, *La organizacion naval*, pp. 280-318 and 318-324. Many Spanish galleys had at least two *falconetes* on their sterns (p. 314, vol. 1).

¹⁰³ To row astern until the galleys were moored on the beach with the bow artillery still oriented towards the sea - and a possible enemy attack - was the classic defense and 'wait' position in Mediterranean warfare.

mention the companies' flags, all of which had been abandoned. Several 'homini di conto' worth a good ransom had been captured, while the prince himself, along with the count of Sarno, barely avoided such a destiny by climbing the hill's slopes along with the other fugitives under Venetian fire. The Perugian *condottiere* admitted the loss of one soldier, while three others were wounded. Orazio was very grateful for the conduct of the three galley captains of the *Serenissima*, and in particular for the fifty or so *falconetto* shots fired from the ship of Peregrino Bragadin who he considered 'per terzo fratello', that is as a third brother together with Malatesta Baglioni¹⁰⁵.

The episode of Salerno, which was part of the League's campaign aimed at neutralising the Imperial forces in southern Italy, is a good example of the offensive amphibious strategy which was one of the peculiarities of the Italian Wars' last phase. The mission of the 'task force' - supported on the lands of the Church by the detachment of the Black Bands sent by Giovanni shortly before his death - was technically a success, and the troops of Naples's viceroy played only a marginal role in the 1526-27 campaign; the killing blow was, however, coming from the north with Bourbon's Landsknechts and Orazio Baglioni was quickly recalled to Rome. The strategic plan set out in the memorandum¹⁰⁶ that the captain general of the League Francesco della Rovere wrote to the king of France immediately after the Sack of the eternal city included the deployment of two fleets - one in the Adriatic, one in the Tyrrhenian sea - destined not simply to balance the enemy's sea power, but to land troops in his backlines. It is worth of note that no naval battle or blockade was mentioned by the duke.

¹⁰⁴ The commander of Salerno's fortress Ogeda was among the slaughtered prisoners together with other 'homini qualificati'.

¹⁰⁵ Orazio Baglioni to the Eight, ASF, Otto di pratica, Responsive, 46, f. 282 r. The names of the Venetian captains were Giovambattista Grimani, Giacomo Badoer and Peregrino Bragadin.

¹⁰⁶ Francesco Maria della Rovere to Francis I, 30 May 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125. f. 27 r. Also in Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chapt. IX, p. 1864. Guicciardini, however, does not mention the two fleets.

Given the attention paid in this study to fighting methods, units and tactics usually considered as ‘minor’, it should not be a surprise that in the case of sea warfare as well I shall be singling out those aspects of it that serve to distinguish it sharply from a Mahanian¹⁰⁷ conception¹⁰⁸ of the purpose of naval conflict. In this sort of warfare there was little space for direct confrontations between fleets, and it earned the *condottieri* of the sea the same reputation for irresolution as their colleagues who fought on land. In fact one of the main features of sixteenth-century Mediterranean warfare is its offensive character because, unlike the sailing ships, the galleys and other oared vessels with their reduced range and extreme logistical fragility ‘monopolised only offensive violence’¹⁰⁹. There were, however, different offensive criteria: an efficient and complete blockade - as the section on the siege of Naples will show - was impossible to enforce with a squadron of galleys, and a direct confrontation with another fleet was not, therefore, considered either unavoidable or worthwhile. The operations in the Neapolitan and Salernitan gulfs against small and lightly fortified cities and harbours were by contrast thought to be perfectly standard undertakings.

The battle of Capo d’Orso (28 April 1528) was the only major naval engagement of the war and was intentionally provoked by the side that was at that moment the losing one – the Imperial army besieged in Naples – for internal political reasons (see Chapter V and Appendix 2) rather than out of desperation at the imminent union of the Genoese and Venetian fleets. The subsequent loss of almost all of their galleys at the hands of

¹⁰⁷ Mahan’s doctrine had its highest point in a strategy of annihilation of the enemy war fleet as opposed to raiding but - conceived in the shadow of the British oceanic supremacy in the nineteenth century - was far better suited to the tactical and strategical options offered by sailing ships, than to those afforded by the galleys of sixteenth century Mediterranean warfare. See Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon history, 1660-1783* (Boston, 1890); Margaret Sprout, ‘Mahan, Evangelist of Sea Power’. in *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, 1943).

¹⁰⁸ For my considerations on sea warfare I am greatly indebted to the works of John F. Guilmartin, especially ‘The Military Revolution: Origins and First Tests Abroad’ in *The Military Revolution Debate*, pp. 229-333 and, obviously *Gunpowder and Galleys; Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1974).

¹⁰⁹ Quotation from Guilmartin. *Gunpowder*, p. 3.

Filippino Doria was a real blow for the Imperialists, but in fact it changed almost nothing - from a strictly tactical and logistical point of view - in the general state of the siege. On the eleven June 1528 the Venetian galleys arrived *in ordinanza* in front of Naples; the Genoese fleet went to meet them and after having politely hailed each other with a salvo of artillery, the two formations veered towards Naples and opened fire - this time in earnest. The harbour's ordnance responded in kind to the challenge, accompanied by the cannons of the land fortifications. From the League's camp in Poggioreale Lautrec ordered his artillery to open fire thrice, followed by a double round of all the arquebuses 'che pareva qua che 'l mondo andasse in romore'¹¹⁰. However impressive, that was all that it amounted to: a demonstrative action, and not the prelude to a massive attack from the sea against the city's heavily fortified port. In fact, among other things the campaign of 1528 witnessed the victory of harbours over fleets.

In Mediterranean sea warfare an expedition could be considered successful if, as in the case of Salerno, the squadron was able to capture an enemy land base, generally by outgunning it; however, Naples was not only one of the biggest European cities, it also had one of the most important and well-equipped harbours of the western Mediterranean which projected a tactical and logistical 'shadow' beyond the reach of its formidable artillery¹¹¹. Its beautiful roadstead could become a dangerous trap for any hostile force, forced to fight a losing battle of attrition far from its bases, waiting for the land forces to break a stalemate that forced the galleys to do for the army essentially the same job that the fortified harbour was doing for the besieged forces, but over a wider area and without appropriate logistical provisions. Even worse, during the siege the nearby island of Ischia (almost an integral part of Naples' defence system) was held by the Imperial

¹¹⁰ Sanuto, *Diarii* XVIII, p 116. From a letter of the ambassador of the duke of Milan Gerardo da ca' di Mosto, 11 June 1528.

¹¹¹ On the tactical relationship between fleets and harbours in Mediterranean warfare see Guillmartin, *Gunpowder*, chap. 2.

forces, along with its port and resources. When eventually the winds of the Italian summer started to blow - and among them the *Scirocco* from the south - the galleys could not hope to intercept the smaller *fregate* and *brigantini* that entered the harbour full of supplies¹¹².

The Mediterranean area of operations, with its rather rigid strategical subdivision matured through the centuries, highlights the European dimension of this phase of the so-called 'Italian' Wars. On paper, the League's naval forces were superior to the Imperial (or rather Spanish) ones, since the young Charles of Habsburg was fighting against the allied navies of Venice, Genoa and France, a coalition that did not lack resources, experience, arsenals and very good harbour facilities but, despite the League's tactical superiority and important successes, its overall strategy proved to be a failure, and not simply because of the adverse *fortuna del mare* or the lack of coordination - even though both factors played an important role, as always.

Usually, sixteenth-century Mediterranean sea warfare is analysed from a point of view conditioned by the dualism of the struggle between the Christian powers and the Barbaresque-Ottoman alliance for the control of the western part of the sea; the analysis of the internal dynamics of the naval conflict between the League of Cognac and the Empire requires just a re-adjustment - or rather a restriction - of the interested area. At a reduced scale, the rules and the priorities were almost the same; after all the seafarers prayed to different gods but ate the same biscuit¹¹³. The infidels - with the exception of those Barbaresque pirates unlucky enough to cross the route of the various Christian fleets - remained at the margins of this conflict. The title of this section ('The Living, the Dead, the Seafarers') is not intended simply to underline the importance of the

¹¹² *Brigantini* and *fregate* were - along with *fuste* and *feluche* - basically smaller versions of the galley, but were better at sailing. The maximum speed of a war galley was approximately six-seven knots, but such a rhythm under oars could not be maintained for long (twenty minutes, more or less). With strong winds from the right direction even roundships were difficult to intercept.

geographical factors, but also their unifying effect and the great role of manpower in a system dominated by oared vessels.

The Mediterranean coasts, and especially the Italian ones, were studded with ports, but there were only a few harbours that could equip a fleet and sustain the prolonged effort of a major expedition; the ones capable of giving hospitality to a significant number of galleys were only a little more numerous (see Map A). Venice, with its shipyards, its *impero da Mar*¹¹⁴ and its fleets was a prominent member of the League. The Adriatic sea was not the scene of any great naval initiative - even though the *Serenissima* used its ships to regain the Apulian possessions lost during the preceding conflicts¹¹⁵, operating from the island-fortress of Corfù. The Venetian galleys, while operating in the northern Tyrrhenian sea often in very difficult conditions, had to use other facilities like those of Genoa, but also the smaller landing places like Pisa or, more frequently, Leghorn¹¹⁶ on the Tuscan shores.

Genoa, erstwhile rival of Venice and in this phase controlled by France, was the other League's sea stronghold, supported by nearby Marseilles. The Genoese galleys of Andrea Doria and other *condottieri* of the sea operated under French contract, and contractual divergences gave to Doria the opportunity to justify his shift of allegiances in 1528.

To these naval powerhouses the Empire opposed Naples on the Italian mainland, Messina in Sicily and Barcelona in Catalonia, with their respective galley squadrons, while the Balearic Islands and Sardinia were also Spanish possessions. Whether owing

¹¹³For the Florentine version of the *biscotto*'s recipe, see ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 5 r.

¹¹⁴On the structure and defense of the Venetian '*Impero da Mar*', see Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, pp. 429-460.

¹¹⁵Vitale, 'L'impresa di Puglia degli anni 1528-1529'.

¹¹⁶Even though it had supplanted Porto Pisano, in this period Livorno was not yet the important harbour – and stronghold of the Knights of Santo Stefano – that it was destined to become under duke Cosimo I de' Medici and his descendants in the second half of the century. For a good general outline, see Cesare Ciano, *I primi Medici e il mare* (Pisa, 1980). On the Knights, although outdated, there is the volume of

to a lack of resources, to indecisiveness or to a deliberate choice, the strategy of the Habsburg forces was characterised by a somewhat 'passive' attitude - especially when compared with the League navies' frantic activities. To set against the superior numbers and the intensity of the efforts of their enemies, the Spanish had the superior land and coastal extension of their Mediterranean possessions, which could sound like a nonsense in modern and contemporary naval warfare but not in sixteenth-century terms. The League's forces had to waste their energies and scatter their units in order to capture places that in practice the Empire could not effectively defend; a very expensive course of action in a world of oared vessels with a very reduced operational range. Moreover, the three points on which Spanish naval strategy was articulated - especially the two Italian ones - were fully self-sufficient, so that when in April 1528 (during the siege of Naples) a plan was proposed to attack the enemy fleet in Catalonia, Florence saw no 'proficito' in it and considered the idea a dangerous diversion¹¹⁷.

The Florentine republic, in this period, had no war galleys of his own and its efforts were almost exclusively dedicated to the land forces. Pisa had been brought back - this time permanently - under the authority of the *Marzocco* after a painfully long war¹¹⁸, but one of the victims of the decades of military, social and political conflicts that caused the decline in the standing of the Florentine state among the Italian powers had been its naval facilities. However, the heyday of the Florentine galleys¹¹⁹ - the 1420-1480 period - was long gone due to the general Italian financial crisis (or rather

Gino Guarnieri, *I Cavalieri di Santo Stefano* (Pisa, 1960), and the more recent book of Cesare Ciano, *Santo Stefano per mare e per terra* (Pisa, 1985).

¹¹⁷The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 16 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 44, f. 54 v.

¹¹⁸ On the siege of Pisa and its consequences on Florentine politics, see Bayley, *War and Society*; Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, pp. 433-443. For a Pisan 'internal' and interesting point of view, see Michele Luzzati, *Una guerra di popolo* (Pisa, 1984)

¹¹⁹ On the history and the various details of the Florentine galley system, see Michael Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys in the Fifteenth Century* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 40-61.

adjustment) of the seventies and to new mercantile circumstances¹²⁰. The republic could not, however, avoid being involved in (and paying for) the League's maritime operations.

During the first days of November 1527 a Venetian fleet - sixteen galleys, eight of which were larger *bastarde*¹²¹ - entered the harbour of Leghorn¹²², chosen as point of rendezvous for the League's forces destined to attack Sicily, flanking Lautrec's descent towards Naples and putting the Spanish forces of the whole *Regno* ('the Kingdom', as the realm of Naples was called) under pressure. In fact, it would have been the only way to really reduce the flow of supplies during the siege. Already in October, eight captains sent by Renzo da Ceri - the unlucky defender of Rome in French service - and authorised reluctantly by Florence had begun to recruit in the Tuscan hinterland three thousand foot to be embarked at Leghorn, while as many were to come with the French-Genoese fleet under the command of Andrea Doria.

The Venetian galleys - and the one hundred and fifty thousand *biscotti* that had to be prepared for their crews - were a considerable additional burden for Florence, already afflicted by a serious grain shortage¹²³. Their presence would have been more profitable, argued the Ten, in the Sienese harbour of Talamone or in the papal one of Civitavecchia, where the Venetians could have lived at the expense of enemy or neutral

¹²⁰ Mallett, *The Florentine Galleys*, pp. 144-152. This historical moment coincided with a crisis of the Medicean party in Florence and the finding of important alum deposits (a vital colouring agent for the Florentine *panni*) near the subject city of Volterra, an event that triggered a chain of events that culminated in the violent sack of the city (1472), quite a significant military event in that period. On this topic see Enrico Fiumi, *L'impresa di Lorenzo de' Medici contro Volterra, 1472* (Florence, 1948).

¹²¹ The *galera bastarda* was bigger than the *galera sottile*; usually the *galera capitana*, the leading ship, was a *bastarda*. The 'mongrel galley' had a length/width ratio of 7 to 1, while a standard 'thin galley' was 8 to 1. The conservative Andrea Doria did not appreciate such a model of galley, saying that 'cosa nata bastarda non fu mai bona'; in fact the *bastarde* were slower and required even more resources than the 'standard' models. For a thorough analysis of the various galley's sub-classes: Olesa Muñido, *La organizacion naval...* vol. 1.

¹²² The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 2 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 148 v. The operation is shortly outlined by Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XV.

powers. The situation was destined to worsen thanks to the arrival of the twenty galleys of Andrea Doria and to bad weather. Although for the land armies a rigid distinction between an appropriate or inappropriate campaigning season was a thing of the past, the *ventura del mare* and the winds refused to bend to mere tactical considerations: the end (March) and not the beginning of winter was the best moment to move a fleet of thirty-six galleys. For weeks contrary winds and heavy rains delayed the departure of the expedition, that finally left Leghorn on 13 December 1527. Several times the squadron had already tried to overcome the hostile weather by heading to Civitavecchia, but eventually, menaced by the wear and tear of the ships, the shortage of victuals and the scattering of the fleet, Andrea Doria had to follow the *fortuna del mare* and the winds to Corsica, then to Sardinia¹²⁴. However, four Venetian galleys were forced to return to Leghorn in very bad shape¹²⁵.

The 'impresa di Sardegna' was only technically a success: the Spanish troops and garrisons were defeated or forced to surrender, but any hope of using the island and its resources as a launching pad for the attack against Palermo - where the pro-French party, according to the Sicilian exiles, was preparing an uprising - were quickly disappointed. As in any unsuccessful amphibious operation the commander of the ground troops and the fleet admiral, Renzo da Ceri and Andrea Doria, started to blame each other, aggravating the difficult tactical and logistical situation and the already existing tensions between the French and Doria and his partisans in Genoa.

¹²³To have a complete picture of the logistical background of these events, it would be interesting to analyse thoroughly the letters from and to Luigi Alamanni, named *Commissario* ad hoc in Livorno during this period.

¹²⁴ Salvago, *Istoria di Genova*, f. 28: '...et como se fosse nel principio de lo inverno, regnorno tempi crudelissimi di piogie, venti, et *fortune de mari*, di modo che la fu sforzata stare molti et molti giorni ne li mari de la Toschana, non habbiando mai potuto pasare Monte Argentaro... et essendo como disperati et incominciando a manchare le vitoaglie, uno giorno la uscì fuori per andare dove lo vento la conducese,'.

¹²⁵The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 16 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 14 r.

On 26 January eight other Venetian galleys - on which there was also the *provveditore* Pietro Lando - were driven back to Leghorn by disease, lack of biscuit and need of refitting¹²⁶, abandoning the League's squadron. Apparently, the Venetian forces - already the more vulnerable part of the fleet given the distance from Corfu at which they were operating - were quite low on Doria's list of priorities. Despite the fact that bread was being sold in the city at more than five *lire* per bushel, Florence ordered two months supply of biscuit to be prepared to sustain the men and replenish the galleys' reserves, but the death (for illness) of some of the captains and the long delay in the arrival of the money from Venice transformed the *Serenissima's* sailors from simply unwelcome guests¹²⁷ to dangerous ones, shielded from Florentine reprisals only by the *capitoli* of the League¹²⁸.

On 8 February 1528 the Ten wrote to their *commissario* with the Black Bands Lorenzo Martelli that the rest of the League's fleet (twenty-four galleys) had entered the harbour of Livorno. Renzo da Ceri, badly ill, remained in Pisa; *monsieur* de Langes, the French commander, went to Florence, while Andrea Doria, with sixteen ships, headed for Genoa after a few days¹²⁹.

The 'impresa di Sicilia' had been a failure.

¹²⁶The Ten to Alessandro de'Pazzi, 28 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 112 v.: '... per non avere più cosa alcuna da vivere, et per essere state assai da sinistri tempi travagliate, sono molto male conditionate, perché gran parte degli huomini si sono infermati, et alcuni de' capi morti...?'

¹²⁷ On their route to Livorno, the eight galleys boarded and took a sailship loaded with wheat already bought by Florence. Ibid, f. 121 r/v.

¹²⁸ibid. '... usando cotali modi disonesti, et non havere rispetto alcuno, se non fosse stato per rispetto del Christianissimo (Francis I) si sarebbe mostro l'errore loro...?'

¹²⁹ibid, f. 145 r.

TABLE II
Ideal armies: Machiavelli and his disciples.

Machiavelli's Arte della Guerra		
	Battaglione	Ali
Pikes ' <i>ordinarie</i> '	1000	0
Pikes ' <i>estraordinarie</i> '	0	1000
Shield Bearers	3000	0
Velites ' <i>ordinari</i> '	500	0
Velites ' <i>estraordinari</i> '	0	500
Cavalry: three hundred horsemen per battaglione. Half men-at-arms, half mounted crossbowmen and arquebusiers.		

Diego de Salazar's Tratado de re militari		
	Square	Rearguard
Pikes ' <i>ordinarias</i> '	2000	0
Pikes ' <i>estraordinarias</i> '	0	1000
<i>Rodeleros</i>	2000	0
Arquebusiers	1000	0
Cavalry: one hundred horsemen for every one thousand footsoldiers, that is 600 per squadron. Half men-at-arms, half mounted crossbowmen and arquebusiers.		

Instructions of monsieur de Fourquevaux		
	Square	Skirmishers
Pikes ' <i>ordinarie</i> '	4020	0
Pikes ' <i>estraordinarie</i> '	0	170
Halberdiers	600	0
Arquebusiers	420	680
Cavalry: two companies of 100 men-at-arms, 100 light horsemen, 50 stradiots and 50 mounted arquebusiers each.		

Table III

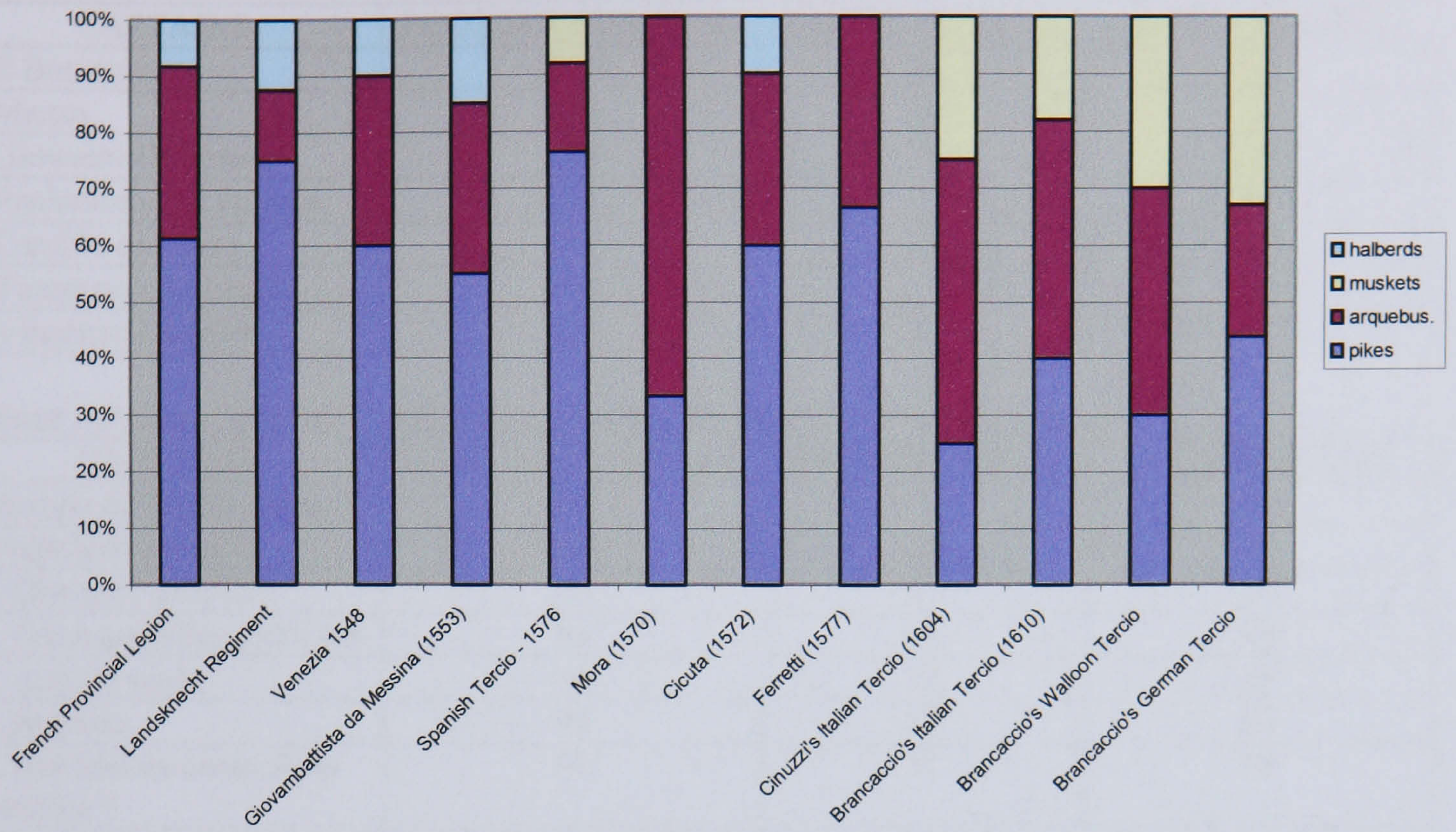


Table IV
The Black Bands. November 1527
(Thirteen Companies)

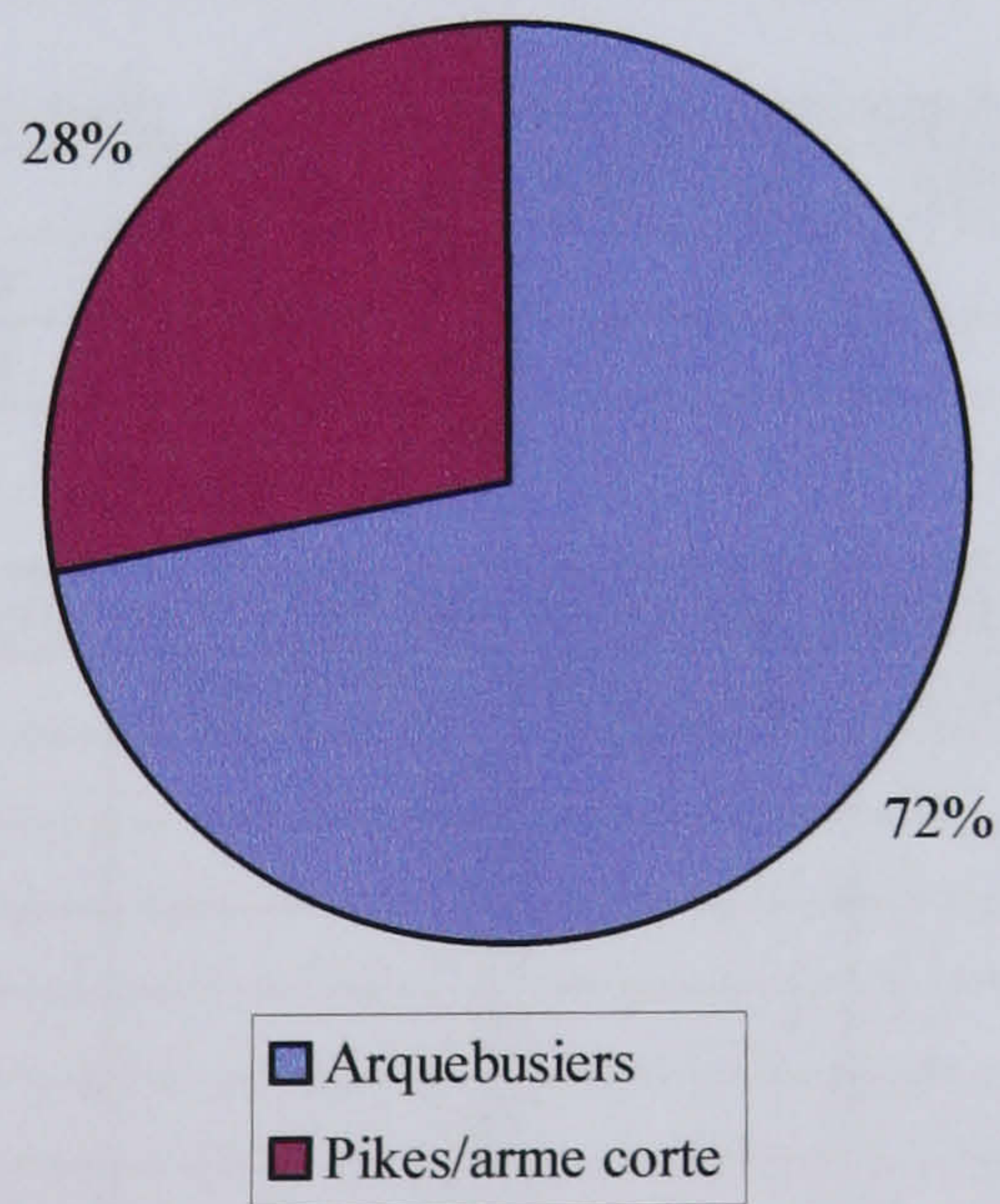


TABLE V

Federico Caraffa, *colonnello* with 1086 foot under the command of seven captains

CAPTAINS	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
1. Il Bastardo	163	99	25
2. Mazza	162	98	37
3. Giovanni Calabrese	124	73	10
4. Paolantonio da Ferrara	164	67	28
5. Camillo di Lauro	133	75	15
6. Tommaso da Leccio	205	129	29
7. Vincenzo Castaldo	135	66	9

Simone Romano, *colonnello* with 968 foot under the command of seven captains

CAPTAINS	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
8. Jacopo da Bozzo, corso *	237	127	35
9. Napoletto corso *	232	129	34
10. Giovanni siciliano	117	47	27
11. Giovannandrea siciliano	96	35	19
12. Angelo sardo	94	32	18
13. Moretto	95	55	20
14. Bernardino corso dalla Bastelica *	97	31	16

Principe di Melfi, *colonnello* with 1192 foot under the command of seven captains

CAPTAINS	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
15. Hectorre d'Assia	254	159	35
16. Carlo Seripana	202	157	19
17. Quaranta	150	78	12
18. Federigo Morone	129	73	19
19. Camillo de Mons	136	85	15
20. Luigi Bonaventura	161	88	18
21. Aosto da Ghaeta	160	85	0

Camillo Orsini, *colonnello* with 549 foot under the command of three captains

CAPTAINS	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
22. Girolamo da Cremona	221	125	20
23. Marco Tullio d'Ascoli	173	107	8
24. Giandomenico da Piacenza	155	65	3

Galeazzo Farnese *colonnello* with 1267 foot under the command of seven captains

CAPTAINS	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
25. Alfonso Farnese	292	158	39
26. Marsilia	130	84	14
27. Menicoccio	139	78	33
28. Luigi Albanese	150	73	32
29. Vincenzo da Spoleto	161	77	36
30. Bernardino Corso *	247	123	72
31. Cherubino da Spoleto	148	71	27

Giancorrado Orsini *colonnello* with 1000 foot under the command of four captains

CAPTAINS	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
32. Rinaldo	400	151	124
33. Squarta	200	157	37
34. Bernardino da Crema	200	119	32
35. Raffaello da Ravenna	200	97	23

by himself:

CAPTAIN	FOOT SOLDIERS (tot)	ARQUEBUSIERS	SCOPPIETTIERI
36. Robertino Francese	96	16	25

* Corsican

TABLE VI
Renzo da Ceri's Troops. Barletta, December 1528.
(each number corresponds to a company listed in Table V)

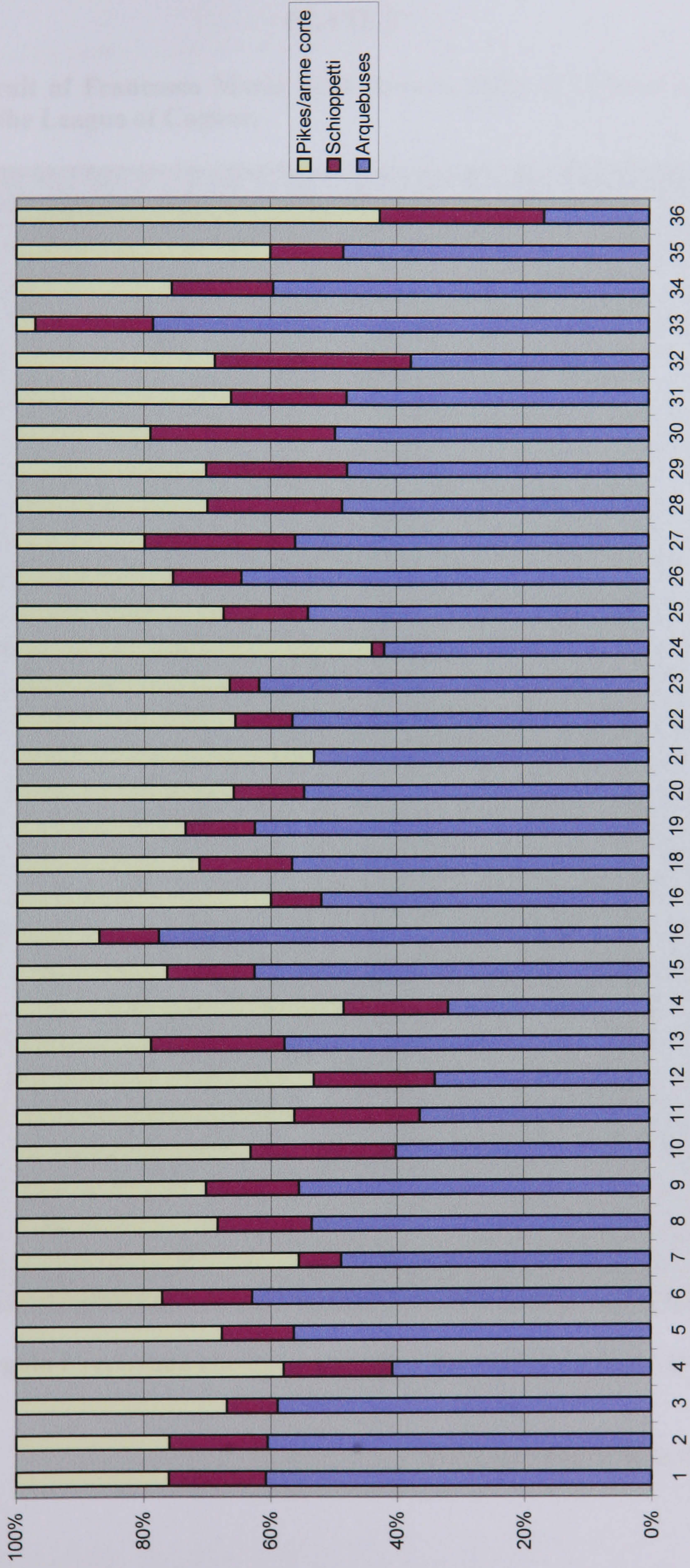


PLATE 2

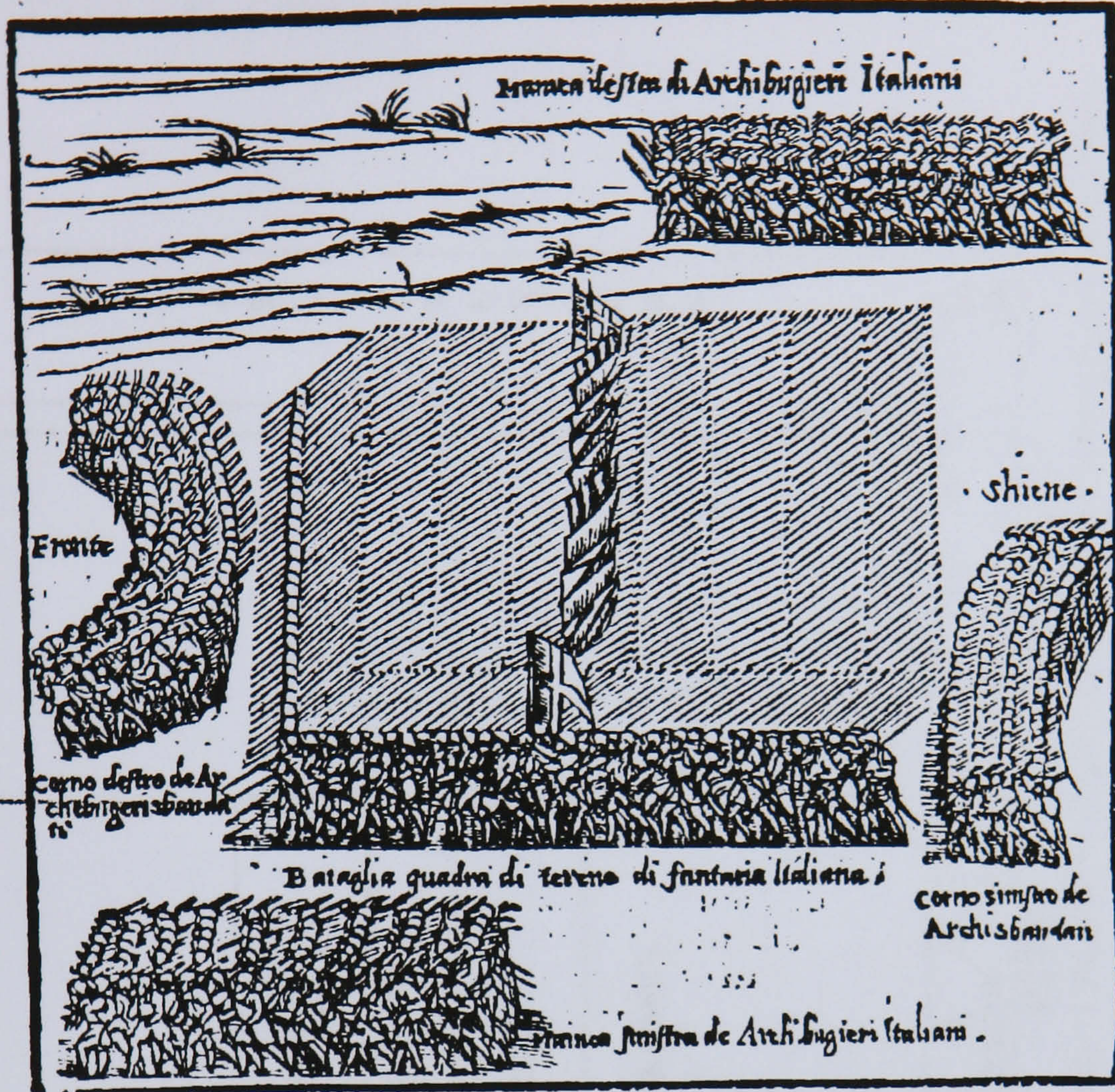
Titian. Portrait of Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino and Capitano Generale of the League of Cognac.



'Et questa regola è verissima che buona regola è non servare sempre la stessa regola.'

Francesco Maria della Rovere

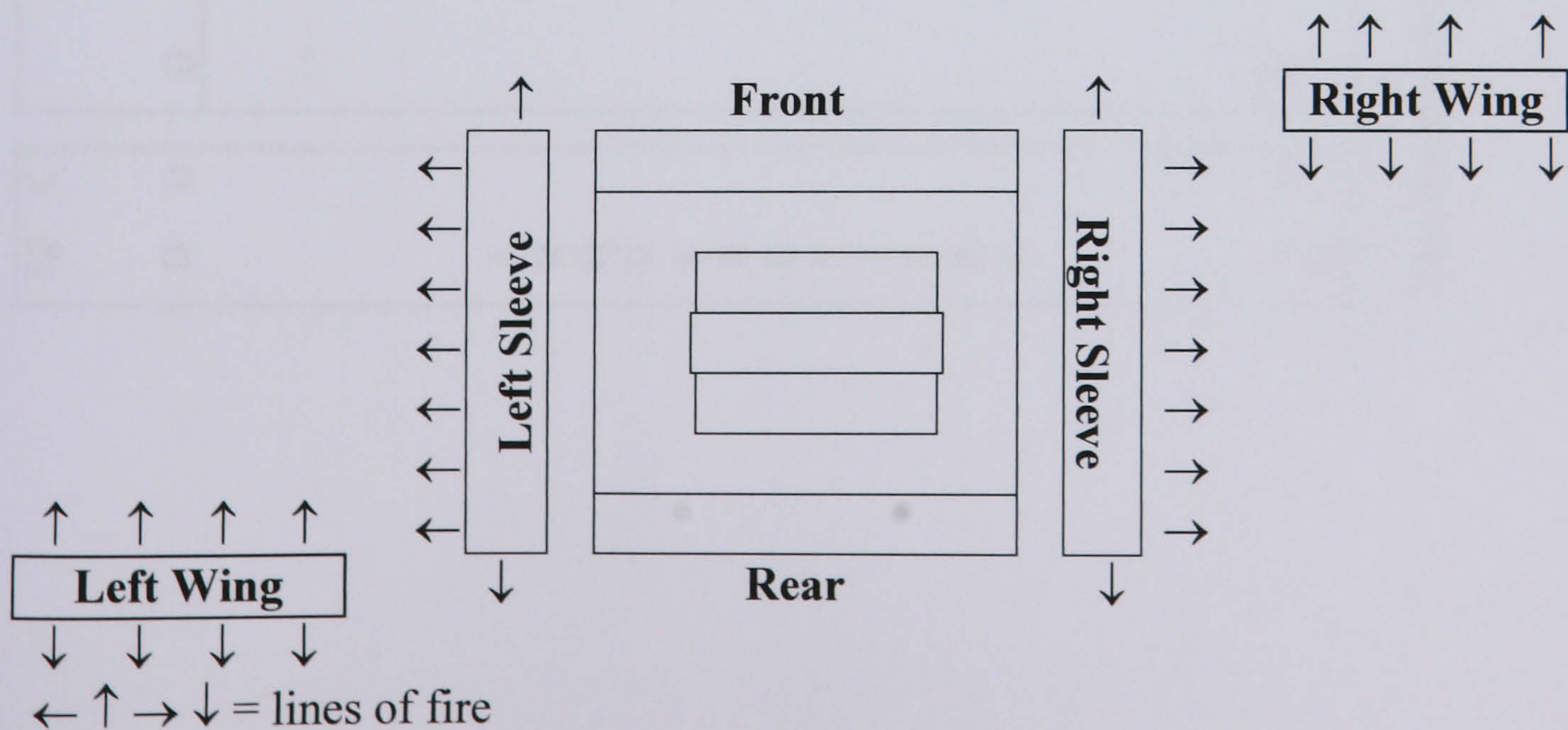
PLATE 3:
'Battaglia quadra de terreno'



Francesco Ferretti, *Della Osservanza militare* (Venice, 1577) p. 101

The battle array here suggested by captain Ferretti is the same as that of Giovambattista da Messina (Sheets ? and ?): in both cases the formation of pikemen is a 'battaglia quadra di terreno', that is a geometrically perfect square, and the position of the sleeves ('maniche') and wings of arquebusiers is the same. The differences are due mainly to Ferretti's 'graphic' requirements and to the incompleteness of Giovambattista's work, that was more a handbook for sergeants than a military treatise. The arquebus required less space than the pike, so the arquebusiers, when *in ordinanza*, were arrayed closer to each other, and their 'maniche' were shorter than the square's side. It ought to be noticed that, unlike Ferretti's, the *archibugieri sbandati* of da Messina's wings were supported by halberdiers and unarmoured pikemen (15-30% of the total), as in Fourquevaux's *Instructions*.

TABLE VII
Giovambattista da Messina's Battle Array



Map A

The central Mediterranean from the military point of view



This is a detail of a map from Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys*, p. 65.

The hexagons represent major military port cities

The other minor harbours (included those added by me) are represented by squares

The 'shaded' coastal lines are the major recruiting areas for seamen and oarsmen.

Chapter III

'In Dispecto Tuo Christo': Florence's Mercenaries

1. The 'Reformation' of a Fighting Force: the 'Seditious' Black Bands.

'Noi vogliamo pure chiamare questa una militia. Io dico che l'è una confusione... ma io so che fino in inferno è ordine et iustitia.'

Commissario Lorenzo Martelli on the Black Bands.

The pessimistic forecasts made by the Duke of Urbino after the sack of Rome and even more after the surrender of the pope¹ proved to be accurate: by the end of June 1527 the League's army had been forced to withdraw to the northern part of the State of the Church, near its borders with both the Florentine and Sienese dominions, between Città della Pieve and lake Trasimeno, at the mouth of the Val di Chiana. One after another, the cities and seignories of the papal state offered their support or at least their neutrality to the mutinous and dreaded Habsburg army, while at the same time almost everywhere in the Marche and Umbria the pro-Imperial Colonna and their partisans were getting the upper hand in their long feud against the pro-French Orsini. The Imperial 'tide' was about to reach the Florentine state and the duchy of Urbino, while the League's army was getting weaker by the day through desertion, and could barely sustain even a purely defensive campaign. The seignory of the Baglioni in Perugia became the first line of defence of the League, and above all of Florence, whose money and troops - thanks to

¹ The Ten promptly used the argument of the pope's 'cowardice' to discredit him in front of the other members of the League. 'El papa pensando alla salute sua et mancho curando del stato ecclesiastico ha facto quanto già hai possuto sapere. Il che a noi non occorre più replicare essendo errore inremediabile, havendo più stimato di campare la vita che di conservare alla sede apostolica et la forteza di Hostia et di Civitavecchia et di Roma quel castello, che tutto è di già venuto in mano delli inimici.' The Ten to Roberto Acciaiuoli, 7 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 19 r.

the choice of Orazio Baglioni as *Capitano Generale* of the Florentine infantry² - were now directly deployed in support of the partisans of Orazio and Malatesta, the sons of Giovanpaolo, in their struggle against Gentile Baglioni, now deprived of papal assistance.

During a period of almost nine months - from June 1527 to February 1528 - in which the army of the League was stationed in Umbria, Florence fought first to prevent the disbanding, then to take control of the troops on its payroll. It was not an easy task; although the *condotta* of the Black Bands had been one of the few welcome legacies of the Medicean regime, in a short time it revealed its true nature: a precious, irreplaceable but 'poisoned' gift.

The thirteen captains of the Bands had devils painted on the silk of their flags, which were now black, and many of them had their armour decorated with four more devilish figures and the motto: 'In dispecto tuo Christo', (that is 'In spite of you, Christ')³. Since the death of their leader and founder, the 'diavoli del signor Joannin'⁴, the orphans of the Great Devil, had resisted any attempt to disband them or give them another commander. They had formed a 'unione' guided by the council of the captains (officers who in the *condotta* usually appeared as nameless sub-contractors of their *colonnello*), prolonging a situation that was regarded by the Florentine republic as dangerous, albeit orderly, 'seditione'.

²After the surrender of the pope in Castel Sant'Angelo, Orazio Baglioni was allowed to return to his estates in Perugia. His *condotta* as *Capitano Generale* of the Florentine foot was signed 27 June 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, ff. 3 r. - 4 r. At the time his brother Malatesta, who also re-entered Perugia with the help of the Duke of Urbino, was commander of the Venetian infantry in northern Italy.

³Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 343 v.: '... (Federigo da Bozzolo) sendo stato offeso un dì un suo dalle bande nostre mi disse: "Commissario, non crediate però per ben che queste bande nere habbino e' diavoli dipinti nelle bandiere et che da uno in su di quelli capitani habbino quattro diavoli addosso dipinti et un breve che dice 'In dispecto tuo Christo'. che mangino e' bracciali...'"

⁴So they were called by Paolo Giovio in his famous description of the defence of Frosinone. All those 'little devils' on the flags of their pursuers probably made the Landsknechts dub Giovanni de' Medici the 'Great Devil'.

The formal appearance of a *condotta* - if not its reality - has much to do with the way in which Italian states conceived of themselves and of the services they required: it was a personal contract which established a chain of command and was centred on the condottiere and on the *aim* which was to be attained. By contrast, written agreements like the German *Bestallung*⁵ and the Spanish *asiento* - the latter in the case of naval forces - were far more concerned with the *means* and the organizational structures offered and administered by the contractor. The Florentine Republic was ready to sign a *condotta* and to deal with princes like the marquis of Mantua in their capacity as military enterprisers or with single captains, but the consequences of the tactical innovations introduced by the Italian Wars did not stop at the borders of the battlefields. The creation and control of large bodies of infantry like the Black Bands required a radically different conceptual approach even on paper.

Between the powers legally granted to a commander and the reality of an army's everyday life, there had always been intermediate, and frequently unofficial, levels of authority and autonomy, levels that at this juncture were highlighted by the sheer numbers and growing tactical importance of the infantrymen. These did not constitute an amorphous mass: the social and professional groups from which each one of them came had their own practices, customs and even their own legal systems⁶; the world of soldiers was not, therefore, radically different from civil society. The 'master arquebusiers' of the units of German shooters, for instance, dressed in their distinguishing colour (black, indicating the 'black art' of the black powder) and had

⁵On the *Bestallung*, see Redlich, *The German Military*, pp. 31-53 and Baumann, *I lanzichenecchi*, pp. 49-55. On the *asiento*: Olesa Muñido, *La organizacion naval*. These kinds of contracts specified, for instance, the number and the quality of the soldiers, recruiting procedures, wages, nourishment, weaponry, supplies...

⁶For instance, the artisan and merchant guilds had their own 'consoli' who judged the disputes between guild members or guild members and workers following customary informal procedures. On the relationship between informal and formal justice: Ann Katherine Isaacs, *Giustizia mercantile e giustizia dotta dal Medioevo all'età moderna*, forthcoming.

their own system of exams, privileges and secrets like any other artisan guild. During that long, bloody and cruel carnival that was the sack of Rome the world was literally turned upside down, but was not altered⁷.

The Italian footsoldier's cultural impact - on customs and arts, for instance - or bargaining power appears to have been significantly less than that of his Swiss and Landsknecht colleagues, but the prominence of the *oltramontani* pikemen did not come only from their being, for the moment, tactically irreplaceable. Their complex and variegated world had its roots in the greater importance of customary law in Germany, and its vitality was highlighted by the involvement of the Landsknechts' 'order', often on both sides of the barricade but always as self-conscious element, in all the major social and religious events that took place in Germany, such as the Peasants' War and the Reformation⁸. The pikemen knew their own value and although Machiavelli - an admirer of their highly disciplined battle array - would hardly recognize it, the element of the 'sedition', that is of the constant confrontation between the interests of the *ring* and those of the commanders, was implicit in their model. Brandishing arquebuses instead of pikes as its main weapon, the most famous and reputed unit of Italian infantry of the time shared some of these characteristics.

With the dismissal of men like Francesco Guicciardini, too compromised with the past regime, the Florentine republic secured its position, but lost their vast experience in dealing with the 'homini militari et grandi'⁹, their familiarity with the aristocratic and military mentality which had been acquired by frequenting camps and courts. The Ten

⁷On this topic see Lenzi, *Il sacco di roma*.

⁸Baumann, *I lanzichenecchi*, pp. 237-248. In Italy the religious temper was definitely different, and above all the rural communities had long since lost their autonomy to the benefit of the cities.

⁹The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 13 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, f. 95 v.

were astonished by the endurance of the ‘exercito del diavolo’¹⁰, that is the Imperial army, over the years: what stopped it disbanding as the League’s ‘bestiale exercito’¹¹ kept on doing? In fact, Florence had the explanation and one of the best examples of how this was possible under its very nose, and on its payrolls, but regarded it as dangerous and unacceptable.

During his residence in the League’s camp from June to September 1527 the Bands were and remained basically a mystery to the Florentine *commissario generale* Raffaele Girolami who, without the physical presence of *capitano generale* Orazio Baglioni, could do little to verify the truthfulness of the numbers given to his paymasters during the musters. Afraid of losing them all, the Republic kept on paying all the soldiers and captains who claimed their wages and not just the ones it wanted to pay. Although the Bands were directly employed by Florence¹², the plans to reduce them to a less prestigious but more reliable militia guided by captains who recognised their status of *lancie spezzate* remained on paper¹³. Giovanni’s lance was not yet broken.

Girolami was an influential figure of the new régime¹⁴, and was used to a great degree of autonomy. While in the camp, he did not write frequently to the Ten and took

¹⁰The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 14 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 69 v.: ‘... loro sanno vivere con l’acqua et come habbiamo veduto senza pane... sanno aspettare 25 paghe con la speranza di rubare... et li franzesi non stanno senza pane et senza vino...’. The Ten repeated the same observation to Giuliano Soderini, bishop of Saintes, 30 August, *ibid.*, f. 79 r. ‘Loro hanno una militia che comporta stare senza danari con la speranza della preda fino a 25 paghe... li nostri non vogliono stare 25 giorni della pagha... quelli stanno senza pane e vivono. Li nostri disfano li paesi...’.

¹¹The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, 8 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 92 v. ‘alcuni animali per le battiture spesso come inviliti si rimettono, alcuni sono che commossi a sdegno per le battiture più si resentano et fannosi animosi et perché non sappiamo quale de’duoi effecti sia per accadere a questo bestiale exercito suto o percosso o vogliamo dire irritato ci pare tanto più sia da stare con li occhi aperti et guardarsi da tutti li disordini’

¹²At the end of June 1527 the ‘Capitani delle bande nere’ as a whole were ‘condotti’ by the Ten. During the following year the money from Florence was sent directly to the *commissario* without any further mention of the Bands, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 4 v.

¹³The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, 8 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 20 v. ‘Et perciò intractieni quelli e’quali ti paiono di miglior conditione... con animo di volere più tosto una militia obediante et mancho seditiosa che tanta bravura della quale alla fine si fa poco capitale.’

¹⁴Raffaele Girolami became one of the Ten and, eventually, the last gonfalonier of Justice of the Florentine Republic during the siege in 1530. Although a member of the moderate faction and a personal friend of the Imperial commander Ferrante Gonzaga, Girolami was first imprisoned and subsequently beheaded.

some personal initiatives that afterwards became sources of embarrassment both to the Ten and to his successor Lorenzo Martelli¹⁵ who, with his *responsive*, kept a real journal of his activities and of his perspicacious - and often witty - considerations on the nature of the soldiers and on the duties of his office. Indeed, to read his letters is to follow him step by step during his 'discovery' of the Black Bands, and thus to acquire a far richer and more realistic picture of their activities than that provided by the terms of their *condotta*.

Martelli arrived in the camp without 'a big piece of his tongue'¹⁶ - that is without money and *riputazione* among men who wanted to hear more than words¹⁷ - but determined to free the city from the Black Bands' dangerous sedition. The captains (see Table IX) were 'huomini indiavolati' who thought only of money to the detriment of their own men¹⁸; and the only way to break their 'union' was to replace some of them with commanders loyal to Florence. The captains of the Black Bands are listed on the Sheet in order of importance, because a captain's *riputazione* was proportionate to the number of the footsoldiers under his command. Since a newly-formed company of Italian infantry was usually 100 to 150 men strong, the high level of prestige reached over the years by Giovanni's group is quite obvious. The *commissario* planned to offer Tommaso Còrso, Amico da Venafro, Giovanantonio da Castello, Giannetto Albanese,

¹⁵Lorenzo di Niccolò di Ugolino Martelli was enrolled in the Arte della lana in 1485. He was captain of Pistoia in 1507, of Montepulciano in 1511, of Cortona in 1513. During the siege, he became one of the Ten and one of the three commissarii in charge of overseeing the defence. Banished to the Mugello after the fall of the Republic, Martelli died in Montespertoli di Val d'Elsa while Alessandro was duke of Florence. His son Niccolò was one of the young Florentines involved in the Orti Oricellari's conspiracy of 1522. See Litta, *Famiglie celebri d'Italia*, dispensa 42, tav. III.

¹⁶Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 september 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 125, f. 122 r.: '... la tardezza de'danari mi ha tagliato un gran pezo di lingua, et finché con epsi non me la ricuciono Vostre Signorie, non ho ardire di intraprendere cosa che necessaria sia...'

¹⁷Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 28 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 125, f. 109 r. '... ognuno m'è atorno per questi benedetti danari, et veggho infine che le parole non mi bastono, che per assai che io ne habbi non vagliono per una...'

¹⁸ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 6 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 125, 240 r. : 'Costoro sono huomini indiavolati né pensano ad altro che a'danari che se Vostre Signorie vedessino come tractono questi fantaccini... gliene verrebbe compassione.'

Giovanni Turrini and Lucantonio Cuppano the opportunity to enter Florentine service even *'per ad tempo di pace'* - albeit in different locations - while Puccini, Barbarossa and Giuliano Strozzi (who were Florentine citizens) would hold their current positions. The companies of Scipione, Morgante, Testino, Cesare Farina and Pasquino, now isolated, were to be given to new captains¹⁹. At the beginning of October Testino, Morgante and Scipione threatened to leave the camp without permission, but were stopped by their fellow captains. The replacements that Martelli had in mind were Girolamo - nicknamed Rossino - de'Ciai, Benedetto di Ciriaco dal Borgo and Giovanpaolo da Cortona; the proud Corsicans from Pasquino's and Cesare's companies would be assigned to the captain Guglielmo Còrso. Rossino, Benedetto and Giovanpaolo had been among the captains enlisted by the Republic between the end of June and the first days of July. In the following weeks Rossino and Benedetto were *condotti* with 150 foot soldiers each. Rossino de'Ciai, who had been in the past one of Giovanni's *allievi*, did not accept the post (probably considering such a small company below his status) and went to the League's camp to join his former comrades, and apparently was urging Lorenzo Martelli to give him a company. The only way to realize such a reform was to have the money for the wages available in advance, in order to separate the five more seditious captains, the last to be paid, from their men with nothing more than the beating of five new drums calling soldiers to the *banca*.

To succeed in such a direct and dangerous confrontation Martelli needed far stronger military and financial resources to draw upon than Florence could provide, and the Black Bands did not remain passive. At the beginning of October the Ten, appalled both by the nature of their interlocutor and by his requests, listened to the words of

¹⁹ibid., On captain Testino, whose name is not in Table IX, more will be said afterwards. On Rossino, Benedetto and Giovanpaolo: ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, ff. 4 v., 5 r. Guglielmo had been on Girolami's 'waiting list' as candidate both for the role of captain and, as we shall see, of *maestro di campo*, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 121, f. 77 r.

Giovanantonio da Castello, the Bands' spokesman, who wanted to discuss with them two *petitioni* on behalf of his fellow captains. Even though only the first one, concerning the much debated topic of the arrears in wages, was in fact discussed and approved, the Black Bands dared to hint that they would serve Florence only if allowed to remain together²⁰. Although Giovanantonio did not officially present the second *petitione*, the threat was clearly perceived. The Bands were not mere soldiers, but a highly visible sign of Florence's will to support the League. Moreover, the impending threat of the Imperial army and the weakness of the League's army did not allow Florence to take any chances: the black flags were to be kept together.

In the same period count Azzo da Correggio²¹ was also in the city, discussing with the Ten and even personally with the *Gonfaloniere* the *patente di colonnello* which had been granted to him by Raffaele Girolami in July. Given the Bands' unsteady internal balance, Azzo's promotion was being kept secret, and the count was in Florence looking after his own interests, trying to persuade the Ten to make his rank public by including certain captains (unfortunately we don't know which ones) in the new *colonnello*. Although he ended up haggling over the price of his patience²², Azzo's preminence was

²⁰ 'Quanto allo ambasciatore che hanno mandato li capitani delle Bande, benché ci sia paruta cosa nuova, pure l'habbiamo ascoltato, et di due petitione che havea in commissione di exponerci se ne ha riservate una, che forse l'havrà meglio examinata, et si sarà vergognato ad fare palese una tale dishonestà, che era di non voler essere obligati a servire se non tutti insieme, che era cosa bestiale a pensarla... parendoci honesto di dovere dare et non havere ricevere legge da simili gente. Pure bisogna accomodarsi...' The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 121 v.

²¹Very little is known of Azzo di Gaspare da Correggio (?-1528), who was from the branch of the Correggio family that held the county of Casalpò, between Reggio Emilia and Parma. The '*buon Contazzo da Casal Po*' was among Aretino's fondest memories. One day the count surprised the exhausted '*condottiere* of letters', Aretino, asleep on the same bed as his indisposed wife, the '*contessa madrina*', of whom Pietro had been taking care. After waking him up very loudly, 'Contazzo' humorously invited the poet to undress and to get under the covers. In another circumstance the flirtatious countess invited the 'divine Pietro' to join her again in bed, since her husband from Milan had written that she should do for Aretino the same things she would do for him; Pietro Aretino, *Lettere*, p. 569, letter to Gerolama Fontanella. Contazzo was also listed by Rossi among the soldiers 'made' by Giovanni de' Medici (*Vita di Giovanni*, p. 97). For more information on the da Correggio family and its *condottieri*, see Litta, *Famiglie celebri*, Dispensa 20, tav. III.

²²The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 120 v.

again recognised, as it had already been in May²³ by the past regime and, unlike Giovanantonio, his reputation, social standing²⁴ and more orthodox demands allowed him to deal with the *Gonfaloniere* and to leave a very positive impression on the Ten.

During Azzo's stay in Florence (September-October 1527), his company had been a constant source of embarrassment for Lorenzo Martelli. In fact, a secret clause established between the Ten and the count of Casalpò to please the latter²⁵ transformed his big company, of 400 footsoldiers, into a sort of small *colonnello* made up of two smaller companies. His lieutenant Testino became a captain with his own staff and *provvisione*, while Azzo's salary remained unchanged²⁶. As if it were not enough - and besides his being 'un poco scandaloso'²⁷ - Testino proved to be the most troublesome, avaricious and undisciplined captain of the Black Bands, not quite able to handle four hundred men during his master's absence. On one occasion, he even threatened the *commissario*²⁸. In fact, only Azzo's successful mission to Florence saved Testino's half of the company, which in Martelli's plans was meant to be the first to be disbanded and given to Rossino de'Ciai. However, even if Florence had accepted the first plan of

²³When he had been given the command over three companies. Benedetto Agnello to the marquis of Mantua, 3 May 1527, ASMn, Archivi Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 874, f. 96 r/v.

²⁴As we shall see, Azzo da Casalpò had close ties with the Este family. One of his brothers, Carlo, died in 1521 in France during his office as ambassador of Ferrara.

²⁵Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 333 v. 'pare che habbi parlato con la excellentia del gonfaloniere della sua provvisione che in facto trove che era scudi 40... et 20 secreta, vedrò di contentarlo benché non sappi come mi habbi a governare delle cose del Testino né ancho so che in una compagnia di 400 fanti habbi ad essere duoi capitani et un soprasoldo et una provvisione secreta.'

²⁶Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 206 v. '... le compagnie sono divise, et 200 fanti sono sotto Testino et 200 sotto il Contazo, in modo che oltra al non essere questo Testino sufficiente a 400 fanti, che ci sono due spese, perché ognuno di loro passa garzoni, cancellieri, luoghitenenti et altre lor mangerie...'

²⁷The exact nature of Testino's often quoted 'unacceptable behaviour' is never fully explained, and may have been sexual habits.

²⁸*ibid.* f. 243 r. '... venne in camera mia dove non era se non un mio servitore et disse mi parole di natura che io dubitai forte non mi manomettessi. Et poi che m'hebbe decto le parole arrivorno Puccino et Lucantonio che dovettono intendere qualcosa dicendomi "Che intendiam noi?". Io dissi loro "Testino mi ha usato molto male parole et ha il torto" in modo che se io movevo punto lo scaccho egli harebbono facto qualche malo scherzo.'

reform of its *commissario*, the chronic delays in the arrival of the money would have crippled any serious attempt to put it in action.

By mid-October the situation in Perugia was stable enough to allow Orazio Baglioni to join the Florentine troops and to play a more direct role as *capitano generale* of the foot. At the same time the League's forces launched an offensive against the Imperial cavalry's positions, while the remaining troops moved to new quarters. Although Orazio came too late to prevent the sack of Montefalco, his arrival and his talks with Lorenzo Martelli²⁹ gave a new impulse to the project of reform of the Black Bands, adding to it the judgement - and, as we shall see, the personal interests - of an experienced infantry commander. Although he enjoyed Martelli's complete confidence, Orazio was another piece on the chessboard.

According to the *condottiere*, the best way to discipline the troops was not simply to remove and replace the most 'seditious' captains, but to re-establish the central authority that had been lacking since Giovanni's death and the disintegration of his *casa*³⁰. This meant the appointment of 'regimental' officers like the *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino*³¹, and the creation of a single *piazza* for all the troops in Florentine service, a place in which to administer justice and build gallows³². The *maestro di campo* (broadly equivalent to the *Schulteiss* of the Landsknecht units) was basically a judge with criminal and civil jurisdiction. A soldier and not a jurist - usually a man-at-arms or a light cavalryman - he determined the encampment's structure, divided the

²⁹Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 19 October 1527. Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 204 r.

³⁰Many of Giovanni's followers were either devoted to young Cosimo or hostile to the Republic. Even the sergeant-major of the Black Bands, Giovambattista Gotti da Messina, wrote to the Ten asking to be discharged and replaced, 7 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 124, f. 40 r.

³¹Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 125, f. 206 v. On the duties of a *maestro di campo* and *aguzino*, see Mora, *Il Soldato*, pp. 50-52; Ferretti, *Della osservanza militare...* pp. 35-40.

³²Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 125, f. 206 v. '... da lui (Baglioni) non mi pare in questa cosa né dall'altre da discostarsi, perché in questi dì che siamo stati insieme habbiamo molto discorsi et trita questa materia, et se noi haremo e'denari noi orderemo una

various troops quarter by quarter according to their speciality and nationality, and determined the location of the marketplace. It was the *maestro di campo* that fixed the price of the goods, protected merchants and sutlers from abuses, charging them a fee, which was his main source of income. The *maestro* was also in charge of organising the baggage train during the marches and, according to some sources, was the leader of the sappers - who often were the camp followers themselves and not a distinct unit. He continued to receive his *soldo* and maintained quite a large staff, which in the case of the Black Bands included up to twenty-five soldiers.

The 'aguzino' (provost) - also called *arcaldo* or *prevosto* - was the chief of the military police, with a retinue that included twenty soldiers³³. The *aguzino* executed the judgements of the *maestro di campo*, enforced his decrees and restored order when needed.

In the aftermath of Montefalco's sack Orazio had to hang some of Testino's and Azzo's men to restore order, but it was not among his duties, nor was it good for his honour³⁴. Nominally there was an *aguzino*, but the judicial functions were left in the hands of the single captains and, or, of the soldiers' assembly company by company. Such a situation weakened both Florence's authority and the bargaining power of the rank and file - to which Martelli had always been very sympathetic - whose strength was in numbers. It was the 'comunità de'fanti' that gave the soldiers a certain degree of control over the administration of justice and protection against arbitrariness and abuses. Unfortunately, the largely oral world of the Italian infantrymen, the words of their

militia molto bene disciplinata... et faremo nostri auzini, nostri maestri di campo, et la nostra piazza et metteremo mano alle forche...'

³³ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 125, f. 547 r. Florence tried constantly to reduce these two retinues but, of course, more soldiers meant more money and more prestige, the only two elements that rendered attractive these difficult and dangerous offices.

³⁴Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 20 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 127, f. 96 r.

informal representatives - who were not only elected during an extreme event such as a mutiny - are almost completely lost to us.

Although in Florence it was thought that the office of *maestro di campo* remained in practice vacant for months for more than merely financial reasons, this was not the case: the merchants and sutlers were already paying a *maestro* appointed by the duke of Urbino who, as *capitano generale* of the whole League, had the priority; the real problem was rather the lack of someone with sufficient authority to guarantee that the man who took up the office, whose duties required him to challenge vested interests, could safely discharge them.

To quote Orazio Baglioni, the Bands were like a foal that needed to be tamed gradually, and not all at once, since such an attempt would bring them to reject the bit and the spurs forever³⁵. The first to understand Orazio's plans was another experienced *condottiere*, the commander of the Mantuan heavy cavalry Carlo Nuvoloni. The marquis of Mantua was still the captain general of all Florentine forces, but - to avoid an excessive involvement - he was also habitually absent from the camp of the League. In the absence of his master, Nuvoloni was taking care both of the marquis' men-at-arms and of his interests, and he saw Baglioni's growing influence as a clear threat. During one meeting the general of the foot treated as unimportant the logistical and financial needs of the Mantuan *lancie*, in view of the fact that for the immediate future the Ten intended only to pay for light horsemen. According to Nuvoloni, the Perugian *condottiere* was openly trying to take control of all the Florentine forces³⁶, since he was already *capitano generale* of the light cavalry. The careful Mantuan refused also to consider as a simple oversight Baglioni's signature as '*capitano generale dello exercito*

³⁵Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 3 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 121, f. 121 r.

³⁶Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, 4 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondeza estera, Roma, 875, f. 353 v. It ought to be noticed that Orazio Baglioni in his *condotta* was appointed only general captain of the foot, although with a remarkable number of lighthorsemen at his service.

fiorentino' on a herald's safe-conduct³⁷. In fact, Orazio really considered 250 or 300 light cavalymen as better able to support his troops' tactical role than 150 *homini d'arme*; one hundred *cavalli leggieri* were more useful and far less expensive than an equal number of their more heavily armoured colleagues³⁸.

At the beginning of November Orazio Baglioni estimated that the Black Bands' effectives did not exceed two thousand soldiers, even though each month Florence was paying for 3500 men. Although the report confirmed what they had suspected since June, the Ten were surprised by the disparity between the official and the real figures³⁹ and by the political and military implications of this, after all those months of great financial efforts during which the city had practically 'sacked' herself without waiting for the dreaded Imperial army to accomplish the task⁴⁰.

Lorenzo Martelli continued in his effort to reform the Bands, and started to give captain Rossino de'Ciai the money that would allow him to form a new company, while the Perugian *condottiere* did the same with one of his men, Belriguardo da Castiglione. The presence of these new companies would help the *commissario* to present as a *fait accompli* the disbandment of some of the more unreliable existing ones - at least the company under Testino's command - at the next payday. The Ten did not approve of Martelli's excess of personal initiative: at the moment the balance of the League's forces was too fragile for a potentially very dangerous move, and above all they did not want Martelli to damage Azzo's interests⁴¹, especially now that the count was eventually returning to the camp with his rank of *colonnello* still kept, at least officially, secret.

³⁷ibid. f. 12 October 1527.

³⁸Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 125, f. 350 r. '... perché in vero questa militia lo ricercherebbe, et che e' vagliono più 100 cavalli leggieri che 100 huomini d'armi et meno spesa.'

³⁹The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 27 November 1527. ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 200 v.

⁴⁰The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, 5 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 40 v.

Moreover, although grateful to Orazio for offering his help, Florence, although short of cash, had plenty of faithful and good captains waiting to be rewarded with a command. However, events in the middle of November helped the troubled *commissario*, relieving him, temporarily, from a difficult position.

On the pretext of the excessive and repeated delays in the arrival of the wages, the captains Morgante Dentini (or d'Antino) from Ferrara and the Corsican Cesare Farina - 'parendo loro avere il coltello alla gola' - asked to be discharged, and not even Baglioni's intervention could dissuade them. In fact, they tried to persuade Scipione da Imola to join them⁴². The Ferrarese captain had been already involved in October's 'pocho di mutinatione' - half-mutiny, as Nuvoloni defined it⁴³ - together with Scipione and Testino. Martelli considered Morgante a hothead (a 'matto'), capable of saving or ruining a situation with equal ease. The Venetian *provveditore* Alvise Pisani, who had been spying on the captain while he was garrisoned in Narni, a few days before, called him 'Ferrarese, et pazo, et forse cattivo', that is a probable traitor, since every day he used to leave the city unaccompanied for 4-6 hours⁴⁴. Cesare Farina had always been so dishonest in his dealings with his men and with Florence, that is was not surprising that he was prepared to leave behind not only his men but even his staff, from the lieutenant to the secretary⁴⁵. Lorenzo Martelli gave them their due and was delighted to see them go without the great majority of their soldiers, although in the end they persuaded captain Giannetto Albanese to leave Florentine service. Together, the three disbanded companies had amounted to nine hundred men: two hundred and fifty were given to

⁴¹The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 2 november 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 151 r.

⁴²Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 12 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 335 v.

⁴³Carlo Nuvoloni to the Marquis of Mantua, 4 October 1527, ASMn. Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, f. 353 r.

⁴⁴Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 7 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 125, f. 393 r.

Girolamo ‘Rossino’ de’Ciai⁴⁶, two hundred to Belriguardo da Castiglione, fifty to Scipione da Imola and twenty-five to Amico da Venafro, while the others were to be divided among the remaining companies. A ‘*debaucheur*’, or more probably a hothead (‘matto’) rather than a traitor, in March 1528 Morgante, together with the others, was already trying to enter Venetian service⁴⁷ in northern Italy.

Having to act quickly to prevent the desertion or the disbandment of Giannetto’s men, who were stationed in Camerino, and assuming that there would be no further complications, Martelli tried to give the remaining company to Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto, one of Orazio’s men. However, the Perugian *condottiere* was not pleased at all, since he wanted the company to be given instead to Bino Signorelli⁴⁸, another of his *allievi* who, following his requests, had left the Venetian army for this specific purpose⁴⁹. Martelli, having been rebuked by the Ten⁵⁰ for his excessive ‘submission’ to Orazio’s previous requests, refused to comply and had to withdraw his offer to Giacomo Filippo⁵¹. Complaining bitterly about the Ten’s unjustified lack of trust in him, the *capitano generale* of the foot threatened to go to Florence to discuss the matter directly with his *Signori*. Azzo da Casalpò wanted to do the same, while the captains of the

⁴⁵ibid. ‘... non voglio mancare di dirlo: quel Cesare Farina non è da cialde, ladro del padrone, ladro della brigata sua propria... Morgante è un matto da saper così bene ruinare come salvare, senza che come più giorni fa scrissi a Vostre Signorie era entrato in suspecto grande...’

⁴⁶The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 10 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 43, f. 3 v. Rossino de’Ciai here is described as ‘creato del signor Giovanni, nostro fiorentino, et valentissimo giovane’.

⁴⁷Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 97.

⁴⁸Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 124, f. 409. According to Rossi, the captain had been one of the *allievi* of signor Giovanni - *Vita di Giovanni*, p. 98 - but Bino Mancini-Signorelli was a relative of Orazio Baglioni himself. After surviving Naples’ defeat he joined Malatesta’s troops during the siege of Florence.

⁴⁹Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 125, f. 489 v. ,

⁵⁰The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 27 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, ff. 199 v – 200 r. ‘Quando le promesse venghino da te, ad te similmente si lascia la pena del iustificarsi manchando tu a quelle... havendoti noi proposto Gianpagolo da Cortona et il figliuolo di Ciriaco (dal Borgo) non sappiamo perché postposti questi a noi fidatissimi et benemeriti senza mai darne risposta hai voltato l’animo in altra resolutione...’

⁵¹ To appease Orazio Baglioni and not to ruin completely the captain, Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto was given a *provvisione* while he was without a company. The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli. 15 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 13 v.

Black Bands lamented that albeit in the *capitolo*, the one drafted by their spokesman Giovanantonio da Castello and approved by the Ten, they had promised to be patient⁵² in the event of a delay of few days in the arrival of their wages, twenty days were definitely not 'a few'.

Orazio did not leave the camp, and Giacomo Filippo along with Bino Signorelli had to wait a few months more for his new company, but the course of action had been outlined: both the *condottiere* and Florence were trying to 'infiltrate' the Black Bands with as many of their men as possible in order to control and, or, break the 'council of captains'. The Ten, financially and politically weakened, saw this correctly as a dangerous and unwanted competition; they really trusted Orazio, but in this case Florence's right of precedence over him was quite obvious. The point of view of Lorenzo Martelli, himself a staunch supporter of the Republic, was different. The *commissario* badly needed Orazio's support, as master of Perugia, during the meetings with the other representatives of the League and, as *capitano generale*, in front of the soldiers, since he was living in a world in which law, by itself, offered scarce support. Giving voice to what he imagined were the Ten's perplexities, Martelli asked himself what he was there for⁵³: for months Florence's paymasters, commissioners and inspectors had been paying the Black Bands 'alla banca' - that is one by one according to the payrolls - and organising *rassegne* (musters), but even the most 'official' events had proved to be blunt instruments of control and investigation. The Black Bands' 'right' of openly cheating and threatening their employers was based on force rather than law, and Florence alone could not hope to restore the balance.

⁵² Their patience was linked to the fact that they would be paid also for the days they had been waiting. However, a delay of two or three weeks reduced (as we shall see) the captains' margin of gain.

⁵³ 'Vostre signorie potrebbono dire "O che vi fa la rassegna, o tu?" E' sono (the soldiers) venuti in tanta arrogantia et tanto gambone hanno preso che oltre al minacciare di tagliare a pezzi ci dicono che e'ladri siamo noi et loro i buoni et e'belli...' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, ASF, Dieci di Balia, responsive, 125, f. 490 v.

The fear that in the near future any privilege accorded too openly to the count of Casalpò would create further disorder among the Black Bands' captains was one of the reasons for the Ten's reluctance to render public Azzo's rank of *colonnello*, but there were also other more 'structural' reasons for this.

Since the restoration of the Republic, Florence had on its payroll Giovanfrancesco Gonzaga da Bozzolo, nicknamed 'Cagnino', nephew of Federigo Gonzaga da Bozzolo, prestigious commander of the French infantry in the League's camp, 'con la persona sua' only, as commander of a *colonnello* (the term indicated both this kind of sub-unit and its commander) still to be constituted⁵⁴. Eventually the negotiations to settle Cagnino's *condotta*, of more or less one thousand footsoldiers, failed because the Ten judged the big *condotte* awkward and dangerous, and wanted to reduce the total to five hundred men⁵⁵. Florence's first intention apparently was to deal with the Black Bands one by one without intermediaries, as it was doing with the companies newly recruited since June. More than a simple attempt to break the 'unione de' capitani' to his personal advantage, Azzo's struggle for a higher rank is to be seen as an effort to re-establish a hierarchy that had existed among the captains even while Giovanni was alive. Twelve or thirteen companies were too many for a single *colonnello*, but enough for a 'regiment'. Among the captains there were at least three *primi inter pares*, that is Azzo da Casalpò, Lucantonio Cuppano - Giovio's 'Patroclus with a gilded arquebus' - and Pasquino Còrso (informal leader of the Bands' Corsicans), not to mention Giovambattista da Messina⁵⁶ who, without having a company, enjoyed the powers and respect due to any

⁵⁴ ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 5 r. and f. 61 r. Cagnino remained *a provvigione* from July to November 1527.

⁵⁵The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 16 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 127 r. It ought to be remembered also that Orazio Baglioni and Cagnino's uncle were bitter rivals.

⁵⁶Giovambattista Gotti da Messina (? - 1559) started his military career in 1500, leaving his native Sicily. Little is known of him until he got the appointment as sergeant-major of the Black Bands. After the defeat at Naples, he became sergeant major of all the Florentine foot. Later on he entered the service of the dukes

sergeant-major, as the man in charge of the Black Bands' training, whose orders overrode everybody else's during the execution of any tactical manoeuvre.

As soon as his masters, the Ten, would allow him to deal with the Black Bands 'senza haverli rispetto', Orazio claimed he would be able to restore order⁵⁷ and to that end he had taken into his service as chancellor, since November 1527, a man who was to become one of his assets in the struggle for control of the Florentine troops. During the distribution of November's wages in Montefalco, many of the soldiers of the Black Bands probably recognised the man who sat by the side of Florentine paymaster Giuliano Ciati, and felt a curious mix of melancholy and concern. Ser Bernardino di Ippolito Politi⁵⁸, a notary from Arezzo - 'huomo ritagliato' and 'persona del signor Giovanni' - had been inspector of the muster ('rassegna') of Giovanni de' Medici himself. From 1520 to 1532 ser Bernardino worked mainly as chancellor and procurator for the Apostolic Treasury, following his patron Jacopo Salviati⁵⁹, General Treasurer of the Holy See and father-in-law of the late Giovanni de' Medici. In 1527, while Clement VII was held hostage in Castel Sant'Angelo, the situation of the papal bureaucracy was rather chaotic, and the 'clients' of the Medici family - never a much-loved category of the papal administration - found themselves temporarily deprived of almost all support and protection. For this reason ser Bernardino was not averse from working for Orazio

of Urbino, for whom he trained the Feltrian Legion. Even after the unit was disbanded, Giambattista remained in the service of the della Rovere family under Guidubaldo until he died.

⁵⁷Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, responsive, 127, f. 95 r./v.

⁵⁸Ser Bernardino was active as notary from 1518 to 1569. The books containing his *rogiti* - those related to his activities in the Florentine dominion - are kept in the Notarile Antecosimiano of the Archivio di Stato of Florence. Unfortunately, the filze 17171 (1518-1520) and 17172 (1532-1557, that is since he resumed his office in Florence) give very little information about his 'Roman' period, and nothing about his months in the service of Orazio Baglioni.

⁵⁹In November, Jacopo Salviati was still hostage of the Landsknechts in Rome, chained together with the bishop of Pistoia, and it was probably with a certain degree of satisfaction that Martelli announced to the Ten: '... che Jacopo haveva gran fluxo et che ogni volta che haveva andar del corpo si haveva a menar seco il vescovo di Pistoia con chi è in coppia'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 23 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 369 v.

Baglioni who, apart from his active role in Rome's defence, had always been an enemy of the pope and of all Medici but Giovanni.

A consummate muster inspector, the notary knew the captains personally, as well as many of the intermediate and lower cadres of the Black Bands and, most of all, knew all their tricks and weaknesses. Ser Bernardino remembered what the 'ordine del signor Giovanni' was and could not be as easily threatened as Giuliano Ciati was by Fazio da Pisa⁶⁰, Azzo's lieutenant, who unjustly demanded his 'arrear' wages of September and October, that is the period (since 17 August) during which he had been with his master in Florence and not in the camp of the League⁶¹.

During the distribution of November's and December's wages ser Bernardino acted on Orazio's behalf, maintaining a relatively low profile, receiving two *cratie* for each inspected soldier, but from November onwards Martelli received the first reliable and detailed information on the composition and the effective strength of the Bands and on how much Florence was being 'rubata'. The captains kept on lying and cheating openly but, to quote the exasperated *commissario*, 'che rimedio habbiam noi con quelli che par loro che per forza noi gli habbiamo a lasciar rubare?'

Since the beginning, Lorenzo Martelli approved and encouraged the presence of ser Bernardino at the *banca* as inspector: the Bands' captains were afraid of him⁶², the notary was being paid by a deduction from the soldiers' wages (and not by Florence's exhausted finances) and, since he had been 'persona del signor Giovanni', no one contested his role - not openly, at least. However, the problem for the Ten was political and not financial: Bernardino was a man of the *capitano generale* and was yet doing the job of Florentine officers like Giuliano Ciati and Marcello Strozzi. In January 1528,

⁶⁰ Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, p. 98.

⁶¹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 499 r.

⁶² Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 385 v.

when Orazio Baglioni and Lorenzo Martelli eventually started to tighten their hold on the captains, the Perugian *condottiere* considered the presence of ser Bernardino as an essential precondition if the Ten wanted him to accept the responsibility of reforming the Black Bands⁶³.

The *commissario*'s initiatives and the more recent events had caused a wave of confusion and concern among the Ten and a certain degree of hostility in certain factions of the *Consiglio Grande* in Florence; however, Martelli successfully defended the choice of ser Bernardino as *rassegna* – in spite of the biased criticism that reached the ears of the members of the *Dieci* from the camp of the League – and protested his own innocence against veiled accusations of misappropriation of public money. At the end of January Florence urged Orazio to appoint a *maestro di campo* with all the prerogatives due to such an office, since the *condottiere*, after the withdrawal of the Mantuan men-at-arms, could now to be considered *capitano generale* of all the Republic's forces in the camp of the League (infantry and mounted troops) *de facto* if not *de jure*, while the *commissario* was to appoint the *aguzino*⁶⁴. Orazio's choice was the infantry captain Guglielmo Còrso, a man respected both by Italians and by his fellow Corsicans, who had been waiting patiently - receiving ten *scudi di beveraggio* per month as a member of the Florentine commissioners' retinue - for an appropriate appointment since Girolami's period in office⁶⁵.

Martelli's first concern was, of course, to ascertain the effective strength and fighting capability of the Black Bands; for him and for his Florentine superiors the black flags' reputation as good arquebusiers and their background as *fanteria vecchia* were a

⁶³ '... senza costui non voleva pigliare carico di pagare né di medicare questa piagha, perché non vi haveva la mano come costui.' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 18 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 77 r.

⁶⁴The Ten to Orazio Baglioni, 24 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 11 r.

⁶⁵Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 2 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 137 r.

mixed blessing. Florence constantly reminded its allies that the city was fulfilling its duties as a member of League of Cognac by paying five thousand experienced footsoldiers, and according to November's payrolls the city had paid in fact - 'secondo il vero calcolo' and excluding Orazio's one thousand men - more or less 3800 men, that is 2150 arquebusiers, 804 footsoldiers of other kinds and 806 'garzoni' (servants, see Table X). At the end of his report, disconsolate Lorenzo Martelli lamented: 'hor veghino Vostre Signorie che cosa è questa'⁶⁶.

Blaming the greedy captains who were only enlisting shooters in order to pocket their half *scudo di vantaggio*, the *commissario* wrote to the Ten in December that in his opinion there were more or less 1500 arquebusiers⁶⁷. Whatever the truth was, for both Orazio Baglioni and Florence the Black Bands had far too many arquebusiers and not enough pikemen.

The city planned to 'tassare' the various companies, that is, to establish in each of them fixed percentages of the two categories of soldier. This involved the creation of a more 'orthodox' unit in which two thirds of the members were pikemen and one third (or at the most forty percent) arquebusiers⁶⁸. However, an eventual transformation of the Black Bands from an élite task force into a fully-fledged militia required time, a more direct control of the Ten over the recruitment and payment procedures, and a different strategic framework. Florence had not enough time or money to silence the Bands' arrogant captains, and its standing inside the League of Cognac was faithfully reflected in the auxiliary role that its troops were meant to have.

⁶⁶Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 491 r.

⁶⁷Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 27 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 547 v. '... et vo' morire che gli archibusi non arrivono a 1500... a questo modo voi vi lasciate rubare, et io vi dico non solamente rubare, ma assassinare...'

⁶⁸The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 24 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie. 43, f. 108 r. '...molto più ci saria stato charo che si fusse mandato ad effecto il disegno di torre il terzo archibusi e il restante picche et quel più che fusse parso al signore Horatio...'. Only in February did the Ten agree to an increased percentage of arquebusiers.

Far more concerned with requirements at the tactical level, during his talks with the *commissario* Orazio Baglioni expressed his worries about such a high percentage of arquebusiers. The Perugian *condottiere* estimated that 1000-1200 shooters would have enough firepower to perform all the duties required by their speciality during a siege - that is, 'levare le offese' - and in the event of a pitched battle, when the arquebusiers' was to weaken the enemy units and to interdict their passage. However, when the troops were involved in a melee, the day, the *giornata*, would be decided by the pikemen and by the other 'armature'. Both Florence's purse and its army would benefit greatly from the 'reformation' of the Black Bands⁶⁹.

By 'armati', that is the footsoldiers equipped with corselets, which were 'arme defensive', Orazio did not mean only the armoured pikemen ('picche armate', or 'corsaletti') that constituted at least the outer layer of any square of Landsknechts or Swiss. The great *capacità di arresto* and support that small groups of pikemen could offer to skirmishing arquebusiers, especially against cavalry and even in relatively open formations made up of *picche secche*, should not be overlooked, even in a unit like the Black Bands, but the Italian and Spanish units also had a more 'offensive' role for their *corsaletti*. In 1610 the Italian Lelio Brancaccio, a veteran of the wars in the Netherlands, in his book on the 'carichi militari' warned his fellow commanders against the still quite common practice, which arose during the Italian Wars and had been widespread among Italian and Spanish troops, of including squads of 25-30 *armati* equipped with shorter polearms like halberds (but also half pikes, *giannette* or *partigiane*) in the arquebusiers' companies. His times, said Brancaccio, were different: these assault teams had been

⁶⁹ '... Parlando a questi giorni col signore (Orazio) circa li archibusi dice questo, che sarebbe bene correggerli, ché per compagnia non ne potessi essere più che tanti che servirebbe prima a l'utile del danaio, poi a quello dello exercito, et che quando in queste bande fussi mille o milledugento archibusieri che e'basterebbono in una factione, perché al combattere una terra per levare l'offese sono assai, in una battaglia l'archibusieri e per isconciare et impedire passi ma al venire alle mani operano le picche et l'altre

effective in skirmishes at a time when the pike had not yet become standard equipment in most armies, when Germans and Swiss were still regarded as masters in its handling, and when Italians and Spaniards confronted each other on equal tactical terms. In the Netherlands the skirmishes were not 'strette' anymore, but had been 'lengthened' by the enormous diffusion of the pike (the 'regina dell'arme... che non basta altra arme contr'essa che la picca istessa') and by the massive deployment of the musket, with its longer range and heavier bullets, against which the corselet did not represent an adequate protection during the phases that preceded the melee⁷⁰. The tactical usefulness of the *arme corte* was a much-debated topic even during the first half of the sixteenth century, but in 'mannerist' skirmish and trench warfare they were still far from becoming a simple indication of a *segnalato* soldier's higher rank.

One of the points on which Baglioni insisted was that each captain had to maintain between twenty-five and thirty percent of the footsoldiers *armati*⁷¹, paying them with half of the *capisoldi* due to the *homini da bene* and to the *soldati segnalati*, the Italian version of the German *Doppelsöldner*. The Black Bands' wages will be examined in the following section. Together with the presence of ser Bernardino's watchful eye during the musters, this measure contributed to reduce considerably, at least from December to January, the number of arquebusiers (see Tables X and XI) in the Black Bands' ranks, 'step by step' in accordance with Orazio's plans: the bit first, then the spurs. *His* spurs, of course. Although they would have preferred a more radical approach, the Ten were pleased by the new trend.

armadure..'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 491 v.

⁷⁰Lelio Brancaccio, *I carichi militari* (Antwerp, 1610), p. 42. Brancaccio himself for years had been commander of one of these companies. In the Netherlands the place of the halberd had been taken by the half-pike.

⁷¹Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 3 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 121 r.

At the beginning of January, that is, when Lautrec's intention of moving southwards with all the League's forces appeared clear to everybody, the Bands' captains started to negotiate with Florence a quite large purchase of military equipment: one thousand good pikes (not like those that had been sent to *messer* Orazio), one thousand corselets and six or eight hundred sallets, 'ma che fussino bone', and not like the ones usually kept 'in monitione' in Florence's warehouses. The captains wanted to pay in two or three instalments with deductions from their monthly *capisoldi*- money which would be soon refunded to them (at the very least) by their soldiers, the final buyers⁷². *Rompicoscia*, Lucantonio's ensign, was sent to Florence, but in the Ten's registers there is no evidence that the deal was actually concluded.

The *famigli* and *garzoni*, that is the servants, were another of the topics most frequently debated by Lorenzo Martelli and Florence. As showed in Table XI, the servants - the official ones, that is those present at the musters and registered as *famigli* - constituted quite a significant portion of the Black Bands' effectives. During one of his excesses of pessimism, Lorenzo Martelli considered that the whole of the Florentine forces amounted to five thousand 'fra tutti', that is including the servants, the 'ragazzi', the whores and 'altre brigatacce, che ce n'è un mondo'⁷³. The camp followers, and all the financial and logistical problems that derived from their cumbersome presence, were the favourite target of irate, and regularly evaded, edicts and *ordinanze*. Although there is no written evidence left of the world behind the lines, usually the older the unit was, the more extensive and structured the train was, and the Black Bands were *fanteria vecchia*.

⁷² Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 7 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121. f. 131 v. Martelli warned his superiors that weapons of inferior quality would simply remain unsold.

⁷³ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 80 r.

Notwithstanding the negative judgements to be found in the military treatises, the train was not simply a moving brothel, but was rather the 'roots' of the soldierly world; it was where the soldiers lived during the campaign, and where the unit 'reproduced' itself, making good its losses⁷⁴. Moreover, the Black Bands' eight hundred servants were not mere lackeys, and should be considered more like their colleagues of the cavalry *lancie*, that is as an integrated and very active part of the infantry *squadra*. Although assigned individually to the various *homini da bene*, many of whom were also *capi di squadra*, corporals, the *famigli* were servants of the squads and during the battles acted as support crew, delivering flasks and lead to the troops on the line and plundering the dead right under the walls of Naples⁷⁵. Many *ragazzi* were in fact soldiers-in-training, arquebusiers at the beginning of their careers who were learning from some of the masters of the craft.

The servants were both a status-symbol, since they were assigned personally by the captain of the company to a *homo da bene*, and a financial advantage, since the *famiglio's* pay ended up in the pockets of his master. The Ten recognised the high percentage of servants as a necessary evil: the precious *homini da bene* considered it below their status to serve for only 23 lire. As long as they were in fact *valenti*, the soldiers could bring their servants to the muster to be regularly *rassegnati*⁷⁶. On this topic, Martelli did not agree with his superiors; he resented the fact that, in addition to the servants ordinary for the squads, each captain demanded four *garzoni* for himself.

⁷⁴ For a good picture of the Landsknechts 'moving cities', see Baumann, *I lanzichenecchi*, pp. 183-207. Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, pp. 158-184. Up to now there are no specialist studies of the Italian 'bagaglie'.

⁷⁵ When Pierre de Veyre, *monsieur de Migliau*, was killed by the Black Bands right outside Naples 'il ragazzo di uno fante da piedi ha hauto la sua bareta, sopra la quale era una medaia et una catena piccola d'oro'; Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 339.

⁷⁶ The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 31 December, 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 46 v.

two for the ensign and two for the lieutenant⁷⁷. The *commissario* wanted to ‘*taxare*’ the servants as well, reducing their numbers from twenty - and sometimes twenty-two - to sixteen percent of the total, a measure that would allow Florence to pay for an extra two hundred soldiers⁷⁸. In his *Storia fiorentina* the well informed Benedetto Varchi⁷⁹ agreed with Lorenzo Martelli, but the problem was apparently unsolvable: the inspector of the muster could not tell if a soldier was really a *homo da bene* or not, and had to trust the captains’ assertions. The Ten seemed to think that, as long they did not exceed the twenty percent, the more servants there were, the more *homini da bene* there would be, and a unit like the Black Bands relied more on quality rather than on quantity. In fact, the proportion of *famigli* varied from 21 to 22 percent.

Backed by Orazio Baglioni’s presence and by ser Bernardino’s data, Lorenzo Martelli was eventually able to judge the companies and captains one by one, and to ascertain how far Florence was in fact being ‘*rubata*’. For instance, wrote Martelli, there were three captains who cheated the city of at least one thousand *ducati* at each payday (the *commissario* does not give their names) while Puccini and Contazzo each stole 60-70 wages ‘*con tanta braveria*’ under Martelli’s very eyes⁸⁰. The bands of Scipione da Imola, Giuliano Strozzi, Pandolfo Puccini and Giovanni da Colle were not good at all, while Lucantonio’s had its ratio of faults, and Azzo’s company was ‘buona’ only when Testino was not in the camp⁸¹.

For long months, that is since the end of October and his discussions with the Florentine Republic’s *Gonfaloniere*, the count of Casalpò had been patiently waiting for

⁷⁷Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 490 v.

⁷⁸Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 January 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 90v.

⁷⁹Varchi, *Storia fiorentina*, book 4, p. 267: ‘... quattromiladugento si contavano le Bande Nere, ma nel vero non passavano tremila; perché senza quelli che tra di peste e d’altro erano morti, si passavano loro ottocento servidori per paghe morte, come se non fusse stato assai meglio averne meno e pagarli più...’.

⁸⁰ ‘... a’nostri occhi veggenti, et con tanta braveria, come sa Giuliano Ciati...’; Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 25 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 539 r.

⁸¹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 1 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 205 r.

his rank of *colonnello* to be revealed. He promised the *Gonfaloniere* Niccolò Capponi to wait at least until December's payday, giving time to the *commissario* to prepare the ground, but December's money had come and his *patente* had not yet been disclosed⁸². At the beginning of January the controversial captain (or lieutenant, according to Martelli's opinion) Testino was sent to Florence to discuss his master's interests with the Ten, and the commissario warned his superiors about him, defining him as the army's most 'rifinito traforello', that is the greatest thief of all inside the League's camp. Since his return from Florence in November, Azzo da Correggio had become Martelli's second military point of reference after Orazio Baglioni, with whom, at least at this stage, the colonel *in pectore* co-operated actively. At the end of January it was the count of Casalpò who was sent to Recanati to honour *monsieur* de Lautrec on behalf of the captain general of the Florentine foot, who was allegedly too busy to leave the League's camp near Todi⁸³. Azzo's requests were supported by Orazio Baglioni, who described the Emilian condottiere as an 'homo da bene che merita' and approved his proposal of appointing not just one, but two or even three colonels, who were necessary in order to co-ordinate the groups of three-four companies (1000-1500 men) so frequently formed during the marches or for some specific tactical purpose. As always, Baglioni favoured the re-formation of 'regimental' offices, like the *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino*, and intermediary cadres that would allow him to control the Black Bands⁸⁴ more effectively during their march towards Naples, a fact that the Perugian *condottiere* was already taking for granted.

⁸² Azzo da Correggio to the Ten, 10 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 120, f. 80 r.

⁸³ As we shall see, there were other more 'political' reasons for Orazio's refusal to go to meet personally his new capitano generale. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 167 v.

⁸⁴ 'El Contazzo mi ha pregato scriva... in racomandarlo maxime che lui è homo da bene che merita, certificando quelle che è forza fare non solo uno ma doi o tre colonnelli, che spesse volte accade mandare in mille o millecinquenteo fanti et essendoci tre o quattro capitani sonno de' tanti cervelli, el che

The appointment of one or more colonels implied the confirmation, or rather the ‘rebirth’, of the Black Bands as a task force destined to operate far from Florence, that had in consequence a lot of scope for autonomous decisions and in which all the companies were to be kept together to maximize their tactical impact and resources.

Testino’s mission to Florence did not change the Ten’s behaviour: on the matter of the *colonnello* the magistracy reaffirmed its confidence in Azzo, but kept on temporizing⁸⁵. What did receive a new impulse were the negotiations to persuade the Bands’ best captains to enter Florentine service on a more regular basis, that is with *a provvisione a tempo di pace*. With this kind of contract the condottiere received a *soldo* from his employer even during peacetime, when he was without a company. In the past, at least, this had been a coveted status. However, the Ten soon found out that Giovanni’s orphans would not beg to achieve it: in fact the opportunities offered by war itself and by their *unione* were considered more appealing.

The selection of the candidates and the bargaining had been going on since Girolami’s period in office, and eventually the Ten decided to limit the offers to Azzo da Correggio, Lucantonio Cuppano and Pasquino Còrso, even though Martelli also considered Giovanni Turrini and Amico da Venafro⁸⁶ to be worthy commanders. The

essendo poi un colonnello quale a tucti comanda le cose sortiscano un bon effecto..’. Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 5 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 127, f. 140 v.

⁸⁵The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 29 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 45 r. ‘Il conte Azo fu eletto capo di colonnello con promissione che quando fusse el tempo, se gli metterebbe sotto que’ capi che se gli è promesso. Di presente ci pare che non si possa se non con qualche disordine et doverebbe havere patientia... perché l’animo non è di mancargli anzi di accrescergli, perché di qua è buon conto... conoscendolo per bono gentilomo siamo certissimi per amor nostro lo soporterà’.

⁸⁶Amico da Venafro and Giovanni Turrini (‘Giovanni da Turino’) are also the two protagonists of one of the more famous ‘episodes’ of Giovanni de’Medici’s life. Irritated by their continuous quarrels, Giovanni summoned the two captains into a room of his palace in Fano, gave them two swords and two *rotelle* and - while locking the door from outside - announced that he would allow only one of them to get out alive. Eventually only the prayers of Lucantonio Cuppano made Giovanni unlock the door, but in the meanwhile the two *homini da bene* had been actively trying to kill each other and were found lying on the ground, almost dead. From that day on Giovanni and Amico became and remained good friends; *Vite*, p. 114. It ought to be noticed that in Rossi’s last version of Giovanni’s life, the Gran Diavolo was persuaded to open the door by the famous Luigi Gonzaga da Bozzolo the Old, and not by his former lackey Lucantonio. Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni*, pp. 68-69. Moved presumably by an excess of Bonapartism, Gauthiez decided that Amico’s opponent was not the Italian Giovanni Turrini but the Corsican Sampiero della Bastelica.

Balia wanted the *provvisioni* to become a symbol of the city's strength and confidence - and not of its weakness, as in fact it was - the proof that the Republic recognised its faithful servants and, in time, would remember the names of other meritorious soldiers. Above all the privilege bestowed on the three captains on 18 January 1528⁸⁷ was meant to confer on them a higher rank in front of their colleagues⁸⁸. However, the negotiations had been long and difficult; aware of their own reputation and of Florence's need, all the Black Bands' captains had, as Martelli put it, 'la testa alta'. Lucantonio Cuppano initially asked for a *provvisione* of 400 *ducati* per year; after all, at the defence of Frosinone he had been in charge of fifteen hundred men (the size of the average 'colonnello') and the French marquis of Saluzzo had already offered him the captaincy of Genoa's garrison 'per a tempo di pace'⁸⁹ as well. However, what Giovanni's former 'right eye' - and future 'right fist' of duke Cosimo - really desired was the long-promised 'accrescimento', that is an increase in footsoldiers. How many did not matter: even two men, said Lucantonio, would suffice⁹⁰.

Once more, the Ten were disconcerted and, given the scanty practical results of their initiative and the arrival of the insufferable Testino to Florence to discuss the matter of Azzo's *colonnello*, they asked Martelli polemically why he had not explained adequately to the three captains their intentions and final decisions about the *provvisione*⁹¹. The disconsolate answer of the weary *commissario* - an embarrassing answer that initially he wanted to give to the Ten personally, given his imminent recall

⁸⁷ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 10 r./v. '... per dua anni proximi futuri, uno fermo et l'altro a beneplacito del magistrato loro... dichiarando che la detta condotta si intenda esser facta et sia per al tempo di pace et quando detto signore non harà la compagnia o altrimenti provvisione da questa signoria...'. Lucantonio and Azzo were granted a *provvisione* of 300 scudi per year, while the Ten gave Pasquino only 250 scudi.

⁸⁸The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 30 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 114 v. '... quanto alli tre capitani ci parrebbe ad proposito che facessi loro intendere loro le provvisioni... ma con tale destrezza et maniera che ne acquistassono grado...'

⁸⁹Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 89 v.

⁹⁰Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 19 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 84 r.

to Florence – was that in fact he had tried to comply with their orders, but the Bands' captains seemed to be well informed about the Ten's 'confidential' resolutions and not particularly impressed by them. 'I knew all about it since the beginning. As you can see', added Azzo, 'I have some friends, too', while Pasquino less maliciously answered: 'Io sono advisato di tutto'⁹². However, it was Lucantonio who eventually gave the most direct reply: in his view an addition of twenty five soldiers (a single squad) 'in su la guerra' was more desirable than one thousand ducats 'in pace'⁹³. Lorenzo Martelli admitted his defeat; maybe his successor would be able to reform the Black Bands in the way the Ten wanted. A few days later the Ten allowed the witty *commissario* to return to Florence in time to celebrate carnival with his family.

As long as there was war, peace and peacetime appointments meant little to professionals like Giovanni's devils. As in the Landsknechts' case, war was their perspective, their horizon. Moreover, after long, and cold, months of tactical stasis on the Umbrian and Marche Apennines, that particular conflict was about to become 'interesting' again.

As we shall see, Florence wanted to keep at least the Black Bands near Perugia for its own defence, but since Azzo's return from his meeting with Lautrec in January it appeared clear to everybody, from the rank and file to the *colonnelli* up to the general captain of the Florentine foot, what the plans of the new French *capitano generale* were and, above all, what it was in their interests to do.

Joined together, the two armies of the League - the one in Umbria whose forces were flagging and the already massive host that was descending from northern Italy - would soon form the biggest army seen in Italy since the glorious days of Marignano.

⁹¹The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 5 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 129 r.

⁹²Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 217 r.

⁹³Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 220 v.

Once the dangerous (but badly weakened) Imperial army had been defeated, nothing would stand between the French and their partisans and the spoils of the whole Kingdom of Naples: baronies, earldoms, principalities, seignories of cities that would soon be vacant. The general impression was that the day of reckoning in southern Italy was near. For a soldier, whatever his rank, it was the occasion of a lifetime; Lautrec asked specifically and repeatedly for the famous Black Bands to be at his side, and Orazio Baglioni wanted to be at the ‘spoglie del Regno’⁹⁴. The Ten were worried by this ‘fantasia’ of his, and asked Lorenzo Martelli to remind him that, given the danger the pope represented to Florence and to his own *stato*, it was time to protect their *stati* and not to conquer new ones⁹⁵. Probably persuaded that the seignory of his family in Perugia was doomed anyway, Orazio thought differently. The Ten were also so afraid of the negative reactions of the captains of the Black Bands, who were eager to join *monsieur* Lautrec in his campaign of conquest, that Lorenzo Martelli had to keep strictly secret his superiors’ firm intention of using them as a defence force⁹⁶.

Eventually the pressure of both its allies and its mercenaries on Florence proved to be too great, and the Ten tried to reach a compromise: Orazio Baglioni, his light cavalymen and four thousand footsoldiers would march southwards, while all the remaining forces, that were to include the two Black bands stationed in Montepulciano (those of Giovanantonio da Castello and Barbarossa) and the company of Pasquino

⁹⁴The Ten to Marco del Nero, 5 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 133 v.: ‘... quello ci dispiace di più è che noi veggiamo che il signor Horatio ancora egli è in questa fantasia, et che la venuta del Contazo non è per altro che per havere desiderio di trovarse anco lui alle spoglie del Regno.’

⁹⁵The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 144 v.

⁹⁶The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 8 February 1528 ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 143 v.: ‘... non vogliamo che questa nostra volontà esca di te che sarebbe per fare disordine, vedendo che tutti cotesti capi hanno volontà di andare nel Regno, et quando si intendesse sarebbe disordine grande...’

Còrso, would remain between Perugia and Montepulciano⁹⁷. However, this decision caused a half-mutiny among the ranks of Pasquino's band: determined to go 'in sulla guerra', the soldiers prepared themselves to desert their commander en masse⁹⁸. Albeit ready to comply with the Ten's orders, the Corsican captain confessed to sharing his men's desire and - since there was nothing he could really do to prevent the disbanding of his company - reminded them that he alone with 'la persona sua', deprived of the soldiers that had served under his command for long years, all of whom he knew personally, would be a rather inadequate tool⁹⁹. Following the advice of their new *commissario* Giovambattista Soderini, the Ten authorised Pasquino to join his fellow captains.

In November the companies of Giovanantonio da Castello and Barbarossa (whose name was probably Barbarossa de' Bartoli) had been sent to Montepulciano to deter pro-Imperial Siena from continuing with its incursions into Florentine territory¹⁰⁰. Their arrival provoked the usual chorus of protests among Montepulciano's citizens. The Black Bands, described as 'gente insatiabile et male avvezzi' by the city's *commissario* Pietro da Verrazzano, were not garrison material, and had treated the *ville* of the Florentine *contado* as if they had been marching through enemy countryside¹⁰¹. Moreover, the two companies had 90 mounts to be fed, most of which were nags, 'inutilissimi et non profictativi'¹⁰², a number that was considered excessive for two

⁹⁷The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini 15 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 165 v. It seems that the Ten agreed with the old saying that 'too many (three were clearly too many) cooks spoil the broth', and decided to intervene on the one that appeared to be weakest.

⁹⁸Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 247 v.

⁹⁹Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 25 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 241 r.

¹⁰⁰On the situation on the Florentine-Sienese border during those months: Maurizio Arfaioli, 'Carlo Strozzi, Capitano e Commissario di Volterra, luglio-dicembre 1527', excerpt from *Rassegna Volterrana*, LXXIII-LXXIV, 1996-1997, pp. 53-83.

¹⁰¹The Priori of Montepulciano to the Ten, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 124, f. 407 r.

¹⁰²*ibid.*

infantry units¹⁰³. However, while the civil authorities were not happy, captains and soldiers had much to complain about as well: they were far from the war and near to Florence, their bargaining power was significantly lower, and the prices of victuals were definitely higher.

By February 1528 the 'call of war' was strong in the League's camp and even more so in Montepulciano, where the soldiers, impoverished by three months of garrison duty far from the meagre comforts offered by the unpredictable life 'alla campagna', were afraid of being left behind by the rest of the army, as Florence intended. The company of Giovannantonio da Castello had to be disbanded altogether, while Barbarossa's maintained its numerical level (possibly making good its losses with da Castello's pikemen), but saw the proportion of arquebusiers drop dramatically from sixty to thirty percent from January to February¹⁰⁴. Pursued by the Ten's indignant edicts, the shooters - specialists who received the highest pay and constituted the real heart of the Black Bands - fled Montepulciano to join the League's camp, rightly confident that somebody would soon give them money and the chance to plunder.

¹⁰³Pietro da Verrazzano to the Ten, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 405 v. Barbarossa had arrived first with 35 horses and nags, followed by Giovanantonio da Castello with 55 nags and donkeys. It would be interesting to know if such a high number of horses was part of Giovanni's tactical legacy (the mounted arquebusiers) or the product of chance.

¹⁰⁴ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, 94 r. (Giovanantonio da Castello's company) and 94 v. Barbarossa's arquebusiers dropped from 134 to 70.

2. On to Naples: the Taming of the Black Bands

‘In Firenze su per le piazze ci chiamon spadacini, et si fan beffe di noi quando non han bisogno.’

Captain Pandolfo Puccini speaking to his men

Giovambattista Soderini¹⁰⁵ (1484-1528), the new Florentine *commissario generale* who arrived to the Bands' camp on 15 February 1528, lacked many of the qualities that make Lorenzo Martelli such an exemplary source. More influential and ambitious than his predecessor (and a far less talented writer) Soderini had no love for witty details and resented being demoted, as he used to put it, to the level of simple paymaster of unruly soldiers. When he arrived, the League's army in Umbria was ceasing to exist as an autonomous body, and the days of the lively 'consulte' in Todi (see Chapter IV) with Venetian and French representatives were gone. What remained to be done was the policing of the troops, and, unlike Martelli, Giovambattista Soderini shared the traditional negative attitude of Florentine *cittadini* towards mercenaries. However, the choleric temperament and disinclination to compromise of the new *commissario*, together with his repeated requests for quick repatriation, did not prevent him from being an acute observer of the political and military situation and a scrupulous guardian of the Republic's interests. In fact, as we shall see, Soderini died doing his duty

¹⁰⁵Giovambattista di Paolantonio Soderini was one of the nephews of the former *Gonfaloniere a vita* Piero Soderini. Exiled by the Medici in 1512 and again in 1522 after the Orti Oricellari's conspiracy, Giovambattista spent many years living between Milan and Venice. His brother Tommaso Soderini, Zanobi Bartolini, Zanobi Carnesecchi and Piero Tosinchi had already refused the office of *commissario in campo*, and Giovambattista himself was in practice 'tricked' by the Ten into accepting it. According to Benedetto Varchi 'era Giovambatista d'animo grande e d'eccellenti virtù, ma superbo e altiero molto.... aveva nell'universale, e massimamente essendo stato esule tant'anni, un favore e concorso incredibile' *Storia Fiorentina*, 5, p. 328. Jacopo Nardi wrote in *Le Historie* (II, p. 146) that Lautrec used to say about Soderini and Marco del Nero that 'se la città di Fiorenza avesse altri tanti così fatti personaggi, non direbbe mai che essa fusse povera di cittadini...'. Other information in Litta, *Famiglie celebri*, disp. 141, tav. VI.

unflinchingly. While he longed to be in Florence playing the role that he felt appropriate to a member of such an illustrious 'republican' family, Giovambattista's first duty was to prepare the Black Bands to march towards Naples¹⁰⁶, an event that would take him far from the Florentine political scene.

Barely had the *commissario* arrived (15 February) when captain Azzo da Correggio asked him to keep the Ten's promise to increase the size of his company, a disregarded pledge of which the count of Casalpò reminded Soderini again a few days later when asking to be discharged from Florentine service. He clearly deserved more than the other captains, and could not accept being treated in that way. 'Very surprised', the commissioner reminded him of the many privileges bestowed on him by Florence: the command of two - his own and Testino's - companies with corresponding remuneration, the *provvisione* during peacetime and the colonelship. However, since the captain persisted with his complaint, Soderini said that it was not up to him to allow his discharge or to deny it: Azzo was left free to choose by himself whether to stay or not¹⁰⁷.

Soderini's apparently uncaring remarks represented a radical change of attitude in comparison with the frantic negotiations of the past months. Now that the League's course of action was decided, albeit against Florence's will, the city could again take the initiative, and the *commissario* was determined (too determined, as we shall see) to assert his authority from the start. Azzo himself did not have many options: the army was about to move towards a new and lucrative conflict, and to leave Florentine service with the Ten's silent approval, but without an official statement, would have represented a great risk for his *riputazione*. Moreover, according to ser Bernardino's last survey, Contazzo's company was composed of very good, but very few, soldiers; had they been

¹⁰⁶ For the Ten's *istruzioni* to Giovambattista, see ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 44, ff. 165 v. - 169 r.

¹⁰⁷ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 239 r.

all 'Orlandi', wrote Soderini, they would have counterbalanced their captain's thievery. If allowed to continue in this way, the Emilian *condottiere* would soon become as expensive as the *capitano generale* himself¹⁰⁸. After a few days Azzo was again more than willing to serve his Florentine masters, and his example deterred other commanders from trying to force Soderini's hand. Moreover, the Black Bands were eager to go to Naples, and there were enough captains without a company who were faithful to Florence and available to Soderini to stabilize the situation¹⁰⁹. This setback did not stop the count of Casalpò from continuing to demand the 'publicatione' of his colonelship, but the commissioner thought that the moment was not right for this. The promotion of his rival would make Lucantonio - who was still asking for an 'accrescimento' to his company - lose his patience¹¹⁰.

In the meanwhile the preparations for leaving were going ahead at a fast pace: the artillery - a few *moschette* that had been used to reduce some small Umbrian castles - was sent back to Florence, Orazio recruited the sappers necessary to open the way for the troops, and the Bands' captains kept on 'filling' their companies.

The first of two grave incidents destined to change radically the internal balance of the Bands took place on 2 March: accompanied by a group of his arquebusiers, captain Pandolfo Puccini entered the quarters of Giovanni da Colle and, after a brief exchange of insults and accusations, had him killed by his soldiers. Puccini tried to avoid any immediate and summary punishment by leaving the camp, followed by his company, at least for a while, but he was overtaken by other Florentine troops after a few miles. Forced to dismount, the captain defended himself against his pursuers with a pike and kept them at bay, only giving finally himself up to Orazio Baglioni, whose arrival was

¹⁰⁸ibid. . f. 240 v.

¹⁰⁹Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 247 r.

¹¹⁰Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, ASF, 25 February 1528, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 242 r.

followed shortly afterwards by that of a furious Soderini. However, not even the intervention of the *capitano generale* prevented what appeared to be a trivial quarrel between soldiers from becoming a major political incident¹¹¹. The *commissario generale* considered the murder of Giovanni da Colle to be one of the many misdeeds of the ‘seditioso Puccino’, and by no means the most serious¹¹².

At the moment of the restoration of the republican régime, Pandolfo Puccini¹¹³ - a Florentine citizen and reputed ‘allievo del signor Giovanni’ - was in San Giovanni Valdarno with some soldiers, billeted on his family’s estates¹¹⁴. During those troubled days, Puccini was among the first to write to the newly-created Dieci di Balìa offering his services, and he was quickly summoned to Florence¹¹⁵ by the Ten, who were desperately looking for faithful troops. His and Giovanni da Colle’s were the first military *condotte* drawn up by the Republic¹¹⁶.

During Lorenzo Martelli’s tenure of office, Pandolfo had been one of the recurrent thorns in the side of the *commissario*: even the slightest delay in the arrival of his wages, a frequent occurrence, gave rise to spectacular complaints, in the course of which the captain ‘assassinated’ (figuratively speaking) the commissioner enumerating with

¹¹¹Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, book 6, pp. 353-365; Giovambattista Busini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Busini a Benedetto Varchi* (Pisa, 1822), pp. 48-51.

¹¹²Soderini’s ‘indictment’ against Pandolfo Puccini (4 March 1528) is in ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, ff. 409 r. - 410 v.

¹¹³Rossi, *Vita di Giovanni...* p. 98. Busini, *Lettere*: ‘Era da primo il Puccino povero compagno, e pareva da poco, e spesso se ne veniva a Monte Reggi col Priore de’Sasseti e certi nostri parenti a spasso, pallido in viso. Avvenne che il Priore, credo per conto della Veronica ----- cosa del Priore, gli disse una gran villania, e gli volle dare, ché era insolente; onde costui ivi a poco l’ammazzò in Firenze da S. Reparata con un pugnale, e fuggissi. Andò alla guerra, e combatté e vinse, onde il signor Giovanni gli dette la compagnia. Era valentissimo, ma superbissimo, e quasi si assomigliava di cuore al Signor Giovanni. Viveva sontuosissimamente, onde eragli necessario rubare e paghe ed altro, come faceva... parlava e discorreva bene’.

¹¹⁴Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, book 4, p. 247.

¹¹⁵The first list of the Ten was written on the register of the Eight’s *missive* on 10 June 1527, f. 63 v. The Ten’s letter to Pandolfo Puccini was written shortly afterwards (12 June 1527). The Ten to Pandolfo Puccini, 12 June 1527, ASF, Otto di Pratica, Missive, 49, f. 66 r.

¹¹⁶16 Juen 1527, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 1 v.

laborious precision the hours of service for which he was owed remuneration¹¹⁷. Had Martelli tried to describe them, the Ten would never have believed the ‘diverse pазie che fa Pandolfo’¹¹⁸.

However, Giovambattista Soderini was a far less tolerant interlocutor. During the meeting of 28 February, Puccini told the *commissario* - arrogantly and in the presence of other captains - that he was a soldier who should be paid punctually every thirty days and, if his pay-day was again postponed, he would lead his company to seek ‘sua fortuna’ elsewhere. Soderini reminded him that he was a Florentine citizen, and should therefore be ready to serve the ‘patria’ for free, but the argument simply provoked the irritated answer of the captain: it was the ‘patria’ that had sold his family’s estates and failed him so many times. Eventually Puccini brought the other captains to Orazio’s quarters to state their complaints to the *capitano generale* and then back to Soderini’s tent, where Pasquino spoke with moderation on behalf of his colleagues, reaffirming their will to serve Florence - a wish that later on each one of them confirmed in several separate meetings. Puccini’s voice remained a discordant one, however, for he persisted in talking like a ‘pazo et cattivo’; eventually he sent word to Soderini that, if he was not paid, on the following day he would beat the drum and leave the League’s camp, followed by one thousand footsoldiers.

Giovanni da Colle’s murder was a big scandal, but the commissioner in his report emphasized that Pandolfo led his company out of the camp ‘in ordinanza’ and made it fire on other Florentine troops to protect his flight. The unit was ‘caught’ and brought back to the camp shortly before its captain, whose life was saved only because Orazio, rather than Soderini, arrived on the spot first. The commissioner suspected that the

¹¹⁷To quote only one of the many episodes: ‘Il capitano Puccino mi assassina, et annovera le hore della paga sua: vegghino di provvedere per l’amore di Dio’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 25 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 247 r.

¹¹⁸Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 October 1527. ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 251 r.

‘seditioso amutatore’ was in fact a traitor in Imperial service; according to many witnesses Puccini had been saying to his men that it was a good time to ask for double pay and so to punish those people who in Florence’s piazzas referred contemptuously to the soldiers as ‘spadacini’ - when they were not needed, of course¹¹⁹.

The four hundred and fifty soldiers left without captains were hastily divided between Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto (250) and Francesco Rustichello (200), a renowned captain with fifteen years of experience¹²⁰.

It seems that at the beginning both Pandolfo Puccini¹²¹ and Orazio Baglioni¹²² considered the whole episode to be a military rather than civilian matter. Giovanni da Colle had been killed for a question of honour; according to the *capitano generale* Puccini was a *homo da bene*, and among soldiers these things happened frequently. However, Pandolfo had soon realised that his situation was made dangerous by Soderini’s personal ‘isdegno’, an hostility that had arisen when the *commissario* misinterpreted as a threat Puccini’s advice about the need to have an extra payment of wages quickly available, given the imminent departure for Naples. As any other good Florentine citizen, he was ready to serve *con la persona sua* without being paid but, deprived as he was of his father’s possessions, he could not maintain his company. Most of all, he wanted to prevent the *homini da bene* from deserting, a scene that he had witnessed too many times¹²³. During the passionate *oratio defensoria* reported by Varchi and pronounced in Florence in front of the *Consiglio Grande*, Puccini claimed

¹¹⁹Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, ff. 409 r. - 410 v.

¹²⁰ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 410 v. Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto in practice already had a company and his situation needed to be made official - mostly to please Orazio Baglioni. Francesco Rustichello was recommended by the duke of Urbino.

¹²¹ Puccini’s letters on the topic and the records of his interrogations in Cortona are kept in ASF, Signori, Dieci di Balia, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, Missive e Responsive, 73, ff. 60-81. Together with Busini’s letters, these papers were Varchi’s main source of information on this case.

¹²²Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 2 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 174 r.

that he had followed Giovanni de' Medici's teaching, pawning and selling his estates to better the conditions of the soldiers, and Busini wrote that even his temper resembled that of the Gran Diavolo¹²⁴.

Giovanni da Colle's murder was caused by a quarrel about rank, when he drove away Puccini's *tamburo*, preventing him from beating the drum with his own drummer to call the two companies to the *banca* together. Besides the obvious difference in *reputatione* (300 soldiers against 150) Pandolfo had always considered Giovanni his direct subordinate, and not without reason, since da Colle's men had been formerly part of a larger body of soldiers which had been split up by the Ten and - according to Puccini's testimony - it was he who entrusted the one hundred and fifty soldiers to a different captain. The commander from Colle Valdelsa had been probably waiting for a favourable circumstance such as the army's imminent departure to declare his 'independence', and when Puccini arrived and tried to reaffirm his authority, he was given the lie in front of many *homini da bene*. Eventually, Giovanni drew his sword, and his halberdiers allegedly tried to kill his rival, who was forced to flee to save himself.

'Non lo potei sopportare, ché non era il mio honore', since a captain without honour was worth nothing. The 'mentita per la gola' was a very serious offence, and Pandolfo Puccini felt obliged - on the basis of the unwritten code of honour of the *soldati* - to kill his antagonist who, although surrounded by the arquebusiers of the Florentine captain, refused stubbornly to admit that he was a subordinate¹²⁵. Had

¹²³In fact, the distribution of an extra pay on the eve of a long march was quite common. Pandolfo Puccini to the Ten, 7 March 1528, ASF, Signori, Dieci di Balìa, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, missive e responsive, 73, f. 64 r. - 65 r.

¹²⁴Busini, *Lettere*, p. 49.

¹²⁵A Florentine notary to the Ten, 15 March 1528, ASF, Signori, Dieci di Balìa, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, missive e responsive, 73, ff. 73 r. - 74 v. 'Audite: la morte di Giovanni da Colle fu che la Signoria mi haveva dato di più 150 compagni et per il respecto sapete li dei a Giovanni da Colle avvenne che havendo a partire da Monte Marciano essendo in ordinanza rassegnai la compagnia sua et non trovai se non 48 compagni. Parendomi cosa più che disonesta riprese el fratello che era suo cancellieri et venni in tanta furia che li diei qualche bastonata ... Di poi sendo in Narni facendo la rassegna non li trovai che cinquantasetto compagni chel'tamburo allora lo ripresi gravemente et epso sempre promesse far suo

Giovanni da Colle's murder been subject to the normal, somewhat informal, procedures of military justice, Puccini would have been treated with lenience or even acquitted. Orazio Baglioni, acting on behalf of certain *homini da bene* and claiming to be a 'friend of soldiers'¹²⁶, wrote to the Ten recommending the captain, and he conceded that Puccini's actions had been not simply rash but also potentially very dangerous only after it was clear that the *commissario* was determined to cause Puccini's downfall in order to affirm his own authority over the Bands.

The captain affirmed that his aim when he left the camp was not desertion, but to reach the quarters of the League's *capitano generale*, where he planned to give himself up to the duke of Urbino, who would grant him a fair trial and protection from Soderini's hostility. When the plan was thwarted, the only remaining option was surrender to another soldier, like Orazio. What confused the situation was the fact that his company was lined up 'in ordinanza', ready to go to the *banca* to receive the *soldo*, and that his men – seeing their *capitano* in danger – decided to follow him for a while, against his own orders, so as to protect his flight (creating thereby the illusion of mass desertion) even after Puccini had entrusted the unit to Giovambattista da Messina, the *sergente maggiore* of the Black Bands¹²⁷.

debito di poi fra 2 o 3 dì fui richiesto andare in campo et allora li dixi "Giovanni noi habbiamo andare in campo dove è Lutrech et tanti altri grandi, pensa che habbiamo affare honore alli nostri Signori" sempre promesse bene. Havendo di poi a tocchar denari mandai el tamburo d'epso Giovanni col mio per chiamare la compagnia che venisse a pigliare denari decto Giovanni lo rimandò indrieto allora gli dixi "Giovanni sempre tu vuoi fare del grande et fai poco honore a me et alla Signoria di Firenze". Lui mi rispose non havere affare nulla mecho allora gli dixi "come tu stai mecho et possoti comandare" et però subito mi rispose "tu menti per la gola" et messe mano alla spada et perché con lui era 12 o 14 delli sua da Colle li quali mi abbassorno le alabarde mi ritirai et chiamai 4 o 5 delli mia archibusieri et andai a trovare decto Giovanni et dissili "Giovanni parti haver facto bene a smentirmi per la gola?", lui rispose "io non sono techo et quello che io ho decto è ben decto". Allora li missi la mano al pecto et fecilo amazzare.'

¹²⁶Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128. f. 170 r.

¹²⁷ ASF, Signori, Dieci di Balia, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, missive e responsive, 73, f. 78 r. During his subsequent testimony in Cortona, Puccini said that he entrusted his company to Giovambattista da Messina, Lucantonio and Azzo da Casalpò. It ought to be noticed that the companies invariably went to the *banca* in *ordinanza*.

Whatever the truth was and notwithstanding the delays of Orazio and Malatesta Baglioni (Orazio's elder brother), Giovambattista Soderini used all his considerable political influence to have the captain 'extradited' from the lands of the Baglioni, judged and found guilty (24 March) by the *Quarantia* in Florence. A good speaker - at least for a soldier, according to Varchi - Pandolfo could not hope to persuade the *Consiglio Grande* to quash the *Quarantia's* verdict, the death sentence; and the *Consiglio Grande* was unable merely to lighten the punishment.

Interrogated in the Florentine citadel of Cortona with many 'demonstrationi spaventevoli' but without being tortured, the captain answered the questions asked by the Ten's envoy Giovanni Naldini. There were seven charges of which the murder of Giovanni da Colle was simply one¹²⁸. The accusations of being a secret supporter of the papal (that is Medici) and of the imperial party must have been an unpleasant surprise. The suspicions that lay behind the charges had their roots in the fact that in December, while he was stationed in Narni, Pandolfo Puccini gave hospitality to the four runaway hostages from Rome (see Chapter IV), that is the archbishop of Pisa, the bishop of Pistoia, Lorenzo Ridolfi and Jacopo Salviati - all enemies of the Florentine republic. During the same month, Lorenzo Martelli noticed that some of the captains appeared relieved at the liberation of Clement VII in Orvieto, and Puccini expressed openly his desire to go to pay homage to the pope¹²⁹.

The prisoner rejected decidedly all the accusations, conceding only that he had killed Giovanni da Colle, a deed that he considered a necessary and justifiable act rather

¹²⁸ The seven questions were: 1. If he had any '*pratica*' with the Empire. 2. If he was in contact with the pope. 3. Why did he kill Giovanni da Colle? 4. What happened while the four hostages were in his hands near Narni, and what did he discuss with them? 5. If he really incited the other captains of the Black Bands to mutiny. 6. If his threat to lead one thousand footsoldiers out of the League's camp was genuine. 7. What were the circumstances of his arrest and of his company's march out of the camp? ASF, Signori, Dieci di Balìa, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie, Missive e Responsive, 73, f. 79 r. /v.

¹²⁹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 14 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 509 r.

than a crime. What the captain really resented was having been deprived of his company immediately after his arrest.

The Florentine host could not wait for somebody whose fate was sealed. The *commissario* and Orazio Baglioni were being harassed by letters both from the Ten and from *monsieur* de Lautrec, who had entered the kingdom of Naples with his troops and was waiting for the arrival of the Black Bands and other allied units before attempting to force the Imperial army to fight in the open field.

The problems of military seniority related to the re-organisation of the Black Bands kept Giovambattista Soderini busy until the very day of departure¹³⁰ (6 March 1528). Worried about the unavoidable ‘publication’ of Azzo’s colonelship and the angry reactions of Pasquino and Lucantonio, the commissioner asked the Ten to give the rank of *colonnello* to the other two captains as well and not only to the count of Casalpò who, according to the commissioner’s opinion, was not the only one to deserve it¹³¹. This time the Ten agreed with Giovambattista Soderini; they had been discussing this complex issue with Orazio Baglioni during his last visit to Florence, and their final decision was to appoint three *colonnelli* - even though the Perugian *condottiere* disagreed on Lucantonio’s promotion - leaving to the commissioner and to the general captain of the foot the task of assigning the companies¹³². Their common defeat at the defence of Rome had apparently created a rift between Orazio and Lucantonio.

However, owing to a second ‘accident’, this resolution of the Ten was never fully implemented. After long days of march (see Map B) in a mountainous and barren

¹³⁰The Ten to Marco del Nero, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 231 v. : ‘Alli 6 di questo partirono con 4400 fanti et 150 cavalli, una bella et bonissima gente... per una giornata non hanno paragone in Italia, per essere tutti homini di guerra.’

¹³¹Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 407 r.

¹³² ‘... et ci risolviamo darlo ancora a Lucantonio et Pasquino, et il signore (Orazio) andò un poco masticando maxime quello di Lucantonio. Non vogliamo fare comparatione dall’uno all’altro che sono cose odiose, ma conosciamo che tutti e tre lo meritano...’ The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, 8 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 230 v.

territory during the harsh Apennine winter the Black Bands camped in sight of l'Aquila, a city that was already in the power of the pro-French party. Incited by their commanders, the companies of Azzo and Testino started to grumble and Orazio was forced to lend money (one thousand and fifty *scudi*) to Soderini to give them a pay. The question was only apparently settled: marching near l'Aquila, the Bands started to shout 'all'Aquila, all'Aquila, allogia, allogia et danari, danari', and headed for the city. Orazio Baglioni tried to stop them, but the soldiers promptly levelled their arquebuses at him, threatening his life 'senza haverme alcuna reverentia'. The Black Bands entered l'Aquila demanding to be billeted; the captain general had no choice but to follow them with his Perugian troops, occupying the city's *piazza* and hanging on the spot four soldiers, but the partial sack of l'Aquila - albeit without casualties among the civilians - could not be prevented. On the following day the *capitano generale* took possession of the city gate, forcing the soldiers to return most of the stolen goods. The Bands gathered *in ordinanza* in the *piazza*, starting to grumble again about their arrears of wages, and were only persuaded to leave the city and resume their march after the commissioner gave more money to the captains¹³³.

L'Aquila was the League's cornerstone in southern-central Italy, and such an incident endangered Florence's reputation among its allies. Giovambattista Soderini authorised Orazio Baglioni to inflict the appropriate punishment on the culprits, whoever they were¹³⁴. The *capitano generale* decided that Azzo da Correggio and Testino were guilty not only of attempted mutiny, but also of treason, since they were in contact with the Imperial army and about to desert with their companies - or at least so he said. On the same day Testino was sent off with a fake mission to Lautrec's camp

¹³³ On the 'sack' of l'Aquila, see the letter of Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 30 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175 r/v. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 105.

¹³⁴ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 21 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 411 r.

and killed by his escort, while the count of Casalpò was executed during the march 'senza alcun tumulto'¹³⁵. Da Correggio's company (400 footsoldiers) was 'temporarily' entrusted to captain Bino Signorelli, whom Orazio called 'fratello'. According to Mantuan sources, helpless Azzo was killed with a blow of a mace to the head¹³⁶ and his naked body put on the road with only a sock on his right foot. Lodovico Ceresara, ambassador of the marquis of Mantua, considered this cruel act a wrong that Baglioni would eventually pay for.

Soderini and the Ten¹³⁷ approved of the Perugian *condottiere*'s line of action, but their approval sanctioned his victory over them in the struggle for the control of the Black Bands. When Soderini tried to appoint two new captains, Francesco Strozzi¹³⁸ and Tommaso Gotti, the brother of the Bands' *sergente maggiore*, for the two halves of Azzo's company, his authority was openly contested by Baglioni, who asserted his pre-eminence in wartime and appointed Bino Signorelli instead.

Many Florentine historians, especially Benedetto Varchi and Bernardo Segni, and their Risorgimento admirers portrayed the proud Giovambattista Soderini as the real soul of the Florentine host, but, from his departure from Spoleto to his death under the walls of Naples, the only person in control of the Black Bands was Orazio Baglioni.

After captain Puccini's arrest - and more so after his execution in Florence - and the violent death of *colonnello* Azzo da Correggio, the remaining captains of the Black Bands appeared to have been brought to heel, but this happened far from Florence and near to the war zone, where the discretionary power of a field commander was at its

¹³⁵ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175 v. ; Busini, *Lettere*, p. 48; Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, p. 353.

¹³⁶Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera Roma, 876, f. 181 v.

¹³⁷The Ten to Orazio Baglioni, 17 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 44, f. 57 r.: '... la malignità del Contazzo et di Testino, che sendo stati honorati da noi non haveano causa di mancarci. Daranno exemplo agli altri come dice vostra signoria che in simili casi non si ha havere rispetto alcuno.'

peak. When the Florentine troops arrived at the League's camp near Troia (21 March 1528; for more information on the tactical stalemate that had been reached at Troia, see Chapter IV), Giovambattista Soderini and Orazio Baglioni were already refusing to speak to each other.

The chance to finish the campaign with a single pitched battle vanished during the night after the Bands' arrival, when the Imperial army, taking advantage of its superior mobility, hastily broke camp and headed for Naples. *Monsieur* de Lautrec chose not to pursue the enemy and, in view of the continuation of the war, decided instead to secure his army's position and supplies by reducing the remaining Imperial strongholds to the south of Naples. The Italian, French and Gascon companies under the command of Pedro Navarro and the Black Bands - that is about 10.000 footsoldiers, the best assault troops of the League - with two *cannoni*¹³⁹ were sent (23 March) to conquer Melfi, a city of 2000 *focchi*¹⁴⁰ ('homes'). Sergiano Caracciolo, prince of Melfi, was in charge of the defence and could count on more or less 1500 men between the infantry companies under his command and the *lance* of heavy cavalry of his *famiglia*¹⁴¹. Melfi had a citadel, while the city walls had been reinforced with bastions - or at least with bastion-like structures.

After a first cannonade had brought down a short stretch of wall, the Black Bands, without waiting for their captains' orders, vied with Navarro's Gascons for the honour of being the first to storm (and to plunder) the city. For two hours the crack

¹³⁸Up to now I have found no information on Francesco Strozzi in the Carte Stroziane nor in the family trees drawn up by Pompeo Litta.

¹³⁹The *cannone* was a heavy piece of artillery, powerful enough to participate in a *batteria*, that is to bombard the walls of a fortress. According to some sources, the troops sent to Melfi had only a few field guns with them, since the city's walls were not expected to be a great obstacle.

¹⁴⁰Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 30 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 175 v.

¹⁴¹According to Orazio Baglioni, inside Melfi there were nine 'flags' of Italian infantry (1400-1600 foot), while the Mantuan Ludovico Ceresara considered that Sergiano Caracciolo had at his disposal 1500 footsoldiers. Paolo Giovio says that there were two Spanish companies, 400 Italians and Caracciolo's men-at-arms. Marco del Nero, Florence's ambassador in the League's camp wrote that there were more or less 600 soldiers.

troops of six companies of the *Bande Nere* - soldiers 'de' più eletti et arditì che vi fusse in quelle bande'¹⁴² - battled under Melfi's walls before being driven back with the loss of about seventy men, including five standard bearers and the valiant Francesco Strozzi, one of Soderini's candidates for captaincy. The attack was poorly co-ordinated: in addition to the losses due to the intense fire of the arquebuses from the bastions' shoulders¹⁴³, further casualties were caused by the fact that the Bands had launched their rash assault without waiting for the end of the cannonade¹⁴⁴. The Gascons did not fare better, and suffered even heavier losses.

Another attempt to take Melfi by storm after sunset turned into a disaster for the Black Bands, since the enemy had been waiting for them and was better entrenched than in the morning¹⁴⁵. During the night, while the Florentine troops were licking their wounds, more heavy guns sent by monsieur de Lautrec - who proclaimed the city 'a sacco'- arrived in the camp. Inside the city's walls, Melfi's elders implored the prince not to cause their total ruin, but Sergiano Caracciolo remained deaf to their entreaties. However, at dawn a battery of eight *cannoni* opened fire on Melfi, and any remaining hope that the League's army would move quickly towards Naples to keep the pressure on the main body of the Imperial army vanished. The prince decided to withdraw into the citadel with his soldiers, aware of the fact that he could keep at bay the enemy and the citizens at the same time. The *villani* raised white flags and started to shout 'Franza!', but it was too late: the furious cannonade had already opened too many gaps,

¹⁴²Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 23 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 183 r.

¹⁴³Marco del Nero to the Ten. 24 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 442 r.; see also Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, pp. 1918-1019.

¹⁴⁴Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 423 r/v.

¹⁴⁵According to Giovambattista Soderini the Bands attacked at 11 p.m. , while Marco del Nero says that the assault started half an hour before sunset. Probably the fight started immediately before or after sunset and ended quite late at night.

leaving the town without defence. The Black Bands and the Gascons entered the city, and the slaughter began.

The League's troops put to the sword all the soldiers who had not been able to take shelter in the citadel and all the inhabitants of Melfi - mostly men, but also women - they were able to lay their hands on. Those *soldati* and *villani* who tried to escape from the city by jumping from the walls suffered the same fate. The prince of Melfi tried to surrender on honourable terms, but the best he could do was to hand the citadel over to Lautrec himself *a discretione*; 'but our soldiers' wrote Marco del Nero, 'did not agree': only the personal intervention of the *capitano generale* of the League saved the lives of Sergiano Caracciolo, of his wife and of his daughters. A handful of 'gentilhomini' managed to surrender to various captains; the others were all slaughtered. In fact, the man that the troops of the Black Bands wanted most to kill was the prince: his resistance, they said, had been futile and unreasonable, and had caused the death of too many good soldiers¹⁴⁶. The partition of the plunder moreover caused a confrontation between Navarro's men and the Florentine troops.

The next morning, when the Bands and the Gascons left the city at the end of the twenty-four hours granted for the sack, more than three thousand dead bodies lay in the streets of Melfi; a large number of women - 'infinite', wrote ambassador Ceresara - had been killed, and as many had been 'taken away' by the soldiers; 'molte' were saved.

The League's casualties amounted in total - between Gascon and Florentine troops - to about five hundred men, but what caused the Bands' fury was the qualitative level

¹⁴⁶Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 24 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 186 r. 'Monsignore (Lautrec) ha fatto assai a poter campare il principe, ché ogni modo le bande negre lo volevano amazare. perché for di proposito loro dicono averse lui tenuto et da questo esser causato la morte de trecento homini de'loro, de la più forbita gente che tra loro fusse tra heri et ozzi'.

of the losses and the circumstances in which they had occurred¹⁴⁷. Moreover, the captains resented the fact that most of the booty had ended up in the hands of somebody who had not fought or risked his life for it, that is Orazio Baglioni¹⁴⁸.

Another friction between the *capitano generale* and the remaining ‘orphans’ of Giovanni de’Medici was the appointment of Bino Signorelli, one of Orazio’s men, as commander of the company of the late count of Casalpò: nothing, wrote Soderini, could have displeased them more¹⁴⁹. Eventually - or maybe it would be better to say ‘paradoxically’ - the captains of the Black Bands and the Florentine *commissario* found a common line of action, but both sides had been weakened by long months of reciprocal attacks to the benefit of the third party concerned, who, to quote his own words, had now bridled the ‘horse’ and was just starting to use the spurs.

In fact, Orazio took full advantage of his superior experience as a military entrepreneur. Shortly before the departure from Spoleto, the *capitano generale* of the Florentine foot made an agreement with some merchants, who agreed to supply him with the money needed to pay his Perugian soldiers and light cavalrymen during the campaign in southern Italy in return for a sort of ‘bill of exchange’ payable in Florence with the Ten’s guarantee¹⁵⁰. During the mutiny at l’Aquila - while the soldiers of the Black Bands lined up in the *piazza* were shouting ‘danari, danari’ - Orazio had his own troops completely under control, and was even able to advance a considerable sum to the *commissario*. In Montefoscoli (6 April) the ominous cry ‘danari, danari’ was heard again, but this time Giovambattista Soderini, who was on very bad terms with Orazio, refused to ‘beg’ for money again, leaving this pleasure to Florentine ambassador Marco

¹⁴⁷ On the sack of Melfi see also Giovio, *La seconda parte delle Istorie*, book 25, p. 70; Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, p. 112 r.

¹⁴⁸ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 26 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 46 r. It ought to be noticed that this part of the letter was written in code.

¹⁴⁹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 226 r.

¹⁵⁰ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 407 r.

del Nero¹⁵¹ (on whose frantic financial activities more will be said in the next chapters). The *commissario* was right when he wrote to the Ten that despite the claims of his secretary and representative in Florence, Michele Conventini, Orazio Baglioni and his contacts did not have the financial resources to support the whole Florentine army, but his masters understood that they had to take the consequences of the situation. Between Florence and the Kingdom of Naples there was the sea with all the risks it posed, the hostile State of the Church and mobs of angry peasants: to face the unavoidable delays in the arrival of the wages and the losses of cash, the Ten's envoys were to rely increasingly on their own initiatives, personal resources and contacts *in loco*.

However, Giovambattista Soderini did not fail to point out that Orazio Baglioni was trying to create a dangerous rift in the ranks of the Black Bands. Since he could not persuade the captains to demand more money from Florence or to agitate for their back pay, the *condottiere* was now inciting the *privati* (the rank and file) to stage protests, in order to erode what was left of the *commissario*'s authority, that is the loyalty of the Bands' captains to Florence¹⁵². The renewed fidelity of the *capitani* was largely due to their fear of Orazio and to their need for protection from his ambitions, but it was still a force to be reckoned with.

Availability of capital and the ability to act with ruthless determination, when combined with good command skills, had always been a powerful combination in the mercenary world, and Orazio Baglioni had all of these assets. Giovambattista Soderini tried to counter the 'perfidia' of the *capitano generale* with the meticulous application of the *capitoli* of his *condotta* and a rigid defence of Florence's prerogatives - especially when it came to the appointment and dismissal of captains - but Orazio Baglioni flatly

¹⁵¹Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 279 r. The money sent by the Ten was still in Ancona, and Soderini refused even to speak to Orazio Baglioni. The *condottiere* loaned 3900 *ducati* to the ambassador.

¹⁵²Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 230 r.

replied that either he or the *commissario* would have to leave the League's camp¹⁵³. The situation was so tense and damaging to the city's *riputazione*, that Florentine ambassador Marco del Nero tried to mediate between the litigants, trying to persuade them to come to a compromise: Azzo's company was to be divided in two; one half would remain under the command of Bino Signorelli, while the other would have a captain appointed by Soderini. After two days of talks, the proposal was accepted by Orazio Baglioni but rejected by the *commissario*. In principle, Marco del Nero agreed with his colleague: the Perugian *condottiere* was indeed acquiring control of the Black Bands; but 'what could not be cured was to be endured', and the situation required a compromise¹⁵⁴. In fact, a few days later Giovambattista Soderini gave in with a bad grace, entrusting 200 footsoldiers to Bernardo di Giovanni Strozzi (1502-1533), nicknamed *Cattivanza*¹⁵⁵.

However, the 'matter' at issue (the Black Bands) had its own ideas, and did not remain quiescent: on 16th April ten captains of the Black Bands went 'unitamente et insieme' - a remarkable symptom of their uneasiness - to Marco del Nero's quarters to speak to the Ten's senior diplomatic representative about the quarrel between the *capitano generale* and the *commissario*¹⁵⁶. The captains' main point was that Giovambattista Soderini (like his predecessors) had promised to please Giovambattista Gotti da Messina - the Black Bands' sergeant-major - by giving to his younger brother the command of a company as soon as possible. But, for his part, Tommaso Gotti refused to take charge of a company without the 'blessing' of Orazio Baglioni, who, had

¹⁵³Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 224 r.

¹⁵⁴Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 145 r. '... [egli (that is Soderini) ha ragione], ma in questo caso mi pareva da fare della necessità virtù per evitare maggiore inconveniente.' The square brackets indicate the parts written in code.

¹⁵⁵ASF, Carte Stroziane, Terza Serie, pezzo 35, *Vite degli uomini illustri della famiglia Strozzi* written by archdeacon Luigi Strozzi, p. 36; pezzo 36, *Vite degli uomini illustri della casa Strozzi*, written by Lorenzo di Filippo di Matteo di Simone Strozzi, pp. 248-249.

¹⁵⁶Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 256 r.

expressed some reservations about him. After Bernardo Strozzi's appointment the Sicilian *sergente generale* got angry with both litigants. At first he threatened to leave the League's camp, and even refused to carry on with his duties.

In his speciality Giovambattista da Messina had few, if any, equals, and at the height of the battle he was more the commander of the Black Bands than anybody else; to avoid such an irreparable loss, each captain was ready to deprive himself of a portion of his men to create *ex novo* a company for Tommaso Gotti. However, not even this makeshift agreement could really satisfy the Bands' tactical mind, who persisted in his *ira funesta*¹⁵⁷, like a sort of early modern Achilles at the siege of Naples.

At the end of April the military operations around Naples were already in progress, but the internal situation of the Florentine host kept on worsening. When eventually even Orazio Baglioni threatened to leave the camp of the League, claiming to have been driven to do this by the hostile attitude of Giovambattista Soderini, *monsieur de Lautrec* summoned the *commissario* and Marco del Nero to find a solution to the problem. The *capitano generale* of the League demanded the reinstatement of both Orazio Baglioni and Giovambattista da Messina - whom he firmly believed was the best Italian sergeant-major. The ambassador openly took Soderini's side, but invited him once again to be more flexible - for the sake of Florence's *riputazione*. The *commissario* promised to comply with this request; for his part, Lautrec would persuade Orazio Baglioni to be more respectful to the Ten's representatives¹⁵⁸.

¹⁵⁷ These words, taken from the first verses of the Italian translation of Homer's *Iliad* have become a now somewhat old-fashioned way of referring to the behaviour of a highly qualified person who wishes to draw attention to his own indispensability.

¹⁵⁸ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 267 r. It ought to be remembered that Lautrec had a firsthand experience of Giovambattista da Messina's value at the battle of Bicocca (1522), when Giovanni de' Medici's companies fought under the French flag. '... monsignor per la esperienza che n'ha visto, anchora l'afferma che in quello exercitio non habbia pari in Italia et in queste fattioni riporta troppo havere uno che sappia bene ordinare le genti...'

However, the damage done was not limited to *riputatione*. During the first weeks of the siege of Naples the Black Bands (see Table XII) had been constantly involved in frequent and bloody skirmishes with the Imperial footsoldiers and light cavalrymen, and probably some of their initial and costly setbacks (see Chapter V) were due to their failure to achieve the necessary degree of co-ordination, a failure to be attributed to Giovambattista da Messina's absence from the battlefield.

3. Short Wages and Expensive Shoes

‘... siamo parati a dovere pagare essendo ragionevole d’essere serviti bene, volendo noi pagare di quella sorte per la quale habbiamo meritamente el titolo delli migliori pagatori di soldati di tutta Italia.’

The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 2 November 1527.

One cannot really understand the *mercenari* without analysing what formed their *mercede*, that is their reward. When the Florentine republic decided to replace the pope as employer of the Black Bands after the death of Giovanni de’Medici and the sack of Rome, the city’s system of metallic currencies was already going through a period of radical changes which were enhanced and accelerated - but not caused - by the war and by the costs of belonging to the League. The most conspicuous of these changes had been, during the fifteenth century, the victory throughout Europe first of the *ducato* of Venetian origin, then of the French *écu au soleil* over the glorious Florentine gold currency, the *fiorino*. In the period we are considering, the minting of the *scudo in oro del sole* in Italy was greatly promoted by the establishment of French hegemony over North and Central Italy; first Genoa (1508), then Milan (1520) and eventually Venice (1528) started to mint their own *scudi*¹⁵⁹, while Florence would do the same only in the most dire circumstances (during the siege of 1529-1530). Even though it maintained its traditional weight and value, in 1528 the *fiorino* was almost always called *ducato* even in Florentine documents, and was on its way to become a simple unit of account¹⁶⁰ used to calculate cash transactions in other currencies.

¹⁵⁹ For the monetary part of this section I owe much to the studies of the late lamented prof. Carlo Maria Cipolla on the transformations of the Florentine monetary system in the sixteenth century; Carlo M. Cipolla, *La moneta a Firenze nel Cinquecento* (Bologna, 1987). For a more technical overview: M. Bernocchi, *Le monete della Repubblica fiorentina* (Firenze, 1974-1978), Edoardo Martinori, *La moneta* (Roma, 1977) and Friedrich Schrötter, *Wörterbuch der Münzkunde* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1930). By *scudo* here I mean a coin of more or less 22-carat gold, weighing between 3.40 and 3.50 grams.

¹⁶⁰See Cipolla, *La moneta a Firenze*, pp. 19-43.

The value of a coin was determined according to the system *lira - soldo - denaro*: in a *lira* there were twenty *soldi*, in a *soldo* twelve *danari*. *Lire* and *soldi* were mere units of account. From 1502 to 1530 the value of the *fiorino/ducato* remained stable at 7 *lire*, while the *scudo* was worth 6 *lire* and 4 *soldi*. The two main units of account used by Florence were therefore the *ducato* - as we shall call it from now on - of 140 *soldi* and the *scudo* of 124 *soldi*.

Even more radical changes had been occurring in the field of Florentine, and Italian, silver currencies. During the second half of the fifteenth century the flow of silver from the mines in Southern Germany promoted the minting of a generation of heavier coins, commonly called *testoni* - 'big heads' - because of the portraits of princes they bore on one side. In the case of Florence the *barile*, the new coin destined to become, albeit with a different name, 'quella moneta con la quale comunemente si ha a negoziare e contrarre' was situated between the Milanese and Venetian *testone* and the traditional Florentine *grosso*¹⁶¹. The *barile* - so called because one was needed to pay the *gabella* of a barrel of wine - had been coined in Florence since 1504 and had been known at first as the *carlino*, like the equivalent silver currencies of the Kingdom of Naples and of the State of the Church. The *carlino* owed its production to the strong commercial and financial links that existed between Naples, Rome and Florence. After the fall of the republic, the monetary adjustment of 1531 and the decree of duke Alessandro de' Medici in 1535, the *barile* was commonly called the *giulio* as the papal *carlino* had been after the pontificate of Julius II - *al secolo* Giuliano della Rovere.

¹⁶¹ The *testoni* went from 9.79 to 6.52 gr., while the Florentine *grosso* weighed more or less 2 gr.; the *barile* 3.512 gr. The silver alloy of all Florentine coins remained the traditional '*lega del popolino*', that is 'a *once* 11 ½' out of 12. On the *carlino-barile-giulio* see Schrotter, *Worterbuch*, pp. 225, 93, 58.

The value of the *barile* – 12 *soldi* and 6 *denari di piccioli*, that is 150 *denari* – remained officially unaltered from 1504 to 1531, when it was brought up to 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari* (160 *denari*), the same value that the *giulio* had had between 1526 and 1528.

The *cratie*, the *quattrini bianchi* - that is ‘whitened’ by a slightly higher percent of silver in their alloy - and *neri* and the *denari* were *moneta di biglione*, with a copper-silver alloy of inferior quality.

Table XIII¹⁶²

Gold

Fiorino or ducato = lire 7 = 140 soldi = 1680 denari = 10 ½ giuli

Scudo = lire 6, soldi 4 = 124 soldi = 1488 denari = 9 1/3 giuli

Silver

Grosso = 7 soldi

Quinto di scudo (Florentine *testone*) = 1 lira and 8 soldi

Barile = 12 soldi and 6 denari

Giulio = 13 soldi and 4 denari

Biglione

1 *cratia*, or *quattrino grosso* = 4 *quattrini bianchi* = 5 *quattrini neri*

1 *quattrino nero* = 4 denari

According to the newly-elected Ten, since the beginning of a war in which Florence had been involved by the Medici and their partisans, the city had spent more than eight hundred thousand *ducati*, and the citizens were ‘consumati’¹⁶³. After its restoration the Republic had agreed to sign, as the previous government had done, the articles of the League of Cognac, but refused to pay more than one-fifth of the total expenditure, since the period of the Medicean régime had been a long financial and political ‘*esterminio*’ for its opponents.

However, Florence never really managed to reduce expenses: it was true that the city was no longer paying the pope’s share, but at the same time its power to affect the

¹⁶²These data are taken from Bernocchi, *Le monete della Repubblica fiorentina*, vol. III, p. 233 ff.

¹⁶³The Ten to Roberto Acciaiuoli, 9 June 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 2 r.

key political and strategic decisions was greatly reduced. The successors of Francesco Guicciardini, lieutenant general of the Church, in the League's camp never attained his degree of influence and were always forced to submit to the initiatives and requests of their French and Venetian counterparts. In November 1527 the Ten estimated that they were spending 25,000 *scudi* per month to sustain the war effort¹⁶⁴, while in January 1528 the monthly expenditure amounted to 30,000 *ducati*. Three years of Florence's revenues¹⁶⁵ had already been pawned by that stage, the churches' silverware had disappeared and the Republic was about to impose an *accatto* of 100,000 *ducati* on the Florentine clergy without asking for the pope's permission¹⁶⁶. It ought to be remembered that in the same period the *Serenissimo d'Anglia* Henry VIII was giving the League a contribution of 30,000 *scudi* per month.

To pay their troops from June 1527 to August 1528, the three field commissioners received the following sums¹⁶⁷:

Raffaele Girolami - from June to the beginning of September 1527: 47,977 *ducati*, 6 *lire*, 16 *soldi*;

Lorenzo Martelli - from the end of September 1527 to February 1528: 54,574 *ducati*, 2 *lire*, 10 *soldi*, 8 *denari*;

Giovambattista Soderini - from February to the end of August 1528: 85,625 *ducati*, 6 *lire*, 12 *soldi*.

The grand total – 188,178 *ducati* in fifteen months – represents only the payments for those persons or items of equipment for whose pay, maintenance or acquisition

¹⁶⁴The Ten to Giuliano Soderini bishop of Saintes, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 165 r.

¹⁶⁵In 1528 Marco Foscarelli, former Venetian ambassador in Florence, estimated that the city's gross revenues amounted to 340,000 *ducati* (Venetian *ducati*), of which 240,000 were 'di spesa'. This left 100,000 *ducati* 'in più'; Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 64

¹⁶⁶The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 19 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 92 v.

Florence was directly responsible and that, like the Black Bands or the few fieldpieces, were in the camp of the League and directly on Florence's payroll; it does not include other forces, like those of the *condottieri* employed by the city.

In June 1527 the marquis of Mantua was still the *capitano generale* of all Florentine forces, and 150 of his 315 men-at-arms were to be paid by Florence together with the 5,000 *ducati* – out of a total of 13,000 - of his annual *piatto*¹⁶⁸. However, the Republic had little interest in maintaining such an expensive and cumbersome legacy of the past regime, and from June 1527 to March 1528 the Ten's most important *condotta* was the one Orazio Baglioni had as *capitano generale* of all Florentine foot. Florence gave to the *condottiere* 3274 *ducati* per month to pay his 1000 Perugian infantrymen, and four *quartieri* of 1875 *ducati* each, which included the wages of the 150 light horsemen (40 *ducati* per year each) and the four instalments of his own *piatto* - that is 1500 *ducati d'oro* per year¹⁶⁹. This amounted to a total sum of about 40,240 *ducati*.

The conditions of payment of the Black Bands were the same ones that had been established by Francesco Guicciardini and Giovanni de' Medici at the beginning of the war, and the Florentine republic made no real effort to change them. The wages of the soldiers were calculated in papal *carlini*: every footsoldier received a basic pay of 28 *giuli*; the arquebusiers were entitled to a *soprasoldo* of 4 2/3 *giuli*, and there was a 10% of *capisoldi*, that is, one extra wage every ten wages. The income of a captain was calculated in *scudi d'oro* in proportion, again, 10%, to the number of men nominally enrolled in his company, so that, for instance, Lucantonio Cuppano received a

¹⁶⁷ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Debitori e creditori, 66, ff. 6 v. -7 r. ; Debitori e creditori. 67, ff. 98 v. - 99 r. These data are confirmed in the Ten's main filza of *condotte* and allocations: ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64.

¹⁶⁸On the *condotta* of Federico Gonzaga and other figures like Vitello Vitelli - *governatore generale* of the Republic's men-at-arms - see ASF, Otto di Pratica, Ricordanze, 3, f. 102 r. Each heavy cavalryman received 100 *ducati di giuli* per year, while the *piatto* of the marquis was 13,000 *ducati di carlini* per year.

¹⁶⁹On the *condotta* of Orazio Baglioni: ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f.f 3 r. - 4 r.

provisione of 40 *scudi* each month. A *ducato* was valued at 10 ½ *giuli*, while a *scudo* was equivalent to 9 1/3 *giuli*¹⁷⁰. A *giulio* was therefore worth 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari*, and the Bands' basic pay was 18 *lire*, 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari*¹⁷¹ per man; as a whole, the Black Bands required, approximately, a monthly expenditure of 12,000 *ducati*.

Since the beginning of the century, the Florentine footsoldier had received three *ducati* per month¹⁷², and therefore at a first glance it would seem *ab absurdo* that the best Italian mercenaries were also the least well paid. The Florentine rank and file during the period between 1526 and 1528 received a salary of 20 *lire* and 4 *soldi* each, but in fact this sometimes produced dangerous tensions in some of the newly-recruited companies garrisoned in Tuscany. What Florence seemed unable to understand was that all soldiers were not, nor considered themselves as, equals; captain Daniello da Castiglione, for example, was afraid that if forced to follow his orders and to pay his men without respecting their established internal hierarchies, he would soon see his *homini da bene*, his *capi di squadra* and his sergeants desert the company. Carlo Strozzi, *commissario* of Montepulciano, agreed with Daniello and proposed to reduce the basic wages to 18 *lire*, 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari* in order to distribute the money saved among the *soldati segnalati* and non-commissioned officers¹⁷³. Other captains saw their precious arquebusiers without *soprasoldo* renounce their weapon of choice - for which they had to buy lead and powder - and take up the pike.

The Black Bands and Orazio enjoyed also other privileges: theirs was a month of 30 days, and not of 36 days as it was for the majority of their Italian colleagues. When, in April 1528, Venice tried to reform its procedures for paying its soldiers, the Senate decreed that the footsoldiers were to be paid three *scudi d'oro* or *di valuta* (A Venetian

¹⁷⁰ To see how the Bands were paid see ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 28 v. and in *Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti*, 64, passim.

¹⁷¹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 224 r.

¹⁷² Bayley, *War and Society in Renaissance Florence*, p. 280.

scudo = 6 *lire* and 16 *soldi*) every 36 days, with a *capisoldo* of 15% for arquebusiers and *homini segnalati*¹⁷⁴.

The Bands' captains inherited from *signor* Giovanni a profitable agreement that could not be easily renegotiated in such troubled times. The Ten criticised Francesco Guicciardini for not having guarded the city's interests adequately, but the republic was also paying the price of its inexperience in dealing with military enterprisers.

In Italian historiography there are excellent studies of merchants and bankers that provided the credit indispensable to the birth and survival of early modern states, but – as Fritz Redlich pointed out in his works on military entrepreneurship in the German area – little has been written on the Italian soldier-aristocrat 'in business'¹⁷⁵. The social, political and even tactical leanings of the Italian *condottieri* of the sixteenth century have been investigated according to the well-established (and unjust) bias that - unlike their *oltramontani* colleagues - they were mainly figures with political aims. Therefore, the vast majority of the members of a category has been judged on the assumption that its priorities and interests were identical to those of the small minority who had famous family names, like Gonzaga, Este or Medici, and who, allegedly, had little interest in business. The debates of both detractors and eulogizers of the *condottieri* have contributed to separate the word *condottiere* from its meaning of 'contractor' and 'businessman'. In fact, the Italian military entrepreneur of the sixteenth century who based his activity on the recruitment and deployment of bodies of tactical infantry, performed the two main functions ascribed by Redlich to his German counterpart: contracting and credit extension¹⁷⁶.

¹⁷³Carlo Strozzi to the Ten, 22 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 130, f. 436 r.

¹⁷⁴The Senate to Alvise Pisani and Piero Pesaro, 23 April 1528. ASV, Senato, Deliberazioni secreta, 53, f. 13 r. For a history of the wages of the Venetian infantry see Hale, *L'organizzazione militare di Venezia*, pp. 367-376.

¹⁷⁵Fritz Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*; see the Preface of the first volume, pp. XIII-XV.

¹⁷⁶Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*, p. 30 ff.

Capitani generali, colonels, captains - even *sergenti maggiori* - all kinds of military enterprisers could become active participants in a credit system that was frequently tapped by their employer, in this case Florence. The most conspicuous case was, of course, Orazio Baglioni, on whose lands the League's army was camped. The Perugian *condottiere* who, as we have seen, had his own merchant-bankers willing to finance him, advanced thousands of *ducati* to the commissioner Lorenzo Martelli when the pay of the Black Bands was badly in arrears¹⁷⁷, and did the same when Giovambattista Soderini held the office. Orazio loaned large sums of money also to the Venetian *provveditore* Alvise Pisani, to prevent the Swiss troops of the Serenissima from disbanding¹⁷⁸. Sitting with his empty pockets at the *Consulta's* table in Todi, Lorenzo Martelli was put under pressure by the French and the Venetians in order to make him ask the captains of the Black Bands for money¹⁷⁹.

A military entrepreneur was sometimes forced to become one of his employer's creditors in order not to lose all his investments, his workforce or even his contract, but the situation presented also many advantages – such as the rates of interest and an increased bargaining power - especially in the case of Florence, that still had quite a good reputation for solvency. During the siege of Naples ambassador Marco del Nero tapped all available sources of cash in the camp of the League, and, besides his personal friends (see the last Chapter), many of his 'clients' were soldiers. There are a few examples: a French captain gave the ambassador 497 *scudi* in exchange for a 'lettera di cambio' at Lyon's Easter fair¹⁸⁰; count Wolf, *Oberst* (colonel) of the Landsknechts of

¹⁷⁷Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 224 v.

¹⁷⁸Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 347 r. 'Proveditore allora disse al signore Horatio: "Prestateci 400 scudi". Horatio disse "Molto volentieri"... poi si ritornò pure in sul resto de' danari et per abbreviarla Horatio fé altri 400 ducati. Ma volle l'obbligo del proveditore. El proveditore voleva che io lo facessi io... pure poi Horatio disse che voleva la promessa sua et non la mia...'

¹⁷⁹ibid. f. 347 v.

¹⁸⁰Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 256 r.

the German Black Legion loaned 100 *scudi*, that were to be paid back to his wife in Florence¹⁸¹; and the Bands' sergeant-major Giovambattista da Messina advanced more than 400 *scudi d'oro* to Giovambattista Soderini¹⁸². It was a good way to transfer one's money safely.

However, the main source of income of a military enterpriser remained his contract and the way in which he administered it. During these years (1520-1530) of transition that shortly preceded the creation of 'regimental' structures like the Spanish *Tercios* and the French Legions, the form and the informal assumptions of the contracts were already changing quickly. Traditionally, a newly-appointed colonel of infantry was given command over a certain number of pre-existent companies, whose recruitment and enlistment had been the responsibility of single captains. But it was in this period that the *colonnello* started its transformation into the regiment, that is a preconstituted administrative unit in which the captains had the role of sub-contractors of their commander. One of the first – or at least the first attested – examples were the troops that Georg von Frundsberg ('father' of the Landsknechts) led in Italy in 1526, the same men that mortally wounded Giovanni de' Medici at Governolo¹⁸³.

In the case of the Italian Black Bands the level of involvement of the captains in the organisation of the unit can be easily inferred from their reaction to the death of their leader. Probably all the 'lesser demons' were sincerely united by the painful memory of the passing of the Great Devil, but the relative ease with which they decided to succeed him shows also their determination to protect their investments. Moreover, it is hard to believe that the captains discovered their 'unionist' vocation only after Giovanni's

¹⁸¹Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 20 April, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 233 r.

¹⁸²ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 46, f. 153 r. ; eye witnesses of this loan were the captains Baldora di Arezzo and Tommasino Còrso.

¹⁸³On this topic see Redlich, *The German...*, pp. 39-40.

death, or that, while alive, he could easily set aside his *allievi*'s needs and expectations. In fact, the Black Bands behaved like a sort of proto-regimental entity.

As we have seen in the other two sections of this chapter the relationship between Florence and the Black Bands was a dialectical one, a complicated 'gioco delle parti' in which both employers and employees were, at different times, creditors and debtors. The captains - those 'huomini indiavolati' whose only thought was money - were determined to protect their two main direct sources of income, that is the margin of gain granted by the contract and their direct control over the payment of the soldiers' wages. Giovanantonio da Castello's mission to Florence is an example of this: he and his fellow captains resisted any attempt by the Ten to avoid paying their men for their services in the days that immediately preceded each payday, in order to, eventually, reduce the number of payments per year, whether this was caused by a deliberate choice of the Ten or by the disastrous financial situation of the city¹⁸⁴. To quote what Pandolfo Puccini arrogantly said to the *commissario*, he was a soldier who had to be paid every thirty days¹⁸⁵.

The discretionary power held by any military entrepreneur - a coalition of captains, in this case - over his workforce was enormous. For months, the almost complete lack of an authoritative figure like *capitano generale* Orazio Baglioni to restrain the greed of the intermediate cadres worsened the situation. Besides being in charge of all aspects of military life, especially discipline, a captain exercised direct or indirect control over the means of subsistence in a world in which the margin of survival

¹⁸⁴The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 5 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 129 r. 'Et se non si manda la paga così ogni 30 giorni ci pare che li pagamenti siano di sorte a comparatione degli altri confederati che si doverrebbero contentare.'

¹⁸⁵Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 409 r. 'Mi domandò danari con grandissima arrogantia, facendomi intendere... che era soldato per essere pagato ogni 30 di.'

for the rank and file, who had to pay for clothing, food, ammunitions and their own weapons, was very narrow indeed.

The soldiers received their basic pay 'alla banca' ('on the table') and, as they also said, 'all'huomo proprio', one by one, under the watchful eye of Florentine paymasters and muster inspectors, looking at the books with the 'signs' and patronymics of the footsoldiers which were kept by the captains' chancellors¹⁸⁶. However, as we have seen, it was at the *banca* that the confrontation between Florence and its mercenaries really began. Every soldier received 18 *lire*, 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari* (28 *giuli*), but the deductions made from their salary by the captains - with various excuses that Lorenzo Martelli thought amounted to so much brazen fiddling - reduced the final amount to less than 18 *lire*, even though (according to the *commissario*) in the camp of the League in Umbria it was patently impossible to survive even on 24 *lire*¹⁸⁷. However, it was by the distribution of the *capisoldi* (also called *paghe morte*) that the honesty of a commander could be measured, since the administration of these allowance funds - which were sent to the camp days or even weeks after the payments at the table - was entirely up to the captains. 'Shoes are very expensive, while wages are short'¹⁸⁸, and the *capisoldi* were important because they provided some relief to hungry soldiers at the end of the month, when their pockets were as empty as their stomachs. However, the *paghe morte* were mostly distributed among the officers of the company, the *homini da bene* and the soldiers who had performed some praiseworthy deed, or were simply pocketed by the captain.

¹⁸⁶Here is one example taken from the payroll of the Florentine company of the 'bargello': 'Giuliano di Caccino da Uzzano di Mugello, pelo nero, poca barba, el parlare alquanto impedito, statura mediocre, anni 30 incirca; Pasquino di Giannone di Luigi da Valbona di Romagna, pelo nero, barba non ancora messa o poco, buona statura, anni 26 in circa; Domenico di Donato da Vessa di Valdibagno, pelo nero, solito radersi, statura buona o più presto piccola, anni 45 in circa...'; ASF, Otto di Pratica, Deliberazioni, partiti, condotte e stanziamenti, 14, f. 2 r.

¹⁸⁷Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 224 v.

¹⁸⁸Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 24 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, f. 409 r.

Specialized soldiers like the arquebusiers received each month a bonus of one half *scudo* - 3 *lire* and 2 *soldi*, that is 4 2/3 *giuli* - but like the *caposoldo* it was not given 'at the table', and the chance to make a profit out of this encouraged the captains to enlist only arquebusiers as replacements. Florence and Venice tried, without success, to find a way to give that bonus 'all'huomo proprio', but the Italian military entrepreneurs guarded their privileges and their account books jealously¹⁸⁹. Eventually, even the wages of servants were in practice *paghe morte*, because only a captain could distinguish a *homo da bene* who deserved one *ragazzo*, and sometimes more than one, as in the case of company officers, from the rank and file.

The captains of the Bands cared little how good the reasons were that forced Florence to postpone payments: for every day of delay, they felt authorised to retaliate by openly cheating at the muster and acting with growing independence and indiscipline; between two distant paydays, all the tricks of the military trade were employed. 'Soldiers' who were in fact lackeys or peasants (or even women, in the case of the Landsknechts), or had been 'borrowed' from other companies and existed only on paper - in German they were called *Passavolanten*, in Spanish *santelmos* - were presented at the muster to 'pad the payroll'. However, Giovanni's 'orphans' seemed to have specialized in taking advantage from the delay itself, since the wages of a company were calculated according to the last muster roll, regardless of whether the same soldiers were still in service or not, and the commander of the unit pocketed the difference. A captain could go as far as to 'encourage' desertion, by, for instance, deliberately refusing to use his funds in the hope that the soldiers would simply go 'con dio', as frequently

¹⁸⁹Such was the case of the attempted reform of 1528. The Venetian captains retained this privilege until the end of the century; on the history of the *caposoldo* see Mallett and Hale, *The Military organization*, pp. 494-501. For an analysis of the Spanish case: Parker, *The Army of Flanders*, pp. 158-161

happened¹⁹⁰; eventually, the captain's strong contractual position vis-à-vis his defaulting contractor would force the Florentine *commissario* to authorise him to 'rimettere' the missing soldiers.

Lorenzo Martelli summarised the situation of the soldiers of the Black Bands during the cold Umbrian winter quite well: 'It is undeniable that our present situation exhibits two cases of extreme need, that of your Lordships (the Ten) and that of these footsoldiers, but, as for them, theirs is more important, because, since they have not got enough to provide themselves with victuals or footwear, since they have to pay 5 or 6 *giulii* for a pair of shoes, they cannot wait as long as your Lordships, who have clothes and shoes to wear and food to eat while struggling to find the money'¹⁹¹. With his words the *commissario* did not intend to reproach the Ten, but rather to make them aware of the urgency of their soldiers' needs: they counted the days rather than the money, and their pay was, by itself, insufficient even when it arrived on time. Moreover, for long months the Umbrian scene was marginal; it was a *guerra vecchia*, whereas the mercenaries tended to migrate - following the flows of money - towards a *guerra nuova*, like the one that was being fought in Lombardy. Only Lautrec's arrival 'renewed' the war of the Bands.

Florence sent to the camp of the League tens of thousands of *ducati d'oro* (but also of *scudi d'oro del sole*), of *ducati di grossi* and *ducati di barili* - that is silver coins - and of ducats of *moneta di biglione* (mostly *cratie*) to pay its troops. The finding of

¹⁹⁰ Lorenzo Martelli thought that it happened too frequently. 'El non haver danari in tempo fa che e' non si possono correggere e' furti; perché e' passa la pagha 12 o 15 o 20 di. Quel capitano che ha disegnato di rubare, che non so se ce n'è più d'uno che forse credo tutti, dice: "Qui posso io rubare 15 o 20 paghe", perché subito che hanno hauto la pagha che è a 15 o 20 del mese in circa ne mandono quelli fanti che hanno accattati, et viene l'altra pagha, et quelli fanti li manchano o dove sono? Sonsi iti con dio, finita che fu la pagha et fassi rimettere di quelli simili, et a questo non v'è rimedio'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, 125, f. 490 v. Cfr. with Redlich, *The German*. p. 52.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.* f. 489 r. 'E' non si può negare che il caso nostro non verta in due extreme necessità, così dalla parte di Vostre Signorie come dalla parte di questi fantaccini, ma la loro è di più importantia quanto a loro, perché non havendo da vivere né da calzare, ché costa loro uno paio di scarpe 5 o 6 giulii, non

cash of any kind in financially exhausted Florence had become one of the Ten's main concerns, and every month they fought a losing battle against the clock; they had too much at stake to risk the same rate of desertion as French and Venetian forces.

The situation was made more complicated by the fact that the League's camp in Umbria had its own exchange values – a sort of central 'currency market' governed by the army's *maestro di campo generale* on behalf of all the various elements of the host – and its own prices. In both cases their fluctuations were linked not only to military circumstances, needs and customs, but also to the deals which were settled with the army purveyors – a different kind of military entrepreneur – and to local practices.

On several occasions Lorenzo Martelli asked the Ten not to send the traditional, and outdated, silver coins of Florence, the *grossi*, because it was almost impossible to persuade soldiers to accept it¹⁹². Soldiers and sutlers rejected the *grossi*¹⁹³ unless these were valued at 20 *quattrini* (1 *quattrino* = 4 *denari di piccioli*) rather than 7 *soldi*, their value in theory, not to mention the fact that objectively many coins were in such a bad shape that they were worth even less¹⁹⁴; every time using the *grossi* resulted in a loss for the city. The *barile*, that had originated as a Florentine counterpart of the papal *giulio* was much easier to distribute, but between the two coins there was not parity: in October 1527 a *barile* was valued at 37-38 *quattrini*¹⁹⁵, while in December it was down to 36 *quattrini*¹⁹⁶. In January 1528 the Ten, troubled by the complaints of the soldiers and by their possible future reactions, decided that for the city keeping the nominal

possono aspectare come possino le signorie vostre havendo da vivere et da calzare et da vestire non obstante che e' si peni a mettere i denari insieme...'

¹⁹² 'Egli è di bisogno che Vostre Signorie non ci lascino mandare più grossi che mi è suto una passione di spacciarle.' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 240 r.

¹⁹³ A *grosso* coined after 1503 weighed 2 grams, and its alloy was 958,333/1000, that is the so-called '*lega del popolino*'. See Bernocchi, *Le monete*, p. 233 ff. vol. 3.

¹⁹⁴ '... tutti costoro non gli vogliono se non per 20 quattrini senza che ve n'è assai che per l'ordinario non gli varrebbero; honne scripto più volte che non se ne mandi.' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 499 r.

¹⁹⁵ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 119 r.

¹⁹⁶ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. r. 499 r.

value of the *barile* at the same level as that of the *giulio* (40 *quattrini*) was an unfair gain, made mostly at the expense of the already vexed rank and file¹⁹⁷.

The quality and the alloy of the gold coins sent to the camp caused many complaints, but the only times in which a *ducato d'oro* was openly 'sgridato' by the troops was when Florence, probably out of desperation, tried to pay its troops, which were stationed in the Papal State, with thousands of Turkish ducats, a sign of the good relationship between the city and the *Sublime Porta*. Lorenzo Martelli had to admit that getting rid of them was a real affliction, but he said that it was most amusing to watch the footsoldiers looking those strange coins up and down¹⁹⁸. However, the real problem was that the purchasing power of a Turkish ducat was a half *giulio* less¹⁹⁹. Even in the case of the *moneta di biglione* there were adjustments to be made: in the camp at the end of January 1528 a *cratia* was effectively worth, at the best, 4 *quattrini*, and the sutlers considered 8 ½ *cratie* as equivalent to a *barile*²⁰⁰.

The real wages of the soldiers of the Black Bands, and, more generally, of the Italian *fanti privati*, are difficult to estimate, but not only for monetary reasons. The great role played in their world by discretion makes it impossible to construct a rigorous typology of payment. As we have already seen, the soldiers did not have equal rights and duties, nor were there uniform customs. The veteran *homini da bene*, the specialist arquebusiers, the non-commissioned officers, had their interests comparatively protected by the fact that their loss was a substantial damage for the military entrepreneur who owned a company of *fanteria vecchia*; the 'others', that is the unskilled soldiers, received their due, if they were lucky and if the contractor was honest, but seldom any

¹⁹⁷The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 16 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 80 v.

¹⁹⁸'... è una festa vedere come li squadrono questi fantaccini.' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 2 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 346 r.

¹⁹⁹Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 29 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 231 r.

²⁰⁰Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 87 r.

further financial help from their commander. They were a part of the company, but not *the* company, and went away as easily as they had arrived.

In early modern armies the help of a captain did not come usually without a price: if, between the contractor and the military entrepreneur, lending money was a system that worked both ways, it was not so between the captain and the soldier, who was by far the weakest (and last) link in the chain. Any sum given in advance to the rank and file for food, or weapons, or clothes, became another instrument of control and source of gain for the captain. Every day of delay in the arrival of the wages worsened the situation of the soldier, who was on subsistence pay, making him sink further into the quicksand of indebtedness. It was not a manoeuvre devoid of danger; for instance, in Volterra (1527) captain Marco da Empoli advanced money to too many soldiers and went broke when the Ten suddenly discharged half of his company.

The first half of the sixteenth century - that is the period that preceded the so-called 'price revolution' - is generally considered to have been a good period for the purchasing power of the footsoldiers' wages²⁰¹. When the situation was not critical (as it was in the camp of the League) the monthly pay at least enabled a *fantaccino* to survive, and offered a quite alluring profit margin to those specialists who earned more than a basic wage²⁰².

It is quite interesting to compare the daily wage in *soldi* of the footsoldiers of the Bands - here calculated assuming (optimistically) a month of 30 days - with those of

²⁰¹See Hale, *L'organizzazione militare*, pp. 367-370; on prices and wages in sixteenth century Italy, see Felloni, *Studi Economici* (Genova, 1999), pp. 1159-1165, vol. 2.

²⁰²Such was the case of the German double-pay man, the *Doppelsöldner*; see Redlich, *The German Military Enterpriser*, pp. 124-130.

some categories of Florentine building and agricultural workers during the same period²⁰³:

	<u>Average daily wage (1525-1530)</u>
<i>Master mason</i>	21.5
<i>Skilled labourer</i>	17.3
<i>Unskilled labourer</i>	9.2
<i>Agricultural labourer</i>	8.5
<i>Black Bands' base soldier</i>	12.43
<i>Black Bands' arquebusier</i>	14.43

The wage of a Florentine general field commissioner like Lorenzo Martelli was calculated *in ragione* of 16 *lire*, 13 *soldi* and 4 *denari* per day²⁰⁴, while Marcello Strozzi - the paymaster - received a *ducato*. It ought to be noticed that, unlike the soldiers, the Florentine construction workers were paid day by day, but the 'safety margin' granted to the *soldati* by their monthly wage was largely apparent. Far from the monetary stability granted in the city by the fact that even the most transactions were evaluated in 'ghost money' – the money of account²⁰⁵ – and by the buffer zone represented by bank credit, the rank and file lived in a world in which the measure of value was far more directly linked to the medium of exchange, that is the coins used for payment. According to *colonnello* Imperiale Cinuzzi, every footsoldier was to be given a daily ration of 1 ½ -2 *libbre* - approximately 509-680 grams - of either biscuit or bread, and a *boccale* (a tankard) of wine or beer²⁰⁶. These values - with some variations - were quite typical of

²⁰³These data are extrapolated from Giuseppe Parenti, *Prime ricerche sulla rivoluzione dei prezzi a Firenze* (Firenze, 1939), Richard Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence* (London, 1980) and Felloni, *Studi Economici*, pp. 1163-1164.

²⁰⁴ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 64 v. ; 'Mastro Andrea mariscalco', one of Marcello's men in charge of the control of the warhorses, was paid 2 *lire* per day; one of the *famigli* received 1 *lira* and 18 *soldi*.

²⁰⁵On the 'alchemies' of the Florentine banking systems and their relationship with the real wages of the town labourers, see Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence*, pp. 301-317. It is difficult to give a better definition of the '*moneta di conto*' than the one given by Goldthwaite: 'The Florentine's sense of value was conditioned by a system that in effect separated the measure of value from the medium of change'.

²⁰⁶Imperiale Cinuzzi, *La vera militar disciplina* (Siena, 1604), p. 106. A soldier from Siena, Cinuzzi fought for twelve years in France and Flanders under the command of Silvio Piccolomini and Camillo Capizzuchi.

early modern armies of the sixteenth and seventeenth century²⁰⁷, and are still now a good criterion by which to judge the effective purchasing power of the soldiers' wages. In August 1527 Lorenzo Tosinghi, *commissario* of Montepulciano, where two companies of the Black Bands were sent in December, had to intervene with emergency measures to subject to price control the victualling of the companies garrisoned in the city. He reduced the price of a *libbra* of bread from 2 to 1 *soldo*, while the wine fell from 4 *soldi* to 3 *soldi* and 4 *denari* for one *boccale*, and a *fiasco* could be bought for 5 *soldi*; a *libbra* of mutton or veal was to be sold for 2 *soldi*²⁰⁸. In October 1527 the soldiers of the Black Bands encamped in Umbria could buy a *staioro* of bread for 7 *lire* - which means approximately²⁰⁹ 2.25 *soldi* for a *libbra* of bread - and a barrel of wine wholesale for 12 *giuli* (14 *giuli* retail price), that is at least 8 *soldi al fiasco*²¹⁰, while forage was sold at 36-40 *soldi per stajo*. The League's encampment drained the Florentine grain market, already weakened by a series of bad harvests, and brought the price of wheat from the already high level of 2 *lire* and 5 *soldi per stajo* in August 1527 to 6 *lire* in February²¹¹ 1528. The situation kept on worsening until May, when negotiations with Siena allowed Florence to import enough grain to lower the price of one *stajo* to 20 *soldi*²¹²; however, in March the Black Bands headed south to join Lautrec's army near Troia, where, according to the Mantuan ambassador, soldiers drank mostly water and a loaf of bread cost 3 *giuli*²¹³.

²⁰⁷See also Parker, *The army of Flanders*, pp. 161-164 and Redlich, pp. 127-130.

²⁰⁸Lorenzo Tosinghi to the Ten, 8 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive 123, f. 138 r.

²⁰⁹The Tuscan *staioro* - or *stajo* - is a capacity measure that corresponded to 24.662 litres. Given the specific gravity of wheat and the baking process, a *stajo* of bread should be approximately equal to 21 kg, that is 61.76 libbre. However, this is the result of a very empirical calculation.

²¹⁰Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 224 v.

²¹¹The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, 12 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 158 r.

²¹²The Ten to Marco del Nero, 15 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 44, f. 94 v.

²¹³Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 18 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 177 v.

Other kinds of goods were not cheap either. In the first half of the sixteenth century the average footsoldier could expect to spend approximately a month's wages to buy a suit of clothes; in the case of the Black Bands we know that a good pair of shoes was worth 4-5 *giuli*: it lasted far less than a year and was as necessary as any armament for people who lived – and frequently died – marching. The main individual weapon of the Florentine troops, that is the arquebus ‘da fante appié’ with its respective equipment, cost the Ten 9-10 *lire*²¹⁴; the Ten also fixed the price of one lb of lead at 4 *soldi*, while the same quantity of black powder was sold to the men of the Black Bands for 16 *soldi*²¹⁵. Even though a systematization of calibres and ammunitions was still to come, we can assume that the arquebus ‘da fante’ could fire a ball of 1 *oncia* or something less, propelled by a charge that weighed slightly less than the ball itself²¹⁶. A pike cost 20 *soldi*, a light horseman's lance 3 *grossi* or 1 *lira*.

Table XV
Tuscan/Florentine Measures

Corn measures:

moggio = 24 staia = 584.710 litres

sacco = 72.088 litres

staio = 24.662 litres = approx. 18 kg.

Liquid measures:

cognio = 10 barili of wine = 455.840 litres

soma = 2 barili of wine = 91.168 litres

barile of wine = 20 fiaschi = 45.584 litres

fiasco = 2.279 litres

boccale = 2/3 of a fiasco

soma of olive oil = 91.118 kg.

barile of olive oil = 33.429 litres = 28.861 kg.

Weights:

libbra = 12 once = 339.542 grams

²¹⁴ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 101. ‘Archibusi da fante appié, con vite, toppe, tenieri et bacchette’.

²¹⁵The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, 2 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Missive, 99, f. 20 v.

²¹⁶ These were the proportions recommended by colonel Imperiale Cinuzzi, who probably left the more detailed sorts of technical information to the arquebusiers of all sixteenth century Italian military treatises: *La vera militar disciplina*, pp. 44-47.

uncia = 28.295 grams

Conversion:

pounds avoirdupois = kilograms multiplied by 2.20462

ounces avoirdupois = grams multiplied by 0.03257

imperial gallons = litres multiplied by 0.220

Table IX

23 May 1527¹:

The Black Bands; 12 companies before the freeing of Lucantonio Cuppano.	3337 foot
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August and September 1527:

INFANTRY	August²	September³
COMMANDERS:	Foot	Foot
The Captains of the Black Bands:		
Lucantonio Cuppano from Montefalco	400	400
Azzo da Correggio, Count of Casalpò	400	400
Pasquino Còrso ^	320	320
Giovanni Turrini ^o	310	310
Giuliano Strozzi ^o	300	300
Morgante d'Antino from Ferrara	300	300
Cesare Farina ^	300	300
Giannetto Albanese	300	300
Giovanantonio da Castello ^o	250	250
Amico da Venafro	225	225
Barbarossa ^o	224	225
Tommasino Còrso ^	220	250
Scipione da Imola	200	200
Pandolfo Puccini* ^o	300	300
Giovanni da Colle* ^o	150	150
tot:	4229	4260
Others:		
Orazio Baglioni, General Captain of the Foot, with his own three captains.	1000	1000
Light horsemen (lancers), under the command of Orazio Baglioni.	150	150
Mantuan heavy cavalrymen, under the command of Carlo Nuvoloni.	150	150

^ Corsicans.

* Captains hired directly by Florence immediately after the restoration of the Republic. It ought to be noticed that Pandolfo Puccini was one of the 'allievi del signor Giovanni' mentioned by Rossi.

^o Florentine citizens or subjects by birth.

The captains of the Black Bands are here listed in order of importance, because the *riputazione* was proportionate to the number of the footsoldiers under a captain's command. Since a newly-formed company of Italian infantry was usually 100 to 150 men strong, the high level of prestige reached along the years by Giovanni's group is quite obvious.

¹ Francesco Guicciardini to the Eight, 16 May 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 22 r. and Otto di Balia, Responsive, 50, f. 34 r.

² ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 66 r.

³ ASF, Dieci di Balia, Missive, 108, f. 18 v.

Table X
The Arquebusiers of the Black Bands

The Black Flags (footsoldiers per captain)	November	Dicember	January⁴
Pasquino Còrso (320) Giovanni Turrini (310) Amico da Venafro (250) Together these bands had 80 ' <i>corsaletti</i> '	/	tot. 473	tot. 425
Rossino de' Ciai (250) Lucantonio Cuppano (400) Scipione da Imola (250) Tommasino Còrso (220)	/	tot. 675	tot. 525
Count Azzo da Correggio (400)	/	245	210
Barbarossa ⁵ (225) ^	/	128	134
Giovanantonio da Castello (250) ^	/	162	162
Pandolfo Puccini ⁶ (300)	/	130	130
Giovanni da Colle (150)	/	79	79
Giuliano Strozzi (300)	/	/	/
Belriguardo da Castiglione (200)	/	/	/
Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto ⁷ (200)*			
total (on paper): 4225	2150	1892	1665
total ('in fact'): approx. 3800			

^ These two captains had been garrisoned in Montepulciano since November.

* This company existed since Giannetto Albanese's departure, but was not officially recognised by the Ten and maintained by Giacomo Filippo himself and Orazio. It ought to be remembered that many soldiers - like the remnants of the three disbanded companies, especially Giannetto's one - literally 'gravitated' around the camp, waiting for their chance to join a company and possibly '*intractenuti*' with '*buone parole*', bread and a few coins by captains who did not want to loose so many '*soldati pratici*' or were hoping for an '*accrescimento*' (an increase) of their effectives.

Unfortunately there is no detailed information on Giuliano Strozzi's company, or on the band led by Orazio's 'protegé'. On paper, the Black Bands' effective force was of 4200 men, but in fact it never exceeded 3800 units. The percentages of Chart ? are based on the '*vero calculo*'.

⁴Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 90 r.

⁵To see how many arquebusiers there were in the companies of Barbarossa and Antonio da Castello, see ASF, Dieci di Balia, Deliberazioni, Condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 94 r/v.

⁶The payday of Pandolfo Puccini and Giovanni da Colle was not the same of their colleagues. ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 28v - 29 r. , 23 December 1527.

⁷ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 127, f. 142 r. , Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 27 January 1528.

Table XI
The Black Bands from November 1527 to January 1528:
Pikemen, Arquebusiers and Servants

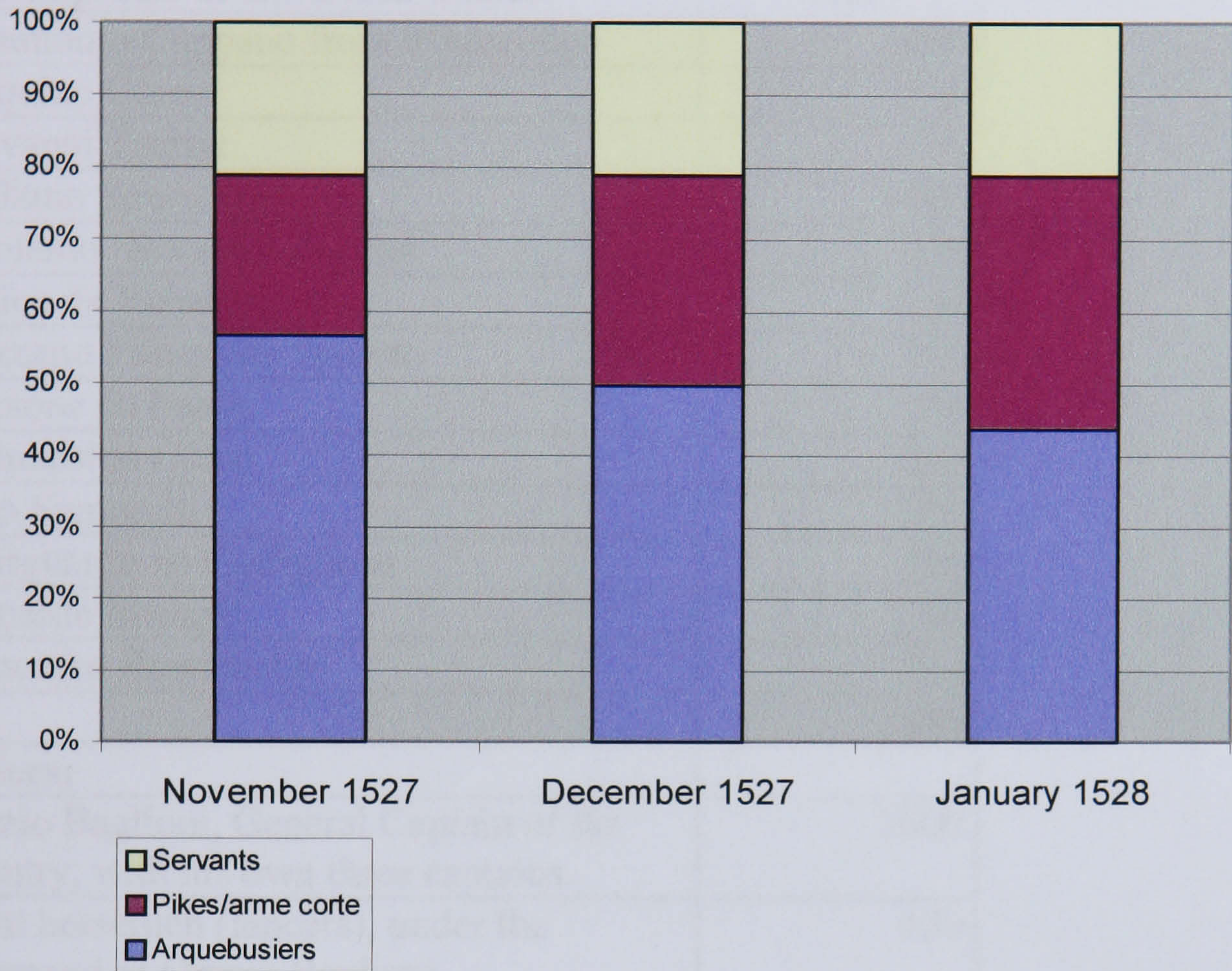


Table XII**The Florentine Troops at the Siege of Naples (April 1528):**

The Captains of the Black Bands:	foot
Lucantonio Cuppano from Montefalco	400
Pasquino Còrso	320
Giovanni Turrini	310
Giuliano Strozzi [^]	300
Girolamo 'Rossino' de'Ciai	250
Amico da Venafro	250
Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto	250
Scipione da Imola	250
Tommasino Còrso	220
Bino Signorelli	200
Belriguardo da Castiglione	200
Bernardo Strozzi [^]	200
Francesco Rustichello	200
tot.	3350
Others:	
Orazio Baglioni, General Captain of the Infantry, with his own three captains.	1000
Light horsemen (lancers), under the command of Orazio Baglioni.	150

[^]: These two companies were garrisoned in Pozzuoli after the battle of Capo d'Orso (see Appendix 2).

Table XVI

Lorenzo Martelli, commissario in campo *		
Orazio Baglioni, captain general of the Florentine foot and <i>colonnello</i> of the three companies of Perugian infantry plus one of light cavalry. *		
<i>Colonnello/i</i> - colonel; captain of his own company. Count Azzo da Casalpò, Lucantonio da Montefalco, Pasquino da Stia. *	<i>Sergente maggiore</i> - sergeant-major. * Giovambattista Gotti da Messina	Maestro di Campo *
<i>Luogotenente</i> lieutenant in charge of the <i>colonnello</i> 's company		Aguzino *
<i>Tamburo maggiore</i> - drum-major		
<i>Furiere</i> - quartermaster		
<i>company officers:</i>		
<i>Capitano</i> - captain *		
<i>Luogotenente</i> – lieutenant		
<i>Alfiere</i> – ensign		
<i>Sergente</i> - sergeant		
<i>Tamburo</i> – drummer		
<i>Capi di squadra</i> - corporals (1 each 25 men)		

* According to its 'regimental' role, the staff that was maintained by each one of these officers included chancellors, paymasters, inspectors, interpreters, servants, jailers, executioners, scouts, cooks, barbers and the ever-present *lancie spezzate*, whose duties ranged from bodyguards to watch officers. Usually a doctor was present only in the *famiglie* of the more prestigious *condottieri*, and up to now I have found no evidence of the presence of a chaplain. In fact, the *preti* are mentioned almost always with open contempt.

Table XVII

'Valenti homini' made by 'Signor Giovanni' according to Giovangirolamo de' Rossi.

Paolo Luzzasco	Lucantonio Zuppano	Scipione da Imola	Giovanni Turrini
Pierantonio da Verona	Annibale da Napoli	Tristano Còrso	Bertaccio turco
Camillo Campagna	Annibale da Padova	Napoleone Còrso	Bernardo da Lantignola
Azzo da Casalpò	Anton Testa da Padova	Amico da Venafrò	Carlotto de'Garimberti
Bino Signorelli	Luigi di Gazzolo	Pandolfo Puccini	Berardo da Padova
Pompeo Ramazzotti	Gian Moro	Quintino da Verona	Mascella di Romagna
Alberto da Treviso	Rosa da Vicchio	Fazio da Pisa	Barba da Pescia
Bartolomeo dal Monte	Federico Castracani da Fano		

Chapter IV

The '*Felicissima Lega*': Florence's Allies

1. In the Emperor's Talon: Florentine Diplomacy

'... si vede manifestamente che li homini stanno a vedere la ruina l'uno de l'altro, et non si risentono se il male non si diriza contro di loro. Il che fanno tanto più li principi, quanto più dalli affecti humani sono discosto.'

The Ten to Alessandro de'Pazzi, Florentine ambassador in Venice

With the obvious exception of the famous siege that caused its fall in 1530, other military events are not considered to have had a great influence on the history of the Last Florentine Republic. Contemporary historians are often too concerned with Florence's domestic politics and inner balances, while during the Risorgimento and the fascist period historians were attracted by the more 'extreme' manifestations of the popular régime. Even military historians such as Pieri focused their attention on the Republican militia, ignoring more 'conventional' aspects like the mercenary troops that were sent to campaign in the Kingdom of Naples in 1528. However, the burden of the defence of the Republic followed the typical trajectory of the other Florentine internal crisis, falling first on the mercenaries, then on the city's subjects and only eventually on its citizens. Actually, it could be said that Florence really lost its freedom under the walls of faraway Naples, and not on the slopes of the nearby Pistoiese mountains, at Gavinana (1530).

When, on 11 May 1527, news of the sack of Rome (6 May) first reached the city, the Medici and their partisans were holding firmly in their hands the levers of power in Florence. Only three weeks before, on 26 April, the proximity of the Imperial army and

the simultaneous absence of the leading figures of the Medicean party, who had gone to discuss the city's predicament with papal lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini and the military commanders of the League, had been enough to spark a rebellion. A crowd led by opponents of the Medici stormed the *Palazzo* and forced the *Signoria* to re-establish the constitution of 1512. The success of the *Tumulto del Venerdì* (Friday 26 April) was, however, very short-lived: that very day the cardinal of Cortona, protector of the two Medici bastards on behalf of the pope, re-entered the city at the head of troops of the League, restored order and cancelled all the measures taken during his absence. The opponents of the Medici had compromised themselves for nothing. The tumult was a 'storm in a glass of water'. The roots of Medicean power lay far from the city, in Rome, and as long as Clement VII, *al secolo* Giulio de' Medici, retained his power and authority, every success of his Florentine enemies was destined to be, at best, brief¹.

However, when the Imperial army outmanoeuvred the forces of the League and marched on Rome, Clement VII himself found out that he, in his turn, was not beyond the reach of the great European powers. The eclipse of papal power that followed the sack of Rome allowed the restoration of the 'popular' government in Florence (16 May 1527), but this did not change the terms of the problem: the Republic was a minor power, and its capacity to control its own future remained, in the long run, very limited. Nevertheless, Florence's efforts to find a new position in the confused international scene or, better still, to influence it, are worth a closer investigation.

Before beginning to analyse the details of the various diplomatic initiatives of the Republic after its rebirth, it will be useful to take a short look at their guidelines and basic assumptions. Florentine diplomats and politicians still prided themselves on taking their decisions following a policy based on rational calculations, that is, on *ragione*, but, if this

¹ J. N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 191-202; on the rebirth of the

certainty had been severely put to the test several times since the beginning of the Italian Wars², from their point of view Italy in the period after Pavia was peculiarly prey to the irrational and the unpredictable.

The sack of Rome epitomised the triumph of *fortuna* - and more exactly of the *fortuna di Cesare* - over *ragione*, the same incredible series of events that had helped Charles V of Habsburg every time his numerous and powerful enemies seemed to have the upper hand, and that had delivered into his hands first the king of France and then the pope. It was a crisis that affected pro-French partisans like Francesco Guicciardini³ as well as pro-Imperial ones like Paolo Giovio, while Florence had to come to terms with its low rank among the powers that composed the League of Cognac, a status that had worsened considerably since the already difficult (and often humiliating) times of the first Republic. Even confining our attention to purely military questions, since 1512 the situation had completely changed, and the technical and social gap that prevented Florence from producing an autonomous military force had widened more than proportionally with respect to the already high number of years that had passed.

As Stephens says, the Republic made the same mistake that pope Clement VII had made before the sack, underrating the Empire⁴. However, more than the effective might of the Habsburg forces, Florence underrated the expectations and loyalties that the Imperial 'ideology', promoted by the recent events and by the intense diplomatic work of the great chancellor Mercurino Arborio da Gattinara, could excite in the Italian scene,

Florentine republic, see also Philip Roth, *The Last Florentine Republic* (London, 1925).

²On the evolution of the Florentine political thought, see Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini* (Torino, 1970) and Rudolf Von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato* (Torino, 1970); on the history of the Florentine republics, see also J. N. Stephens, *The Fall of the Florentine Republic* (Oxford, 1983), H. Butters, *Governors and Government in Early Sixteenth Century Florence, 1502-1519* (Oxford, 1985).

³ On pre and post-1527 Guicciardini see Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, pp. 85-103 and 225-246; on Giovio: Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio*. and the third section of the first chapter of this dissertation.

⁴Stephens, *The Fall*, p. 242.

which was so different from the times of emperor Maximilian and of king Ferdinand of Aragon. In fact republican Florence could only reject the social premises of the Imperial system as it rejected – as we shall see – its line of action. Inside the Republic even the Black Bands, the best and most up-to-date Italian example of the *militia de'tempi moderni*, remained a foreign body exactly because of their modern characteristics, which are the traits that they shared with the Imperial armies. Actually, how to get rid of a certain Imperial army was one of the first points on the Ten's agenda.

During the days of the first Republic, Florentine ambassadors and Florence's ruling class had been left astonished by the undeniable successes obtained – mostly against them - 'fuora di ogni ragione' by the choleric pope Julius II della Rovere through his irrational consistency⁵. In 1527 they were terrified by the proximity of the army that had sacked Rome, even though it had been its passage near Florence that triggered the chain of events that led to the fall of the Medicean régime, which was only sanctioned by the Sack and by the surrender of the pope⁶. The Imperial host that occupied Rome was indeed an 'exercito del diavolo' that seemed to feed on victories rather than bread, uncaring of the fact that *secondo ragione* it should have been beaten and disbanded many times. Almost completely isolated both diplomatically and logistically since the beginning of the 1526 campaign, pursued by the army of the League, cornered by Giovanni de' Medici, weakened by mutinies and epidemics, every time it had managed to survive, either by sheer luck or pure stubbornness. Its *riputazione* was provoking a political and cultural earthquake whose proportions are now difficult to imagine, not to mention the huge amount of capital that was made available in the aftermath of the sack of one of the wealthiest cities of the world. From summer 1527 to winter 1528 between this sword of

⁵Gilbert, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini*, pp. 110-114

⁶Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, pp. 1836-1852

Damocles and Florence there was only what was left of the army of the League, which had been defeated without a fight.

Too feared, too unpredictable, the Imperial army in Rome *was to be destroyed*; this concept was constantly repeated in the letters of the Ten to the various Florentine ambassadors in Italy and Europe; it was an essential condition for the restoration of a semblance of 'normality' - if not of peace. However, the Republic was not ready to wage a total war against the Empire, and the situation, at least at the beginning, allowed some distinctions to be made between the authority of Charles V and the mutinous army that represented a threat to all the Italian powers. It was clearly a political *éscamotage*, but it was not without foundations. As the Ten wrote to their ambassador in Spain Domenico Canigiani⁷, the Medici and not Florence had been enemies of Caesar, and the 'potentia del papa' had caused the city's involvement in the disastrous conflict. The Florentine republic was not ambitious, and its choice in favour of the League had been largely conditioned by the situation: the Imperial generals and ministers in Italy held no real authority over their unpaid troops and could hardly be considered as interlocutors. On the other hand, besides threatening it, Venice and France offered the city acceptable conditions. Neutrality had never been really an option.

The triumphs in Lombardy and Rome of the Imperial captains, who were more intent on personal gain than on the eventual victory of their master - in Lombardy and Rome had won Charles V a reputation for ingratitude and disloyalty. Even when the emperor decided to keep his word, he had always done it through the use of his might, and never through his 'amici'. The real 'gloria del principe' - concluded the Ten - lay in the preservation of his 'popoli', and not in the extent of his 'imperio'⁸. It seems that - at

⁷The Ten to Domenico Canigiani, 18 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legaziosi e Commissarie, 42, ff. 128 r.-129 r.

⁸Ibid. f. 128 v.-129 r. : 'Non ha dunque cotesto principe nel pigliare et tenere questa provincia (Lombardy) usato mota prudentia, perché nel occuparla s'è valuto di tali exerciti i quali se bene gli hanno

least officially - it never dawned on the Ten that it was exactly its line of action that had won for the Imperial cause the loyalty and support of such aⁿ important portion of the Italian military, political and financial élites. In fact, it is interesting to see how the republic's criticism of Charles V's attitude echoed the reproaches so frequently addressed against the Medici regime since the death of Lorenzo *il Magnifico*.

The war had been declared to free the Italian peninsula from the danger represented by the Imperial supremacy, and the reasons that persuaded the pope and his partisans to fight against Charles of Habsburg still existed; if anything, they had been made more difficult and urgent by the fall of the Medici. The Ten were persuaded that the emperor was planning to become the 'monarcha de'christiani'⁹, and that 'a volere liberare l'Italia, bisogni extinguere l'exercito Imperiale'¹⁰. It was not an easy task, since while the remaining Italian powers and France measured their military might by how much they could spend, Charles V fought without spending, ready as he was to give Italy over to plunder by his soldiers¹¹. Moreover, if Italy fell, France and England would soon feel 'the emperor's talon'¹². Charles V's unstable Italian domains, conquered against the odds and retained against reason, had become his force instead of his weakness.

dato molte victorie gli hanno non di meno facto tutti li popoli nimici, et generato in tutti una opinione che apresso sua Maestà non si tengha conto della fede, nel tenerla poi ha voluto condurre ogni cosa per forza né ha cercato di farsi amici... la gloria del principe, la quale consiste non tanto nella grandezza dello imperio quanto nella conservatione de' popoli...'

⁹The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 8 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 160 r.

¹⁰The Ten to Pierfrancesco Portinari, 25 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 139 r.

¹¹The Ten to Alessandro de'Pazzi, 3 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 114 r. 'Perché habbiamo ad combattere con uno che nella guerra non spende, né si cura per mantenerla di dare Italia ai suoi soldati in preda. Noi, cioè Francia e potentie italiane non ci vagliamo se non de' danari, il manchamento de'quali ci darà sempre la victoria al nemico.'. Compare with Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XIII, pp. 1888-1889.

¹²'... l'artiglio dell'Imperadore'. The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 166 r.

After a first attempt to make peace with the emperor through the mediation of the duke of Ferrara¹³, Florence placed all its hopes in the only power that could still counterbalance the Imperial supremacy, that is, France. The city was fully aware of the fact that Francis I was mainly interested in obtaining the release of his two sons¹⁴, who were hostages of Charles V, on less heavy conditions, and that *Cesare's* wrath after the refusal of the king of France to comply with the terms of the treaty of Madrid would not be easily appeased. The republic actually counted on this, even though, as in the case of Clement VII, the Ten overestimated the distance between the Emperor and his enemies.

However, after a long series of military defeats – and especially after the catastrophe of Pavia – it seemed that there was little enthusiasm left for the Italian *aventure* and monsieur de Lautrec had accepted the command of the League's relief army almost unwillingly. In July 1527 the Florentine ambassadors wrote that the general feeling was that this *impresa* was to be considered as the last and decisive effort. Once more the Ten were disappointed by the lack of consistency of the French and, at the same time, by their overconfidence: their vision of the Italian situation was too narrow and their solutions simplistic. This last *impresa* would not be as easy as the king and his ministers were claiming, but, for Florence's sake, the ambassadors were told to encourage this mistaken point of view¹⁵. In anticipation of Lautrec's arrival in central Italy, the Ten held that all the wrongs that the city was suffering at the hands of its allies

¹³ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XI, p. 1873.

¹⁴ On the return of Francis I to France after his imprisonment in Spain, see R. J. Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior and Patron: the Reign of Francis I* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 249-271.

¹⁵ 'Intendiamo quello dici, che costì s'è facto per questa impresa l'ultimo sforzo, et che questo sia ultimo perentorio. Il che quando fussi non ci darebbe pocho dispiacere.. che le cose non sarebbono tanto facili quanto costori si persuadeno. Pure è da metterlo loro in confidatione perché non restino di fare al continuo di fare nuove provisioni...' The Ten to Roberto Acciaiuoli, 29 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 36 r.

and enemies alike could be tolerated for the moment; the new *capitano generale* would eventually recognise Florence's merits¹⁶.

On August 1527 the new League's army started to campaign in Piedmont, but the Ten were determined to avert the danger that on this occasion, as before, the French forces would get bogged down in what they called 'Milanese mud'¹⁷. The road to Rome, and to the weakened Imperial army, and not to Milan, the old dream of Francis I, was the road to victory. The king probably remembered how many times he had cherished vain hopes in Lombardy only to be bitterly disappointed¹⁸; the Ten, with the utter failure of the League's army under the walls of Milan in 1526 still fresh in their memories, surely did, and Antonio de Leyva was still holding the city with an iron fist and with his veteran troops. With winter drawing near, Florence multiplied its ardent appeals to Lautrec, urging him to renounce Lombardy in order to go southwards 'ad vincere il mondo', giving to the *Cristianissimo* the *imperio* that was rightfully his, and that was now in the hands of the enemies of the Christian faith, and gaining the gratitude of the 'oltraggiata tanto et sua tanto fedele Toschana'¹⁹. Francis I agreed, at least partially: the loss of Naples would hurt Charles more than the loss of Milan, but the lack of enthusiasm the Ten had noticed was probably due to the fact that the Italian *aventure* was now a means and not an end. When the *Cristianissimo* ordered to Lautrec to guide his army towards

¹⁶The Ten to Raffaele Girolami, 8 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 42 v.

¹⁷'... attendete a sollecitare la passata nel Reame o verso Roma con ogni studio perché in questo consiste la victoria del tutto, né ci pare per cosa del mondo da perdere il tempo nelli fanghi di Milano...'. The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 123 v.

¹⁸... diciamo che vostra signoria conforti la Maestà del Re a usare le sue forze in disfare quello exercito... et facci spignere avanti monsignor di Aultrech havere la vittoria di Roma et non perda tempo in Lombardia, dove tante volte le false speranze l'hanno ingannato... ma spigna avanti et batta questo exercito (the Imperial army) prima che si rassicuri che essendo uso a vincere sempre la prima bastonata lo pone in terra...'. The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 30 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 78 v.

¹⁹The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 24 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 102 r.

Naples he did so not because of his dream of being called duke of Milan, but to force the Emperor to accept a ransom in money in exchange for his sons²⁰.

The main weak point of Florentine foreign policy was, of course, Rome²¹. Formally, the renewal of the League of Cognac was motivated by the need to liberate the pope, but the Ten spoke more willingly of the need to free the Holy Roman Church. The destruction of the ‘*esercito del Diavolo*’ and the struggle against papal influence were priorities that clashed. After the fall of the Medicean régime, the Republic had to fight first to find, and then to protect its new role inside the League. Florence paid a high political price and exposed itself to all the dangers that derived from its internal instability and from the lack of reputation of the republican ruling class, two factors that in the eyes of the *collegati* were not compensated anymore by the presence of the Medici and of their partisans. Even before the release of Clement VII, the pope’s family and its supporters had been trying to discredit the Republic in all the European courts; due to his ambiguous attitudes and his past pro-Medicean leanings, ambassador to France Roberto Acciaiuoli was replaced by Giuliano Soderini (1491-1554), half-brother of Giovambattista and bishop of Saintes²².

After the liberation of the pope, on 8 December 1527, the Ten hastened to remind Lautrec how little a Medici tyrant ever cared about maintaining his word²³. Notwithstanding the extreme weakness of his situation, his forced neutrality and the considerable financial support given or promised to the Imperial army in exchange for his

²⁰ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 253-260.

²¹ On the relationship between the pope, the Medici, their partisans and the Republic see Stephens, *The Fall*, pp. 220 ff.

²² Giuliano Soderini, son of Paolantonio di Piero Soderini and Margherita di Strozza Strozzi, became bishop of Volterra when he was eighteen, taking the place of his uncle, then of Vicenza and eventually of Saintes - again, instead of his uncle. ‘Uomo tutto dei suoi piacere e amantissimo della quiete’, he became ambassador in France in 1527, but after a year asked to be replaced. In 1529 he refused to help the Republic in its dealings with Clement VII. Giuliano Soderini was among the exiles that contributed to the recruitment of the army that was defeated at Montemurlo, earning Cosimo de’ Medici’s hostility. He never became cardinal.

release²⁴, the whole world, except Florence, from Muscovy to England, rushed to pay homage to *Nostro Signore* in Orvieto²⁵. To Clement VII's ambiguous promises and *buone parole*, the Republic opposed its staunch loyalty to the League, the services of the best Italian troops available and even works of art sent as gifts to the king of France²⁶, but the Ten forewarned the *Cristianissimo* that this time he could not count on what in the past had been Florence's great asset, that is, its wealth. With the possible exception of Venice and Ferrara, the 'borsa di Italia' was empty²⁷. However, there were other sources that could be tapped: the 'borsa di Inghilterra', for instance, was still full.

Already on April 1527 Henry VIII – who, incidentally, had been an admirer of Giovanni de' Medici²⁸ – had decided to support the League of Cognac militarily, hoping to win the pope's assent to his divorce from Katherine of Aragon. After the Sack of Rome the *Serenissimo di Anglia* agreed to pay, for six months starting from June, more than thirty thousand *scudi*, that is the wages of the ten thousand men that composed the German Black Legion. This veteran Landsknecht unit, under the command of French count Luis de Lorraine-Vaudémont, was the backbone of Lautrec's army²⁹. On August 1527 cardinal Wolsey – who had brought with him 300,000 *scudi* 'per le spese occorrenti' – signed in France, on behalf of Henry VIII, the Treaty of Amiens. It was also established that 'gracious' Gregorio Casale, a Bolognese knight of St. John and

²³The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 10 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 2 r/v.

²⁴ On the conditions imposed for his liberation, see Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, b. XVIII, chap. XIV, pp. 1895-1897.

²⁵ The ambassadors from Muscovy gave to the pope a sable fur, while the dinner-service was offered by their English colleagues. '... la corte è qual falita, senza un carlino. Li vescovi vanno a piedi con un capeleto in testa et mantellini frusti, et li cortesani biastemano Idio. Sono come disperati. Li cardinali vanno con 4 servitori et su la sua mula sicome andavano in primitiva ecclesia; pur a li soliti costumi disonesti, et per uno julio (that is for 13 soldi and 4 denari) si venderebbono Cristo.' Aloisio Lippomano, 7 January 1528, Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, p. 488.

²⁶The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 165 r.

²⁷*ibid.* f. 166 r.

²⁸ Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, book 5, p. 310.

ambassador of the *Serenissimo* to Venice and all Italy, would join Lautrec's retinue in order to verify that his master's money was well spent³⁰. During his mission, the ambassador was also accompanied by two hundred English light horsemen under the command of Sir Robert Jerningham (see last section), the only unit of Lautrec's army that was not only paid by, but also fought under the flag of the *Serenissimo d'Anglia*.

The Ten appointed an envoy to the English court as soon as they had been assured that this would not endanger their privileged relationship with the changeable Francis I. As it appears clearly from his *instructione*³¹, the mission of ambassador Pierfrancesco Portinari was not easy, since the representatives of the Florentine Republic were 'huomini novi' and without reputation in that court. Although the Italian language was generally understood if not spoken - and the ambassador was ready to speak also in French or in Latin - the real problem was how to gain access to the *Serenissimo* by overcoming the selfish objections of the ambassadors of the other Italian powers, Venice in the first place, that cared little for freedom or were completely ignorant about it. Freedom was in fact the keyword of Portinari's opening speech in front of the court: 'libertà' for his homeland in the first place, then for the Holy Roman Church, then for Italy, 'patria tanto celebre et d'ogni specie di gratia ornata'.

However, in private the ambassador was to use the many *ragioni* with which he had been 'equipped' by the Ten, who were persuaded that, eventually, what was really important was to have the most telling arguments at their disposal³². The Venetians,

²⁹Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, b. XVIII, chap. XII, pp. 1871-1881. Vaudemont's Black Legion was an unit of 'fanteria vecchia' that had fought for many years against the 'secta Lutherana' in Germany.

³⁰'Questo oratore anglico è persona molto gratiosa, et presume assai del facto suo, col quale Lautrech per rispetto del Re di Inghilterra ha grande rispetto, intanto che io non credo che sua Excellentia habbi forza di sognare cosa che costui non voglia sapere... lui (Guido Rangone) et il Casale in fatto sono molto amici del Papa.' Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi to the Ten, 17 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 300 v. On the treaty of Amiens see also Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, p. 272-274.

³¹The Ten to Pierfrancesco Portinari, 25 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, ff. 136 v.-139 v.

³²'.. bisogna ci armiamo con molte ragione, le quali alla fine sono quelle che restano in campo...', Ibid. f. 138 v.

obsessed by their expansionist policy, were belying their reputation for wisdom. The king of England had to be informed dispassionately and in detail of the military, political and financial situation of the war in Italy as it was seen by a relatively weak power such as Florence, which was correspondingly more aware of the impending danger of the spreading of the Imperial influence beyond the Alps, 'to the ruin of all Christendom'. The Ten saw only two possible positive outcomes to the war: in the first the Empire was expelled from the peninsula entirely, while in the second Charles V was allowed to retain the Kingdom of Naples, and the *Serenissimo* and the *Cristianissimo* - or at least the latter - were to be given 'buono stato' in Italy³³. In either case, the Imperial army had to be destroyed as soon as possible. Henry VIII should ignore the diplomatic proposals of the Emperor, who simply aimed to prolong the strategic stalemate till winter, draining the remaining financial resources of the League. The 'borsa di Inghilterra' had to sustain the offensive efforts of the alliance in Italy, since the only way to really negotiate with Charles V was from a position of advantage. For this reason the Ten urged Henry VIII to spend his money freely through the 'right' channels, authorising - for instance - the loan of 60,000 *scudi* for which Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi had already asked ambassador Casale and that in their hands would have been equivalent to 100,000³⁴. Pierfrancesco Portinari was even encouraged to look for somebody *in loco* who - thanks to a *donativo*, a 'gift' - could help Florence in its constant search for money³⁵. The days of the Bardi and of the Peruzzi were very far indeed.

Besides being a way to get money from a full purse, for the Ten the contacts with the English court were another way to put pressure on Francis I, who relied heavily on his alliance with the *Defensor Fidei* Henry VIII. Listening to cardinal Wolsey's advice

³³Ibid, f. 138 r.

³⁴Ibid., f. 139 v.

³⁵The Ten to Pierfrancesco Portinari, 2 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 50 v.

rather than that of the Florentine ambassadors, the *Serenissimo* ended up by following, up to a point, the Ten's strategic guidelines. Henry VIII discouraged all the military initiatives of the League outside Italy, and in February 1528 he promoted a truce of eight months between Francis I and Marguerite of Habsburg, regent of Flanders and aunt of Charles V. England's financial contribution to the League's army in Italy was prolonged for six months³⁶.

However, the issue that really interested the king of England was the divorce, and his attitude towards Florence changed after the liberation of the pope. The manifestations of Henry's desire to court Clement VII and the greater attention given to the reports of the other Italian powers annoyed the Ten. Cardinal *Eboracense*, that is, Wolsey, and Henry VIII were inclined to please the pope rather than the Florentine Republic, and ambassador Portinari was instructed to reveal to them the true aims of Clement VII, and how treacherous His Holiness was. The pope's liberation had been a positive event for the Italian cause, but it was in everybody's interest that the Holy Roman Church be free, but not powerful³⁷, otherwise it would eventually disturb the peace that was being created at such great cost. The Ten were right, but, as in the case of Francis I, they could not change the priorities of Henry VIII: only unbiased political initiatives, and not *ragione*, could force the pope to concede him the divorce³⁸.

Peace and the restoration of a balance in the Italian peninsula had always been Florence's objectives, and in its pursuit of them the Republic always considered Venice as its main opponent. Unlike the Florentine Republic, the *Serenissima* was 'grande' and

³⁶ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, b. XVIII, chap. XVI, pp. 1905-1906.

³⁷ '... debbono questi principi volere bene che la chiesa sia libera, ma non grande, acciò che non habbia cagione di turbare poi quella pace alla quale con tanto spendio et fatica da loro si camina...' The Ten to Pierfrancesco Portinari, 8 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 146 v.

³⁸ On the struggle for the divorce and cardinal Wolsey initiative in foreign policy during this period, see J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (London, 1968), pp. 198-240 and S. J. Gunn, 'Wolsey's foreign policy and the domestic crisis of 1527-1528' in S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley (ed.), *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State*

followed a different and rather dangerous line of action. In comparison with the tone they used with the other allies, in their dealings with the Venetian Senate the Ten used a far more direct, and sometimes brutal, style. The two republics had been unanimous in calling for the immediate dispatch of another French army to Italy after the sack of Rome, but, immediately after Lautrec's arrival in Piedmont and the taking of Alessandria, their aims diverged. The matter of issue was, as always, the future of Lombardy and of the duchy of Milan. Venice wanted to see Francesco Sforza restored as duke of Milan, and, since the whole campaign in northern Italy was based on its financial support, the League's *capitano generale* had to accept the requests of the *Serenissima*, at least at the beginning. Duke Francesco, considered as 'fallito' even by many of the Milanese exiles who thronged Lautrec's court³⁹, would have been a quite malleable neighbour for Venice⁴⁰.

Florence's point of view was completely different⁴¹. She considered that this was not the time to plan for future territorial acquisitions. The freedom of their states was in danger, and the only way to assure their respective positions was to give the duchy of Milan to the king of France, the only power that could counter the Imperial supremacy in Italy. The Ten thought that in practice it would be impossible to drive Charles V and his partisans out of the peninsula. It did not matter how vigorously his Lombard domains were being attacked, for the emperor cared little for them, since Milan was a simply a 'stato acquistato', and not an inherited patrimony such as the Kingdom of Naples. Only if the *Regno* was attacked would Charles V have felt the need to reconsider his ambitions.

and Art (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 149-177; Peter Gwyn, *The King's cardinal; the rise and the fall of Thomas Wolsey* (London, 1990).

³⁹ Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi to the Ten, 31 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 60 r.

⁴⁰ See also F. Bennato, 'La partecipazione militare di Venezia alla Lega di Cognac', *Archivio Veneto*, 1956, pp. 70-87.

However, at that point the emperor could have offered the liberation of Francis I's sons, and the *Cristianissimo* most probably would have accepted his overture. Therefore, Charles was to be forced to cede Milan in order to retain Naples, and any idea of an attack against Aragon or Flanders was to be discarded, since Charles V was the 'naturale signore' of those 'armed' peoples⁴².

The Ten made it clear that they were quite aware that the king of France had made such a great effort not only to protect the interests of the Italian powers, but to promote his own, that is, to regain a strong foothold in Italy after the disaster of Pavia in 1525. Even though, they said, it appeared logical that he should intervene, if only to protect his own kingdom, which was the next to be threatened by the Imperial 'tide', in their experience men - and even more so princes, naturally aloof from human emotions - cared little about other people's ruin until it was their turn to suffer⁴³. In the view of the Ten, *monsieur* de Lautrec was slowing down his efforts because of Venice's attitude, afraid as he was to be fighting in theory for his king but in practice for Venice. Due to the slow progress of the League's troops in Lombardy, the duke of Ferrara and the marquis of Mantua - the two 'zolfanelli' (matches) that had triggered the great explosion of Rome - maintained their dangerous neutrality. According to the Ten, the excessive 'greatness' of Venice could even force Florence and Ferrara - should France decide to withdraw its army - to sign peace with the emperor, whom the Ten considered as a natural enemy of the *Serenissima*⁴⁴. Even though the magistracy told the ambassador Alessandro de'Pazzi not to emphasise this threat too much, on another occasion it evoked explicitly Venice's worst nightmare: the dark days that had followed the battle of Agnadello (1509), and the

⁴¹The Ten's letter to Alessandro de'Pazzi, appointed Florentine ambassador in Venice, could be considered as the manifesto of the Republic's foreign policy. The Ten to Alessandro de'Pazzi, 3 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, ff. 13 r. - 16 r.

⁴²Ibid. f. 14 v.

⁴³Ibid. f. 15 r. See also the phrase in Italian that introduces this section.

⁴⁴Ibid. f. 14 v.

possibility of a renewal - after the defeat of the League of Cognac - of the League of Cambrai, 'la quale doverria restare sculpita eternalmente nella memoria di quelli Signori...'. Moreover, even if Florence had to have a 'patrone', the Venetians were not great enough to play that role⁴⁵. Alessandro de'Pazzi received instructions to persuade English ambassador Gregorio Casale not to support the requests of duke Francesco Sforzà, and he was to do this, if possible, without arousing the suspicions of the Milanese envoy.

The Ten were determined not to follow the Venetian example by allowing themselves to be carried away by their desires and their 'volontà', no matter how just and legitimate they were. The government of Florence claimed to be looking at the big picture and criticised the *Serenissima* for pursuing its own agenda even in such troubled times, but, besides the staunch and jealous defence of its identity, in fact it did not have a perspective of its own⁴⁶. The popular and 'democratic' regimes of Florence and Siena⁴⁷ answered to their irremediable internal contradictions and to the deep transformations of the Italian political and social situation in two opposite ways, but both choices contained the seeds of their undoing. France and Empire sided with the two republics only in opposition to each other, and both powers were contributing to successfully diffuse 'aristocratic' models and tendencies in Italy.

Florence's main diplomatic goal was the involvement, by hook or by crook, of the highest possible number of Italian powers in the League, and the creation of a united, if not homogeneous, front against the Empire. Mantova and Ferrara were the most conspicuous cases, but there were states closer to Florence that could represent a direct

⁴⁵ 'Havendo avere patroni, non pare loro che li Venetiani siano tanto onorevoli che bastino...' The Ten to Alessandro de'Pazzi, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commssarie, 42, f. 144 v.

⁴⁶On the Florentine republican 'ideology' see the book of Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*, especially pp. 119-145

threat to the Republic. Lucca, for instance, had remained faithful to its pro-Imperial leanings, but, according to the Ten, it was kept in check by its closeness to both Florence and Genoa and by the wisdom of its own ruling class⁴⁸. What really worried the Ten was Siena's 'bestiale stato'. Utterly unreliable and hostile, the Sienese republic was Florence's uncovered flank, the obvious point of arrival for the Imperial army from Rome, should it decide to march northwards. From afar, the Ten said, the most obvious answer to this dangerous situation might seem to be an attack of the Umbrian League's army against Siena and its subjugation to Florence, but the Republic had not 'stomacho da gran pasto'⁴⁹. Time was not ripe for the Ten to follow their 'volontà'. The best choice, they wrote, was still to make Siena join the League through a change of ruling class and the return of the *Noveschi* exiles that would not involve Florence, at least not directly⁵⁰. Moreover, if threatened directly the Sienese *Balia* could invoke the help of the 'esercito del diavolo', that would probably rush to protect what was its granary, making fruitless all the Florentine efforts to keep the war far from Tuscany.

⁴⁷ See A. Katherine Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti nella Siena del primo Cinquecento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, LXXXII, 1970, pp. 4-24.

⁴⁸ 'Lucca dipende dalli Imperiali, benché el freno di Genova et il nostro è per tenerli, ma sono savi...', ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 138 r.

⁴⁹The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 207 r.

⁵⁰The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 7 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 118 r./v. On the *monte dei Nove*, see Isaacs, 'Popolo e monti nella Siena del primo cinquecento.'

2. *'Battaglie di maledetto senno'*. The Debates in the *Consulta*

'Commissario, voi scrivete troppo minutamente de ogni cosa.'

Venetian *Provveditore* Alvise Pisani to Lorenzo Martelli

One of the first official acts of the newly appointed Florentine *commissario* Lorenzo Martelli after his arrival in the camp of the League in Umbria was to take the place of Raffaele Girolami at the table of the *Consulta*. Given the social standing of his interlocutors, Martelli had probably been quite worried about it, but, after a first meeting with the duke of Urbino, the Venetian *provveditore*, the Milanese ambassador, Orazio and Malatesta Baglioni, he ended up by writing to the Ten that, to his great relief, *'questi son poi huomini come noi, et qualcosa di meno ne' discorsi'*⁵¹.

The *Consulta* (the 'Council') was an informal consultative body made up of military and civilian representatives of all the powers that composed the League of Cognac; its task was, at least in theory, to choose the best way to implement in the field the League's policies and the orders of the *Capitano Generale*. In practice, the *Consulta* was more than that: it was a necessity. On paper, the duke of Urbino, who was also the *capitano generale* of the Venetian forces, had full powers, but in fact many important decisions were taken collectively and according to the unstable inner financial, political and tactical balances of the army of the League. This situation was only partially the result of the duke's style of leadership. Even before its controversial retreat from the siege of Milan, the army had mirrored the composite nature of the anti-Imperial front,

⁵¹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 27 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 107 r.

but, after the sack of Rome, the utter failure of his strategy and his ensuing fall into discredit forced Francesco Maria della Rovere to tap all available resources and to involve more directly the other members of the *Consulta*.

Moreover, the host stationed in Umbria was really an army of the League of Cognac, while Lautrec's, with which it would eventually converge, was in fact a French army, not only because of the prevalence of the forces paid by the *Cristianissimo*, but also because of the different kind of leadership exercised by Odet de Foix. As we shall see, the new *Capitano Generale* of the League surrounded himself with a court rather than with a consultative body, and progressively centralized the decision-making process in his own hands. However, unlike the duke of Urbino – who has been harshly criticised by generations of Italian historians for his slowness at taking decisions – Lautrec eventually lost contact with the real situation and the needs of his army.

With the entry of Lorenzo Martelli into the *Consulta* we gain a precious, if unorthodox, observer. Through his descriptive and literary talent, a world of subterfuges, winks, overheard phrases, sudden changes of expressions and tones around the 'tavola' comes to life, compensating for the *commissario*'s relatively low rank on the Florentine political scene and his apparent lack of initiative in comparison with the other members of the *Consulta*. In fact, Martelli followed strictly the *commissione* given him by the Ten, and tried to cope with the lack of authoritativeness of the reborn Florentine republic. The fact that Lorenzo⁵² was appointed *commissario in campo* in such difficult times – and with his son Niccolò still prisoner in the papal stronghold of Civitavecchia – attests both his loyalty to the new regime and his enmity with the

⁵² Niccolò Martelli was among the young Florentines arrested after the failure of the conspiracy of the Orti Oricellari. Lorenzo's nephew Lodovico – together with Dante da Castiglione, another famous 'republican' – challenged two of the Florentine *fuorusciti* from the Imperial camp that was besieging the city to a duel. The challenge was accepted by Giovanni Bandini and Bertino Aldobrandini. The result was a draw: Bertino died on the spot, his mouth transfixed by Dante's sword, while Lodovico, badly wounded, died a

Medici, which was strong enough to earn him the definition of ‘empio et scelerato huomo’ by Paolo Giovio⁵³. The attitude of Lorenzo Martelli mirrored the hardening of the position of Florence – which had finally negotiated the first critical period of transition from Medici to Republican régime – towards its allies.

Even though many *signori*, ambassadors and high-ranking military commanders frequently sat at the *Consulta*’s table, mostly as military and political consultants, the ones with the ‘right to vote’ (besides Lorenzo Martelli) were the *Capitano Generale* Francesco Maria della Rovere, Venetian *provveditore* Alvise Pisani⁵⁴ (?-1528), the two leaders of the French forces Federico Gonzaga da Bozzolo (?-1527)⁵⁵ and Piedmontese marquis Michele Antonio di Saluzzo⁵⁶ (1484-1528), lieutenant of the *Cristianissimo* in Italy. Starting from his first *Consulta*, the *commissario* made clear that since Florence shared the common danger and expenses, the Republic had the right not only to take active part in the decision-making process, but also to maintain its positions; ‘... gli hanno visto che io non sono per cedere se non ad reputatione et honore di Vostre Signorie. In modo che io dubito che io non paia loro un pò troppo rigido. Et per Dio non bisogna manco.’⁵⁷. However, it appeared also clear that Florence was in the minority. To quote Lorenzo Martelli, ‘e’ duoi terzi del giuoco è loro’⁵⁸.

few days later in Florence. This famous episode is narrated by all the Florentine historians of the period. For a general overview, see the book of Emanuella Scarano, *Sette Assedi di Firenze*.

⁵³ Paolo Giovio, *La seconda parte dell’Historie del suo tempo* (Florence, 1563) book 25, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Father of Francesco Pisani, cardinal-archbishop of Narbonne and bishop of Padua.

⁵⁵ Federico di Giovanfrancesco Gonzaga da Bozzolo, from the branch of the Gonzaga that held the title of dukes of Sabbioneta. A pro-French partisan who started his military career in 1496, Federico followed Charles VIII in France and followed Henry XII during the conquest of Milan. At the time of the League of Cambrai he fought against Venice. In 1512 he was wounded during the battle of Ravenna. Sacked by Lorenzo de’Medici from the office of ‘*generale*’ of the papal forces, he joined Francesco Maria della Rovere during his attempted reconquest of Urbino. In 1521 Federigo was again in French service against papal and imperial forces. He fought at Bicocca (1522) and was captured at Pavia (1525).

⁵⁶ Brought up at the court of Louis XII, Michele Antonio di Saluzzo was appointed governor of Asti in 1527. Captured at the battle of Novara, he lost his marquisate and had to pay a ransom of 16,000 ducats to the duke of Milan. The marquis fought at Pavia and was afterwards appointed admiral of Guyenne and Lieutenant-general of Francis I in Italy.

⁵⁷ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 121 r.

⁵⁸ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 10 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 231 v.

France and Venice – or, more exactly, the duke, the *provveditore*, Federico da Bozzolo and the marquis – shared a line of action that took little account of the interests of the Republic. Florence was the member of the League most directly in danger, and its allies exploited this fact. ‘Costoro ci hanno per cenci. Par loro che noi abbiamo bisogno di loro... et come io non approvo in tutto le loro deliberationi saltano come bestie, che mai più vidi sì molesta cosa.’⁵⁹ It was in Venice’s interests if the war remained far from the Veneto and the bulk of the expenses fell on Florence. Moreover, given the importance of the *Serenissima*’s support for any army that planned to campaign in Lombardy, it was in the interests of France to support Venice and not Florence. As far as it was possible the *commissario* tried to minimize the differences – ‘bisognami fare più giuochi che una bertuccia’⁶⁰ – but when all the others turned on him ‘like dogs’⁶¹ Martelli could only yield, in order to avoid complete isolation.

In the *consulta*, the border between political and personal enmities was somewhat blurred; the relationship between the marquis of Saluzzo and Florence was, for instance, particularly tense. The Florentine republic was staunchly pro-French and had almost a ‘Messianic’ confidence in Lautrec’s arrival, but had no trust in Michele Antonio and tried constantly to discredit him in the eyes of Lautrec⁶² and of the *Cristianissimo* – quite an easy task, given the very bad shape of the French and Venetian forces.

⁵⁹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, date unknown, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 243 v.

⁶⁰ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 239 r. ‘Et veggho che li vinitiani e lui (the duke of Urbino) fanno capace il Marchese quello che fa per loro di deviare il fiume (the Imperial army) dalla parte loro, et bisognami fare più giuochi che una bertuccia...’.

⁶¹ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 11 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, 125, f. 232 r. ‘... et io stando a mio uso sospeso mi si volsono tutti come cani...’

⁶² Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 11 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, 125, f. 232 r. ‘All’ultima Consulta il Marchese mi si volse dicendo: “Provveditore, io mi voglio dolere qui in presentia di tutti de’ Signori del Commissario et forse di lui”, et indegnatamente disse: “Vostri Signori hanno scripto – o voi – a Monsignor di Utrech, et lui lo scrive a me calumniandomi forte che io non ho le genti mie. Io lo ho avute sempre et fate male”. Io li risposi che non lo avevo scripto’.

Merchants to the bone, the Ten would never have entrusted to him the ‘conto della cassa’⁶³.

According to the articles of the League of Cognac, Florence’s allies were to keep 20,000 footsoldiers in central Italy⁶⁴, but, in October (see Table XVIII), Martelli’s spies reported that Venice had in Umbria 800-1000 Landsknechts, 2200 Italian footsoldiers, less than 40 men-at-arms ‘destructi et ruinati’, 250 Albanian stradiots ‘e’quali non sono da factioni’ and 150 Italian light horsemen; at the same time the marquis of Saluzzo had under his command 1400-1500 Swiss, 400-500 footsoldiers of various nationalities, 240 men-at-arms ‘male et pessimamente ad ordine, ché non li pagono’, 150 *franc-archers* and 100 *sujet-archers* ‘da non fare molta factione’⁶⁵. It was with these forces, together with Florence’s, and without artillery, that Federico da Bozzolo planned to take Chiusi and possibly to subjugate Siena itself. The offer was firmly rejected by Lorenzo Martelli⁶⁶ for reasons of political opportunism, but the need to find safer and richer winter quarters for the demoralised, impoverished and plague-stricken⁶⁷ troops of the League was real.

However, Martelli’s main interlocutor was his Venetian counterpart *provveditore* Alvise Pisani. In fact, the relationship between the two commissioners epitomised the

⁶³ ‘Per essersi fatto ben conoscere può esser certo non li sarebbe fidato il conto della cassa’, The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 4 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e commissarie, 42, f. 208 r.

⁶⁴ 20,000 out of a total of 25,000. Florence’s 5000 soldiers were supposed to represent the city’s contribution (one fifth of all expenses) to the League’s expenses. The Milanese ambassador wrote to his master that the League could count on less than 8000 footsoldiers, 200 men-at-arms, 400 light horsemen and no artillery; Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, p. 49.

⁶⁵ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 224 r.

⁶⁶ ‘... m’è bisognato fare una giostra col signor Federigo, il quale si ha cacciato nel capo de volere andare a Siena. Et dicendo io che non volevo, et che non volevo scrivere a quelle, cominciò alzare le voce, et dire che vi andrebbero da loro. Io gli risposi che non si haveva a fare in questo modo, et che ogni homo ci ha la parte sua, et che noi non governavamo le cose a questo modo...’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 4 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 220 r.

⁶⁷ Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, f. 350 v. ‘... son certo che in pocho tempo restaremo in pochi, et se la Excellentia Vostra vedesse queste bande franzese come sono redutte la se ne maravigliarebe, perché non c’è quasi rimaso niuno, et de quelli pochi che ce sono ogni giorno qualche duno per votto se ne va a Loreto armato cum tutte l’arme a pedi, et cum lo elmo atachato alle spale, si che la paura fa fare de gran cose...’

ancient tradition of rivalry between the republics they represented. Rich and influential Pisani, father of a cardinal and an experienced diplomat, enjoyed a freedom of action unknown to the Florentine *commissario*, whose daily reports to the Ten – punctually reported to him by the Venetian ambassador in Florence Marco Foscarelli – he considered far too detailed⁶⁸ and an obstacle to the progress of their common cause. Despite this warning, Pisani took full advantage of his superior experience, of his wealth and of his contacts, especially of his son Francesco, cardinal of Narbonne, who wrote to him from Rome.

The correspondence of the *provveditore* relating to this period has been unfortunately destroyed by a fire (what is left can be found in Marin Sanuto's *Diarii*), but scrupulous and pugnacious Lorenzo Martelli, who had to compete with him constantly, gives us an intriguing – albeit incomplete, *a sprazzi* – picture of Alvise Pisani that is, in its way, probably just as revealing. In the long run, Lorenzo Martelli took his revenge: what remains of the *provveditore* – from the memory of his duplicity to his strong Venetian accent – are the detailed reports of somebody who was his inferior as a diplomat. Thanks to the *commissario*'s inexperience, and to a combination of wit and poor selectivity, his letters are a precious, if disorganized, source of information and of details that usually cannot be found in more 'refined' reports.

On 6 October, for instance, Pisani was trying to persuade Martelli that on his muster roll 4800 Italian footsoldiers and 1500 Landsknechts were registered, but the sneer he saw on the face of the *commissario* interrupted his statement; 'Et disse: "Magnifico Commissario, voi nol crede vu' al corpo di così" et cominciò a giurare che gli era vero'. Martelli answered that if those numbers were accurate, between the Black

⁶⁸ '... commissario, voi scrivete troppo minutamente de ogni cosa... Lo ambasciatore mi scrive cose terribili...' Alvise Pisani speaking to the commissario; Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 213 r. In another letter, desperate Martelli asked his masters not to disclose *everything* to the Venetian ambassador in Florence.

Bands and the French soldiers there were enough troops to proceed immediately to the invasion of the Kingdom of Naples. ‘Mo’ – disse – io (Pisani) voglio che noi facciamo un pacto: pieré vo’ i denari nostri et noi e’ vostri, e ogniun paghi le compagnie l’uno de l’altro’. Eventually, the pair ended up by making fun of the whole thing⁶⁹, but theirs were tight-lipped smiles.

During a *Consulta*, laughters and sneers were not an unusual occurrence, especially when the participants were still ‘ritti’ (standing) and were not more officially ‘seduti’ around the table. On 8 November the atmosphere was decidedly informal, and, after the arrival of Federico da Bozzolo and of the marquis of Saluzzo, the members of the *Consulta* started to speak about almost everything but the war. Laughing, *signor* Federico boasted that, even though he could barely find one *scudo* among his things, he was creditor of two republics, Florence and Venice, for one thousand and six hundred *scudi*. Martelli answered that they would have paid him with the ransom they would demand to free the marquis, who was also indebted to Florence. ‘Et così ridendo ridendo il signor Federigo ci disse che gli faciavamo un gran torto’⁷⁰.

However, the atmosphere could also turn dramatic: on 15 October, having sent everyone else out of the room, the duke of Urbino, ‘appoggiato a un muro’, addressed the *provveditore*, the *commissario*, the marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo, who stood ‘ritti ritti’. Francesco Maria della Rovere asked them to act as witnesses of his words, whatever happened to him in the near future: the Venetian *Signoria*, deceived by ‘male lingue’, doubted his loyalty and his wife and children had recently been kept in

⁶⁹ ‘... et così ce la burlamo, et advisesi molto bene quel che io ne credeva.’ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 October 1527. Responsive, 125, f. 119 r.

⁷⁰ ‘...cominciassi a ragionare d’ogni altra cosa che della guerra, et entrò Federigo così ridendo col proveditore a dire: io mi trovo in mia masseritia uno scudo, ma io son ben creditore di due Repubbliche, della vostra proveditore di scudi 400 per resto di mio sudore et mia fatica, et non megli volete dare, et della vostra commissario di 1200 et dite che havete havere dal Re et che io mi vaglia da sua maestà. Dissi che havamo havere dal marchese et che lo faremmo pigliare per pagare sua signoria. Et così ridendo

custody. It was the duke's firm intention to go to Venice, so that, had he in some way wronged his masters, they could punish the real culprit, and not the innocents. The moment was crucial: the consequences for the already weakened army of a possible fall into disgrace and departure of the *Capitano Generale* were unpredictable. Alvise Pisani tried to appease the duke's anger with 'buone parole', while the marquis and *signore* Federico, the other soldiers present at the *Consulta*, showed their solidarity with the duke, saying to the *provveditore*: 'Il Duca parla bene: noi altri stimiamo più l'honore che la propria vita'⁷¹.

Lorenzo Martelli saw the rift between the *provveditore* and the duke and took advantage of it: during the following weeks the *commissario* managed to acquire 'buona familiarità' with Francesco Maria della Rovere. Even though it is difficult to say how much of the 'buona volontà' towards Florence displayed by the duke was sincere and not a tactic designed to put his Venetian masters under pressure, the meetings and fortuitous encounters between the duke and Martelli became increasingly frequent. The *commissario* assured the Ten that he was encouraging the favourable mood of the *Capitano Generale* and his confidences, taking good care to show that he was not doing it 'ex arte', that is artfully, but 'ex corde'⁷². It ought to be remembered that the lack of confidence of the *Serenissima* in della Rovere had been caused by the failure of the

ridendo il signor Federigo ci disse che gli facivamo un gran torto...'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 8 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, f. 396 v.

⁷¹ '...Et così ritti ritti, il duca appoggiato a un muro disse: "Signori per scarico mio venendo caso nessuno di me in questa impresa che al presente siamo io voglio che voi mi siate testimoni a quel che io dirò. Le male lingue hanno subornato in modo la Illustrissima Signoria che ha messo suspecto loro di me talmente che gli hanno in mano la donna et i figli... come io potrò prima io me n'andrò a Vinetia a fine che havendo io errato che in questa cosa non domando altro che ragione e' possino fa la punitione nel peccatore et non nelli innocenti" con le più accomodate et le migliori parole che forse io udissi più un'altra volta. Il provveditore li andava dando buone parole. Il Marchese e Federigo dissono al provveditore: il Duca parla bene, noi altri stimiamo più l'honore che la propria vita.'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 15 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 229 v. – 230 r.

⁷² '...come anche ne scrissi a Vostre Signorie e' discorse meco più di un' hora et mezo sopra le cose de' Vinitiani *incipiens ab ovo*, in modo che e' mi dette una occasione di tal natura che mi parve che tutto quello che io li detti mangiare in su quello appetito se gli appiccassi addosso, et così farò sempre et a ogn' hora che ne darà occasione le occorrentie per non parere però che e' si facci *ex arte* et non *ex corde*.

siege of Milan (1526), and not by the sack of Rome. The duke stressed the necessity of his ‘andata’ to Venice, and for this reason he asked the Florentine *Dieci di Balìa*, through its *commissario in campo*, to replace their ambassador Alessandro de’Pazzi, on the grounds of incompatibility of character. Martelli’s manoeuvres did not go unnoticed: on 29 October, while the duke and the *commissario* were walking and talking together, the *provveditore* was looking down at them from a nearby window, ‘et di continuo ci haveva gli occhi addosso’⁷³. A few days later Martelli arrived quite early – that is, he arrived on purpose before the *provveditore* – at the table of the *Consulta*, and the duke told him in confidence that his problems in Venice had been caused by the false accusations of the papal lieutenant Francesco Guicciardini; a few moments later the *provveditore* appeared, remarking caustically that Martelli had become an early bird⁷⁴.

Although interesting, the constant bickering between Venetian and Florentine commissioners was only one of the consequences of the precarious strategic and political situation of the army of the League. After the sack of Rome and the surrender of the pope – and even more after Clement’s statement of neutrality – the continued presence of the army on the lands of the Church had become not only a logistical nightmare, but also difficult to justify diplomatically. The *collegati* had consolidated

Et vedesi manifestamente che e’ fa capitale grande della Città, et basti.’ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 25 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 247 r.

⁷³ ‘...Poi mi disse “Havete voi mutato ambasciatore a Vinetia?” Dissi che no. “All’hora” mi disse “se io vi vo addunque non harò con chi conferire, perché el cervello di colui io non lo intendo né mi pare di dovermi allargare con lui. Può essere che e’ non vi sia da mandarvi di quegli che voi possiate fidare? Di quegli sapete”. Et soggiunse “Io non mi tengo offeso né mai mi tenni dalla Città, ma da’ particolari, a chi Dio habbi perdonato”. Et molto si andava allargando meco, et il provveditore era col Marchese a una finestra et di continuo ci haveva gli occhi adosso...’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 216 r.

⁷⁴ ‘...uscimmo a una cosa che mai più me l’ha detta: “Et questa è che tutta questa materia la riputa dal papa per haverli il Guicciardino facto capace che io nelle cose di Milano andai claudicando et fecelo per ricoprire il suo falso iuditio sulle cose di Milano con la vergogna mia”... Io l’andavo assentendo et lo confortavo a non volere gittarsi, maxime che questa era di presente più cosa più dannosa a noi che a altri. Disse mi: commissario per hora et per l’interesse de’vostri signori et per qualche altra cosa e’ mi basterà solo che quella signoria levi le guardie et della donna che è a Padova con due putte, et del figlio che è in Venezia... Et in questo mentre arrivò il provveditore et vidi che e’ non harebbe voluto che fussi suto sì sollecito, et mi disse “Commissario voi siete venuto a buon hora”...’ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 10 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 331 r.

their positions around Perugia, but so great was its *riputazione* that every hint of a move by the Imperial army northwards forced the field commanders of the League to consider the only reasonable strategic alternative allowed by their few remaining forces – that is, a retreat towards either Siena or Florence. The Ten considered both these options unacceptable: they had paid much to keep the war far from the city, and the duke's project of sending Federico da Bozzolo and Orazio Baglioni to oversee the reinforcement of Florence's fortresses provoked their sharp criticism⁷⁵. More prudent were the Ten's answers to the army's reiterated requests for pieces of ordnance that could be taken only from the already depleted, and obsolete, Florentine artillery park⁷⁶.

After having criticised the Venetians and the French for months for their failure to pay their troops stationed in Umbria punctually, Florence could hardly deny the expensive support of its artillery without appearing to default in its turn, but, at the same time, it was the total lack of ordnance that, albeit dangerous, forced the army of the League to follow the purely defensive strategy desired by the Republic. In fact, the only practical use that the French and the Venetian forces could have had for the Florentine artillery was as a *batteria* against the walls of Chiusi or even Siena. Employing the duke's own arguments against him, the Ten maintained that, in view of the overwhelming superiority of the Imperial army, a few pieces of artillery were unimportant and even dangerous, since they would slow down the eventual retreat of the League's forces. In their turn, the duke, the *provveditore* and the marquis used their requests for Florentine *cannoni* as a very effective political weapon, forcing the Ten every time to pronounce an embarrassing 'no' that reduced the credibility of Florence's

⁷⁵ The Ten to Lorenzo Martelli, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 42, f. 179 v.

⁷⁶ The first request for artillery – two 'mezzi cannoni', two 'quarti di cannone' and two other pieces that could shoot cannonballs of 6-9 libbre - dated back to Girolami's period; Raffaele Girolami to the Ten, 10 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 123, f. 432 v.

accusations against its allies both at the *Consulta* in Umbria and in front of the *Cristianissimo* in Paris.

The isolation of Florence and its low bargaining power were partially counterbalanced by two factors that even its unreliable allies had to note: the Black Bands and Orazio Baglioni (1493-1528), *capitano generale* of the Florentine infantry. The Bands' contribution to the numerical and qualitative level of the League's army could not be underestimated⁷⁷, but in the aftermath of the sack of Rome Orazio Baglioni played a more significant role.

The Baglioni family has been used by Jacob Burckhardt as a negative exemplar of those powerful Italian families constantly involved in bloody intestine feuds, 'whose rule never took the shape of an avowed despotism'⁷⁸. The pro-republican Florentine historians of the sixteenth century⁷⁹ and the historians of the Risorgimento transformed Orazio's elder brother Malatesta into the traitor who in 1530 sold Florence, the last bastion of Italian freedom, to pope Clement VII and to the *barbari*⁸⁰. In this still well established picture, Orazio has always been linked to Malatesta⁸¹ and appears as a 'typical' member of the family whose reign of terror in Perugia had been mercifully short. In fact, without the personal intervention of Orazio Baglioni and the support of the partisans of the two sons of Giampaolo – who silenced the supporters of their cousin

⁷⁷ 'Et se noi non fossimo superiore come noi siamo di genti, e' ci harebbono in un calcetto...' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 121 v.

⁷⁸ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance Italy* (reprint London, 1990) pp. 35-39.

⁷⁹ For a general overview on this topic: Emmanuella Scarano, *Sette Assedi di Firenze* (Pisa, 1982)

⁸⁰ On the myth of 'traitor Malatesta' see Scarano-Ciardi-Vannocci, *Il Romanzo della Storia* (Pisa, 1986), pp. 239-276; Bartolomeo Valori, *La Difesa della Repubblica Fiorentina* (Firenze, 1929); Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, *L'assedio di Firenze* (Parigi, 1836). Mambrino Roseo da Fabriano, the translator of Fourquevaux's work, was Malatesta's chancellor during the siege of Florence, and wrote a quite bad epic poem in which he tried to defend his master from the widespread accusations of betrayal; Mambrino Roseo da Fabriano, *L'assedio di Firenze* (Firenze, 1894).

⁸¹ According to what Giovambattista Busini wrote in his letters to Benedetto Varchi, the night before his execution Pandolfo Puccini said that Orazio would betray Florence as he had betrayed him. In fact it was Malatesta that 'betrayed' the republic. This was just one of the many mistakes of Busini, but a quite indicative one; Giovambattista Busini, *Lettere di Giovan Battista Busini a Benedetto Varchi*, p. 50.

Gentile Baglioni, a protégé of Clement VII – Perugia would have fallen into Imperial hands in July 1527. The *capitano generale* of the Florentine infantry made good use of the one thousand footsoldiers of his *condotta* and of all his ‘amici’ and connections in the *ville* of the Perugian *contado*, persuading the nearby cities of Todi and Spoleto to join him in his attempt to halt the advance of the Imperial army ‘insolentemente per le victorie insuperbito’⁸².

However, by the beginning of August the citizens of Perugia were so exasperated by the impositions of the League’s troops stationed in their territory that only Orazio’s presence prevented the city’s *Consiglio Grande* from accepting the terms proposed by the Imperial generals. Pietro Squarcialupi, Florentine *Podestà* of Perugia, wrote that, albeit accused of excessive servility towards Florence and the duke of Urbino, Baglioni managed to cool the Perugians’ rage with a remarkable display of ‘patientia’ and ‘dexterità’. According to the *Podestà*, ‘povero signore Oratio’ was behaving like a ‘Cesare’, and fully deserved the Ten’s compliments and benevolence⁸³.

It was in this delicate political and military situation that Orazio Baglioni allegedly committed the crime most frequently associated with his name⁸⁴, even though both *Podestà* Squarcialupi in his letters and Francesco Guicciardini in his *Storia d’Italia* considered the violent deaths of Gentile, Fileno, Annibale⁸⁵ and Galeotto⁸⁶ Baglioni

⁸² Pietro Squarcialupi, *Podestà* of Perugia, to the Ten, 21 July 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 122, f. 279 r. The fact that Perugia had a Florentine *Podestà* is quite interesting and the relationship between the Umbrian city and Florence would deserve a separate analysis.

⁸³ ‘...a questa hora questa ciptà harebbe dato la volta se non fussi stato la virtù et prestantia del signor Oratio, quale con grande animo, somma prudentia et mirabile ---- ha riparato a tutto... in modo che tutta la colpa davano al Signore Oratio dicendo che lui doveva et poteva riparare a queste cose et non lo ha voluto fare per non dispiacere a’Fiorentini et al Ducha... El povero signor Oratio si porta come uno Cesare per tenere ferma nella fede questa ciptà et drento et fuori che ogni di cavalca in campo, ma mi pare necessario che Vostre Signorie per uno aposta o per loro lectere lo ringratino, lo comendino et li diano animo con qualche promessa o di crescerli conducta o di quello parrà... perché questo caso lui l’ha governato et conducto con tanta desterità che è parso dipinta...’. Pietro Squarcialupi to the Ten, 5 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 123, ff. 73 r.- 74 r.

⁸⁴ Burckhardt, *The Civilization*, pp. 38-39.

⁸⁵ ‘... iersera a ore 22 giunse qui el Signor Federigho da Bozolo con forse 40 cavalli et eravi pochi banda di archibusieri còrsi. Venne il signor Federigho a visitare el Signore Gentile et parlando secho fu circhundata la casa sua da quelle bande de’corsi et signor Federigho pose le mane al pecto al signor

respectively as a necessary act or an infamous crime perpetrated to protect the interests of the League and not, at least not only, to quench Orazio's craving for revenge against his relatives. Gentile was suspected of being about to open Perugia's gates to the Imperial army with the help of his powerful Vitelli relatives, since he was married to Giulia, sister of Alessandro and Vitello Vitelli. Gentile Baglioni had always been a protégé of the Medici popes, while, on the other hand, Orazio had always lived his life as a survivor⁸⁷ of the infamous massacre of Midsummer 1500 between the court of the della Rovere family – fierce enemies of the Medici, who had tried to strip them of the duchy of Urbino – and the Sienese entourage of Pandolfo Petrucci, whose daughter Francesca he had married.

Orazio's bloodthirsty and vengeful temper was well known, but the difficult strategic and political situation of the republic and the geographical location of Baglioni's domain rendered it an acceptable, and even useful, aspect of the personality of the *Capitano Generale* of the Florentine infantry. The fact that Braccio Baglioni, brother of Galeotto and commander of a company of light cavalry in Florentine service⁸⁸, simply refused to go anywhere in the immediate proximity of Orazio, was just a minor side effect. Benedetto Varchi described Orazio as a valiant soldier and an 'uomo d'incredibile animosità e gagliardia', but also 'sanguinolento, crudele e

Gentile et li disse "Sta forte che se' prigione della Legha". Et così rinchiusono in una camera el signor Gentile, el signor Fileno et Anibale tutti e tre de'Baglioni, e'quali tre a ore quatro di nocte furono amazati da' Còrsi sopradecti con e' pugniali' Pietro Squarcialupi to the Ten, 5 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 123. See also Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, pp. 1879-1880. According to Guicciardini Orazio allowed Gentile to return in Perugia pretending to make peace with him and his followers. Annibale was the natural son of Gismondo Baglioni, while Fileno was a *protonotario apostolico*.

⁸⁶ Orazio had Galeotto killed notwithstanding the fact the the latter was a prisoner of the duke of Urbino. Due to this grave insult, Francesco Maria della Rovere became furious with both Orazio and Federico da Bozzolo; see Sanuto, *Diarii*, 49, p. 617.

⁸⁷ Orazio and his brother Malatesta had been saved by the direct intervention of Atalanta Baglioni, mother of Grifone, who was the organiser of the massacre that followed the wedding of Astorre Baglioni with Lavinia Colonna.

⁸⁸ Braccio Baglioni had been one the accomplices of Grifone Baglioni during the massacre of 1500. Braccio's condotta included 400 fiorini per year 'per la persona sua' and the command of eighty light cavalymen, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, *Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti*, 64, f. 60 r.

vendicativo sopra modo'⁸⁹, and Clement VII himself shared the historian's disgust for Baglioni's ruthlessness, even though the Perugian *condottiere*, together with Renzo da Ceri, had directed the efforts of the pope's last defenders in the fortress of Castel Sant'Angelo, while the Imperial troops were sacking Rome. However, there was another aspect of Orazio's personality that displeased Clement VII: his consistency⁹⁰. Once Baglioni had chosen whose side he was on, he had no second thoughts and fought wholeheartedly for his master; understandably, such an uncompromising attitude unnerved wavering Clement VII, who was if anything too susceptible to the changes under way around him.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters, the Perugian *condottiere* was an experienced and determined commander, and the priority he had given to his own plans for the Black Bands over those of the Ten did not invalidate his loyalty towards Florence. In fact, his success had caused no harm to the republic, which retained ultimate control of its best troops, albeit through an intermediary. It ought to be observed that Orazio was probably sincere in all his dealings with Florence: besides being, according to him, the best options available for the 'servitio' and 'honore' of the Republic, the choices he had made generally consorted with the 'honore' and 'riputazione' of a Captain General.

His *crudeltà* did not prevent Orazio from acting and speaking lucidly, when the need arose, as was frequently the case⁹¹ during the sessions of the *Consulta*, during which he always assured his support to the otherwise isolated Martelli. The Perugian *condottiere* knew very well that his fate was linked to that of the Republic, and, whether

⁸⁹ Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, book 4, p. 219.

⁹⁰ '... disse (to the marquis of Saluzzo) che era homo da bene, ma che quella sua crudeltà non li piaceva.... et soggiunse che Horatio haveva una altra parte, che dove si giptava e' non haveva mezo'; Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 14 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 509 v.

a murderer or a 'Cesare', Orazio was instrumental in Florence's strategy. Without his loans and advances to the marquis and to Federico da Bozzolo, the Swiss troops in Umbria would have disbanded long before Lautrec's arrival, and the same could be said of the French *lances* of heavy cavalry, that for months plagued the *ville* of Perugia's *contado* with their exorbitant requests. When *provveditore* Pisani asked him to oblige the 'comunità' of Perugia to write a letter in which it asked to the pope to concede the 'legation' of the city to his son cardinal Francesco, Orazio agreed without further ado. When the *commissario* warned him about the future implications of such a choice, the *condottiere* replied that it mattered little who held that benefice. 'Sievi chi vuole'; what the despised 'preti' wanted had no real relevance. What really mattered was that Florence remained 'in libertà' and therefore able to protect the seigniorship of the two sons of Giampaolo Baglioni over Perugia, a city of the State of the Church, from the constant threat represented by the Medici pope⁹². The Ten and Orazio were surely conscious of the fact that, to achieve their common goal, the power of the Medici family had to be reduced, if not broken, both in Florence and in Rome.

Between October and November 1527, the strategic situation in central Italy was stable enough to allow the army of the League to move its quarters from Perugia's *contado* to Todi's without fear of attack (see Map B). Albeit a short one, it was nonetheless a step towards the south, that is towards Rome, where the bad feelings between the soldiers of the various *nationi* that composed the Imperial army, and between the soldiers and their commanders, remained strong, and prevented the host

⁹¹ The relationship between Orazio and the marquis of Saluzzo – who, according to Martelli was 'un poco ardente alla Franzese' – was particularly bad. In more than one occasion, Michele Antonio provoked Orazio directly or indirectly, but the latter always managed to remain calm.

⁹² '...Rispose: "Questo porta poco. O questi preti potranno o non potranno; se potranno, qualunche vi fussi drento mi potrebbe dare delli storpi; se non possono io non me ne curo, sievi chi vuole. Poi possino o non possino, a me basta che i miei signori operino per me quel che io farò sempre per loro. Dio vi dia pur gratia di mantenervi in libertà che io non temo di nulla" .' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 349 v.

from leaving the plague-ridden city. The negotiations between the Imperial representatives and the pope over the financial and political conditions for the release of such an embarrassing hostage proceeded slowly⁹³, but Clement VII was already starting to make his voice heard and his influence felt outside his prison's walls.

The partition of the territory, and of its resources, caused a new wave of harsh debates in the *Consulta*, as the various powers struggled to secure the richer and safer zones around Todi, where the sessions of the League's council were held. The transfer of the Black Bands' *piazza* from Montefalco to Diruta was one of the main issues, as Martelli tried to prevent his colleagues from giving the 'pan masticato' once again to the Florentine troops. According to the *commissario*, the other members of the *Consulta* had already come to an agreement with the *castella* around Todi, and were trying to divert the Black Bands to Diruta, where the countryside had already been 'tutto assassinato' during last summer, and there was no fodder within a radius of six miles. Once more, the Florentine commissioner found himself isolated: '... è una festa il facto loro... Vogliono quel che vogliono, talmente che è una passione et, quid peius est, un pericolo grandissimo. Ma Idio ci aiuta'⁹⁴. Moreover, the bad reputation of the Black Bands and the fact that the Florentine troops had sacked Montefalco a few months before hindered Martelli's efforts to have them garrisoned near Todi.

The discussion on this topic went on session after session, and, to quote Lorenzo Martelli's joke, had he and *signor* Orazio not found in Todi a 'spetiale' (an apothecary)

⁹³ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XIV, pp. 1894-1897.

⁹⁴ '...Marchese si levò in piè et accostommi al horecchio et mi disse "Commissario questo non fa per voi prestatemi fede". Et io son certificato che ogniuno di loro ha bazzicato et tutti in Todi vivono con provisione delle castella a torno, et io so che uno d'un castello che si chiama Marcialla da al Marchese ogni giorno fra grano, biada, olio et legna per più di 15 scudi. Et poi vogliamo sconsigliare et storre che e' non si vada dove vien commodo al alloggiare. Dissi anche loro che havamo mandato a vedere li alloggiamenti di Diruta et che non v'era strame vicino a 6 miglia et tutto assassinato el paese rispetto a questa state. Et che noi andremmo in que' castelli di Todi che havevon dato, et pur loro dicevano Diruta è vostro alloggiamento buono. Et a questo modo non facemmo conclusione alchuna, che è una festa il facto loro. Sonsi ristretti insieme. Vogliono quel che vogliono, talmente che è una passione et quid peius est, un

who sold them a little bit of patience, they could never have endured it: ‘fu una festa bella: quando volevano et quando non volevano...’⁹⁵. As a reaction, Florence tightened the strings of its purse, and the *commissario* reassured the Ten that in the *Consulta* ‘belle sberrettate, risi et inchini io ne do loro, ma innanzi che mi cavino un quattrino di mano saranno negromanti, et non ciurmadori.’⁹⁶. It ought to be noticed that, unlike the other military and civilian leaders of the army of the League, Lorenzo Martelli always refused to reside in Todi and remained with the Black Bands⁹⁷, shuttling continuously between Todi, Montefalco and Elci. It was a hard life: when Martelli asked the Ten to send a new chancellor, he insisted that they had to send a young and healthy one, since ‘qui si sta in su la paglia’⁹⁸.

Eventually (2 December), the Bands were not sent to Diruta but quartered in various castles around Todi as requested by Martelli, even though Vepri, assigned to Azzo da Casalpò, refused to ^{accept} the company⁹⁹ that had caused the sack of Montefalco inside its walls. However, this small success was overshadowed on the same day by the news of the arrival in Narni of the group of very important hostages that had escaped from Rome a few days before. The hostages, now in the hands of Pandolfo Puccini (see

pericolo grandissimo. Ma Idio ci aiuta...’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 213 r.

⁹⁵ ‘... et se non che noi trovamo a Todi uno spetiale che ci vendé in facto un poco di patientia non so come ci avessimo facto ... fumo in su questi benedecti alloggiamenti, che fu una festa bella: quando volevano et quando non volevano...’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 1 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, ff. 347 r. – 348 v.

⁹⁶ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 339 r.

⁹⁷ ‘Costoro (the other members of the Consulta) si sono acconci bene a Todi et hanno buone provisioni, et non vorrebbero sbucare... et mi fanno instantia grande che io alloggi a Todi, et mi pare star meglio a presso a le mie gente’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 26 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 371 r.

⁹⁸ Martelli would have enjoyed having at his side old and experienced *ser* Baccio but ‘... non mi mandino per cosa del mondo *ser* Baccio perché io so che gl’è vecchio et non può e’disagi... ma quando potessi mandare uno di que’giovani di costì mi sarebbe più charo che, benché la fantasia mia fussi a *ser* Baccio, non di manco Marcello (Marcello Strozzi, the paymaster) mi ha facto intendere che e’sarebbe uno amazarlo’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 14 November 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 341 r.

⁹⁹ Count Azzo da Correggio decided lay siege to Vepri, and was wounded to one hand during an assault, while four-six *homini da bene* were killed. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 16 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, f. 515 r.

Chapter 3), were: Giovanni's father-in-law Jacopo Salviati, Lorenzo Ridolfi the brother of cardinal Ridolfi, the bishop of Pisa Onofrio Bartolini, the bishop of Pistoia Antonio Pucci, the bishop of Verona and *Datario Apostolico* Giovan Matteo Giberti, and eventually Giovan Maria del Monte, bishop of Manfredonia and future pope Paolo III. The fact that, having escaped from the Imperialists' clutches, they were, technically speaking, in the hands of a Florentine captain in the League's service caused a serious outcry against the *commissario*, who refused to order Puccini to free the runaway hostages without asking the Ten for instructions. Todi's *Duomo*, where Lorenzo Martelli was together with the duke, became the scene of a mighty 'battaglia di maledetto senno' between the *commissario* and the *provveditore*, who threw in Martelli's face the fact that one of the basic assumptions of the League was the liberation of the pope. The *commissario* replied that he did not know anything for sure and denied ever having said that they were Puccini's hostages. Things worsened when, in quick succession, the marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo joined the discussion. The choleric marquis attacked Martelli frontally: 'Come! Non siamo noi qui per liberare il Papa? Et monsignor di Lautrech non viene per altro?'. Federigo da Bozzolo decided on a different approach and, at the beginning, sided with the *commissario*, but, from the ironical smile on Martelli's lips, he saw that his efforts to deceive the Florentine were pointless. Filled with anger, *signor* Federigo 'cominciossi ad versare più terribilmente del mondo con parole molto mordaci', revealing his desire – which was also everybody else's real desire – to save Jacopo Salviati and to please the pope. The marquis of Saluzzo and Federico da Bozzolo threatened to go themselves to free the hostages, whatever the opinion of the *commissario*. Alvise Pisani, seeing that things were going too far, mediated a solution with Lorenzo Martelli: since Florence did not consider them as prisoners, Salviati and the others were to be escorted to Todi,

where they would stay at the disposal of the League. However, the marquis and Federigo were so eager to show their concern for the pope's cause that they decided that it was up to them to free the hostages, and went to Narni. 'Per una giostra', wrote Lorenzo Martelli, 'io non vidi mai la più bella'¹⁰⁰.

In the hands of the Imperial army remained cardinal Pisani, whose father, *provveditore* Alvise Pisani, was worried about the Landsknechts' possible reprisals. What worried Martelli was, by contrast, Jacopo Salviati's 'cervello di gatta', that would soon be free to plot against the Florentine republic¹⁰¹. In the days following the debate in the *Duomo*, the rumours about the liberation of the pope multiplied, and eventually the official confirmation arrived from Florence: on 8 December, Clement VII had entered Orvieto, escorted by the Imperial commander Luigi *Rodomonte* Gonzaga¹⁰². Technically speaking, the pope had 'escaped' from Rome, but not before he had made significant financial and territorial concessions to the Empire and had promised that he would remain neutral for the rest of the war. The presence of Luigi Gonzaga at the side of the pope was not accidental: Clement had just made Pirro Gonzaga, Luigi's brother¹⁰³, a cardinal, and it ought to be noticed that they were all Gonzaga da

¹⁰⁰ The *commissario* used to call 'giostre' (jousts) his harsh discussions with Federico da Bozzolo and the other members of the Consulta. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 2 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, ff. 482 r. – 483 v. The punctuation marks of Saluzzo's answer are mine. Paolo Giovio, faithful to Clement VII, described in the following terms what happened to the runaway hostages after their arrival in Narni: 'i miseri non istettero molto, che uccellandogli quasi la fortuna, poco mancò che non incontrassero in uno altro pericolo, per ché Lorenzo Martelli commessario de' Fiorentini con pazza bestialità gli volle far pigliare. Ma il duca di Urbino e il signor Federigo da Bozzolo con severissime parole raffrenarono la pazzia di questo empio et scelerato homo', Paolo Giovio, *La seconda parte delle Historie*, book 25, p. 49.

¹⁰¹ '... un servitore del datario ha detto che il Vescovo di Pistoia gli aveva detto che questo cervello di gatta di Jacopo Salviati metterà nel capo al Papa di fargli cedere queste cose ad Firenze et che per questo mezo lui ritornerà et noi ce ne resteremo fuori'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 6 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 486 r.

¹⁰² '... per questa nuova la città si trova sollevata, perché ciascuno giudicha che tale venuta non possa partorire altro che noia et travaglio...' The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 10 December 1527. See also Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XIV, pp. 1895-1897.

¹⁰³ Giovio, *La seconda parte*, book 25, p. 50.

Sabbioneta, like their uncle Federico da Bozzolo¹⁰⁴ who, during the stay of the League's army in the State of the Church, had been constantly throwing in the *commissario's* face all the destruction caused by the Black Bands to the lands and cities of His Holiness.

The liberation of the pope finally confronted Florence with the intrinsic contradictions of being a member of a League that had among its main objectives the restoration of the power of the republic's greatest enemy, and it considerably weakened the position of Lorenzo Martelli. One after another, all the members of the *Consulta* went, or at least expressed their desire to go, to Orvieto to pay homage to Clement VII and to persuade him to support the cause of the League openly. Lorenzo Martelli and Orazio Baglioni, however, refused to be parties to this. In his constant search for political 'weak points' that could be turned to his advantage during the *Consulta*, the Venetian *provveditore* used the *commissario's* refusal to make him appear unreasonably uncompromising. Lorenzo Martelli was particularly annoyed by Pisani's persistent requests that he should go to Orvieto to 'bite' the pope's feet¹⁰⁵. In fact, since he and the Black Bands had occupied the *castella* around Todi, and not the zone of Diruta as they were meant to do, Martelli had to put up with all kinds of complaints provoked by the damages caused by the Florentine troops. The *commissario* considered those complaints preposterous and disingenuous: the Venetian soldiers used to do in hours what their Florentine colleagues did in weeks, 'et se noi azoppiamo una gallina ne va il fumo a l'aria'¹⁰⁶. There was a lot of talk, especially in Orvieto, about what Contazzo was doing

¹⁰⁴ The Ten considered that Federico da Bozzolo had committed himself in favour of the pope after Clement VII's promise of a 'cappello' for Pirro and the hand of Pallavicina Salviati, one of Jacopo Salviati's nieces, for another of his nephews; the Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 21 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 23 r/v. Apparently, the Gonzaga da Sabbioneta, albeit divided by their choices between France and Spain, were united in defence of the family interests.

¹⁰⁵ '... et molto insistentemente mi persuadeva (Pisani) che ancora io dovessi andare insieme con loro a mordergli i piedi...' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 14 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 509 r. It must be said that Pisani himself was having his problems: a few days before, he had been taken hostage by angry Corsican soldiers in Venetian service, who threatened to make him run the gauntlet if they did not receive their arrears of wages.

¹⁰⁶ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 9 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 498 r.

to Vepri, but no one remembered the poor *villa* of Bevagna, which the Swiss in Venetian service had turned into a brothel, not even sparing its nunneries¹⁰⁷. To explain his point of view, Martelli turned to a Florentine ‘novella’, and told the duke of Urbino how Lorenzo de’Medici ‘sent’ Bartolino de’Daldi to Paradise and Antonio Vettori to Hell, even though they were guilty of the same sin, gluttony, simply because Bartolino used to eat at Lorenzo’s table¹⁰⁸.

On 16 December a young *cameriere* of the pope arrived in the League’s camp and, after the *Consulta*, addressed the *provveditore*, asking for further instructions. Noticing that Martelli was near, Pisani tried to present him to the *cameriere*, and asked the youth to turn towards the *commissario*. The cold and arrogant answer the *cameriere* gave on behalf of his master was: ‘Il Papa dice che non ha ad fare nulla co’Fiorentini’. ‘Io’ wrote Martelli ‘guardai in viso el proveditore, che veramente lo vidi cambiare’. Pisani, of course, was not shocked by what those hostile words meant for Florence, but by what they meant for him, since he could not exploit anymore the *commissario*’s refusal to go to Orvieto¹⁰⁹.

However, the thought of how important for his future it was to go, or not to go, to Orvieto, plagued Orazio Baglioni’s nights. If the Perugian *condottiere* remained staunchly loyal to Florence and did not go to kiss Clement VII’s feet, he would probably share the republic’s destiny and would expose his family’s seigniorship over Perugia to the wrath of the pope. Those were the last days in which Clement VII was not strong

¹⁰⁷ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 16 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 516 v.

¹⁰⁸ ‘... mi volsi al duca, et dissegli la novella d’Antonio Vettori... che Lorenzo de’Medici mandava gli uomini d’uno medesimo peccato, l’uno in paradiso, che era Bartolino de’Daldi, perché pasteggiava con lui, et non Antonio, et pure erano ghiotti ad un modo, et l’altro in inferno, che era Antonio.’; *ibid.* f. 516 r.

¹⁰⁹ ‘in questo venne quivi al proveditore uno assai giovane, et volsesi al proveditore dicendo “Orbene, che io ho ad fare proveditore?” disse “Voltatevi costà, che questo è el commissario fiorentino”. Disse colui “Il papa dice che non ha ad fare nulla co’fiorentini”. Io guardai in viso el proveditore che veramente la vidi cambiare. Mostrò, havendo per male non per bene che e’ci voglia, ma perché e’non può più molestare che io vadi et che io facci.’ *Ibid.* f. 515 v.

enough¹¹⁰ to spurn an agreement with Gentile Baglioni's murderer. Orazio asked the *commissario* for a 'ricompenso' for the considerable 'perdita' that he was facing by not going to Orvieto, and Martelli encouraged him to follow Florence's line of action, a piece of advice Orazio, after many hesitations, decided to accept¹¹¹.

The session of the *Consulta* held on 18 December started in a very relaxed atmosphere. In fact, as the duke of Urbino pointed out, it seemed a 'veglia' rather than a council: there was a lot of people 'ritti' in the room, engaged in 'cianciare di molte cose' and in 'fare inchini et baciamenti' to some friends of the marquis who had just arrived from Lombardy. When eventually the duke had the chairs brought in, so announcing the opening of the *Consulta*, those who did not have one left the room. From the start, the *commissario* appeared isolated: the liberation of the pope, his declaration of neutrality and his growing influence had altered an already delicate balance. The duke of Urbino and *signor* Federico stressed the need to leave the lands of the Papal State in order to respect the neutrality of the pope; since Florence had always rejected the idea of moving the camp of the League to Sienese territory, and since it was now too late to do this anyway, the only option left was to withdraw it to Florentine territory. 'In questo' writes Martelli 'balzò drento quel cameriere del Papa', announcing the arrival of Ottavio da Cesis, 'chierico di camera' of Clement VII, who had with him two important papal *brevi*. As *messer* Ottavio entered the room, the already tense atmosphere became suddenly stifling: with one voice, the *provveditore* and Federico said that this time there was no time to ask Florence for instructions. At this point, Orazio made it clear to

¹¹⁰ According to reliable witnesses, the pope had '... una barba bianca, spunto, macilento et molto pensieroso, brullo, lui et tutti e'sua, fino senza masseritie, che se vi si mantenessi sarebbe vicino a San Piero se fussi nel Borgho degli Albizi (?)... referisce anchora che e'non ha uno quattrino, et che è sbattuto forte, et come verrà lo ambasciatore di Inghilterra... gli donava numero d'argenti, perché e'non mangiassi in terra, come e'fa, et che fa un grande spacciare di brevi...' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 21 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, ff. 521 v – 522 r.

¹¹¹ 'El signor Horatio ancor lui è suto hoggi qui, et hammi decto "Commissario, io mi sono rivoltolato ista nocte pel capo la gita mia al papa, et infine io non gli vorrei senza ricompenso della perdita che so fo del

Martelli that they should leave the room before the others could ‘level’ the *brevi* at them, for these probably contained Clement VII’s orders that they leave the Papal State¹¹². In a frantic search for an excuse that would allow him to gain precious time, the *commissario* noticed that the ‘scesa’ that had been plaguing his shoulder had grown acute again, and begged to be excused; ‘Horatio restò, ché non si potette spaniare’. Later on, Orazio reported that Ottavio had not broken the seals of the *brevi*, maybe thanks to Martelli’s absence, or perhaps because of Baglioni’s ominous presence¹¹³.

The morning after, since Martelli was not around, the marquis and Federico kept on insisting to the duke of Urbino that the Florentine troops had to leave the lands of the Church immediately, and provoked the angry answer of Francesco Maria della Rovere: ‘Et se e’ non si volessino partire, haremo noi per questo ad venire con loro ad l’arme?’. When Lorenzo Martelli was summoned once more to the table of the *Consulta*, he answered that he was still suffering from the ‘scesa’. For his part, Orazio Baglioni was afraid that all those discussions were just a ruse to send him far from Perugia and deprive him of his *stato*, and he therefore fully backed the *commissario*¹¹⁴.

On 19 December, the duke, Alvise Pisani and Ottavio da Cesis went to visit Lorenzo Martelli, who received them in his room with a towel (a ‘sciugatoietto’) wrapped around his neck, presumably to relieve the sufferings caused by the ‘scesa’. Ottavio assured the *commissario* that the pope trusted him and considered him a *homo da bene*, but also asked him to remove the Florentine troops from around Todi;

non vi andare, dare altra ombre che e’ si possa havere de’facti mia”. Io gli dissi che la pensassi bene...’. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 16 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 514 v.

¹¹² ‘... come si venne a questo, il signor Horatio mi fe’ intendere che era bene che noi ce n’andassimo avanti che ci spianassimo adosso que’brevi, che debbono essere comandatorii che noi dobbiamo nectare...’, *ibid.*, f. 526 v.

¹¹³ ‘Per vedere se potessimo acquistare tanto tempo che Vostre Signorie si potessimo risolvere, che non lo credo. Et per questo io mi arzai et chiesi licentia dicendo che havevo una spalla che non era mia – et è vero – per un po’ di scesa... Ottavio non volle presentare el breve, o per paura di Horatio, o per non vi vedere me’ *Ibid.* ff. 526 v. – 527 r.

¹¹⁴ ‘dice (Orazio): “Costoro ci vogliono levare di qui per mandarci in sul Vostro per levare me da Perugia et mettervisi loro et poi menarci per il naso...” *ibid.* f. 527 r.

according to Martelli Ottavio ‘parlò assai honestamente’ but his words were ‘minatorie’. In fact, the *chierico di camera* was trying to gloss over the untimely words of the *cameriere*, whom he called a ‘pazerello’, but, at the same time, he did not refrain from criticism and pronounced more than one ‘parola pugnente’, especially against the Florentine forces. Eventually Orazio and the duke left the room to discuss military issues,⁴ and Lorenzo Martelli remained alone with Ottavio. After ‘mille belle parole’, the *chierico* revealed to the *commissario* that he was the son of messer Agnolo da Cesis, a very close friend of his through his brother (maybe Giovanfrancesco Martelli, the father of Ludovico), and he dismissed the *cameriere*’s blunder as personal and unconnected with the *missione* given to the young man by the pope. It is difficult to tell how Clement VII had selected the bearer of his *brevi*, or even if he had deliberately chosen someone who could boast, at some level, a connection with Lorenzo Martelli, in order to try to influence him. The pope had certainly not forgotten that he still had in his hands something that could interest the *commissario*. After all his ‘belle parole’, messer Ottavio ‘m’entrò in mio figlio’¹¹⁵.

Since his arrest, in 1522, for his involvement in the *congiura* of the Orti Oricellari, Niccolò di Lorenzo Martelli had been held prisoner in the papal stronghold of Civitavecchia. In August 1527, Niccolò wrote to the Ten, asking them to intervene with Andrea Doria, who was currently his ‘owner’, that is the holder of the ‘cedola’ of two hundred and fifty *scudi* Niccolò was supposed to pay to refund the expenses of his own captivity. However, wrote Niccolò, during the last year he had been prisoner of Bartolomeo della Valle, a Florentine citizen and a ‘sviscerato servitore della casa de’Medici’, who had kept him in chains, naked and barefoot like ‘el più vil homo del

¹¹⁵ ‘... quel messer Ottavio restò mecho et femmi mille belle parole, dandomisi ad conoscere per figlio di messer Agnolo da Cesis, amicissimo mio per conto di mio fratello, et scusommi le parole di quel cameriere, dicendo che era un pazerello, et che il Papa non gli aveva dato questa commissione. Poi mi entrò in mio figlio...’, Ibid. f. 519 v.

mondo'. From the bottom of the papal dungeons Niccolò Martelli argued that Bartolomeo could not have spent more than thirty *scudi*¹¹⁶.

'Habbiate fede' said Ottavio 'et ricordatevi che il papa ha nome Clemente, et userà clementia'. The *commissario*'s sharp reply was that, up to that day, he had never seen any evidence of Clement's clemency, and that he had 'più caro che lui avesse questo carico con tutto il mondo, che rihavere il mio figlio'. So rebuked, the *chierico* took his leave, after having lavished 'one thousand bows and *isberrettate*'¹¹⁷

Determined to hamper the works of the *Consulta* as much as possible, in the days that followed Lorenzo Martelli kept on playing the role of the sick man, laying in his 'political' bed far from Todi. On 21 December, 'con arte di malattia et con ciurmeria di parole'¹¹⁸, the Black Bands were still in Umbria and were not heading ^{for} Tuscany. However, although on 23 December Martelli alleged that he was taking pills ('pigliavo pillole') and could not ride, the 'signori da Todi' could, and the whole *Consulta* went to the *commissario*'s quarters in Elci. Martelli faced the requests of those who were all too eager to please Clement VII by leaving the Papal State, and countered them with Florence's strategic guidelines. Martelli distrusted the pope¹¹⁹ and his vague promises,

¹¹⁶ '...quando il papa fu preso, per sua commessione mi trovavo prigionie nella rocha di Civita Vecchia, sotto la cura di Bartolomeo della Valle fiorentino, qual, oltre alle stranezze grande pel passato mi ha fatto senza commessione, per dimostrare esser sviscerato servitore della casa de' Medici, mi forzò al farli una cedola di scudi CCL, per un anno sono stato a spese sua. Et la dette a messer Andrea Doria che li promesse non mi relaxare se non lo satisfacevo... Hora decto Bartolomeo della Valle mi ha tenuto sempre scalzo et nudo come el più vil homo del mondo, con libre LX di ferri a' piedi, di modo che non che se li venga scudi CCL ma a pena scudi XXX. Et perché io non vorrei mi facessi questo torto...' Niccolò Martelli to the Ten, 10 August 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 123, f. 155 r.

¹¹⁷ '... dissegli che fino a qui non gnene avevo veduto usare, et che io havevo più caro che lui avesse questo carico con tutto il mondo che rihavere il mio figlio... et con mille inchini et isberrettate si partì da me.' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 19 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, ff. 519 v. – 520 r.

¹¹⁸ 'Io scripsi una lettera a quelli signori, molta dolce et grata inverso messer Ottavio, dolendomi non poter così subito levarmi. Et perché per non poter ancor cavalchare, feci loro intendere che mi havessino per iscusato... con arte di malattia et con ciurmeria di parole, siam anchora qui...' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 21 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 521 r/v.

¹¹⁹ 'Uno amico mi ha detto che il Papa non mi ha punto in concepto, et lo credo perché m'ha offeso et offende, come egli è mal disposto delle cose della città... et così mal contento di Horatio, quale se non muta proposito non è per andare più da lui, ancorché il maestro di casa del Papa, che è molto suo, ogni giorno ne lo infesti...' Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 23 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 543 v.

and suggested that the army of the League should set up a line of defence around Todi, where it would receive logistical support from Perugia and from the Florentine state. In fact, what really plagued the *commissario* was not the ‘scesa’ but the complete lack of news and instructions from Florence, where the new Ten were about to be appointed¹²⁰.

Eventually Martelli’s passive resistance and his delaying actions managed to appease the pro-papal inclinations of the other members of the *Consulta*; they had tried everything to change his and Orazio’s mind: ‘commissari di Papa, brevi, lettere loro di fuocho, parole efficacissime, et ultimo, ogni duo giorni, 3 volte alla fila venire qui in persona tutti’, but in vain. The ‘battaglia’ fought on 23 December had been, apparently, ‘l’ultima’¹²¹, and still the seals of the papal *brevi* – that dreaded ‘bavalischio’ (‘basilisk’) – were intact. The ‘monster’ could still come out of his den during one of the future ‘battles’, but the *commissario* had already asked messer Ottavio twice to read the *brevi*, and the *chierico* had refused to do so¹²². It is possible that they were, in fact, just a gambit, if not a complete bluff, designed to check how far the pope could still influence events and, if possible, to make Martelli – that is, Florence – flinch. On 29 December the *commissario* made his ‘recovery’ official by going to Todi to visit the duke of Urbino, who warmly welcomed him: ‘Commissario, voi siate el ben guarito’ and added ‘se voi pure havete havuto male.’¹²³

However, those of the second half of December were the last important ‘battaglie di maledetto senno’ which were to be fought in the camp of the League in Umbria.

¹²⁰ ‘Per l’amore di Dio quelle mi advisino come m’habbi ad governare et non fidate di dire “Lorenzo farà et dirà”. Che se pure io ci erro, non lo imputino Vostre Signorie al manco ad me, e maxime che io non veggho che qui si facci altro che macchinare di levarci di qui ad complacencia del Papa...’ Ibid. f. 542 r.

¹²¹ ‘Veduta la resistentia nostra, hanno mutato vento... da 23 in qua, che mi dettono l’ultima battaglia, mai più me n’hanno parlato.’ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 25 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 538 v.

¹²² ‘... io gli ho ben visti (the *brevi*) in mano a messer Ottavio, ma suggellati, et credo io che le parole mie dolci et le lettere buone fino a qui l’habbino ritenuto di non gli pubblicare, non ostante che io due volte dicessi che gli mostrassi. Ma pocho staremo ad havere una altra battaglia, et forse uscirà fuori questo bavalischio...’. Ibid. f. 539 r.

¹²³ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 28 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 531 r.

During the last days of the year Federico da Bozzolo died in Todi; according to Martelli ‘veramente... da buono christiano’. Federico had been suffering since May from internal bleeding since his horse had fallen on him three times during the last failed attempt to free the pope immediately after the fall of Rome, breaking first an arm, then a leg and eventually his body armour¹²⁴. When the physicians opened him up, they noticed that his entrails were ‘marcie’¹²⁵. With his death, the *Consulta* lost one of its more active members, but by the end of 1527 the strategic context in central Italy had started to change, and, after months of skirmishes in Lombardy, the Kingdom of Naples had become the League’s main target for the campaign that was about to begin. The road that Lautrec’s army would follow in its march towards the south was yet to be decided, but the League’s host quartered near Todi was about to lose much of the importance that, even with its weakened forces, it had had in the region before it lost its identity completely. There was no point in fighting a *battaglia* or a *giostra* around the table of the *Consulta* if it was not a point of reference for all the powers of the area (see the ‘Carta de casa Orsina’, Map C), from the pope to the minor *signori* like the Varano of Camerino, the Orsini or the Vitelli. The military side also prevailed over politics in the letters of Martelli, in which the principal subject addressed was taking control of the Black Bands.

Obviously, the military hierarchies had to be revised. His *honore* and his *reputazione* did not allow the duke of Urbino to stay in the same camp as monsieur de

¹²⁴ ‘...il prefato signore andò per far prova di liberare il papa, li cascò adosso tre volte il cavallo, la prima li ruppe una gamba, la seconda un braccio, et la terza essendosi il cavallo levato in piede cascò a l’indrieto, et con l’arcione de la sella che era ferrata li dette sullo stomaco, et la botta fu tanto grande che li ruppe la coraccia che haveva in dosso, dove si crede che sia tutto guasto di dentro...’ Benedetto Agnello to the marquis of Mantua, 19 May 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 874, f. 96 r/v.

¹²⁵ ‘... mi condolsi assai della morte del signor Federigho, quale veramente è morto da buono christiano. Feciolono sparare, et trovarono le interiora tutte marcie, et dannone causa alla caduta di questo anno.’ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 29 December 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 534 r. In announcing his death to their ambassadors to Lautrec’s camp, the Ten were quite explicit: ‘Il signor Federigo si morì. Il Christianissimo n’ha fatto perdita, et essendosi dimostrato dopo la liberatione del papa

Lautrec, who held the title of *capitano generale* of the League now as he had formerly. Effectively Francesco Maria della Rovere had been discharged, and he went back to Venice, with his troops from Urbino, shortly before the remaining units of the *Serenissima* joined the French army. The marquis of Saluzzo, lieutenant of the *Cristianissimo* in Italy, carved out a role for himself under the command of Lautrec. In the end, before they merged with the new main body, all the different parts of the army of the League in Umbria had started to operate separately.

As far as the Black Bands and the plan to reform them were concerned, Lorenzo Martelli had failed in his mission (see Chap. 3), but, from a diplomatic point of view, there is no doubt that he had carried out his *commissione* with success. Almost invariably Martelli had had to fight his ‘battles’ in the *Consulta* from a position of inferiority, but, at the time of his recall to Florence, the army of the League had not only not entered Florentine territory, it had moved to the south, regaining, at least partially, the initiative. With his transfer we lose a precious, witty and meticulous observer. However, even if Giovambattista Soderini had had the same literary talent as Lorenzo Martelli (which he did not), he would not have had occasion to expatiate much about his own ‘battles’; as we shall see, the decision-making process in Lautrec’s army was quite a different matter.

nimico nostro, non ci pare havere perso niente.’ The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 2 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 43, f. 57 v.

3. *Cortigiani and Commissarii: Lautrec's Descent*

'... e per aver li figlioli si calerebbe le brache el Re francese, e lasciarebe el mondo in bordello...'

Paolo Giovio to Domenichi, 14 February 1527

Albeit rude, this phrase of papal courtier Paolo Giovio express effectively what in fact was a widespread feeling about France's real intentions and effective margin of manoeuvre in the Italian peninsula in the years after Pavia. Between 1527 and 1528, no one doubted that the first aim of Francis I, after his release and his disavowal of the Treaty of Madrid, was the liberation of his two sons, hostages of Charles V who, having been cheated by their father, was not favourable to any compromise that did not include the application of Madrid's articles¹²⁶. The only dignified choice left to the *Re francese* was to put the Emperor under military and political pressure, in order to make Charles accept a substantial ransom in money, as a substitute for the lands that were part of his Burgundian inheritance. The descent, in August 1527, of the new French army into Italy should be viewed in this political and strategic framework, which implied, once the main objective had been attained, the option of leaving France's Italian allies like Florence 'in bordello' (in *real* trouble). As we shall see, there is also the possibility that Lautrec and his host were eventually included among the 'expendables'.

In September Genoa was recaptured by Andrea Doria, then still in French service, while Odet de Foix, the 'Stormer of Cities', took Alessandria. On 5 October the *honte* of Pavia was partially avenged, as the city itself was occupied and sacked by the troops of

¹²⁶ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, p. 257.

the League¹²⁷. After long weeks of skirmishes with the Imperialists in Lombardy, and of diplomatic manoeuvres to persuade Ferrara and Mantua¹²⁸ to join the League, monsieur de Lautrec established his winter quarters between Parma and Piacenza, whence he set out having reorganized his army for the expedition against the Kingdom of Naples. At the beginning of January the troops of the League (see Table XIX) left Bologna, and headed southwards following the ‘cammino del Tronto’ (see Map B). By that time Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi had been replaced as Florentine ambassador to Lautrec by Marco del Nero. ‘Amantissimo del popolo’ and, since he did not like either Niccolò Capponi or Baldassarre Carducci, not compromised with the various ‘sette’¹²⁹ that dominated the Florentine political scene, Marco del Nero was ‘se non valentissimo, almen fedelissimo, e santo, e più che di comunal cervello...’. According to the pro-republican Busini, had Marco not been too young, he would have probably been elected *Gonfaloniere* after Capponi’s first term of office¹³⁰. Del Nero was also very rich, a connoisseur of French customs, and fulfilled his duties as ambassador with ‘splendore’: he always dressed with elegance, kept open house and was always surrounded by

¹²⁷ ‘... La città andò a sacco, e vi fu per otto dì continui usata da’franzesi crudeltà grande e fatti molti incendi, per memoria della rotta ricevuta nel barco.’ Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XIII, pp. 1886-1887. On the sack of Pavia, and on the interesting distinction between the attitude of the Italian soldiers and of the ‘oltramontani’, see Sanuto, *Diarii*, 46, p. 172. ‘... se prese Pavia per forza, con grandissima reputatione di soldati italici, quali forno li primi ad entrare, combatendo et expulsando li nemici, con pochissimo danno di questo exercito. Da poi la expulsatione de lo inimico, la città è ita tutta a sacco, fatto presoni dal canto nostro ad usanza di bona guerra. De quelli della terra non è perito alcuno né non periranno altramente, salvo ne la roba, et pagare qualche taglia come si serve; vero è che de’ guasconi, lanzinech et altra gente barbara hanno usato qualche mali termini ne’ tractamenti a la usanza loro, non di equiparar a la militia de italiani’.

¹²⁸ Alfonso d’Este, duke of Ferrara, joined the League in November; see Knecht, *Francis I*, p. 215. After the disaster of 1526 and the sack of Rome – caused in part by the ambiguous political conduct of those two ‘zolfanelli’, as Ferrara and Mantova were sometimes called by the Ten – there was no way to leave them behind once more without taking precautions. As we shall see, Mantova and Ferrara sent each a company of heavy cavalry to the camp of the League. See Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, book XVIII, chapt. XIV, pp. 1892-1893.

¹²⁹ However, Benedetto Varchi says that Marco del Nero was ‘troppo buono, cioè alquanto superstizioso, e troppo credulo, dando fede a’profeti falsi, come il frate (Savonarola) e altri...’. Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, book 5, p. 325. On the Florentine ‘sette’, see Von Albertini, *Firenze dalla repubblica al principato*.

¹³⁰ Busini, *Lettere a Benedetto Varchi*, 5th letter, p. 32. ‘Si ragionò di fare una legge solo per conto suo circa el tempo, ma si dubitò... per il favore de’Medici e dei Capponi per quella legge... Né mai Firenze

servants. The French loved this 'religione' of his¹³¹. However, during his stay in the camp of the League, del Nero's patience and great talent for finding compromises was put severely to the test, and not only, as we have seen, by the contrast between Orazio Baglioni and Giovambattista Soderini.

His past experiences in Italy and his defeats apparently had taught Marshal Lautrec¹³² (1483-1528, see Plates 4 and 5) very little. He was still the epitome of the great French noble: he was 'superbo' and fully aware of this irritating fact, a detail which, according to his own point of view, was largely offset by his undeniable merits¹³³. As a matter of fact, any advantage that he derived from his military skills as a strategist was often nullified by his style of leadership, which was to be, eventually, his undoing. Unlike the duke of Urbino, the viscount of Lautrec was not surrounded by a *Consulta*, but by a 'corte', and a 'king', even one on a reduced scale, does not really negotiate important matters with his courtiers; a ruler issues orders. However, while a good ruler at least listened to the advice of other people, Lautrec almost always reacted with anger to those who persisted in having a view of the situation that differed markedly from his, and rewarded them with his disfavour. Moreover, since nobody else seemed able to execute his orders correctly, he tended to concentrate power in his own hands. However, a single man could not coordinate everything, and eventually it became

ebbe sì bella coppia, perché quello (Marco de Nero) per la pace, questo (Giovambattista Soderini) per la guerra era singolarissimo.'

¹³¹ '... vestiva onorato, teneva tavola, copioso di servitori, e quella religione molto piaceva ai Francesi...'. Ibid. In the same period Lorenzo Martelli slept 'in sulla paglia' and sometimes had to say to the other members of the *Consulta*: 'Non consumiamo il tempo in questo, terminiamo la cose... che si fa tardi, et io no ho ordine da darvi cena...'

¹³² Famous for having been beaten at the battle of Bicocca and for being the brother of *Madame de Chateaubriant*, the mistress of Francis I, Odet de Foix's figure has never been thoroughly studied; see the quite outdated biography written by Bertrand de Chanterac, *Odet de Foix, Vicomte de Lautrec* (Paris, 1930).

¹³³ '...una bellissima gentildonna amata da Odetto di Foix, chiamato Monsignor di Lutrec... gli diceva motteggiando ch'egli era ben nobile e valente ma ch'era troppo superbo, come'era forse vero, perché essendogli corteggiato ogni mattina da nobilissimi e ricchissimi signori feudatarii dello stato, non levando la berretta, appena degnava di guardarli in viso, il che faceva scandalizzare e ammutinare tutta la nobiltà di Milano'. Lautrec's *impresa* was 'un largo camino d'una fornace che ardeva con un gran fuoco dentro e

Lautrec's invariable practice to issue peremptory instructions, which could not be implemented without a well-articulated chain of command, that is one that could pass on information, and sometimes orders, in both directions. By the time of his fatal illness in August 1528 no bad news regarding his dying army was able to reach the hearing of the dying general Lautrec¹³⁴.

However, there was bad news that even the Captain General of the League could not ignore: that coming from France and from his king. In January 1528, just when the army was about to begin its march towards Naples, Lautrec saw the French financial allocations assigned to his troops reduced from one hundred and thirty thousand *scudi* per month, granted to him by Francis I at the moment of leaving Paris, to sixty thousand *scudi* per month, and even in this case only for the next three months¹³⁵. According to del Nero's sources of information, this drastic reduction was the result of the rivalry between Lautrec and the chancellor of France Antoine Duprat¹³⁶ (1464-1535), who was scheming to turn Francis I against the general¹³⁷. Either a scheme to draw on the 'borsa d'Italia', or a necessity imposed by the huge effort of collecting in France the two million *écus au soleil* needed for the ransom of the two princes, the reduction forced Lautrec to turn to his Italian allies, that is Venice and Florence.

Marco del Nero quickly saw that the sums of money he was allowed to offer on behalf of the Ten, and the way in which Florence stuck rigidly to the percentage of one

per le bocche usciva fuori molta nebbia di fumo con un motto che diceva: "Dov'è gran foco è gran fumo"...'. Giovio, *Dialogo dell'Imprese militari e amoroze*.

¹³⁴ In Italian, Lautrec would be considered an evident case of 'cadornismo'. This word, that has never acquired currency in Italian, originated from the (infamous) popular memory of general Cadorna, who managed to destroy - with his systematic denial of reality, his senseless idea of discipline and his contempt for the life of his soldiers - the fighting spirit of his own men during the Great War of 1915-1918, and came exceedingly near to annihilating the entire Italian army.

¹³⁵ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 February, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 360 r.; see Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XVII, pp. 1912-1913.

¹³⁶ On Antoine Duprat, chancellor of France and archbishop of Sens, see Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*.

¹³⁷ '... secondo che io ritraggo è tanta emulatione in fral gran Cancelliere che ha il carico di tutto, et questo illustrissimo capitano, che si dimentica lo honore et il bene di tutta questa impresa'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 157 r.

fifth of all expenses the city was expected to sustain, risked alienating the *capitano generale*. On the other hand, Venetian ambassador Piero da Ca'di Pesaro (? -1528) answered Lautrec's requests for money with fair promises – which were often empty ones, since Pesaro passed off the money Venice had to give to the League anyway as an allocation of funds made ad hoc for the occasion – that appeased the French commander as much as Florence's reasonable 'excusationi' seemed to irritate him¹³⁸. However, according to del Nero, what really made things look bad for Florence's 'riputazione' were the negotiations about the 'pratica de'Lanzi'. The military leaders of the League had managed to get in touch with the remaining commanders and the elected representatives of the Landsknechts in Rome, who had allegedly agreed to leave the Emperor's service and to go back to Germany in return for a payment of one hundred sixty thousand scudi. Marco del Nero tried to persuade Ambrogio da Fiorenza (or 'da Firenze', but he was from Milan), Lautrec's secretary, of the state of exhaustion in which the 'esterminio' of the 'governo tyrannico' had left his city. Messer Ambrogio replied that 'ciaschuno si haveva a sforzare', and that on this occasion Florence could not content itself with paying one fifth of the expenses; Venice, Florence and France were to contribute each one third of the required sum. In fact, owing to Lautrec's financial problems, Venice and Florence were to advance the French share of the burden – an effort for which the two republics would be (eventually) reimbursed, but that brought the sum the Florentine republic was expected to scrape together to eighty thousand scudi¹³⁹. Lautrec simply refused to accept any justification presented by Marco del Nero and, 'faccendo con loro doglienza della mia scarsità' in front of the Venetian

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ '.... Pregai lui (Ambrogio da Fiorenza) con grande instantia volesse fare capace monsignore Illustrissimo che e' non era bene fussemo forzati o ricerchi di fare oltre a quello che ci toccava et oltre alla possibilità nostra... rispetto a quello esterinio il quale si lungamente sopportato, benché hora per gratia di Dio ne sia libera, la aveva totalmente fatta inabile al fare quello desiderrebbe...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 297 r./v.

ambassador and messer Ambrogio, ordered them to have a meeting and to find a solution to that impasse, so that he could give more precise instructions to the marquis of Saluzzo, who was conducting the negotiations with the Imperial Landsknechts¹⁴⁰.

At this point it appeared clear, and not only to Marco del Nero, that Florence's 'reasonable' attitude was out of place, and that it could represent a problem for the cause of the League. When dealing with monsieur de Lautrec, appearances were as important as facts. Ambrogio da Fiorenza approached Marco del Nero as an 'amico', and tried to explain to him that the best approach was to 'acquistare la prima gratia dell'offerte', even though later on these offers could be withdrawn and the ambassador could plead the opposition of his 'padroni'. 'A pena s'era partito il detto messer Ambrosio da me', Marco reported, he 'stumbled' into 'un'altro di questi di corte', one of Lautrec's confidants. Even though he had been instructed to do so by his master, the French courtier addressed the Florentine ambassador, again, 'come da sé' and as an 'amico', expressing Lautrec's discontent with Marco's prudent attitude in comparison with that of the Venetian ambassador who, 'offerendo gagliardamente', allowed Lautrec to see Piero Pesaro's goodwill. Marco del Nero replied that during the campaign Lautrec would probably come to appreciate more the modest, but reliable, help offered by Florence 'che di chi forse ha tanto largheggiato'¹⁴¹.

In an attempt to remove the doubts about Florence's loyalty and to defend the city from the false accusations spread by the marquis of Saluzzo, the Florentine ambassador decided to deal directly with Lautrec, 'sendo serrati soli in camera'. The *capitano*

¹⁴⁰ '... né accettando Sua Excellentia cosa che per me gli fusse replicata, né giustificazione di Vostre Signorie... ci impose che ci restringessimo assieme, et gli referissimo la ultima resolutione...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 7 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 349 r.

¹⁴¹ '... scontrandomi in un altro di questi di corte, con chi confida Lautrech, et mi si mostra amico. mi disse liberamente non ostante avesse commissione di parlarmi, ma come da sé.. et di me gli pareva ch'io fussi più intento al risparmio de'danari che non si convenisse... giustificandolo io della mia ottima dispositione ... et che sua excellentia quando s'havesse a mettere ad effetto, forse si plauderebbe più della buona osservantia nostra di quel tanto si promettesse che di chi ha tanto largheggiato'. Marco del Nero to

generale did not deny that ‘più volte et più di uno’ had attempted to persuade him of the republic’s bad faith, but without success. In fact, he rather believed that, after fourteen years of Medicean domination, the representatives of the republican ruling class, ‘non sendo esercitati’, were somewhat inexperienced in affairs of state. If he had appeared frequently angry with Florence, it had been for its sake and to persuade Marco and the Ten to do what was necessary to preserve the city. Marco del Nero admitted that without the Medicean tyranny there would have been ‘più huomini, et più affinati nell’esercitio dello stato’. On the other hand, many of those who had learned that craft before 1512 were still active, while the young ones made up for their lack of experience with their zeal¹⁴².

However, for the *capitano generale* the interests and strategical needs of the army of the League came first. When, on 31 February 1528, Lautrec revealed to Marco del Nero his intention of combining the two armies of the League, Marco del Nero pointed out that the Imperialists were still in Rome, dangerous and unpredictable as ever. If the ‘Umbrian’ army followed the line of the Apennines towards L’Aquila, while the main body (Lautrec’s) marched southwards along the Tyrrhenian coast (see Map B), Florence would be left without protection from the attacks that could come not only from Rome, but also from Clement VII. Lautrec still trusted the pope, but the republic did not. Odet de Foix dismissed del Nero’s worries as baseless, and eventually snapped that he was the *capitano generale*, and that the Ten were obliged by the League’s articles to entrust him with their troops every time the League needed them. Then he turned towards captain Azzo da Correggio, who, despite the marquis of Saluzzo’s requests, had been sent by Orazio Baglioni in his stead, and told him to carry his direct order to the

the Ten, 7 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 345 r. It ought to be noticed that the confidential remarks of Ambrogio and of the courtier are written in code.

¹⁴² Marco del Nero to the Ten, 14 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 314 v.

capitano generale of the Florentine foot: as soon as the Imperial army had left Rome to go towards the Kingdom of Naples, ‘ad ogni requisitione del marchese (of Saluzzo)’ the Perugian condottiere was to bring the Black Bands to join the main body¹⁴³. This was a very crucial moment: not only had Orazio refused to go to Lautrec’s camp precisely because he had not wanted to receive that order in person, but the relations between Florence and the marquis of Saluzzo were very tense (see the second section of this chapter). Issuing such an order in those circumstances, overriding both the Ten and their representative, Lautrec had damaged the Ten’s reputation and ‘dignità’. Not even during the worst ‘battaglia di maledetto senno’ had the duke of Urbino dared to challenge the city’s authority openly. This fact caused major worries in Florence, but Marco del Nero tried to minimize them: those who frequented Lautrec’s court were used to these things, he said and, probably, had hardly noticed the episode; ‘et se si havesse a tener conto di questi particolari, ci haremo a contristare troppo spesso. Bisogna, con Sua Excellentia, tollerare et fare vista di non vedere né udire quel che dispiace...’¹⁴⁴. In their turn, the Ten reminded del Nero that with the French he had to be ‘più largo’ with his words, and not to stand upon his dignity all the time, as with the Spaniards¹⁴⁵.

Unlike the ambassadors of the other Italian powers, and inexperienced as he was in military matters, Marco del Nero had a quite low opinion of Lautrec’s army, a judgment that was shared by the Ten. The host was, on paper, huge (see Table XIX),

¹⁴³ ‘... Sua Excellentia a questo si scaldò in dire che era capitano generale della Lega, et che secondo le convenzioni Vostre Signorie erano obligate al farlo seguire dalle loro bande sempre che così fussi il bisogno della Lega... et così voltandosi al capitano Contazzo, presente et suto mandato dal signor Horatio in compagnia del marchese per scusare lo impedimento del venir lui, come il prefato marchese gli faceva instantia, et per parte sua comandasse al signor Horatio che ad ogni requisitione del marchese, doppo l’essersi assicurato della gita degli imperiali alla volta del Regno, lo seguisse con le sue bande per congiungersi a questo esercito.’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 167 v. During his stay in Lautrec’s camp, Azzo da Correggio was contacted by Fabio Petrucci who, on behalf of the pope, tried to ‘sviare’ the count of Casalpo from the Florentine service.

¹⁴⁴ ‘.. e’ circumstanti et tutto il resto della corte sono bene assuefatti...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten. 11 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 339 v.

and if its 'diligenza' had been equal to its forces, it would have been, 'per discorso humano' to be sure that victory was close at hand¹⁴⁶. As always, the lack of discipline among the troops was appalling, but what worried the ambassador was the atmosphere of political and strategic carelessness that seemed to permeate the army. Things had not changed since Lautrec's departure from Paris; none of the commanders seemed able or willing to grasp the complexity of the situation. At the end of February, no one knew the position of the other forces of the League, and no one was trying to find out where the marquis of Saluzzo, Orazio Baglioni and the Venetians were. Apparently, Lautrec believed that he could achieve all his goals by force of reputation alone¹⁴⁷, that is to conquer Italy 'col gesso' like Charles VIII, but now the Imperial influence was strong and had ramified at every level of Italian society.

The Ten were not satisfied, either. According to their estimates, by March 1528 the effective strength of the League's army had dwindled to twelve thousand foot and four hundred lances of heavy cavalry, which, untried as they were, were not enough to assure the defeat of the Imperialist army, that was not only victorious, but also 'fortunato'. Unlike the French, the Empire had always been willing to increase its forces according to the needs of the moment¹⁴⁸. Moreover, an enormous number of 'genti inutili' (camp followers), a permanent feature of sixteenth-century armies¹⁴⁹, crippled

¹⁴⁵ '... Non vogliamo mancare di ricordarti che con i Franzesi bisogna essere più largo con le parole, et non stare del continuo sul puntiglio come con gli Spagnoli...'. The Ten to Marco del Nero, 15 February 1528. Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 170 v.

¹⁴⁶ 'Se l'ordine et la diligenza di questo esercito fusse corrispondente alle sue forze, si potrebbe per discorso humano promettere la vittoria certa, et presto. Ma s'ella seguirà si potrà conoscere particolarmente dalla gratia di Dio.'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 352 r.

¹⁴⁷ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 2 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 424 r.

¹⁴⁸ '... né sono (the French troops) di tale qualità che ce ne possiamo promettere indubitata vittoria, maxime avendo all'incontro uno esercito vittorioso et fortunato... La consuetudine degli Imperiali è sempre stata d'accrescere le forze su' bisogni. Il contrario hanno sempre fatto i Franzesi.'. The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 1 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 43, f. 210 r.

¹⁴⁹ However, according to the general opinion, the number of camp followers and of the whores that followed the French armies seemed to surpass those of other 'nationi'. '... molto abbondanti ne sono (of whores) gli eserciti corrotti d'oggi, massimamente de gli Spagnuoli, et de gl'Italiani. De' Francesi non dico nulla, percioché se si unissero tutte insieme in uniforme le puttane che vi sono, mi potrebbe far una

the already inefficient logistics of Lautrec's army. According to the Mantuan ambassador, between paid and unpaid personnel, the host of the League amounted to more than seventy thousand 'pedoni', without mentioning the horses and the carts, and occupied an area of sixty miles¹⁵⁰.

By contrast, the Ten believed that the Imperial army could count on five thousand Landsknechts, four thousand Spanish and two thousand Italian footsoldiers, all veterans 'di tanta bontà et virtù che tutta Italia ne trema'¹⁵¹, flanked by almost two thousand very good light cavalrymen. The only real asset left to the largely untried army of the League was its artillery (see Table XIX). Given these premises, Marco del Nero pointed out that the presence of the far less numerous, but far more experienced troops of the Umbrian army, and especially of the Black Bands, was going to be decisive.

On 17 February 1528, the Imperial army left Rome and marched towards the Kingdom of Naples. Lautrec, whose army was slower owing to its size, to its artillery train and to its seemingly limitless logistical apparatus, was forced to take the road that led to Puglia and not directly to Naples. On the diplomatic side, the representatives of the cities on the route of his army rushed one after another to pay homage to Odet de Foix¹⁵², in adherence to the decree he had issued at the end of January, with which he had promised a retroactive pardon for the crime of lèse-majesté to those who greeted the

matta paura, se ben fussero a mia difesa et le Italiane et le Spagnuole, ch'io so che resterebbono vinte dal numero di quelle...'. Aurelio Cicuta, *La vera militar disciplina*, p. 410. In the Landsknecht regiments the commander of the baggage train was called *Hureinwabel*, that is 'sergeant of the women'. On the Landsknechts and 'love', see Baumann, *I Lanzichenecchi*, pp. 188-207.

¹⁵⁰ '...A mio iuditio, tutto questo exercito si trova molto volenteroso al combater, et vi si trovano soldati da factione numerati da 21 in 22 milia combatenti ogni volta che tutto lo exercito de la lega sii unito, senza quelli che non sono pagati, che in tutto si tiene che ascendano più de 50 mila fanti; cosa quasi incredibile. Et tutto questo exercito occupa apresso 60 mia di paese; siché pensi Vostra Excellentia se bisognerano di le vituarie.' Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 25 February 1528. Sanuto, *Diarii*, 47, p. 26.

¹⁵¹ Even worse, there were three thousand Italians under the command of the prince of Melfi and two thousand Spaniards under the command of Alarçon in the Kingdom of Naples. The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 2 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 43, f. 206 r.

¹⁵² '... quasi tutte le terre anticipavano a darsi venticinque o trenta miglia innanzi la venuta dell'esercito.' Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XVII, p. 1914.

League's troops as friends, and the abolition of all taxes imposed by the Aragonese rulers after the expulsion of the Angevin kings¹⁵³. On the other hand, the pope remained neutral, but in fact his neutrality favoured the Emperor, while his money allowed the Imperial generals to regain control of their army and to leave Rome before Lautrec could get ahead of them to Naples. Marco del Nero did not fail to remark to Lautrec how 'friendly' indeed the pope had eventually proved to be¹⁵⁴.

During his march towards Apulia (see Map B and Plate 6), other problems plagued the *capitano generale*: the expedition of the League's fleet to attack Sicily had been diverted by the 'ventura del mare' to plague-ridden Sardinia (See section 3, chapter 2), where, in exchange for a handful of strategically unimportant coastal strongholds, Andrea Doria lost a sizeable portion of his fleet's precious 'manpower'. Moreover, the galleys badly needed refitting, and were not able to support the advance of the army with diversionary actions and the landing of troops¹⁵⁵.

¹⁵³ ... Il primo che rimette a ciaschuno che accepterà le genti della Lega come amici, ogni dellto et offesa, et etiam di crimine lese majestatis fatta di qui a dietro, reservando le ragioni de'particulari, le quali di ragione s'habbino a conoscere. Il secondo, che chi farà resistentia non solo perderà il privilegio di sopra, ma venendo in loro forze sarà castigato aspramente in exemplo delli altri. Il terzo che e' lieva et annulla tutti i diritti, dazi et graveze di qualunque sorte sute imposte da qui indrieto, per la casa di Ragona volendo che solo restino e' dazi che correvano al tempo del re d'Angois... Il quarto che nessuno fuoruscito o altro ardisca entrare in possessione d'alchuno stato o bene mobile di propria auctorità, sotto pena di perdere tutte le ragioni che e'vi avesse, ma vuole se ne conosca di ragione, che sommariamente la administrino commissarii da sua excellentia deputati, che son tutte cose da muovere gagliardamente e' popoli alla sua devotione, benché questa ultima parte dispiaccia a' fuoriusciti, ma per facilitare la victoria non vi harà rispetto.' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 154 r.

¹⁵⁴ There was probably a badly concealed sense of satisfaction in Marco del Nero's words when he '... feci gustare a Sua Excellentia quanto era suto da amico [il colpo che gli haveva riservato il papa] a tempo de'danari dati all'Imperiali senza e' quali non si sarebbero partiti da Roma... ma bene lui (Piero Pesaro) et io gli diciamo [che se ne ricordi poi quando harà vinto]... et non si satisfaccia [all' hora delle buone parole come egli ha fatto in passato]... sono certo che Sua Excellentia non sarebbe hora del medesimo animo a confortare le Signorie Vostre a mandargli (to the pope) oratore...'. [in code]. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, ff. 425 v – 426 r. See also Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XVII, pp. 1913-1914.

¹⁵⁵ It seemed that '... [messer Andrea Doria... habbia perduto quello calore con che e' cominciò questa impresa. Et pochi giorni fa se ne dolse molto con noi Monsignor Illustrissimo... che quando era il colmo del bisogno... (Andrea Doria) aveva usato dire che se ne voleva andare a Genova a riposare]... io gli ho detto che almanco 10 galere andando verso Napoli li farebbono buoni effecti...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 436 r.

Pedro Navarro¹⁵⁶ (? –1528) and his Gascon assault troops spearheaded the advance of the army of the League, often acting as a separate body: they forced the prince of Melfi to retreat from l’Aquila, and, seldom losing contact with the Imperial troops, took Capistrano, and expelled the enemy from Celano, Nocera and eventually Foggia. The relations between Lautrec and the famous master engineer were not good, but low-born count Navarro was one of the few persons whose support the *capitano generale* did not dare to alienate¹⁵⁷. The reason for the Gascons’ swift advance in order to take control of northern Apulia was of a practical nature: March was the month of the year in which it was possible to collect the ‘dogana delle pecore’, that is the toll on the transhumance of the flocks of sheep from the pastures of Apulia to those of Abruzzi, a tax that each year could yield between eighty and one hundred thousand *ducati*¹⁵⁸. Lautrec managed to take control of the area, but the revenues of the great *dogana* and of other revenues of the Kingdom of Naples were, because of war, considerably less (one half, roughly) than they were expected to be.

On 4 March Lautrec received the first intelligence about a large contingent of Imperial troops in Troia (see Map B), and sent a mixed reconnaissance group of French

¹⁵⁶ The history of Navarro’s career as a military engineer and field commander coincides with the history of the Italian Wars and its tactical and technological innovations. He had been the lieutenant of Consalvo de Cordova and had made a considerable contribution to the development of the defensive-offensive tactic (based on the combined use of gunpowder weapons and earthworks) in response to the initial marked French superiority in offensive capacity, while thanks to the explosive mines he had perfected he was a dreaded opponent for any enemy garrison commander. Navarro was captured after the Spanish defeat at Ravenna (1512) and, having waited in vain for what he considered a reasonable period of time to be ransomed as adequate reward for his past services, he decided to offer his favours to the king of France see Pieri, *Il Rinascimento...* pp. 390, 401, 406, 410, 413-14, 417, 425-26, 487, 492-3; Taylor, *The Art of War* (especially the section on siegecraft) and Hall, *Weapons and Warfare* pp. 100, 167, 168, 170-75.

¹⁵⁷ After a mutiny of the Gascon companies, who had murdered their provost, Navarro went back to the camp ‘... sdegnato, parendoli con loro havere perso l’obedientia... Et Lautrec n’era tanto malcontento stasera, che era mezo disperato, dolendosi a cielo del detto conte Pietro et de’ suoi modi, che del continuo dice essere molto strano, ma avendo bisogno di lui è necessario lo comporti senza poterlo neanche riprendere, per non farlo sdegnare...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 286 v. Cfr. with Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, *ibid*, p. 1914.

¹⁵⁸ As a matter of fact, many wealthy citizens of l’Aquila had supported the pro-French party in order to save their flocks, which were at the moment still in Apulia. They had an interest in Lautrec’s taking control of the whole area, for he would then be able to grant safe passage to their ‘bestiame’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 11 February 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 333 r.

men-at-arms and Italian light cavalry under the command of Valerio Orsini to investigate¹⁵⁹. Against Lautrec's orders and Orsini's advice, the French, guided by monsieur de Gruffy, waded the river between Lucera and Troia and fell into an ambush of the Imperial light cavalry. 'Oggimai accerchiati et rotti', the *gendarmes* had to be rescued by Orsini's horsemen¹⁶⁰. In fact, the whole Imperial army was in Troia, and in a few days the two armies would face each other, from 12 to 21 March, on the plains that surrounded the small Apulian city.

This long confrontation¹⁶¹, which did not lead to a pitched battle, can be divided into three phases:

First phase: contact. On 12 March the army of the League camps five miles from Troia; and, after a first series of skirmishes, the Imperialists retreat into the city. By the end of the following day, the Imperial troops – five thousand Landskechts, five thousand Spaniards, three thousand five hundred Italians, almost two thousand light cavalrymen¹⁶², but no artillery – are encamped on the top of a hill outside Troia, and dominate both the League's camp and the 'probable' battlefield. The Mantuan heavy cavalry (eighty men-at-arms) arrives in the camp of the League.

Second phase: Lautrec's advance. On 14 March, preceded by its artillery, the whole army of the League moves forward divided into three echelons: first the Gascons along with the other French troops, then the Swiss together with the Italians, then the

¹⁵⁹ '... armati con l'elmo et la corazza alla italiana, fra i quali la banda del signor Valerio (Orsini) era stimata che fosse meglio armata et meglio a cavallo con buoni cavai turchi...'. Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book XXV, p. 63; on Gruffy, see the section on the French lances of Table XIX.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 65-66. Valerio Orsini was about to be punished by Lautrec for contravening his orders, but was 'rescued' in his turn by the testimony of *monsieur de Gruffy*.

¹⁶¹ On the quasi-battle of Troia, see Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, pp. 66-69; Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, pp. 110 v.- 112 r.; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XVII, pp. 1915-1918; Lodovico Ceresara to the Marquis of Mantua, 15 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, ff. 173 r. - 175 v. ; Marco del Nero to the Ten, 13-23 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, the folios are not in numerical order.

¹⁶² Marco del Nero to the Ten, 7 March, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 456 r. (decoded at f. 458 r.).

Landsknechts, followed by the men-at-arms and by the light horsemen¹⁶³. After cannonading the enemy ineffectively¹⁶⁴ for half an hour, Lautrec leads his army to the top of a hill that dominates the one occupied by the Imperialists. After the initial skirmishes provoked by Navarro's arquebusiers, the fighting in the valley below was confined to the cavalry on both sides. Towards the end of the day the Imperial Landsknechts seem willing to counterattack, but are 'dissuaded' by the reaction of the League's artillery, now in a favourable position. 'Et così scaramuzzando si prese lo alloggiamento designato, con grandissimo onore de la Legha.'

Third phase: unstable equilibrium (15-21 March). The two camps are so close that the soldiers of each army can clearly see what the others are doing¹⁶⁵. Both sides declare their willingness to fight a decisive *giornata*¹⁶⁶, but decide to wait for reinforcements¹⁶⁷ and try to cut each other's lines of supply. The damages caused by the League's artillery eventually (19 March) force the Imperial troops to leave their camp and to retreat, at

¹⁶³ Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 March, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 173 v. ; Martin du Bellay gives us a very different battle array, and one most unusual for the period: according to him the army of the League, vanguard, battle and rearguard marched 'tout d'un front', that is not in echelons but in line (left wing, center, right wing) and at its sides each battalion (deployed in this order: Landsknechts, Swiss, French, Gascons, Italians – a sort of classification) was supported by a 'troupe' of men-at-arms.

¹⁶⁴ In this phase the cannonade of the famed French artillery was rendered ineffective by the slope of the hill, that prevented the cannonballs from 'bouncing' and taking a heavy toll of victims in the ranks of the 'ordinanze': '.... Ma le palle, scaricate contra i nemici i quali erano all'alto, facevano poco danno, però che subito inghiottite dal terreno, avendone a pena amazzato uno o due, non saltavano, né urtavano nelle ordinanze folte.' Giovio, *La seconda parte*, p. 66.

¹⁶⁵ 'Il loco in che si trova l'uno et l'altro esercito non potria esser più idoneo per il combattere come è, et tanto vicino che l'artiglieria danneggia da la parte de li cesarei e da questi doi picciol colletti in fori tutto il resto è spaciosa campagna... e così l'uno et l'altro esercito si vedeno tutti li movimenti che ciascuno fanno e tanto sono vicini che se un homo de una parte chiamassi uno de l'altra, io credo si intenderiano il loro parlare...'. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, (*ibid.*) f. 174 v.

¹⁶⁶ Their past experiences persuaded the marquis of Vasto and Juan de Urbina to dampen the enthusiasm of the prince of Orange: '... i Francesi s'havevano a trattenere et tenere a bada, et che finalmente quando si fosse raffrenata l'ingordigia di combattere di quelle nationi, le quali vagliono molto nella prima furia, all'hora poi si sarebbero vinti senza ferita, come molte altre volte s'era fatto'. Giovio, *La seconda parte*, p. 67.

¹⁶⁷ The Imperialists were waiting for the Italian *colonnello* of Fabrizio Maramaldo, the men-at-arms of the Neapolitan barons, and the artillery.

least partially, to Troia¹⁶⁸. The ‘alloggiamento’ of the League gives Lautrec control of the main road from Naples to Troia. The Black Bands arrive (20 March) near the camp of the League, and the Imperial army, now severely outclassed in firepower, begins that very night a hasty retreat towards Naples¹⁶⁹. On 21 March, the troops of the League sack Troia.

Besides the fact that it represented an important tactical achievement for the League of Cognac, the encounter at Troia presents some interesting features, the most evident of which is that it was fought almost entirely by cavalry and artillery. For almost a week, in the plains around Troia, the men-at-arms, the light cavalymen and the stradiots of both sides fought a series of skirmishes that, thanks to the absence of the arquebusiers, became an ‘honorato più tosto che sanguinoso spettacolo’. There, wrote Giovio, following the plumed helmets and colours, one could see how good a knight was with lance and sword¹⁷⁰. According to the Imperial officer Ferrante Gonzaga (see Plate 7), ‘di continuo siamo alle mani insieme con bellissime scaramucce. Attendesi in breve la giornata’¹⁷¹. The French *gendarmes* performed well in the open field¹⁷², but showed once more their limitations and lack of discipline when they were asked to coordinate their actions with those of the other forces of cavalry, such as the Venetian stradiots¹⁷³.

¹⁶⁸ According to Marco del Nero and to Guicciardini, the cannons shots and the constant threat of the French artillery forced the Imperialists to leave their ‘alloggiamento’ on the top of the hill, and to go back to Troia. It is not clear if the army of the League moved to the position abandoned by the Imperial army.

¹⁶⁹ According to the letters of Ferrante Gonzaga, commander of the Imperial cavalry, their intention was to go to meet the reinforcement halfway and to fight the ‘giornata’ immediately after, but on their own terms. Eventually, the Imperial generals were not able to regroup. Ferrante Gonzaga to his brother, the marquis of Mantua, 23 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, ff. 177 r.-178 v.

¹⁷⁰ Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 66 and 68. However, there were a few violations of chivalrous behaviour: Teia de Aguilar, one of the captains of the Spanish light cavalry, went to the fight too elegantly dressed and was mistaken for the prince of Orange and ‘... I nemici (the French) veggendolo così ben vestito... l’uno a gara dell’altro gli furono adosso et l’amazzorno...’.

¹⁷¹ Ferrante Gonzaga to his mother Isabella d’Este, 20 March, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 178 r.

¹⁷² Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, p. 111 r/v.

¹⁷³ ‘...Io cominzai a ritirarme per tirare li inimici ne la nostra zente d’arme; pensandomi esser soccorso da loro, me voltai et feci testa. Allor mi fu tolto 4 stratioti, et questo perché el mio banderaro mise la bandiera dentro, talmente che fu preso il banderaro con la mia bandiera. Io viti persa la bandiera, così mi

Everybody was convinced that the battle was imminent, and that it was just a matter of time before one of the two armies was forced either to retreat or to attack the entrenched positions of the other. The weather was extremely cold, rainy and windy, and every night the Spaniards, following their usual tactic, caused the alarm in the camp of the League to be sounded with mock attacks. The Imperialists declared that the only thing that worried them was the French artillery¹⁷⁴. On the other hand, many qualified witnesses noticed that the Germans and the Spaniards were not living up to the reputation¹⁷⁵ of the ‘*exercito del diavolo*’.

Unlike the other ambassadors, Marco del Nero did not enjoy the sight. In addition to his concerns regarding the quality of the army of the League, even after the arrival of the marquis of Saluzzo and of his troops, what really worried him was the inexplicable, and increasingly embarrassing, delay of the Black Bands. Where were they? Once the Imperial army and an acceptable battlefield (Troia) had been found, Lautrec could not speak of anything else. ‘Troppo beneficio farebbono le genti di Vostre Signorie, se le ci fussino’, cried out Marco del Nero on 7 March¹⁷⁶. The bad weather, the impassable Apennine roads and the ‘*villani disperati*’, who killed all the stragglers, messengers and scouts they could find, frustrated every attempt to locate the Black Bands. ‘*Horamai sarà*

voltaio verso nimici come rabiato cridando a stratioti: “*Hozì dobbiamo murir tutti per honor nostro*” Ne fui poi carcato troppo i panni addosso, talmente che ne convene voltar, *et li francesi non facendo mai testa se misero in fuga, talmente che per spazio di uno miglio ne fu data la caza; et de loro ne fu presi circa 6 avenga me pensava havessemo receputo maggior danno di quello habiamo hauto. Monsignor di Lautrech biasima molto quei capitanei franzesi, et lauda il nostro combattere...*’. Venetian Provveditore agli Stradioti Andrea Civran to his brother Cristoforo, Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, pp. 137-138. Civran wrote also that the French men-at-arms reprimanded by Lautrec were shifting the blame and challenging each other to duels. Italics are mine.

¹⁷⁴ ‘... gli Spagnoli dicono che quando non fusse l’artellaria che tiene alto questo esercito, che non seriano stato sin hora a fare de le faccende, et monstra temerla molto...’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 20 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 180 r.

¹⁷⁵ ‘... come io intesi dal marchese (Alfonso de Avalos, marquis del Vasto) e da Giovanni Dorbino (Juan de Urbina) gli spagnoli et Tedeschi non mostrarono punto quel giorno (14 March) l’usata prontezza degli animi loro...’. Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 67; ‘... e certamente combatteno (the Imperialists) valentissimamente, ancor che sin qui habbino perso grossamente, et non habbiano trovato questi soldati come credevano...’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 March, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 174 v.

¹⁷⁶ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 7 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 456 r.

facil cosa che arrivino dopo il fatto’, that is, after the battle, but ‘da esserci a non esserci quelle (the Black Bands), può risultare la vittoria, o esser vinti.’. For Lautrec, the Florentine forces, ‘delle quali si intende li inimici temano et costoro (the League) confidano assai...’¹⁷⁷, represented the element that could tip the balance of forces around Troia¹⁷⁸. Marco del Nero was only too aware of this fact, especially having seen how much the enemy commanders used ‘astutia’ in addition to force¹⁷⁹. Since, according to his letters, Lautrec ‘[resta di lui malissimo contento]’, Marco del Nero was forced to maintain a low profile and to stay away from ‘court’, even if that meant leaving the *capitano generale* alone with the papal ambassador; the results of weeks of intense diplomatic activity were frustrated by the delay of the Black Bands.

However, even in the absence of del Nero, Lautrec ‘[si duole a cielo et con parole di troppa indignatione per la tardità di quelle Bande]’¹⁸⁰, and the Florentine ambassador was afraid that, in case of defeat, everybody would blame Florence, while, in case of victory, the city would be seen as guilty of failing to contribute to it¹⁸¹. The arrival (21 March) of the Black Bands in the camp was a great relief for Marco del Nero and a remarkable success for Florence’s image: marching through the camp of the League *in*

¹⁷⁷ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, f. 479 v.

¹⁷⁸ ‘... Una sola cosa gli (the Imperialists) poteva confortare a venire alla giornata: che’l signor Horatio Baglione non era giunto anchora in campo di Lotrecco con le fanterie Toscane, et perciò se diferivano la battaglia, conoscevano che havrebbero poi trovato il nemico molto più forte per l’essercitatissime compagnie sue di archibugieri. Era quella fanteria del Baglione in gran parte di soldati vecchi, i quali sotto Giovanni de’Medici s’havevano acquistato gran credito di valor di Guerra’. Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 67. ; ‘Aussi une des occasions qui meut monsieur de Lautrec de ne donner bataille le jour qu’il la presenta, fut qu’il attendoit le seigneur Horace Baglion, qui amenoit treze enseignes de gens de pied, des plus aguerris d’Italie, qui estoient les Bandes Noires, qui avoient esté de longue main, sous la chage du seigneur Iean de Medicis...’ Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, p. 111 v.

¹⁷⁹ Marco del Nero to the Ten, *Ibid.* It is quite amazing how del Nero’s point of view on the army of the League differed from the one of his Mantuan colleague, Lodovico Ceresara: ‘... Vostra Excellentia sappia che è XX anni che alla campagna non si vide mai così forbita gente et bello exercito como è questo a iuditio di tutti gli homini di guerra, talmente che fa spantare ogniuno, et è con tanto ordine condotto che non se portia existimare...’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 174 v.

¹⁸⁰ ‘... [si duole a cielo et con parole di troppa indignatione per la tardità di quelle bande... et d’essere suto da me ripieno di una speranza et quasi adirato verrebbe a qualche parola di rottura]...’, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 121, ff. 483 v – 484 r.

ordinanza, the Black Bands deeply impressed Lautrec¹⁸² and the other observers¹⁸³. When, on 28 March, *provveditore* Pisani arrived with his few remaining soldiers, he was received with ‘poco romore et con manco satisfatione’, while Lautrec, together with his court, was ‘più contento un giorno che l’altro delle Bande di Vostre Signorie, et non fa risparmiio... di laudarsene’¹⁸⁴.

The approach of the Black Bands, sighted by both armies on 20 March, probably forced the Imperial commanders to reconsider their tactical situation: if they remained, the French with their artillery could force them to fight a battle on unfavourable terms, and now the margin of advantage of the Habsburg troops – their qualitative level and their reputation – was very narrow. Moreover, they had much to lose: the fabulous plunder of the sack of Rome had to be protected. The Imperialists broke camp at night – always a dangerous operation – leaving Troia, still full of victuals, with most of their ‘bagagli’ and ‘senza strepito alchuno’. This retreat was a blow for the ‘riputatione’ of the Imperial army, and boosted the spirit of the League’s troops¹⁸⁵. On 24 March Ferrante Gonzaga wrote to his brother that, thanks to the reinforcements sent from

¹⁸¹ ‘... et si perdessi, di tutto saremo fatti debitori noi, et se si vincerà resteremo ad ogni modo in contumacia...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 13 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 473 r.

¹⁸² ‘... Hevevono le Signorie Vostre visto di quanta satisfatione erano sute le Lor genti di qua et a Monsignore et a tutti gli altri, la reputatione delle quali è sempre cresciuta et presso di costoro, et – per quanto si intende – apresso li nimici, et è reputato che le sieno uno de’ principali membri di questo esercito, et senza il quale li nimici si renderebbono sicuri...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, date unknown (23-24 March 1528), ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 121, f. 365 r. The last pages of this letter are missing.

¹⁸³ ‘Ozzi le Bande Negre condotte dal signor Oratio Baione sono agionte in campo, et è una bellissima et capata gente, et di numero sono tremila e cinquecento fanti, che non manca uno come se dice, che sono a gran subsidio e favore di questo esercito e di che facevano grandi existimatione gli Cesarei...’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 21 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 181 v.

¹⁸⁴ According to Marco del Nero, Alvise Pisani arrived with 1600 foot soldiers instead of the 6500 that he was supposed to bring with him. His soldiers ‘hanno fatto buono paragone a quelle delle Signorie Vostre’ – that is, they were so bad that they actually ‘promoted’ the Black Bands. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 150 r.

¹⁸⁵ ‘... questo (the retreat of the Imperial army) non si credeva, anzi se tenea certo che dovessero venire alla giornata per la bella et la bona gente che sono di guerra, et per non cognoscerli soldati che sempre non volessero honore’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 21 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 181 r. ; according to Paolo Giovio, the Imperialists ‘... erano posti in fuga, et poco manco che rotti.’, *La Seconda parte*, p. 70.

Naples – artillery, six thousand foot soldiers and two hundred men-at-arms – the Imperial army was ready to fight ‘... con tanto di buon core come andassimo a combattere con tante femine...’¹⁸⁶, but the reality was different. Pursued by the League’s light cavalry, the Imperialists, now divided into several columns and following different roads, marched towards Naples ‘molto timidi, e non parevano quelli valorosi’¹⁸⁷. They were undergoing their own version of the ‘Caudine Forks’¹⁸⁸.

Lautrec refused to follow the advice of many of his commanders, who urged him to attack the enemy in order to deprive him at least of his precious booty¹⁸⁹, and accepted Navarro’s recommendation that, in view of the siege of Naples, the army’s backline and supplies should be secured by reducing all the remaining Imperial strongholds; ‘ayant pris le reste du Royaume, il auroit la ville (Naples) la corde au col’. After Melfi (see chapter 3) it was the turn of Venosa, where the Spanish garrison surrendered to Navarro without conditions¹⁹⁰, while the other cities of the area had been left unguarded.

While the army of the League proceeded towards Naples *in ordinanza* at an average of eight miles per day, its light cavalrymen were sent ahead to re-establish

¹⁸⁶ Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua, 24 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 177 v.

¹⁸⁷ ‘... questi Cesarei andavano molto timidi, e non parevano quelli valorosi, e nella loro ordinanza erano mescolati spagnoli, lanzchenetti e italiani insieme, e tutti sotto sopra al meglio che Dio gli mostrava caminavano...’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 21 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 181 r.

¹⁸⁸ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 145 r.

¹⁸⁹ ‘...Al conte Guido Rangone... a monsignor di Valdimio, a quasi tutti i capitani de cavalli et massimamente al Signor Valerio Orsino piaceva grandemente che si tenesse lor dietro et che con tutta la cavalleria si perseguitassero i nimici, i quali senza dubbio per la secreta et vergognosa ritirata loro erano spaventati... et se si fosse messa in fuga, gli havrebbero tolte le bagaglie; di che non poteva accadere loro cosa alcuna più grave, i quali erano carichi della preda di Roma, né a nostri soldati maggiore allegrezza, ne cosa più utile et più honorata a confermare et accrescere l’openione della sperata vittoria.’. Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 69.

¹⁹⁰ Pedro Navarro gave the Spaniards two choices: they could go to Naples with a white wand in their hands (a sign of surrender) surrendering all their weapons and possessions to the League, or they could go back to Spain ‘con tutte le loro cose’. ‘Questi Spagnoli – per essere ricchi – accetteranno d’andare in Spagna più presto che perdere le robbe...’. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 28 March 1528. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 191 r.; see also Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, book XVIII, chap. XVII, p. 1919.

contact with the enemy, but, as always, their ability in tactical reconnaissance left much to be desired, as they sent back little or no intelligence to the main body¹⁹¹. In fact, unlike the Imperial host, in the army of the League there was not a large body of tactical light cavalry, since the French *archers* fought as a part of the *lances* of heavy cavalry, and the unruly Venetian stradiots ~~were~~ specialized in ‘scorte et pizzicamenti’. The Italian *cavalli leggieri* of Valerio Orsini and Girolamo da Silva¹⁹², together with the ‘peculiar banda’¹⁹³ of, probably, English light horsemen (two hundred, see Sheet Table XIX) under the command of Sir Robert Jerningham¹⁹⁴ (?-1528) had to undertake that duty. However, the retreating Imperialists were demoralized, and evaded any direct confrontation. Their confused situation was confirmed by prisoners captured by Sir Robert: the Imperialists still did not know whether they were to take refuge inside

¹⁹¹ The commanders of the League ‘... si dolgono et maravigliono di non haver advisi più recti da e’ loro cavalli leggieri che sono innanti solo a questo effecto, et è certo grande inconveniente che e’ sieno [tanto male advisati da loro, ma è usanza vecchia]...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 273 r.

¹⁹² On the Italian light cavalry and on its specific features, see the second charter of this dissertation. On Valerio Orsini and his men: ‘...gli altri (the Italians) erano armati con l’elmo et con la corazza alla Italiana, fra i quali la banda del signor Valerio era stimata che fosse la meglio a cavallo con buoni cavalli turchi.’ Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 63.

¹⁹³ ‘... la cavalleria di Francia era molto grande et illustre, alla quale Gherlindano (Sir Robert Jerningham) Inglese, mandato dal Re Arrigo, aveva aggiunto una sua peculiar banda...’. Ibid. p. 64. At the time Tudor light cavalry was equipped in two quite distinct ways: the more common demi-lances, that is heavier version of the Italian and continental light cavalymen, and a sort of English version of the Albanian stradiots, that is lancers with light armours, a ‘caschetto’ instead of the typical Burgundian sallet, and mounted on small but resistant horses. It is probable that Sir Robert’s company was made up of demi-lances, but the Italian military writers were more acquainted with the other kind; Giulio Cesare Brancaccio, *Il Brancatio*, p. 178. Brancaccio probably saw English light cavalry in action during his service in France and Flanders. On the English cavalry during the sixteenth century, see Eltis, *The Military Revolution*, p. 114.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Jerningham was knighted in France by the duke of Suffolk on 1 November 1523. On 12 April 1526 he was appointed keeper of the new fortress of Newnhambridge and given the command of twenty men. In September 1527 he was sent by cardinal Wolsey to Lautrec’s camp in Italy together with Gregorio Casale and John Carew. Being a soldier rather than a diplomat, he remained with the army of the League while ambassador Casale went to Orvieto to discuss the difficult issue of Henry VIII’s divorce; see *Calendar of State Papers, Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, voll. III part II, IV part I and II.; ‘... et maistre Ierninghen Anglois, gentilhomme de la chambre du Roy (Francis I) et du Roy d’Angleterre, ayant charge de deux cents chevaux legers, homme bien estimé et son Lieutenant maistre Care (John Carew)...’. Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, p. 107.

Naples or to fight a pitched battle¹⁹⁵; their cowardice left the League's officers astonished: it seemed that eventually 'iudicio divino' had overtaken the Imperialists¹⁹⁶.

There were, apparently, also signs of disintegration in the enemy army: deliberately left unpaid, one after another the companies of Italian infantry were leaving the Imperial camp¹⁹⁷. The choice to expel most of the Italians from the army was, however, a deliberate one. The Imperial commanders were screening their troops, bracing themselves for the coming siege.

On 11 April, when the army of the League was still seven miles from Naples, Jerningham, Orsini, Selva and the other captains of light cavalry went to skirmish with the enemy at Poggioreale, in sight of Naples's walls. After the usual initial success, and after their horses were exhausted, they were ambushed by more than four hundred Imperial light horsemen. Even though sir Robert and Valerio Orsini had foreseen the 'imboscata', the latter was wounded twice in the face, thirty of Selva's horsemen were captured, and the League's light cavalry was forced to return to its camp¹⁹⁸.

¹⁹⁵ '... come Berlinghan capitano di cavalli leggieri del Re Anglico ha scritto a Monsignor prefato, che ritrovandosi alla coda de li Imperiali, scaramuzzando con loro ha preso alcuni de'loro, et intende gli Imperiali non havere determinato il partito che vogliono pigliare... scrive ancora che elli scaramuzzano freddamente.'. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 6 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 205 r.

¹⁹⁶ Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 29 March 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 193 r.

¹⁹⁷ On 5 April, 200 Italian footsoldiers had left the Imperial camp, where 'spagnoli e lanzichenecchi fanno malissima compagnia alli Italiani, e gli fanno morir di fame di modo a poco a poco tutti i Italiani sono costretti a partirsene'. Three days later a company left the Habsburg camp at midday marching with flying colours to join the army of the League. It seems that the Spaniards had broken the agreement according to which neither the Italians nor the Spaniards would agree to accept their wages unless both were paid. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 8 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 207 r.

¹⁹⁸ '... Heri le compagnie di Berlinghan, del signor Valerio Orsino e di Hieronimo Selva con loro capitanei andò alla scaramuzza contra gli Cesarei sotto Napoli... questi de la Legha ne venivano con molti prigionieri... et molti bagagli... che gli Cesarei non haveano potuto fare cosa onorevole. In quel instante venne un caval leggiero di quelli di Hieronimo Selva a dire come alcune reliquie de li cavalli di Cesarei erano poco inanti, tutti stracchi. Allora il Silva deliberò prendere quel resto de li cavalli... contra il volere del resto de li capitani... l'altre compagnie lo seguirono, ma con sospetto... che ella non fusse imboscata, e grossa. Cossì in un momento uscì l'imboscata de Cesarei da quattro cento cavalli in suso, et trovò queste compagnie stracche, e ne prese forse altre trenta di questi del Selva...'. Lodovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 12 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 211 r.

The conclusion of the campaign was not close at hand, as many commanders and ambassadors of the army of the League seemed to think, and the 'exercito del diavolo' was not defeated.

Plate 4



‘Dove è gran foco, è gran fumo’

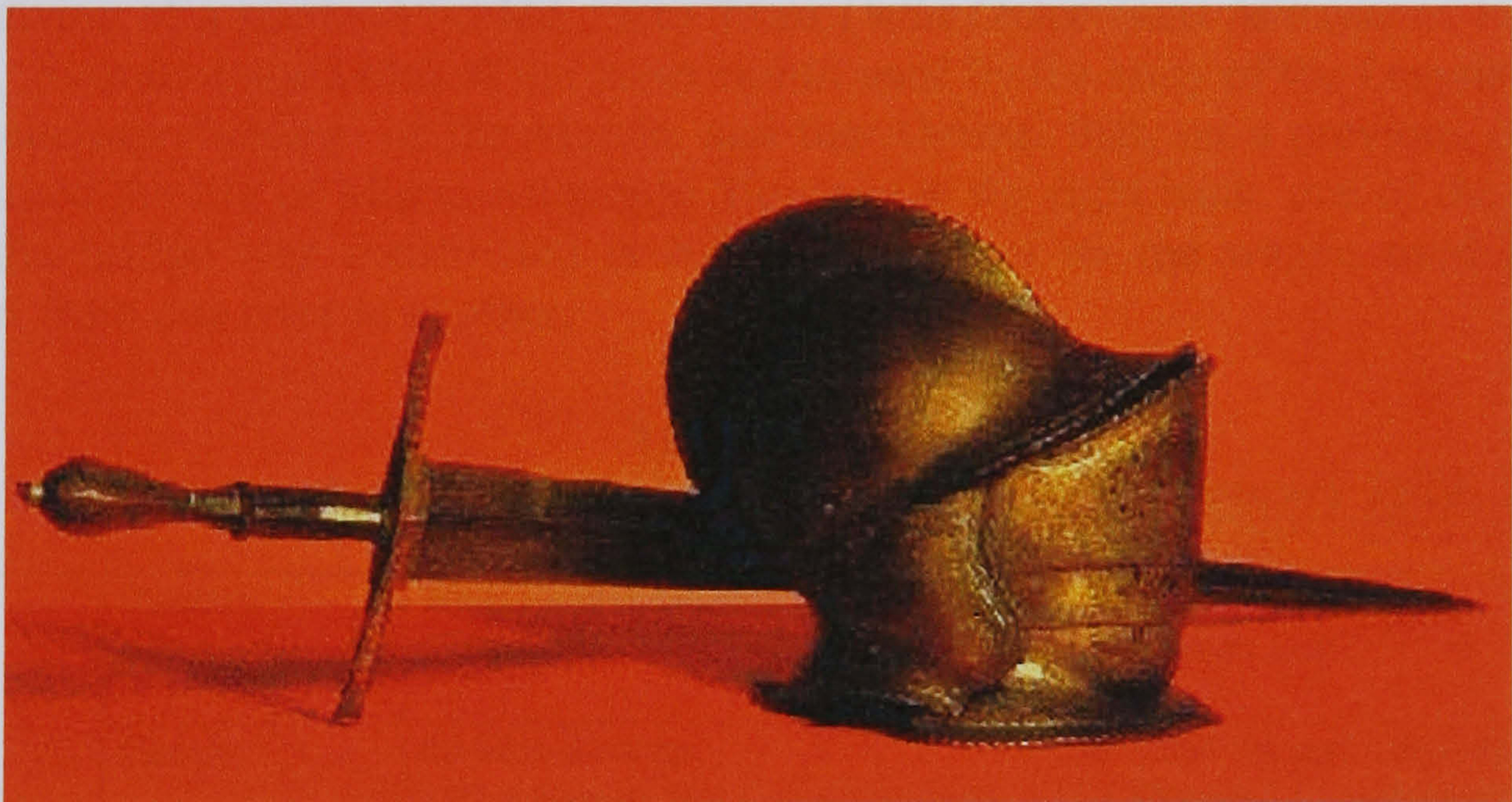
The *motto* on Lautrec’s *impresa*

‘Dove era grande valore d’animo nasce gran fumo di superbia’

Giovio’s comment on Lautrec’s *motto*

Odet de Foix, *Vicomte de Lautrec* and *Capitano Generale* of the League of Cognac – author unknown. Two *ritratti* are conserved in the Sacristy of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Tears, in Treviglio.

Plate 5

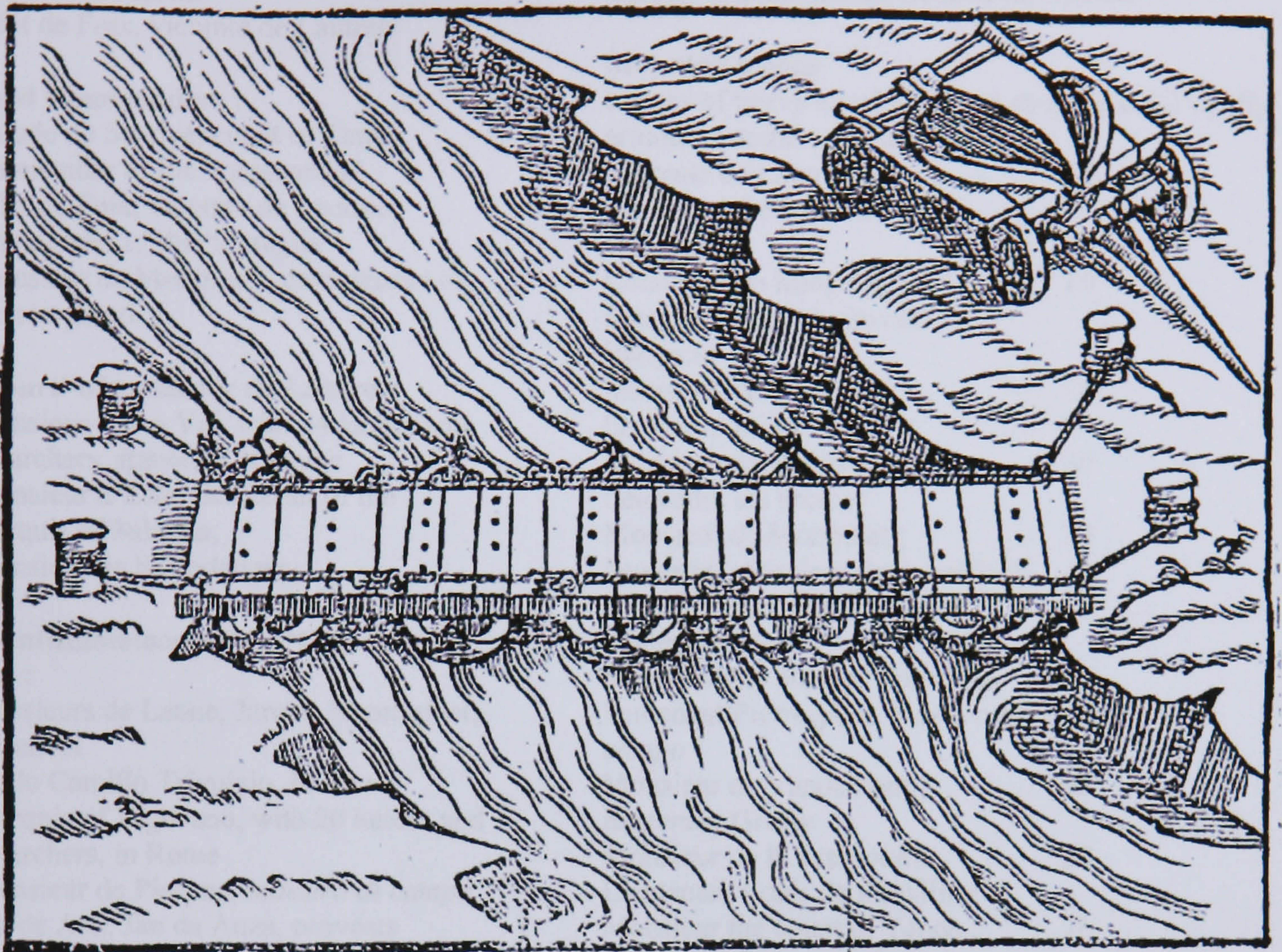


The sallet and the sword of general Lautrec are still conserved under the altar of the Shrine of Our Lady of the Tears in Treviglio (Bergamo). It ought to be noticed that this sallet is a ‘Burgonet’, an helmet ‘alla Borgognona’, that is the model preferred by Giovanni de’Medici, even though in this case the sallet has a *buffa* (a protection for the face and the throat) strapped to it.

On 28 February 1522 French general Odet de Foix decided to raze to the ground the city of Treviglio. The population took refuge in the Convent of the Agostiniane invoking the divine protection. The Madonna, painted on the wall of the bell tower of the church, started to shed tears. Informed by his soldiers of the miraculous event, and having verified the truth of the report, Lautrec knelt down at the feet of the image and laid down there, in sign of submission, his weapons.

Plate 6: THE 'PONTE PORTATILE'.

H



This drawing of a pontoon bridge, taken from *Della Osservanza Militare* of Francesco Ferretti, gives us a good idea of the *ponti mobili* used by the army of the League to cross the treacherous *fiumare*¹ of the Marche and the Abruzzi that, on a previous occasion, had claimed the life of Muzio Attendolo Sforza. On the right bank, one of the boats of which the bridge was constructed is still upside down on the wagon used for their transport from one river to another.

Table XVIII

The Army of the League: Umbria, October 1527 - January 1528

		October 1527 ²	January 1528 ³
Venice	Infantry	1000 Landsknechts 2200 Italian foot	1000 Landsknechts 2000 Italian foot
	Cavalry	40 Men-at-arms 250 Albanian and Croat Stradiots 150 Mounted Crossbowmen	250 Albanian and Croat Stradiots 150 Mounted Crossbowmen
France	Infantry	1400-1500 Swiss 4-500 various nationalities	1800-2000 Swiss
	Cavalry	240 men-at-arms 150 'archers' 100 archers-sujets	Unknown. At least 100 men-at-arms.
Florence	See Chapter Three		

¹ There is not a good translation for this word. A 'fiumara' is a kind of river that is usually low or even dry, but that can swollen very quickly by heavy rains.

² Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 5 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 125, f. 121 v.

³ Orazio Baglioni to the Ten, 20 January 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Reposnive, 127, f. 95 r./v.

Table XIX: LOMBARDY, DECEMBER 1527: THE FRENCH ARMY

Captain General:

Odet de Foix, vicomte de Lautrec.

Field Commanders :

Claude de Savoye, count of Tenda, commander of the 'vanguardia'

Odet de Foix, vicomte de Lautrec, commander of the 'battaglia'

Monsieur de Montpesat, commander of the rearguard.

'Court' of monsieur de Lautrec:

Monsieur de La Val, with 24 lances and 48 archers, stationed in Rome

Monsieur d'Este, lieutenant of the marquis of Saluzzo;

Monsieur de Robodanges

'Gentilshommes' of the 'Camera del Re' :

Messieurs de Laune, Jarnac, Nantouillet, Bonnivet

Paolo Camillo Trivulzio, in Rome

Marquis of Vigevano, with 20 lances and 40 archers, in Rome

Monsieur de Pierpon, *maestro di campo* ;

Jan da Asti, Jan da Anza, provosts marquis of Mortara, in charge of victuals Stefano Colonna

Monsieur de Severgny, 'generale di finanza'

Commissioners in charge of the musters:

Monsieur de la Foccoedra, Pietro

Rizardo, monsieur de Lomlae, the baron of Lecco

Jan Beltrand, general treasurer

Monsieur de Scandiiach.

Secretaries of monsieur de Lautrec :

Messer Ambrogio da Fiorenza, Gian Vio, Gracian, Piloes.

Gentlemen of the court of monsieur de Vandemont

Baron of Bussanses, Sandio, Campois, Luier.

Faies, general quartermaster.

Ambassadors

Knight Gregorio Casale for England

Count Francesco di Somaglia and Massimiliano Stampa for Milan

Piero da ca'di Pesaro for Venice

Count Galeazzo Tassoni for Ferrara

Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi for Florence

Cardinal Cybo for the pope

Giovan Giovachino da Genova for France.

Mounted troops

Lances of heavy cavalry (1 man-at-arms and 2 lightly-armoured archers per lance):

Vicomte de Lautrec ; 60

lieutenant the baron of Grandmont

Count Guido Rangoni; 60

lieutenant count Ludovico Rangoni:

Monsieur de Bonaval; 36

lieutenant his brother

Monsieur de Negre-Pelice ; 30

lieutenant his brother

Monsieur de Monpesat ; 30

lieutenant monsieur de Scandiiach

Monsieur the duke of Albany ; 60

lieutenant Moriac

Monsieur the duke of Lorraine; 45

lieutenant Pierrespont, *maestro di campo*

Monsieur de Vandemont ; 42

lieutenant Gruffy

Monsieur de la Tremouille; 20

Lieutenant Louis de Beavillier

Monsieur the count of Tenda ; 36

lieutenant the baron of Lille

Monsieur de Sant-André 30

Monsieur Claude d'Etampes de la

Ferté Nabert

Monsieur de la Fayette 24

Total 503

Light cavalrymen:

Sir Robert Jerningham 100

Antonio Casale, in English service. 100

Captain de la Grua 100

Captain Pastiglia 100

Total: 400

GRAND TOTAL (including the 'archers') 1909

Infantry

Troops under the command of Pedro Navarro, captain general of the Gascons – lieutenant captain Borja:

Commanders of the Gascon companies:

The baron of Bearn 700

Don Masano 400

Mascaron 300

Caiait 300

La Flota 360

Blaise de Montluc 300

Aussun 400

Lamesan 300

San Julian 300

Granian	300	Giovanni dal Brando, corso	98
Langhile	200	Marco Antonio Cusano	210
Montruel	200	Frabaston	150
<i>Total</i>	4060	Claudio de Rispa	137
French <i>aventuriers</i> under the command of monsieur de Burie, Commanders of the French companies:		Marco Antonio Trotto	228
Lambrande	300	Alfonso Galante	300
Forchades	300	Alfonso Ozerio	800
San Giovanni	290	Stafirino	300
Don Piero de Boemonte	300	<i>Total</i>	3633
Moye	300	Landsknechts under the command of captain general Vandemont – that is the German Black Bands:	
El Basso	300	<i>Obrist</i> (colonel) Brandech	2000
Maro	300	<i>Obrist</i> count Wolf	2000
Thermes	300	Imperial ‘defectors’ under the command of ‘Lupe’	700
Montalt	300	<i>Total</i> (?)	4754
<i>Total:</i>	2690	Swiss under the command of captain general monsieur Ducrech:	
Italian troops in French service (the ‘White Bands’):		Swiss	1780
Commanders of the Italian companies:		<i>GRAND TOTAL</i>	16917
Count Gerolamo da Castiglione	600	Artillery	
Count Cesare Scotti	600	Commander (according to Du Bellay): monsieur de Mondragon, a Gascon.	
Moran Carbon	201	60 pieces of ordnance;	
Maceran	253	900 horses for the drawing of the artillery and of the ammunitions;	
Jan Paolo Cossa	200	600 carts.	
Sorgio Baratta	30		
Grogheto	274		
Le Liol	92		

These data are mostly taken from a Venetian *rassegna* of Lautrec’s army in Lombardy compiled in December 1527 and included in Marin Sanuto’s *Diarii* (46, pp. 428 ff.). It ought to be noticed that this was not a *rassegna* of the army of the League, and did not include Venetian or Milanese forces that at the moment were operating in the area or the French troops stationed elsewhere. I have also introduced a few corrections and specifications based on comparisons between subsequent Italian muster rolls and French secondary sources. According to Sanuto, a French *livre* was more or less equal to half a Venetian ducat, that at the time was worth 6 *lire* and 4 *soldi*. The Italian footsoldiers in French service were paid 27,320 *libre* per month, the Gascons 29,141 *libre* and the French 19,505. This means that the average wage was about 3 Venetian ducats per month. The monthly cost of such an army was, according to *monsieur de Lautrec*, fifteen hundred thousand *scudi*. The ‘companies’ of infantry that exceeded two hundred units were almost always ensembles of several companies, that is *colonnelli*, as in the case of the Gascon baron of Bearn, whose seven hundred men were divided into five companies, or the Italian Girolamo da Castiglione, who had three *insegne* under his command. The case of Pandolfo Puccini and Giovanantonio da Castello should be also remembered, and it would be interesting to compare it with the case of the company formed by Blaise the Montluc and Aussun, who, in Alessandria, divided between them (unequally) the men previously enlisted by Montluc⁴. Unfortunately the Venetian muster inspectors did not consider this detail important. It is interesting to compare this muster roll with the one compiled by the Ferrarese ambassador in June 1528 (Sheet XX). The figures given by Martin du Bellay in his *Mémoires*⁵ are far more impressive, but, besides not being a reliable source for this campaign, *monsieur du Bellay* emphasise excessively the role of the French cavalry and credits them with a function that they never had during Naples’s campaign. However, it ought to be remembered that, after almost five months of campaigning, many lances had been garrisoned in the cities and castles conquered, and that there were scores of unpaid ‘*gentils-hommes... venus pour leur plaisir pour voir la guerre*’, who were not included in the muster rolls. Count Ugo dei Pepoli, who was to become the last leader of the Black Bands and commanded fifty lances at the time, does not appear on Sanuto’s list.

⁴ Blaise de Montluc, *Commentaires*, p. 77.

⁵ Martin du Bellay, *Mémoires*, p. 107 r.

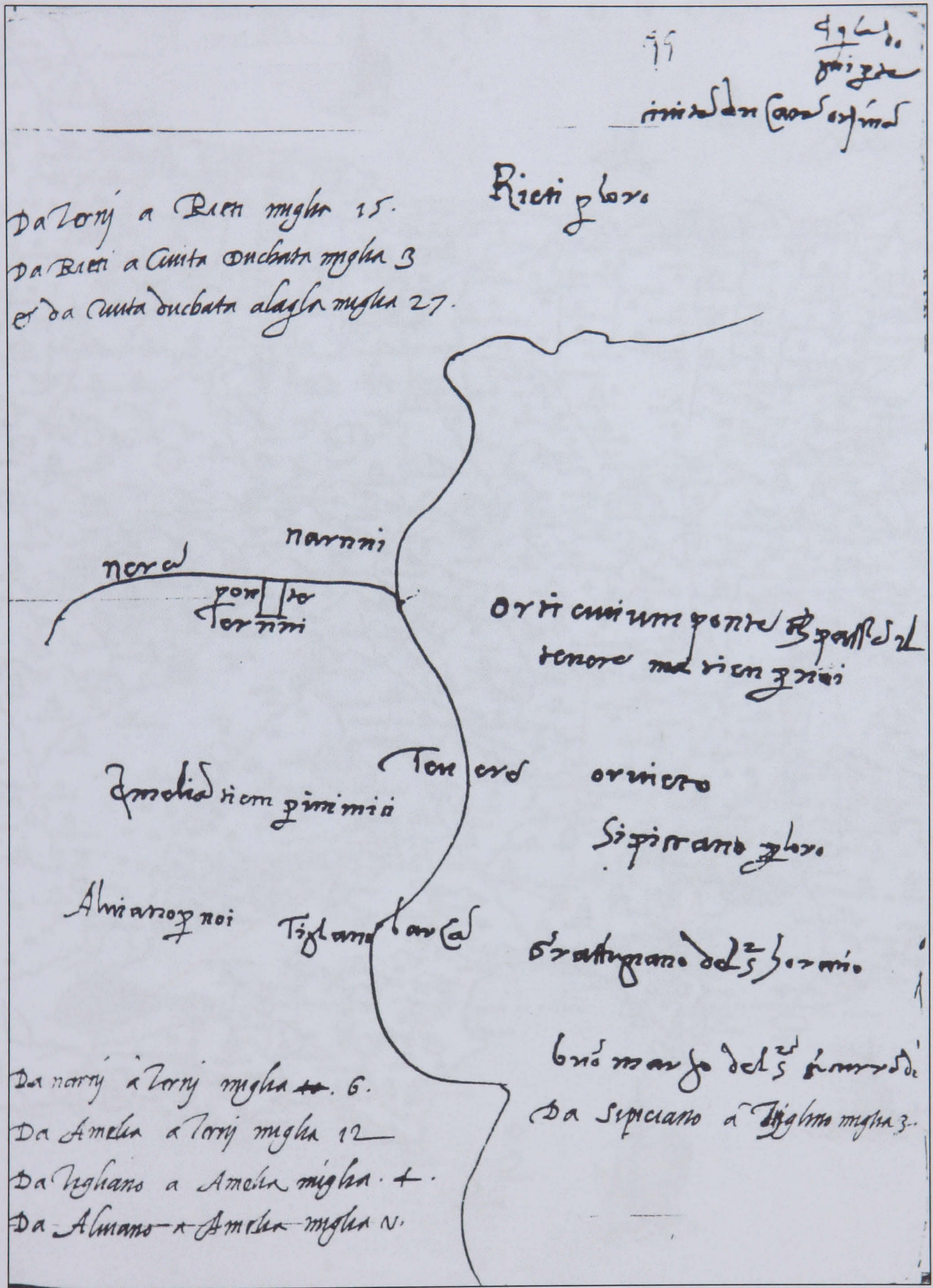
Plate 7



Ferrante Gonzaga (1507-1557), was the third son of marquis Francesco II Gonzaga and Isabella d'Este. While Federico, the firstborn, was educated at the court of Francis I of France, and second born Francesco was to become a cardinal, Ferrante was sent to Spain in 1523 and became a gentleman of the retinue of Charles V, as well as one of the emperor's closest friends¹. In September 1526 Ferrante went back to Italy, where he started a long and successful career in Imperial service. During the siege of Naples he was in command of the Imperial light cavalry, while, at the same time, his brother the marquis Federico had joined the League of Cognac and eighty Mantuan men-at-arms were fighting on the side the besieging army. During the whole campaign, Ferrante maintained a friendly and detailed correspondence with Federico and with his mother Isabella.

¹ On this topic, see the books of Raffaele Tamalio on the Gonzaga family and especially his article 'Tra Parigi e Madrid. Strategie famigliari gonzaghesche al principio del Cinquecento', *Atti del Convegno The Court of the Gonzaga in the Age of Mantegna: 1450-1550*, pp. 69-90. See also Giuliano Gosellini, *Vita di don Ferrando Gonzaga* (Pisa, 1821).

Map B
The 'Carta de casa Orsina'²:
the North of the State of the Church on January 1528



This map was drawn in January 1528 by partisans of the powerful pro-French Orsini family to show the commanders of the army of the League the tactical situation at the confluence of river Nera with the Tevere.

² ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 127, f. 99 r.

Map C: The Road to Naples



ALLA LIBRERIA DELLA STELLA
 IN VENEZIA 1557

Chapter V.

The Siege of Naples

1. Bastions and Galleys: Naples' Blockade

*'... ma quando il sol gli aridi campi fiede
con raggi assai ferventi e in alto sorge,
ecco apparir Gierusalem si vede
ecco additar Gierusalem si scorge
ecco da mille voci unitamente
Gierusalemme salutar si sente.'*¹

Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, chant 3.

After its 'strategic' retreat from Troia had become almost a fully fledged rout, the Imperial army had been unable to regroup in order to fight the much-spoken of *giornata*, even after the arrival of substantial infantry and artillery reinforcements. Eventually, the demoralized columns converged on Naples and camped outside the city, while the Imperial generals – the marquis of Vasto (see Plate 8), the prince of Orange, Fernando de Alarcòn, Ferrante Gonzaga – and the viceroy Hugo de Moncada devised a new strategy. The ideas of a pitched battle or of a retreat towards the south were quickly discarded. Against the opinion of the marquis and the pleas of Naples's city Council, which wanted to avoid the grim fate of Milan, the viceroy Moncada decided to secure the capital against both the French army and the restless Neapolitan *baroni* by billeting the whole army in the city²: approximately five thousand Spaniards, five thousand

¹ '...but when the sun rose high over the arid fields, / its burning rays at utmost fervour, / Behold, Jerusalem appears in sight, / Behold! Jerusalem they show and point / Behold! A thousand voices unite to salute Jerusalem.'

² Gregorio Rosso, *Historia delle cose di Napoli sotto l'imperio di Carlo quinto, cominciando dall'anno 1526 per infino all'anno 1537* (Napoli, 1635), p. 15; '... et così piangendo indarno i Napoletani, fu l'essercito distribuito per le contrade...' Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 74.

Landsknechts, two thousand Italians, fifteen hundred cavalrymen both light and heavy³ and several thousand camp followers⁴. According to Marco Guazzo, the Italians, the Spaniards and the Germans were respectively in charge of the defence of the western, northern and eastern sections of the city walls⁵.

In the meantime, the army of the League was advancing very slowly, both for logistical and political reasons. All sources agree on the fact that Lautrec's was a huge host; Marco del Nero estimated that in total it was made up of eighty thousand persons and twenty thousand horses, more than two thirds of which were useless 'mangiatori'⁶. The provisions and the organizational skills of the *maestri di campo* were never sufficient for the needs of such an army, and for this reason, before proceeding towards Naples, Lautrec wanted to have the logistical and financial support of all the cities south of the river Garigliano. Already on 11 April, while inspecting the camp, the *capitano generale* was greeted by the ominous and multi-lingual chorus of his soldiers shouting 'Ghelt, ghelt! Argent! Denari, denari!'⁷. In fact, the Florentine representatives did not share the optimistic mood of their Mantuan and Ferrarese colleagues: the army had plenty of men-at-arms, especially after the arrival of the reinforcements from Mantua and Ferrara⁸, but its light horsemen were few and 'cattivi', and, despite the imminence of the siege of Naples, of all the League's commanders only Lautrec seemed really

³ Such were the estimates of Venetian *colonnello* Antonio Maria Avogadro in April 1528, Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 383.

⁴ According to a Florentine merchant, the Imperialists in Naples '... avevano con loro 6000 femene...'; Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 260, 14 April 1528.

⁵ Marco Guazzo, *Historie di messer Marco Guazzo* (Venezia, 1564), p. 82 v.

⁶ '... più che ottanta mila persone et ventimila cavalli [che li dua terzi o più inutili et non si potria credere la gran quantità di vectovaglie si consuma]...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 March 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 145 r.

⁷ '... cominciorno li tedeschi a gridare "ghelde, ghelde", li franzesi "argent", et li italiani "denari, denari", di modo che presto si (Lautrec) ritirò all'alloggiamento, et pocho apresso mandò per e'capitani exhortandoli a dare speranza a'soldati'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 13 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 292 v. Even Marco del Nero was asking for money: his purse was empty, and where he was 'bisogna esser copioso et di servitori, di cavalli et chariaggi per potersi accomodare delle cose necessario... volendo stare secondo che richiede il grado di chi rappresenta le Signorie Vostre...'.
⁸ The marquis of Mantua sent eighty lances, while the duke of Ferrara sent one hundred. The Mantuans arrived during the confrontation at Troia, while the Ferrarese contingent joined the army a few days after the Black Bands.

concerned about the future⁹. And, albeit ‘invictissimo’, there was no one else with his qualities, wrote Soderini¹⁰.

Notwithstanding these problems, the pressure of the forces of the League on Naples was growing constantly. While the League’s light cavalry harassed the Imperialists from the east, on 13 April the Genoese galleys of Andrea Doria (1466-1560), under the command of his nephew Filippino, bombarded the Landsknechts camped near the church of La Maddalena (see Map D). Under the cover of a landing party of seven hundred arquebusiers, the Genoese took on fresh water and headed to Amalfi. Thanks to his raids on coastal cities and on Spanish ships trying to leave Naples, Filippino Doria amassed a considerable booty and captured five hundred Spaniards, whom he immediately chained to the oars¹¹, exacerbating their old grudges against the Genoese.

On 21 April, while the main camp was still three miles from the city on the road to Aversa, the infantry of the League attacked Naples for the first time. Orazio and the Black Bands, acting as ‘stracorritori’¹² – that is, advancing and attacking at a run – caught by surprise and in the open a Spanish contingent of two hundred foot soldiers and five hundred light horsemen, forcing them to retreat towards the *Porta Capuana* (see Map D). A first relief sortie made by the Italian companies and a second one attempted by the Landsknechts were similarly repelled, and the Imperialists were

⁹ Marco del Nero was afraid that the protection of the lines of supply, threatened by the Imperial light cavalry, would be entrusted to infantry rather than cavalry troops, ‘... per esser loro copiosi di cavalli leggieri e noi ne siamo scarsi’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 260 r. ; on 27 April Soderini echoed del Nero’s words: ‘...per havere noi pochi cavalli legieri et cattivi, che e’ nimici corrono ove a lor pare et ci rompono ogni strada...’, f. 234 r.

¹⁰ ‘... per quel che mi pare non ci veggo homo nessuno pensi a questa Guerra se non monsignor Illustrissimo, el quale benché sia invictissimo, mi pare che da solo harà molte fatiche...’. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 20 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 233 r. However, the idea that Lautrec was ‘*invictissimo*’ was rather questionable.

¹¹ Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 15 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 219 r.

¹² Giovio, *La seconda parte*, p. 75. Paolo Giovio speaks about French ‘stracorritori’, but in fact it was the Black Bands, whom Giovio himself considered ‘*velocissimi archibuggieri*’ (ibid., p. 87), that attacked Naples for the first time. The ‘stracorritori’ were basically infantry companies which, among other things, were specialized in running. Still today the Italian *Bersaglieri* maintain this peculiarity as an important part of their regimental tradition.

pursued up to Naples' *borghi*, where Pierre de Veyre¹³, a gentleman of Charles V's retinue, was killed by an arquebus shot. More than fifty Imperial foot soldiers and twenty-five light horsemen were either killed or captured, while the Bands lost ten men, killed or badly wounded. The generals of the League were impressed by this first victory of the Black Bands, 'tal che ogni giorno cresce la reputatione loro'¹⁴. On the other hand, the Imperialists looked 'worse discomfited than when they fled at the town of Troye'¹⁵.

As the League's army advanced towards Naples, the skirmishes intensified and reached their peak on 25 April, when almost two thousand Imperial arquebusiers went to attack a group of shooters, who were defending a house near Poggioreale, where Lautrec was planning to build his main 'alloggiamento'. To support them, Lautrec, now encamped only half a mile away from Poggioreale, sent first the White Bands under the command of Gerolamo da Castiglione (see Table XIX) with fifteen hundred arquebusiers, and then Baglioni, with two thousand arquebusiers of the Black Bands. On their arrival, the Italians of Castiglione were involved in 'una scaramuzza grossissima, tutta d'arcebusieri'. The losses were heavy on both sides, but the Imperialists, possibly Spaniards, were still holding their positions when the fray was joined by Baglioni's crack troops. Under their furious assault, the Imperial front collapsed, and from Naples one thousand arquebusiers and three hundred horsemen were sent to support the first contingent, that was now facing annihilation. The skirmish continued until sunset, when, after a final charge, the troops of the League managed to drive back the enemies and pursued them up to the Porta Capuana. However, their rush

¹³ 'Il ragazzo di uno fante da piedi ha havuto la sua bereta, sopra la quale era una medaia et una catena piccola d'oro' Girardo Cadeno to the duke of Milan, Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, pp. 338-339. Pierre de Veyre, better known as monsieur de Migliau, had been sent to Italy by Charles V after the sack of Rome with the conditions for the liberation of the pope. Since he ended up by trying to stop the negotiations because they were taking a turn too favourable to Clement VII, both Guicciardini and Giovio considered his death the just reward for his *empietà*; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XVIII, chapt. XIV, pp. 1894-1895.

¹⁴ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 21 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 265 r.

¹⁵ Sir Robert Jerningham to Henry VIII, 26 April 1528. Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, vol. IV, part II, 4207, p. 1857.

brought the soldiers of the Black Bands within range of the Imperial artillery, and, once in front of the Porta, exposed them to the fire of the muskets and arquebuses *da posta* of the bastions' flanks¹⁶. One of the many victims of the crossfire was captain Lucantonio Cuppano, who had his right thigh-bone shattered by a musket shot shortly after killing an Imperial light horseman¹⁷. Eventually, the Florentine forces had to withdraw with heavy losses, but Lucantonio, one of their best commanders, was out of combat for the rest of the siege, at a time when the Bands' *sergente maggiore* Giovambattista da Messina was still refusing to put aside his *ira funesta* against Baglioni¹⁸.

On 26 April Lautrec transferred his headquarters to the *villa* of the duke of Montalto on the hill of Poggioreale, which during the preceding days had been heavily fortified with trenches and bastions. The camp of the League on Poggioreale and its impressive defence system were regarded as Navarro's masterpiece even by the Imperialists, and Charles V decided to inspect them during his visit to Naples in 1535¹⁹. Looking at the beautiful city (see Plate 10) from their new position, Lautrec and his staff officers pondered the tactical situation. The League's slow advance had given time to the Imperialists to strengthen Naples's walls, and the Aragonese defensive system (see Plate 9) had been crowned by the massive earthworks that now encircled the top of

¹⁶ On the 'archibusi da posta', 'moschette' – bigger versions of the arquebuses and muskets utilised by the footsoldiers – and the use of the 'rampart guns', see Simon Pepper and Nicholas Adams, *Firearms and Fortifications* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 15-17.

¹⁷ 'De questi de la Legha che furno morti, che furno in quantitate, non vi sono homeni da conto, ma solo fanteria privata, ma ben valente, excetto che il capitano Luca Antonio, allievo del Signor Giovanni de' Medici è sta' ferito da un archebuso e chi dice da un moschetto in una gamba, che gli ha rotto l'ossa... lui dimostrò gran valore che fu uno tra quelli che entrò sino su le porte di Napoli et amazzò uno cavallo leggiero de' cesarei su le porte....'. Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 25 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 238 r. – 239 v. ; see also Lucantonio Zuppano to the Ten, 28 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 129, f. 235 r.

¹⁸ Three splinters of bone were extracted from Lucantonio's wound. By the beginning of July he was doing well, but 'per li soi disordini' he relapsed and his life was again in danger. His own brother did not expect him to survive; Nobile Cuppano to the marquis of Mantua, 3 July 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 150 r. Nobile Cuppano, who, like his brothers Annibale, Scipione, Tommaso and Quintino, was in Mantuan service, had been sent to the camp of the League by the marquis to buy the best warhorses the Kingdom of Naples could offer.

¹⁹ '...molti de' capitani Imperiali confessarono che all'età nostra nessuno altro in luogo veruno non s'havea né meglio né con maggior diligenza accampato, et dicevano che gran parte di quella disciplina era venuta dall'ingegno del Navarro' Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda Parte*, p. 104. On the visit of Charles V: Paolo Giovio, *Lettere*, vol. I, p. 169.

mount San Martino, reinforced by four *cannoni* and by a garrison of at least eight hundred men. ‘Fortificato maravigliosamente’²⁰ and situated just outside the western city walls on a rock basement that prevented mining, San Martino did not represent a direct threat to the besiegers, but prevented the French from taking possession of a position that dominated the city and from encircling it completely. Moreover, Naples was not Pavia; Naples was one of the largest European cities and its inhabitants numbered more than one hundred thousand²¹, a fact that, added to the numerical ratio between besiegers and besieged – at the very best 2:1 – argued against a general assault. The twenty thousand footsoldiers of the League were barely enough to blockade the city. According to del Nero’s reports, some ten thousand more men were needed to launch a proper attack against the town²². On the other hand, after the surrender of Capua, Aversa, Nola and Pozzuoli the League controlled the surrounding cities (see Map E), the aqueduct that supplied with water Naples’s fountains and watermills had been destroyed and most of the fields between the camp and Naples were flooded – a decision that Lautrec would eventually regret, because it broke Poggioreale’s delicate hydro-geological balance²³ (Plate 10).

However, Naples was also a major harbour, and, in Mediterranean warfare, harbours, and not fleets, dominated the sea (see Chapter 2, third section). Naples hosted a squadron of six galleys, while Gaeta and the island of Ischia were still in Imperial hands (see Map E). Sixteen Venetian galleys were expected to arrive in a few weeks, but in the meanwhile the eight galleys of Doria’s squadron were not enough to blockade the port. In order to intercept the small sailing ships that carried provisions and

²⁰ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 21 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 265 r.

²¹ According to Pardi and Mols, in the period of the siege the population amounted to approximately one hundred and fifty thousand. G. Pardi, *Napoli attraverso i secoli, disegno di storia economica e demografica* (Milano, Roma, Napoli 1924); Roger Mols, *Introduction a la Demographie Historique des villes d’Europe du XIV au XVIII siècle* (Gemhouse, 1956).

²² Marco del Nero to the Ten, 26 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 270 r.

²³ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 90. ; Rosso, *Historia delle cose di Napoli*, p. 33.

reinforcements to Naples, a galley captain had at his disposal a quite reduced angle of attack and many other factors to consider, such as the artillery of the harbour or the constant threat of a counterattack by the Imperial galleys. Speed under oars and the manpower needed to achieve it did not come cheaply, and did not last long. The galley was an oared fighting vessel designed to apply its mainly offensive potential on a very limited front and for short periods of time; its defensive capacity, in open sea²⁴, was negligible and its range of action was limited²⁵. The best option was a line of blockade close to the city, but the sheer size of Naples, its defences, its squadron and the fact that the Imperialists maintained, through Ischia and Pozzuoli, partial control over the entrance of the Gulf of Naples, prevented the League from establishing one. Since the beginning of the siege, the galleys of Filippino Doria were forced to use distant Salerno (see Map E) as their main base.

Aware of the fact that he had not enough troops to storm both San Martino and Naples, during this first phase of the siege Lautrec decided to focus on the first. For this reason the *capitano generale* planned to move his main *alloggiamento* from Poggioreale, which was in front of the Porta Capuana, towards San Martino, opposite Porta San Gennaro and closer to the city²⁶. While the new quarters were being ‘posti in fortezza’ by thousands of sappers, Anton Maria Avogadro, *colonnello* of the Venetian Landsknechts, was sent to preside over the advanced positions. Quartered with his men on a hilltop, a ‘loco molto scoperto’, at an arquebus’ shot from San Martino as the crow flies, the Brescian *condottiere* considered it a ‘loco fortissimo’, and felt little enthusiasm

²⁴ If caught by a superior force near to the coastline, a galley could protect its main weak point – the stern – by mooring at the edge of the beach with its bow artillery turned towards the enemy ships.

²⁵ On the operational limits of the galleys during a blockade, see Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys*, pp. 57-84.

²⁶ ‘... Monsignor Illustrissimo... vuole mutarsi in un altro alloggiamento più propinquo a Napoli et al Monte San Martino... et già ha facto cominciare le trincee et si guardano, ché in tre o quattro dì doverrà essere totalmente in fortezza...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 8 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 404 r.; see also Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, book XVIII, chapt. XVIII, pp. 1925-1926.

for the idea of an assault; ‘mi par cosa dura, et forsi si potrà dir “Si Africa pianse, Italia non ne rise”’²⁷.

At the same time, in Naples the situation was not very rosy²⁸. The Imperialists had imposed on the Neapolitans, unaccustomed to war since the first phase of the Italian Wars in 1504, the same harsh discipline they had enforced in Milan during the sieges: the *popolo* was disarmed, any ‘romore’ was forbidden and curfew was enforced²⁹. The warehouses of Castel Nuovo were full of wheat, and there was, at least at the beginning of the siege, plenty of wine to soften the bad mood of the Landsknechts, who, unlike the Spaniards, kept on grumbling about their arrears of wages³⁰. The city wells made up for the lack of aqueducts, but not for the almost complete lack of watermills and, therefore, for the shortage of bread. The soldiers used rudimentary handmills to produce very low-quality flour (Spaniards and Italians) or ate boiled grain (the Germans). However, the indiscipline of the Imperial troops, especially when it came to the consumption of wine, soon jeopardized the logistical situation and exasperated Naples’ population³¹, already disheartened by the fact that on 2 May the ‘miracle’ of San Gennaro had not taken place, and the blood of the city’s patron saint had refused to melt.

As we have seen, the tactical situation was grave, but not totally compromised, and the strategic aim of the Imperialist commanders was now to resist until the arrival

²⁷ Anton Maria Avogadro to Antonio Capriolo, 28 April 1528. *Sanuto, Diarii, XLVII*, p. 383.

²⁸ Neapolitan edited sources on the siege of 1528: Gregorio Rosso, *Historie*, cit. and Leonardo Santoro, *Dei successi del sacco di Roma e Guerra del Regno di Napoli sotto Lotrech* (Napoli, 1858). Although both contain many mistakes and are not up to the works of Giovio and Guicciardini, they give a quite vivid picture of the war from the point of view of the besiegers (Santoro was the representative sent by the city of Caserta to give Lautrec the key of the city) and of the besieged (Rosso).

²⁹ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 259 r. According to Rosso, the Imperial generals started to take a census of able-bodied Neapolitans, but soon rejected the idea of organizing a militia as dangerous, Rosso, *Historia*, p. 19. However, it is not clear if a full-fledged contribution ‘come si fa a la Lombarda’ (Girardo Cadeno to the duke of Milan. *Sanuto, Diarii*, 47, p.339) was really enforced on the capital city of the Kingdom of Naples.

³⁰ ‘...massimamente di vino, col quale solo si sa, come si possono allettare e acquistare gli animi de’ Tedeschi.’ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 72.

³¹ ‘...né hoggimai v’era più tanta abondanza di vino, che bastasse a’ Tedeschi, i quali fuggono il ber dell’acqua, come quella che nuoce al corpo...’ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 74. The Landsknechts raided the cellars and the residences of their commanders, Santoro, *Dei Successi*, p. 65. . Moreover, ‘...usati a molta libertà, e crudeltà contro a Milanesi et a Romani, sforzavano donne, occidevano, maltrattavano, arrobavano...’. Rosso, *Historia*, p. 33.

of the relief army that was being mustered north of the Alps by the duke of Brunswick. The political situation was, however, worsening. The majority of the well-off Neapolitans – up to eight thousand, according to Santoro – had left the city with their families seeking refuge in Sorrento, Gaeta, Ischia and Procida, while the *baroni* of the Kingdom chose their side and prepared for the day of reckoning between Aragonese and Angevin factions³², but at this stage it was Lautrec's army which benefited the most from the activities of the pro-French partisans. In Naples, the Imperial *consulta* was paralysed by the contrast between the supporters of viceroy Hugo de Moncada – the marquis of Vasto, Cesare Fieramosca, Ascanio Colonna – and those of the *capitano generale* the prince of Orange, that is Ferrante Gonzaga and Alarcòn. According to the Ferrarese representative in Naples Gerolamo Naselli, in those days the most frequently heard phrase was: 'Io me ne lavo le mani'. The reasons for the dispute were of a jurisdictional rather than tactical nature, but the situation had been worsened by the fact that the prince had been verbally granted by Charles V either the duchy of Milan or the viceroyalty of Naples, and Moncada was frantically looking for a way to reinforce his position³³. Given the situation, a military success was the easiest way to do it, and so the viceroy and his party embarked (literally) on a hazardous expedition aimed at destroying Doria's fleet before it could join up with the Venetian galleys (see Appendix 2). Albeit a terrible blow for the Imperial forces, the defeat at Capo d'Orso in fact removed from the *consulta* Orange's opponents, allowed Charles V's army to have once again a single strong leader and, as we shall see, planted the seed of discord in the League's camp. In fact, the defences did not waver, and the Imperialists strengthened their position by expelling from Naples thousands of 'bocche disutili'. Ferrante

³² Leonardo Santoro, who eventually found himself on the wrong side (the losing one) of the barricade, gives us a very detailed account of the names and rank of all the barons who actively supported France and Lautrec during the siege, and a full list of all the pro-French partisans who paid for their untimely choice with their life and/or their lands; Santoro, *Dei Successi*, pp. 64-65, 66-69, 127-138.

³³ Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 23 May 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, busta 9, the folios are not numbered.

Gonzaga wrote to his brother that he was still confident in the justness of the Imperial cause and in its ‘buona fortuna’, and remarked upon the great opportunities offered by the eventual confiscation of the lands of such a great number of rebellious barons³⁴.

In the meantime, the excavation of the trenches towards San Martino advanced slowly, ‘combatendo il terreno a spana a spana’ in the plain between the fortress and Naples, from which the Imperialists launched frequent counterattacks and organised dangerous ambushes³⁵. On 2 May, Rossino de’Ciai’s company and Avogadro’s Landsknechts drove back the enemy, pursuing them up to the walls of Naples. In doing so the Florentines³⁶ came under the intense fire of the city’s small firearms and started to withdraw but, caught in the open without support, they were overwhelmed and scattered by a well-timed sortie of the Imperial light cavalry. Hit by an arquebus shot in the thigh, captain Rossino found himself isolated and surrounded by enemy horsemen. He fought to the death, receiving three lance strokes in the face (together with the thigh, one of the partially exposed points of the infantryman’s suit of armour the captains used to wear³⁷) and one – probably the *coup-de-grace* – in his chest³⁸. Some fifty men of the Black Bands fell with him.

³⁴ ‘... non manchiamo di buona speranza, mediante il soccorso che viene... restare alfine vittoriosi, come per i meriti de la Maestà Cesarea accompagnatida buona fortuna habbiamo veduto ogni volta accadere che da le imprese più disperate le succede la vittoria... et a noi habbia a resultare in grandissimo profitto...’. Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua, 7 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 181 r.

However, a few days before he had written to his mother, asking urgently for money, ‘... per modo ch’io mi moro di fame se la Reverentia Vostra non mi sovviene per qualche via... acciò non habbia a sopportare tanta indignità come io sopporto con vergogna mia, et di tutta la Casa (Gonzaga)...’. Ferrante Gonzaga to his mother Isabella d’Este, marchioness widow of Mantua, 23 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 180 r.

³⁵ ‘... et se guadagnamo ditto San Martino, habbiamo bona speranza... a sforzarli et taiarli a pezi et liberar questa povera Italia da questi marani.’. Antonio Maria Avogadro to Antonio Capriolo, 4 May 1528. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 466.

³⁶ Rossino’s company was ‘tutta di Fiorentini’. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 224 v.

³⁷ A typical infantry suit of armour utilized by the first-line pikemen and by the company officers was made up of a ‘corsaletto’ (body armour), ‘bracciali’ (armlets) and ‘manopole’ (gauntlets). The ‘scarselloni’ (thigh guards) often shielded only half the thigh, and some soldiers preferred not to wear them at all. Since Rossino was an infantry commander and an ‘allievo del signor Giovanni’, to protect his head he probably wore a burgonet without ‘bufe’ (see Chapter 4, Plate 5).

³⁸ ‘...questo caso del capitano Rossino, che in una grossa scaramuccia... vi rimase lui, ferito d’uno archibuso in una coscia, et poi con tre lanciate nel volto et una nel petto fu amazato... non s’è però parlato

The sight of the League's infantry, and especially the Black Bands, caught in the open and slaughtered by the Imperial light cavalry was becoming ever too common, and the death of Rossino was just the last straw³⁹. *Signor* Giovanni knew how to 'fare spalle' to the light infantry with the light cavalry, but he had been trained by the Imperialists, and in the French camp, where the value of tactical bodies of light cavalry was yet to be recognised, it was hard to find somebody like him⁴⁰. In fact, the precious light cavalry of the League had been badly neglected: to the advantage of the men-at-arms in the French case, to the benefit of the war waged by the *Serenissima* in Apulia⁴¹ in the case of Venice. Sir Robert Jerningham and John Carew had died⁴², and their company had probably disbanded; *provveditore* Civran and most of his stradiots had been sent to Apulia, while Valerio Orsini, unpaid, had left Venetian service⁴³. The remaining horsemen were too few – like those of Orazio Baglioni, of whom, according to the Florentine *commissario*, there had never been more than fifty⁴⁴ - and were

altro che della morte di questo Rossino, il quale per le virtù et buone qualità sue ci era di ottima riputatione, et universalmente amato da ciascuno..'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 3 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 373 r/v.

³⁹ '... che ci pare di guadagnarli correndo lor (to the enemies) drieto et ne tiron nel forte, dove fin dalle mura con li archibugi ne offendono, et nel ritirarsi de'nostri per non havere nessuno cavallo che facci loro spalle son amazati da'cavalli delli inimici, per modo che credo quando queste Bande ritorneranno, sarà mutato la maggior parte de'capitani et de'fanti...'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 333 r.

⁴⁰ Even at the siege of Pavia, during an absence of signor Giovanni, the *gendarmes* of the duke of Alençon had been unable to support the companies of the *Gran Diavolo*, and left them exposed to a devastating sortie of the Imperialist garrison. Giovanni '... poi che fu ritornato mosso a ira, et dolore con ogni sorte di villanie vituperò la viltà de'cavalli francesi, i quali erano delle bande di Lanson, perché come havevano promesso, essendoli tanti vicini non havevano dato pure un poco di soccorso alle fanterie, abandonate et tolte di mezzo. Percioché egli da principio haveva biasimato quel luogo, di maniera che se il Re e Lanson, vicini al luogo, non gli havessero honoratamente promesso di dargli soccorso, egli era in ogni modo per levarle di la fuor di quel pericolo...'. Paolo Giovio, *Delle Istorie del suo tempo di monsignor Paolo Giovio vescovo di Nocera, tradotte da M. Lodovico Domenichi. Prima parte.* (Venezia, 1581), book 22, p. 500 v.

⁴¹ Vito Vitale, 'L'impresa di Puglia degli anni 1528-1529', *Nuovo Archivio Veneto*, Tomo XIII, part II (1906), pp. 5-68.

⁴² John Carowe (Carew) to Henry VIII, 28 April 1528. Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, vol. IV, part II, 4215, p. 1858. John Carowe died a few days later of typhus like sir Robert.

⁴³ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 339 r. Soderini considered Orsini's discharge a considerable loss for the League.

⁴⁴ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 238 v.

ineffectual⁴⁵. Nor was this Orazio's only fault (on the origins of the feud between Baglioni and Soderini, see Chapter III). The Black Bands were 'valente et licentiose', and most of the captains were 'homini da bene', but the *capitano generale*, wrote Giovambattista Soderini, was not a 'grandissimo homo di guerra' and, a capital sin in the eyes of a Florentine republican, 'si scorda la militia per il principato'⁴⁶. The *commissario* simply could not accept the way in which Baglioni and his Perugian followers lorded it 'alla Perugina' in the Bands' *piazza* in the camp of the League. The *maestro di campo* and the *aguzino* were a disgrace⁴⁷, and Orazio was taking full advantage of the circumstances and of the distance from Florence to 'fare bottega' and to break, one after another, the terms of his *condotta*. The *commissario* had been deprived of his authority and was being kept in the dark about everything just like a simple footsoldier⁴⁸. The main issue was, as always, the right of 'cassare et rimettere' the captains of the Black Bands, who already hated and dreaded Baglioni. Soderini wanted to give Rossino's company to Gian Moro 'fiorentino' or to Braccio de'Pazzi⁴⁹, 'per non uscire dalla nazione', Baglioni was determined to increase Bino Signorelli's command, while the captains of the Bands wished to please their *sergente maggiore* by giving the company to his brother. Giovanni Turrini, one of the Bands' best captains,

⁴⁵ '... Tentasi ogni dì qualche scaramuccia, et per non avere cavali non acquistiamo niente. Questi del signor Horatio non sono in essere...'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 16 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 337 r.

⁴⁶ 'Del capitano delle fanterie... né si può dire che sia grandissimo homo di guerra, non avendo più experientia che si habi, et forse più intentione al suo dominio di Perugia che al mestiero del soldo, come accadde etiam al presente, che si scorda la militia per il principato. Né anchora mostra sapere che autorità habi un commissario fiorentino ne' vostri eserciti.'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 18 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 230 v.

⁴⁷ '... ci si vive troppo alla Perugina... Io ho pagato lo Auzino pensando si ordinassi meglio le cose di questo campo, et si facessi uno Maestro di campo che non fussi uno obbrobrio, ma qui non si pensa altro se non a l'utilità che viene per ogni via recta et indirecta in modo di questi ministri...'. Ibid.

⁴⁸ '... lui ha voluto far la piazza et far patire i soldati che io pago e dare le grazie a'sua et metter maestri di campo che rubino in grosso, lui ha voluto ministrare la iustitia senza alcuna mentione di commissario, lui ha voluto fare la decisione tra sé e i soldati quando ha tolto loro i bottini... lui vi rompe i capitoli et vuole sforzarvi...'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 240 v.

⁴⁹ Gian Moro is included in Giovangirolamo de' Rossi's list of Giovanni's 'valenti homini'. Rossi, *Vita*, p. 98. Both Giovan Moro and Braccio de'Pazzi were on the list of the captains 'condotti a provvisione' by Florence in July 1527. Giovanni was given a company of two hundred men, Braccio one of one hundred and fifty; ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 5 r.

chose this moment to ask permission to entrust his company to his lieutenant – his brother – and to come to Florence to discuss, possibly on behalf of the *unione*, very important questions with the Ten⁵⁰. In the meanwhile, on 11 May, the Imperial light cavalry once again inflicted heavy losses on the Florentine infantry; ‘et così andiamo consumando il tempo et li homini da bene’⁵¹.

Reassured by the victory at Capo d’Orso, Lautrec continued to unfold his plan. The *capitano generale* decided not to leave Poggioreale, and sent Navarro’s Gascons and the White Bands to guard the new positions towards San Martino, extending the whole camp of the League along a fortified line which was now more than a mile and a half long. Since the beginning, many commanders had argued that the length was excessive, but, as always, Lautrec was inflexible: he planned to tighten the League’s hold on Naples on two fronts, that is towards San Martino (west) and in the direction of the seashore, in the area of La Maddalena (east)⁵². To break up Naples’ defence system, the excavation of new trenches *between* San Martino and the city was being organised. Del Nero believed that, to take the fortress, Lautrec was planning to launch a three-pronged assault: two diversions, one from the sea, where the fleet was to cannonade the harbour, and one from the land, directly against the city, would mask the real attack against San Martino and force the Imperialists to split their forces⁵³. The Florentine ambassador was pessimistic, and argued that the coordination of the Imperial forces was superior to the League’s⁵⁴.

⁵⁰ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 333 r.

⁵¹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 354 v.

⁵² ‘L’alloggiamento che per l’altra mia dissi s’acconciava è poi ridotto in fortezza, [et di già vi sono iti e’Guasconi et Italiani del conte Petro et del signor Giovangirolamo et del conte Cesare Scotto ad alloggiare], che mi pare lo continueranno con questo allungandolo per la testa, et stringendolo per la coda, di modo che monsignore non diloggerà dall’habitatione sua, che è da Poggioreale per non lasciare questa parte libera a’ nimici donde potrebbero ripigliare l’acque et impedirle a noi’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 9 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 409 r.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ ‘[Et in effecto delle loro forze si fanno servire assai meglio di questi altri] (the League)...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 413 r.

However, after having secured the positions in front of San Martino, by mid May the resources of the League were largely devoted to the excavation of the trenches in the direction of la Maddalena, and to the preparation of the network of earthworks, bays and bastions destined to support their great length – at least one mile, from the edge of the camp of the League to the ‘marina’. To cover the excavations, the artillery positioned at Capo di Monte frequently opened fire on the fortifications between Porta San Gennaro and Porta Capuana (see Map D), where the enemy was trying to build a bastion that could threaten the League’s fortified line. Some shots were also aimed at the city, apparently without ‘grandi effecti’⁵⁵. Unknown to del Nero, on 15 May a cannon shot hit the quarters of Ferrante Gonzaga and Alarcòn, leaving them stunned and covered with rubble⁵⁶. The ‘fortuna di Cesare’ was holding out. What was not holding out was the patience of the Imperial Landsknechts, a contingent of whom, on 19 May, abandoned its positions and was seen marching towards the camp of the League shouting ‘Ghelt! Ghelt!’⁵⁷. It was just a ‘token strike’, but also a symptom of the acute financial problems the Imperialists were having in Naples.

On the sea, the delay of the Venetian navy, which was still supporting the action of the *Serenissima*’s land forces in the conquest of the Apulian coastal cities of Brindisi and Otranto, was starting to upset Lautrec. Doria’s fleet had destroyed the Neapolitan squadron, but the Genoese galleys were now badly damaged and needed refitting. The blockade, already inefficient, was becoming ineffectual, as many round ships entered

⁵⁵ ‘La artiglieria che fu piantata a Capo di Monte trae spesso a alcuni torrioni che sono tra la porta di San Gennaro et Porta Capuana, et così impedisce di fare certo bastione... e qualche volta trae dentro, ma non ne vego fin qua grandi effecti...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 337 r.

⁵⁶ Gerolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 23 May 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio principi esteri, busta 9, the folii are not numbered.

⁵⁷ ‘... fu sentito nella terra un gran tumulto, col quale uscì fuori una parte de’Lanzichenet gridando “ghelde ghelde” e pigliando il cammino verso i nostri ripari, come quelli che debbono essere soprastati et tenuti in parole della lor paga. In sul che furono visti i capitani che li richiamarono drento, et subito feciono dare nei tamburi et metter lor guardie... che si pensa fussi qualche loro intentione da quietargli.’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 421 v.

Naples' harbour bringing in precious supplies or, as in the case of the convoy of five ships that arrived on 12 May, a reinforcement of eight hundred Spaniards⁵⁸.

In order to make life in Naples even harder, Lautrec decided to capture and destroy the watermills placed near La Maddalena. Besides being advanced fortified positions outside the city walls and guarded by Landsknechts, the watermills were also the only places where the Imperialists could produce the flour needed to relieve the increasingly damaging shortage of bread in Naples⁵⁹. The Black Bands, considered by both sides one of the most, if not the most, combative units in the army of the League⁶⁰, spearheaded the attacks and covered the excavation of the new trenches. Their duty was not easy: from the Porta del Mercato (see Map D), the Imperialists could observe every move of the enemy infantry and follow the progress of the trenches, while the skirmishes were fought at two arquebus shots from Naples itself⁶¹. For long days the area became the setting for some of the more violent and intense clashes of the siege, as every watermill was sometimes taken and lost four or even five times during a single day, according to the savage rituals of trench warfare. Eventually, the forces of the League prevailed, but not without heavy losses: the captain general of the Florentine infantry himself was among the fallen.

On 22 of May, during an assault from the newly-made trenches and bastions against one of La Maddalena's watermills, Orazio Baglioni found himself separated from the arquebusiers of his escort and, 'troppo animosamente messosi con poca compagnia in luogo di pericolo', was caught in the open by a group of Spaniards. 'Disarmato', that is without corselet, with only leather armour on and an halberd in his

⁵⁸ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 405 r.

⁵⁹ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 421 r.

⁶⁰ The testimonies to the extreme valour shown by the Black Bands during the siege of Naples and to the admiration they excited among both friends and enemies are simply too many to be listed here.

⁶¹ Guazzo, *Historie*, pp. 84 v. – 85 r.

hands⁶², Baglioni was surrounded by the Imperialists, who certainly did not identify him as a high-ranking enemy officer. According to some sources, he even refused to yield ground and tried to make a stand along with a few soldiers⁶³. The rescuers found him dying, already stripped, his body covered with wounds inflicted by swords and halberds. To avenge the death of the Perugian *condottiere*, Lautrec ordered a general assault on the watermill, which was eventually taken by storm. The grindstone, which milled one hundred and fifty *tomoli* of wheat each day, was destroyed⁶⁴. While Marco del Nero joined in the general chorus of dismay at the death of Baglioni – who had been publicly commended by Lautrec just a few days before – Soderini pointed out that he had died ‘solo, come un privato fante’, a suitable end for somebody who had always shown little regard for ‘boni soldati’⁶⁵. The Mantuan ambassador remarked that Baglioni had been left by the enemies in the same state in which he had left Azzo da Correggio, that is naked and with only a sock on.

⁶² ‘...fu amaciato el signor Oracio, el qual mandato da monsignor a far lavore a le sopra ditte trinzee eso signor Oracio aveva mandato tre maniche de archebuseri per sua scorta et vedendo che esi non tornavano perché erano stati forciati ritornare per altra strada, ma lui, vedendo questo, deliberò andare a vedere lui proprio dove procedeva questa dimora, et caminando solo in giupone con una alabarda in mano, acapitò in la inboscata de li inimici, dove da spate et alabarde fu amaciato e cavato nudo del medemo modo che lui fece lasare el Contaccio cioè con uno calceto drito solo in pede...’. Francesco Benaduso to the marquis of Mantua, 25 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, ff. 118 v. – 119 r.

⁶³ ‘Come sendo il signor Horatio alle nuove trincee... fue asalito da’nimici et non si potendo prevalere restò da più ferite di arme corte morto et per meglio dire tanto maltractato che mentre si conduceva a casa passò di questa vita. Che Dio habbia hauto l’anima...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 441 r. ; Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 87: ‘...quando il S. Horatio Baglione per fatal bestialità discostandosi troppo dalla sua trincea... trovandosi disarmato, fu morto da un fantaccin Navarrese, il quale ritirandosi egli gli veniva dietro, che gli cacciò la punta d’una alabarda nella schiena, non essendo egli conosciuto da veruno...’. See also Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 534.

⁶⁴ The account of the death of Baglioni written by Cora di Corrado, commander of the Mantuan men-at-arms, is slightly different from that of the Mantuan ambassador: in it the Perugian *condottiere* is hit first by an arquebus shot: ‘...et al principio il signor Oratio andete inanti con qualche 25 fanti de li soi dove gie fu dato una archebusada et come il se sentete ferito volve ritirarse ma li spagnolli che erano al decto molino deteno fora et quelli compagni che non erano feriti parte se salvete et parte ne rimaste morti et uno fante spagnolo arivete il signor Oratio et gie dette cum una alabarda in testa et il ----- d’amazare, qual Monsignore come sepe la sua morte fece atachare una grosa scaramuccia de sorte che li nostri andete tanto inanti che arrivetteno al molino sempre combatendo qual molino masinava cento cinquanta tomoli de formento fra il dì et la nocte de sorte che li nostri l’ano rotto e fracasato.’ Francesco Benaduso to the marquis of Mantua, 28 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 121 r.

⁶⁵ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 341 v.

The Imperialists responded to the loss of the watermills with a daring *encamisada*⁶⁶ in Spanish style. Juan de Urbina, who had taken the place of the marquis of Vasto, organised the operation with great care⁶⁷. During the night between 30 and 31 May, three thousand Spaniards and Landsknechts, equipped with ladders, ‘trombe di fuoco’, ‘pignatte’, ‘fochi artificciati’⁶⁸ and ‘con loro bravarie de camisate’, silently stole into the still incomplete perimeter of the League’s new earthworks and went up the empty trenches that had yet to be ‘poste in fortezza’, until they reached a passage to the main ‘alloggiamento’ of the League which was not bounded by a ditch. If they had managed to reach Poggioreale with all those ‘fireworks’, the three thousand Imperialists could have inflicted serious damage. However, the passage was dominated by a house guarded by two Basque companies, whose sentries had sighted the enemy quite early and had alerted, in silence, their comrades. To quote Mantuan ambassador Benaduso, the white shirts turned into red ones as the Basques repelled the desperate assault launched by the Imperialists once they realized that they had been discovered. More than two hundred Spaniards, and among them five or six captains, died during the short and violent attack, while the losses of the League were minimal⁶⁹. It ought to be

⁶⁶ An ‘*encamisada*’, or, in Italian, ‘*incamiciata*’, was a surprise attack launched at night – generally a few hours before dusk – in which the members of the raiding party wore the ‘*camisa*’, that is a white shirt or surcoat that allowed them to tell friend from foe at night and in the confusion that invariably followed the surprise attack. Spanish and Italian troops excelled in this kind of operations.

⁶⁷ This ‘*encamisada*’ is mentioned by almost all the sixteenth-century historians who wrote about the siege of Naples. Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, p. 113 r. ; Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 89.

⁶⁸ The ‘*trombe da fuoco*’ were handmade flamethrowers that could be utilised only once, made up of a reamed log, reinforced with leather and iron rings and placed at the top of a long pole. The ‘*pignatta*’ (the ‘pot’) was basically a low-potential grenade. On the production of black powder and the military use of fireworks, see Girolamo Ruscelli, *Precetti della militia moderna, tanto per mare quanto per terra* (Venezia, 1568), pp. 26 r. – 35 v.

⁶⁹ ‘El signor Zan d’Urbino volse fare una camisata bianca et la fece rossa... che non li valse né travi, né scale, né niuno altro in strumento bellico, cume saria a dire pignate, trombe et altri fochi artificiali, che cum tuti lori artificii, bisognò che se aritraseno cum gran perzedà de li homeni et capitani, el numero de li quali li capitani dicono essere morti cinque over sei, dui ne ho visti feriti a morte, lasati in el fato... ma d’altri soldati tra guasti et morti se estima che pasano ducento...’. Francesco Benaduso to the marquis of Mantua, 31 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 123 r. According to Du Bellay, of the two Basque captains, one (Martin) was killed, while Raymonnet was badly wounded in the leg; *Mémoires*, p. 113 r.

remembered that, even though the Basques did not receive any support from the main camp, the Spaniards, surprised in their turn, were not attacking ‘in ordinanza’.

This was the last great Imperialist counterattack on the side of La Maddalena until July, and in fact it concluded the ‘settling-down’ phase of the siege of Naples. From that night on, both sides would move more warily and, as we shall see, far from the city. However, Lautrec utilized this success to reassure the duke of Mantua on this point: ‘fortuna’, and not ‘valore’, had given the Emperor so many victories, but now everybody agreed that ‘la fortuna è mutata’, and ‘li cieli... hora li voleno punire’⁷⁰. The *capitano generale* felt that the fall of Naples was imminent, and refused even to consider the idea of relaxing his army’s hold on the city. The news from Florence that the Ten were thinking of withdrawing a part, if not all, of their troops from the siege in order to protect the republic from the Imperial relief army which was about to descend on Italy, excited his anger. Lautrec even threatened to exclude Florence from the League of Cognac⁷¹. Del Nero and Soderini had tried, in vain, to keep these new instructions secret while they dissuaded the Ten from pursuing their project, since both were aware that only the presence of the Black Bands allowed Lautrec to keep the enemy under such intense pressure⁷², and it took all the remarkable diplomatic skill of del Nero to appease the captain general’s fury.

Lautrec’s optimism was not shared by everybody. In fact, his decision to proceed to a blockade by staying so close to Naples’ walls had been motivated by the

⁷⁰ Odet de Foix to the marquis of Mantua, 1 June 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 125 r/v.

⁷¹ *Oratore* Carlo Gondi’s instructions were to propose to Lautrec three options: either all the Florentine forces, or Orazio and his Perugians, or Orazio alone (the Ten did not know that he was dead) were to go back to Florence. ‘... Sua Excellentia era venuta in grandissima collera, parendogli che questo fussi uno sinixtro procedere verso lui, in levargli sì buone genti nel colmo della importantia di quella impresa. Et che se Vostre Signorie perseverassino in tale deliberatione protestava che le terrebbe per disciolte dalla colegatione, et al tempo si ricorderebbe di valersi di tanta ingiuria...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 380 v. ; the list of the apologies lavished by Marco del Nero is two-pages long.

⁷² ‘... egli (Lautrec) stima di poi queste Bande tanto et in fatti conosce quello che è vero, che se ne fussi privo non starebbe bene sicuro sì presso a’ nimici, i quali come più volte ho scritto non fanno risparmio di dire che se non ci fussino queste genti di Vostre Signorie terrebbero il resto poco conto...’. Ibid.

assumption that this would heighten the already existing rifts between the various components of the Imperial army, and that the siege would be very short. However, albeit demoralized and weakened by their recent defeats, the Imperialists kept on responding to every blow, while the attrition caused by the sheer size of Naples, by its resources and by its 'garrison' had already begun to wear down the initial advantage of the besieging army.

By the end of May the camp of the League had assumed its final configuration. The main 'alloggiamento', as well as Lautrec's headquarters, was in Poggioreale, which was outside the range of Naples' artillery and protected by ditches, fences, 'terrepleined' wooden towers⁷³ and earthen bastions that housed the French heavy ordnance. No frontal assault was ever attempted by the Imperialists against this part of the camp, in which were stored the ammunitions, the provisions, the army's baggage/artillery train and, of course, the money. It was a veritable city constructed of earth, wood and tents, with thousands of inhabitants and many *piazze* – one for each *colonnello*/regiment of the army and, generally, at least one for merchants and victuallers⁷⁴. The *alloggiamento* was the backbone of the besieging army, but, with regard to the city, its primary purpose was that of containment. A more offensive role was played by the *forti* that protruded from the eastern and western sides of the main quarters, that is towards San Martino and La Maddalena, which were called by Du Bellay respectively 'Fort de Gascogne' (or 'Fort de France') and 'Fort des Basques'⁷⁵. Positioned lower and closer to the city, the '*forti*' were defined by earthen bastions and ramparts⁷⁶, and their heavy ordnance – especially that of the bigger 'Fort des Basques' – had played an active role in the reduction of the watermills at La Maddalena, and in the

⁷³ Santoro, *Dei successi*, pp. 50-51.

⁷⁴ The *piazza d'arme*, constantly guarded, was at the same time a place in which to assemble and/or to drill the troops and where justice was administered. For an early example: Ferretti, *Della Osservanza*, pp. 35-40.

⁷⁵ Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, pp. 112-113.

⁷⁶ On earthworks and field fortifications, see Pepper and Adams, *Firearms*, pp. 71-78.

interruption of the works on the bastion the Imperialists were building between Porta San Gennaro and Porta Capuana, and sometimes it had opened fire on the city itself. On the plain below the hills that surrounded the city the two networks of trenches that stretched towards San Martino and the seashore were the third and last ‘step’ of the League’s impressive complex of earthworks, the closest to Naples’ defences.

It is really interesting to compare the tactical choices made by Lautrec and Navarro during the siege of Naples with those suggested by Francesco Maria della Rovere in his *Discorsi Militari*⁷⁷. In a century that saw, especially during its second half, the publication of dozens of specialized treatises on siegecraft and fortifications, the work of the duke of Urbino – a rather incoherent *raccolta* of personal papers which was published long after his death in 1537 – could look quite rough and unscientific. However, the *Discorsi* are the testimony of a soldier of the same generation as Odet de Foix and Navarro, a soldier who had been in command of many of the men who fought at Naples and had plenty of personal and professional reasons for criticizing the conduct of Lautrec and the French ‘tactical school’. Remarkably, the model of a besieging camp proposed by the duke (see Plate 11) corresponds to the one which had been set up outside Naples: it consisted of an ‘alloggiamento sicurissimo et fortissimo’, a ‘forte’ closer to the city walls and ‘a cavaliere’ of trenches that stretched towards the city walls⁷⁸. Since the arquebusiers could not yet develop enough firepower to protect the advanced positions from a sortie, and since the trenches were too narrow to shelter a sufficient number of men, the duke suggested interspersing with ‘gabbionate’ (a sort of casemates) equipped with muskets, *falconetti* and *archibusi da posta* any trench that was positioned too far from the range of the fort’s heavy artillery⁷⁹. However, this was a disposition that was intended to prelude a direct assault against a besieged city. In the

⁷⁷ Francesco Maria della Rovere, *Discorsi Militari dell’eccellentissimo signore Francesco Maria I della Rovere duca d’Urbino* (Ferrara, 1583).

⁷⁸ Della Rovere, *Discorsi*, pp. 20 v. – 21 r.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21 r./v.

case of a blockade, Francesco Maria recommended that the camp should not be pitched close to the city; that had been, he wrote, the great mistake of Francis I at Pavia, and of Lautrec at Naples. The best option was to occupy one or two ‘buone terre’ ten-fifteen miles from the city, taking control of the area that surrounded them. This disposition gave the besieger safe back lines, a better time of reaction, and more occasions to intercept the enemy supplies before they entered the city; and, in case of a sortie, it forced the besieged troops to fight far from their base, without the support of artillery and on ground chosen by the enemy⁸⁰. What Lautrec did was too much for a blockade, and too little for an assault. Furthermore, the duke emphasised the usefulness of light cavalry and of reconnaissance parties, two of the weak points of the army of the League. By sending most of his men-at-arms to the small towns that surrounded Naples, the captain general was probably trying to create a sort of ‘safety zone’ around the city, but the French *gendarmerie* was the wrong instrument for this: the heavy cavalymen lacked the right equipment, the right training and the right mindset, and quickly disappointed everybody with their inactivity and lack of discipline⁸¹. The French controlled the cities, but the more mobile Imperial light cavalry controlled the roads. At the same time, close to the city, the League’s light cavalry and light infantry were subjected to accelerated erosion. Even a civilian like Soderini was aware of the fact that ‘questi Franzesi si straccono’, and that, when it came to a war of attrition, the French had never shown the same level of endurance as the Spaniards⁸². Marco del Nero pointed out how ‘ingannevoli’ were the losses inflicted on the Black Bands during the

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 26 r.

⁸¹ After Troia, the French heavy cavalry had never lived up to its reputation and had demonstrated on many occasions a complete inability to coordinate its efforts with those of other units. By the end of May the distrust of them was spreading among the soldiers and the diplomats that lived in the camp of the League. ‘... (Lautrec) metterà in futuro più studio al fare cavalcare queste sue armerie, che se fino a qui egli havessino [facto el debito suo forse saremmo fuori di briga, o pure che anchora e’ lo facessino...]’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 369 r. ; ‘...‘et se questi nostri (horsemen) volessin cavalcare più spesso terrebbon più sicuro el paese’ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 339 r.

⁸² ‘Questi Franzesi si straccono come la guerra va in lungo...’. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 16 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 337 r.

skirmishes under the walls of Naples: by themselves, the figures were not impressive, but the qualitative level of the fatalities was⁸³.

Francesco Maria della Rovere had always tried to act according to strictly military considerations and circumstances – sometimes with catastrophic results, as in the case of the sack of Rome – and in his *Discorsi* he recommended that the help that could come from external ‘sources’ (treason, popular uprising, mutiny...) should be considered as a last resort on which a commander should not base his strategy⁸⁴. At the end of April the ‘pratica de’Lanzi’, a secret negotiation conducted by the marquis of Saluzzo with the intention of persuading the Landsknechts to leave the Imperial service, was still going on, ‘benché’, wrote del Nero, ‘il filo ancora sia sottile’⁸⁵. By 26 May, many of the high-ranking officers of the army of the League believed that it was time at least to prepare a second line, distant from Naples, on which the army could fall back if forced to. However, not only was Lautrec sure that the city would soon fall, but everybody was so in awe of him that no one dared to propose anything that could clash with his forecasts. In the same way, many issues concerning the situation of the army, and that should have been discussed in the *consulta*, were left unresolved because, besides Lautrec, only Pedro Navarro, who strongly supported the choice of a ‘close’ blockade, could really propose anything and be listened to⁸⁶.

⁸³ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 26 April 1526, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 269 r.

⁸⁴ Della Rovere, *Discorsi*, p. 11 r.

⁸⁵ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 20 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 366 v.

⁸⁶ ‘... Sua Excellentia ha tanto l’appetito et la speranza del havere prima Napoli inanzi che altro impedimento venga che e’ non consulta come questi altri capitani, et del consiglio desiderrebbono che da hora si facessi col preparare con ogni abondante cautela le vectovaglie et ogni altra cosa necessaria da poter poi soggiornare in quelli luoghi, dove, occorrendo ritirarsi di qua bisognassi, et non l’havere a fare di poi tumultuariamente. Et è tanto Sua Excellentia temuta da qualunque ci sia che nessuno ardisce di proporli tutto quello che gli’intende, temendo ciascuno di non essere con mal grado da sua excellentia ributtato se forse gli dispiacessi il pensare hora a una simile consulta. Et per questo medesimo rispetto molte cose che occorrono giornalmente a diverse persone di questo campo, et forse sarebbero utili, si rimangono indiscusse, et da quel che dipende da Sua Excellentia in fuori, o talvolta del conte Pietro Navarra, che ha più entrata d’ogni altro, tutto el resto è poco apprezzato, donde che quasi ognuno si lascia menare dal filo dell’acqua...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 26 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 438 r.

2. *'Caldi insuportabili et malattie infinite'*: the Struggle for Naples.

'Dubitiamo cotesta impresa non habbi a essere un pò lunghetta...'

The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, 31 May 1528.

To quote Marco del Nero, the death (22 May) of *signor* Orazio – ‘a chi Dio perdoni’ – solved many problems⁸⁷, and made possible the reorganization of the Florentine forces so frequently urged by *commissario* Soderini. The very day after Baglioni’s tragic demise⁸⁸, Lautrec summoned to his quarters ambassador Marco del Nero, Giovambattista Soderini, the captains of the Black Bands and of Orazio’s *colonnello*, in order to discuss with them the appointment of his Italian protégé count Ugo de’Pepoli (? - 1528) as temporary ‘governatore’ of the Florentine troops, that is, at least until the Ten chose a successor to the late *capitano generale*. The importance of the Black Bands was such that no leadership vacuum could be allowed, and it is remarkable that in this case, and even after del Nero and Soderini had given their official approval, the assent of the Bands’ captains was considered important, if not essential. The answer of the ‘*unione*’ was positive: free at last from Orazio’s violent and oppressive leadership, the captains declared themselves pleased (‘*contenti*’) to have a new commander who was not only a soldier of renown, but a man who was ‘reasonable and amiable’ and knew how to make himself obeyed ‘with skill’⁸⁹. Since the first day, the *commissario* approved of the

⁸⁷ ‘Dopo la morte del signor Horatio – a chi Dio perdoni – s’è levato molte difficoltà che fastidiavano il signor commissario...’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 26 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 430 v. Marco del Nero considered the death of Orazio a considerable blow to the ‘impresa’, but pointed out rather philosophically that it was a ‘fructo di questo mestiero’, that is the mercenary’s life (f. 441 r.).

⁸⁸ To celebrate the death of Orazio and the arrival of encouraging letters (probably forged by the staff of the prince of Orange) from the relief army in northern Italy, the Imperialists rang all the bells of Naples and fired five volleys with all their cannons and arquebuses. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 444 r.

⁸⁹ ‘Così chiamati in nostra presentia tuti i capitani delle bande et quelli che servivono el signore Oratio parlò Sua Excellentia exhortandoli non obstante la morte del signor Oratio a dovere servire con il valore che fin qui havevano dimostro et che accioché lo potessino meglio fare haveva di consenso nostro

choice of Pepoli: the Bolognese count was ‘honorevole, prudente et moderato’ and, moreover, was a favourite of Lautrec, who had enthusiastically backed his candidature⁹⁰.

At the same time, the Florentine representatives struggled to prevent the troops who had been under the direct command of Orazio from disbanding completely. The Perugian captains Febo and Leandro, who, according to Soderini, were not ‘homini da guerra’, refused to remain in Florentine service after the death of their master, and the *commissario* welcomed their decision. On the other hand, Bino Signorelli and Ceccone Martelli were good soldiers, but their demands were considered excessive⁹¹, and were therefore ‘cassati’ (discharged) by Soderini, now at the height of his powers. However, the rank and file of the Perugian companies, which now amounted to seven hundred and fifty footsoldiers, had decided to remain in the camp of the League and were divided between three newly-appointed captains: the Sicilian Tommaso Gotti da Messina (the brother of the *sergente maggiore*), the Florentine Braccio de’Pazzi and the Corsican Gianni di Restino⁹².

Of the one hundred and fifty light horsemen that were included in Baglioni’s *condotta*, less than one hundred were in fact fit for service. Given the League’s desperate need for good light cavalrymen, the *commissario* decided to give the command of the remaining eighty-four light horsemen to the Siense Iacopo Bichi⁹³, who had been Orazio’s cavalry lieutenant. Soderini also managed to retain the services

disegnato che il conte Ugo fussi loro governatore et capo sino che dalle Signorie Vostre a chi si apparteneva fussi provisto et loro tutti allegramente acceptandolo con la dicta conditione promessono di portarsi meglio che mai et così in particolare ---- di loro a noi efficacemente hanno promesso et molto son contenti di questo governatore che in vero è persona di reputatione grande in questo campo et molto discreto et affabile da farsi pur amare et con dextreza bene ubidire...’ Ibid. f. 441 v.

⁹⁰ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 23 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 341 r./v.

⁹¹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 27 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 349 r.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Even though Iacopo Bichi was from Siena, his family lived in Florentine territory, and he fought staunchly for the Republic during the siege of Florence of 1529-1530, where he was killed by artillery fire. The Florentines, who admired his loyalty and his valour, greatly regretted his loss; Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, vol. 3, pp. 341, 390.

of the fifteen *lancie spezzate* that made up the *famiglia d'armi* of the late Perugian *condottiere*, and which were now operating as a small independent cavalry unit under the command of Angelo Bastardo, an Albanian, after their first leader count Carlo da Montone had decided to go back to Perugia⁹⁴. In total, Florence had at its disposal ninety-nine light horsemen, a figure that clashes with the estimates of the Ferrarese ambassador (see Table 20).

According to Marco del Nero, at the moment of Baglioni's death, Florence's monthly expenditure for the maintenance of the Bands amounted in total to four thousand three hundred and fifty 'paghe' (wages) or, approximately eleven thousand six hundred *ducati*. The 'teste vive', that is the soldiers in fact enlisted in the thirteen companies, were, broadly speaking, 'el quarto meno fanti che non sono le paghe', which means more or less three thousand three hundred men (see also Table XXI). However, owing to the high number of injured and sick, who still collected their pay, the Black Bands could in practice count on an effective operational force of two thousand footsoldiers⁹⁵. Even though the losses sustained by the Bands since the beginning of the campaign, more or less four hundred men, had been made good, the standard of the recruits was judged unsatisfactory⁹⁶. Owing to their high morale and to the fact that between them and Tuscany there were hundreds of miles of ravaged and dangerous territory, during this campaign desertion was never a major problem for the Florentine troops.

However, there were other difficulties. The 'forzo', that is the backbone, of the Black Bands were their arquebusiers: at least eighteen hundred⁹⁷, according to the

⁹⁴ Angelo Bastardo was an Albanian who had always lived in Italy. He was both a cavalry and an infantry commander, and was considered by Soderini a 'homo valentissimo'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 23 r./v.

⁹⁵ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 422 r. / v.

⁹⁶ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 21 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 345 r.

⁹⁷ '... né si può mandarne tanta (gunpowder) che sia troppa, che quelle intendino quanto consumino 1800 archibuseri...'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 6 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 224 v.

estimates made by Soderini at the beginning of the siege. The quantity of lead and of gunpowder ‘fine’ consumed by the Florentine forces was astonishing, but ‘non si può servire di questa gente chi non serve della polvere et piombo’⁹⁸. To buy gunpowder and lead in the camp meant paying at least four times the normal price for it. Since the beginning of the siege of Naples, the Florentine troops had to draw regularly on French and Venetian supplies, ‘con grandissimo disvantaggio nostro’, since the price was 2 *giuli* for one *libbra* of either powder or lead. During the first half of May alone, Florence had spent more than three hundred *scudi* to refill the Bands’ flasks and pouches, which means that the Florentine forces had fired approximately eight thousand rounds in two weeks⁹⁹. The *commissario* calculated that, at that rate, the monthly expense would soon exceed five hundred *scudi*,¹⁰⁰ and constantly urged the Ten to send by ship all the powder and the lead they could find. However, Florence directly supplied its troops only once, in June, when one thousand *libbre* of lead and three thousand of black powder were sent to Pozzuoli, escorted by Florentine troops. However, one third of the gunpowder was ‘grossa’, too costly to refine and therefore completely useless¹⁰¹. The main obstacle to the production of black powder was the almost complete lack, in Tuscany, of facilities for the production of saltpetre¹⁰², which had always been imported from the Kingdom of Naples. Showing his usual spirit of enterprise, ambassador Marco

⁹⁸ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 353 r.

⁹⁹ My calculations are based on the quantity of powder and lead judged optimal by Imperiale Cinuzzi in his book *La vera military disciplina*, pp. 44-47. Cinuzzi calculated that one *oncia* of powder was needed for a *palla* which weighed slightly less than one *oncia*. In one *libbra* there were twelve *once*, and three hundred *scudi* corresponded more or less to two thousand eight hundred *giuli*, that is approximately six shots per *libbra*.

¹⁰⁰ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 340 r.

¹⁰¹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 15 r. ; on the history of and the differences between the ‘*polvere fine*’, utilized by the small firearms, and the ‘*polvere grossa*’ of the ordnance, see Hall, *Weapons and Warfare*, pp. 67-104.

¹⁰² On the production of saltpetre: Hall, *Weapons and Warfare*, pp. 74-79. It is worthy to note that Florence started to produce important quantities of saltpetre only during the siege of 1530, when the city was cut off from its regular suppliers.

del Nero tried to promote the export of saltpetre from Apulia to Tuscany¹⁰³, but it was too little and too late.

Del Nero's personal initiatives were far more successful on the financial side. The already considerable distance between Naples and Florence was increased by the fact that the crossing of the Papal States was made dangerous by the presence of angry mobs of 'desperati' peasants and by the not-so-veiled hostility of Clement VII towards the Florentine Republic. The routes most frequently followed by those who carried the wages of the Black Bands were two: one on the Adriatic and one on the Tyrrhenian side. The first, the 'via di terra', went from Florence to Ancona, then to Ortona (near Pescara) and eventually to the camp of the League through the Apennines with a heavy escort of mounted arquebusiers. It was extremely slow – it took more than a month for the porters to reach the camp of the League – and unsafe. The 'via del mar Tirreno' was only apparently shorter: its lack of a naval force forced Florence to rely on French and Genoese ships to send the money to Naples. However, this was not a regular service and left the Ten at the mercy of their allies' priorities and of the 'fortune del mare'. For the *commissario* and for the ambassador, the continuous delays represented a constant 'agonia'. In fact, without the latter's frantic activity as financial broker, the Black Bands would have probably disbanded. As we have seen, Marco del Nero was a member of the Florentine moneyed elite, and he used his personal wealth – as well as his vast network of friendships and connections – to find in the camp of the League the cash that the Republic needed desperately. The loans negotiated by the ambassador, often of thousands of *scudi* (see also Chapter Three, third section), were made to him personally, and not to the Republic. Del Nero would prepare 'lettere di credito' payable, for instance, on the markets of Lyon or Venice (or even directly in Florence), as required by the lenders, then would ask the Ten to give 'his' people, that is his relatives and/or

¹⁰³ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 8 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 396 v.

agents in Florence ('a'miei'), the same amount of money¹⁰⁴. However, del Nero repeatedly warned his superiors that these and other financial expedients could not, in the long run, make up for all the problems caused by the chronic delays in the arrival of the wages. His *amici* were not a resource that could be tapped too often, without occasioning 'dishonore del publico et del privato'¹⁰⁵ which, in this case, were inextricably mixed. The ambassador was aware of the financial crisis Florence was experiencing, but he declared that had the Ten known the damage done by a ten-days delay, they would have borrowed the money even if they had to pay 20% interest on the loan¹⁰⁶ – which, for business-minded del Nero, was presumably a very bad deal. The *commissario*, who lived among the troops, was even more insistent. The death of Orazio had added seven hundred footsoldiers and one hundred light horsemen to his payrolls and to his worries. The Bands were suffering from the high prices and food shortages typical of the 'campi Franzesi' and could not survive if the *capisoldi* were not distributed twenty days after the payday¹⁰⁷. In the camp of the League everything was expensive, and the prices were 'as high as the sun'¹⁰⁸. The situation of the two companies garrisoned in Pozzuoli was even worse: only the fact that they were under the command of the two Strozzi captains, Giuliano and Bernardo, was preventing them from disbanding¹⁰⁹. The *commissario* also asked the Ten to send a substantial amount of

¹⁰⁴ Here is one example: '... io ho provisto il signor commissario di 1050 scudi... con parte de'sopradecti denari n'ho fatto lettere per Venetia et per Lione. Il perché piacerà alle Signorie Vostre far pagare costi a'miei scudi 450... acciocché essi ne faccino la provisione et a Lione et a Venetia...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 211 r.

¹⁰⁵ '... oramai ho troppo affaticato li amici, et avergli a ricercare sì spesso non passa senza disonore del publico et del privato...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 49 r.

¹⁰⁶ '... non ostante la difficoltà – che io presumo grandissima – di mettere insieme di costà denari, mi rendo però certo che se le Signorie Vostre vedessimo con gli occhi quanto sia grande il detrimento nel tardar qua e' pagamenti solo X giorni, vorrebbero pigliargli ad interesse di 20 per 100 per mandargli qui in tempo...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 209 v.

¹⁰⁷ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 20 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 9 r.

¹⁰⁸ '... quelle (the Ten) pensono quanto travaglio sia havere queste fanterie senza danari già X di in luogo ove si compra caro insino al sole'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 169 r.

¹⁰⁹ et se fussi altri che questi Strozi haremo hauto difficoltà tenerli...' Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 340 r. ; in June the commissario pointed out that

silver coins such as *barili* and *lucchesi*, which would have been most useful, because in practice only gold coins were circulating in the camp, ‘con danno comune’. The shortage of *moneta* was causing many problems, but, since Lautrec seemed to ignore it, no one dared to intervene¹¹⁰. Faced with a possible, and disastrous, failure, Soderini asked the Ten polemically if there was somebody in Florence who knew how to keep together four thousand soldiers without using money; if so, they should send him to Naples, ‘perché questa è una scientia che io non posseggo, né crederei mai impararla...’¹¹¹.

Being the elite unit of the assault troops of the League’s army, the Black Bands were almost constantly in action. In this phase of the siege, one of their main duties was to guard the trenches whose excavation had cost them so much. Following a system of rotating shifts, every four days the Bands were on guard duty in the trenches for twenty-four hours, while during the other three they were available for the various ‘*fazioni extraordinarie*’, that is to spearhead all the offensive operations in which their skill as skirmishers and their aggressiveness were often decisive¹¹². However, as the siege went on, these heavy duties began to drain the energies of the Black Bands. Their own reputation was playing against them¹¹³.

On the other hand, there was also some good news. One of the big ‘*difficoltà*’ solved by the death of Orazio was the ‘*strike*’ of the *sergente maggiore*. After the man who had offended him had been killed and his brother Tommaso had been given the command of a company, Giovambattista da Messina resumed his role as tactical

nobody else but Giuliano could have resisted so much in Pozzuoli: ‘... ogni altro che lui in questo termine non si sarebbe potuto ritenere...’ ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 11 r.

¹¹⁰ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 15 r. ; on the ship that brought the gunpowder and the lead to Pozzuoli, the Ten sent also five thousand scudi ‘di sole’ and six hundred ‘ducati di moneta’ The Ten to Soderini and del Nero, 28 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 44, f. 204 v.

¹¹¹ ‘... piaccili (to the Ten) fare provvisione(of money), o, se è nessuno che si persuada tractenerli senza danari, Vostre Signorie ce lo mandino qua, ché questa è una scientia che io non posseggo, né crederei mai impararla...’. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 June, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 7 r.

¹¹² Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 18 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 11 r.

¹¹³ ‘... nuoce la opinione di loro che ha Monsignore Illustrissimo...’. Ibid. , f. 11 r.

coordinator and executor of the actions of the Black Bands, and the good effects of his return were soon clear. At the same time, the new approach adopted by count Ugo dei Pepoli aimed at reducing the excessive demands the Black Bands had been subjected to since the beginning of the siege. Not only were the Florentine troops less frequently involved in ‘factioni’, they were also more prudently deployed¹¹⁴ and, even more important, light cavalry were deployed in direct support of the infantry¹¹⁵. Always respectful of the authority of the *commissario*, count Ugo had moved into the quarters of the late Orazio and lived among the Florentine troops, where he, like any good commander, was forced to ‘tenere tavola’, that is to spend a lot of money and keep open house for the captains and other ‘homini da bene’ of the Black Bands¹¹⁶, among whom he was very popular. Since the beginning, the Bolognese *condottiere* displayed his deep desire to retain a command that, even on an informal basis, would have been enough to enhance the reputation of any commander¹¹⁷. The Black Bands were the best and most famous Italian unit of the day and, for Ugo de’Pepoli, who hitherto had commanded a mere sixty men-at-arms (see Table XX), they represented the chance of a lifetime. However, the longer count Ugo remained in a sort of limbo as provisional ‘governatore’ of the Florentine troops without a regular *condotta*, the greater the risks became for his

¹¹⁴ ‘... et hoggi di nuovo el conte Ugo con queste Bande è ito fino sotto le mura di Napoli, et non hanno usato quei di drento uscira fuora, perché infatti e’ vi va con tale ordine che e’ conoscono vi sarebbe pocho guadagno... ha dimostro et coraggio et prudentia ne l’ordinare le cose sue, tale che ciascuno lo comenda.’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 7 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 46 r. However, it would be interesting to know how much of the ‘ordine’ of the Black Bands was due to the leadership of Ugo de’Pepoli and how much to the skill of sergente maggiore Giovambattista da Messina.

¹¹⁵ ‘... tutte le fattioni che si sono haute a fare a tempo suo (of Ugo), sono state con honore et con preservatione di queste genti... che già due volte che le sono ite fuora in sieme con e’ cavalli leggieri che comanda questo messer Jacopo Bichi hanno fatto sempre buona fattione...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, ff. 91 v. – 92 r. ; ‘... el conte Ugo... si adopera assai di alleviarne delle factione, che in vero è stato imposto a questa nostra gente più che parte conveniente...’ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 3 v.

¹¹⁶ ‘... il conte Ugo... è tornato nelle Bande Nere e vive con gran spesa come si richiede a chi tien un simile loco...’. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 7 v. ; ‘...tornato alloggiare dove alloggiava el signor Horatio nel mezo delle bande, dove è forzato a tener tavola et intrattenere li capitani et gli altri huomini da bene...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 79 r.

¹¹⁷ ‘Lui (count Ugo) molto prudentemente rispose faccendo prima un fondamento, che non solo in una carica come era questa onorata d’havere a governare queste sì valorose Bande da dare reputatione ad ogni huomo più qualificato di lui...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 44 v.

reputatione were his command not be made official or were somebody else eventually to replace him.

In fact, since the beginning the Ten had made it clear that they would not appoint another captain general of infantry. On the contrary, their original intention had been that, after the death of Orazio, the Bands should stay under the direct command of Soderini. According to the Ten, the military skill of their captains, combined with the authority of the *commissario*, were enough to face any challenge¹¹⁸. Even though Florence promptly accepted the candidature of Ugo de'Pepoli, the first choice of the Ten would have been Pedro Navarro. The preference accorded to the celebrated Navarro, who already had all the honours he wanted and would guide the Florentine troops from afar, was due to the fact that, for better or worse, at that point the Black Bands constituted *the* Florentine army, and any new *condotta* would hamper, both financially and politically, the secret negotiations for the appointment of Ercole d'Este, firstborn of the duke of Ferrara, as *Capitano Generale* of all Florentine forces¹¹⁹. Lautrec approved of this project – Ercole had recently married princess Renée, the daughter of late French king Luis XII – but said that, either with or without a *condotta*, the Bands required a real field commander, and, since no soldier could accept such task without committing his honour, the sacrifices made by count Ugo required some kind of compensation¹²⁰. Moreover, the League's captain general pointed out that, besides the advantages that Florence would derive from the generalship of young Ercole d'Este, the

¹¹⁸ '... il desiderio nostro è che il commissario ne sia padrone, sappiendo che i capitani delle Bande Nere o la maggior parte di loro sarebbero apti ad fare ogni factione quando fussero comandati da commissarii...' The Ten to Marco del Nero, 27 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 44, f. 139 r.

¹¹⁹ The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e Commissarie, 44, f. 148 r.

¹²⁰ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 44 r./v.

Republic would still need in the future someone like count Ugo both as adviser and as executor¹²¹, and asked a 'grado onorevole' for his protégé.

Giovambattista Soderini, who had to care for the Florentine troops and was moved by more practical considerations, strongly recommended the Bolognese *condottiere* to the Ten. The *commissario* knew very well that the duties of a captain general were not limited to the battlefield; as Lorenzo Martelli had to learn during the absence of Orazio Baglioni, a unit without a commander who lived among his men soon found itself 'declassified', cut off from decisions and exposed to all kind of abuses, and more so in the camp of the League, where 'licentia sfrenata' was the rule. The men of the Black Bands were not more disciplined than the others, but, being Italians, they were more noticed, and Ugo had always backed them as a good 'protectore' and 'scudo'. Moreover, any 'homo novo' appointed by Florence would have first to win Lautrec's respect, while the count already enjoyed the captain general's esteem¹²².

Immediately after Orazio's death, the Ten had sent a representative to Mantua in great haste to discuss with Paolo Luzzasco the terms of a possible *condotta*. Giovanni de'Medici's former lieutenant and associate had recently left Venetian service in disgrace¹²³, but the negotiations never got started, because Luzzasco had already 'impegnata la fede' with the pope¹²⁴. At the same time, the negotiations with Ferrara had reached a deadlock, owing to the excessive financial demands made by the duke on

¹²¹ Even though the youth of Ercole was not mentioned by Lautrec, it ought to be remembered that the *condotta* of the son of the duke of Ferrara had mainly a political significance. 'Ma perché egli (Lautrec) ama anchora assai il conte Ugo, et gli pare che oltre alla reputatione di don Hercole, le Signorie Vostre habbiano bisogno d'un par suo (Ugo de'Pepoli) che sia et per consigliare et per mettere in opera, lauderebbe assai che e' segli desse qualche grado conveniente...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 79 r. /v.

¹²² Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 3 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 23 v.

¹²³ Charged with treasonable activities on behalf of the Emperor, Luzzasco had been painted hanged by his feet, and had on his head a reward of two thousand ducati, an income for life of five hundred ducati per year for his murderer's descendants and the right to pardon three 'banditi'. If the executioner was a man-at-arms, he would be given the command of fifty 'homini d'arme', if he was a light cavalrymen a company of one hundred 'cavalli', if he was a footsoldier a company of five hundred men. Francesco Gonzaga to the Ten, 27 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 129, f. 467 r.

¹²⁴ Paolo Luzzasco to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 129, f. 511 r.

behalf of his son¹²⁵. On 16 June, the Ten authorised the ambassador and the *commissario* to try to talk count Ugo into joining Florentine service with ‘honeste conditioni’, that is with a salary markedly inferior to that of Orazio and with an amended *condotta* which, this time, would safeguard the city’s rights and define more clearly the limitations of a captain’s authority¹²⁶. The Ten clearly resented the fact that, at the moment, they had no real choice in this matter, but eventually they agreed with their representatives that Ugo de’Pepoli had all the qualities of a good commander, and his prudent behaviour was particularly appreciated. In fact, during the night of 25 June, count Ugo led the Black Bands in what was to be their last great success.

After the disastrous failure of the ‘encamisada’, on 18 June the Imperialists again attacked the still incomplete earthworks and trenches near La Maddalena, and were repelled once again with heavy losses by Pedro Navarro and his Gascons¹²⁷. However, the camp of the League still had no safe direct access to the sea, and even though the Imperialists could no longer launch an attack from Naples through the marshes of La Maddalena, thanks to the superiority of their light cavalry their raiding parties could still re-enter the city using the ‘via di Somma’. The League’s fortified line was a sort of half-moon that went from the eastern seashore to the fortress of San Martino (see Map D), and the encirclement of the city was never completed. Had the siege been short, a complete encirclement of Naples would not have been necessary. From their positions the troops of the League controlled the access to the main roads, and although the

¹²⁵ The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 16 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 44, f. 173 r.

¹²⁶ ‘... et però quando esso venissi alle conditioni honeste che la città potessi sopportarle, lo condurremo alli stipendi nostri... sopra che è necessario che tagliate ogni richiesta di quelle cose che rendono e’ capitani insolenti et finalmente poco utili a’ loro signori, come sono le condotte delle fanterie et altre cose le quali per havere avuto a a maneggiare il signore Horatio avete molto bene potuto conoscere.’ The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini, 16 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 44, ff. 173 v. – 174 r.

¹²⁷ ‘Hoggi uscirono li spagnoli molto grossi alla volta di quella trincea dove era il signor conte Piero Navarra con e’ suoi guastatori a fare lavorare, e’ quali per ordine suo mettendosi in fuga, condussono e’ nimici che li seguitavano fino all’imboscata che gli aveva ordinato. Et essendone fra feriti et morti da cento di loro, con perdita solo di tre o quattro de’nostri, si ritirorno in Napoli, dove del continuo si intende che e’ sono molto allo stremo...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 18 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 83 r.

fortress of San Martino and mount Posillipo denied them access to the eastern part of the city, the fortifications of the League, French control of neighbouring cities, the lack of good roads and the ridge of the peninsula of Cuma (partially visible in Map D) were all factors that prevented the Imperialists from moving large bodies of troops. While Naples itself was not completely blockaded, the Imperial army as a whole was.

The real danger, wrote Marco del Nero, came from behind the League's fortified line¹²⁸. As their enemies tightened, or attempted to tighten, their direct hold on Naples, the Imperialists intensified their attacks against the League's backlines. The problem represented by mount Posillipo, when there was a need to despatch troops quickly from one side of the Cuman peninsula to the other was an age-old one, and in Roman times it had been partially solved by the famous architect Cocceius, who, when the gigantic works for the construction of the Portus Julius were in progress, dug a tunnel approximately one mile long through (see Map F) mount Posillipo between Naples and Pozzuoli¹²⁹. At the beginning of June, Ferrante Gonzaga used the tunnel to guide his light horsemen first to Pozzuoli and then to Aversa. There, they ambushed, outmanoeuvred and captured a company of Scots men-at-arms¹³⁰ who had imprudently left the city and pursued in open order the group of Albanian stradiots used by Ferrante as bait¹³¹. During the night between 24 and 25 June, Gonzaga tried the same trick, this time with a bigger party made up of light cavalry, Landsknechts, men-at-arms and foragers to reap the corn. However, this time the enemy was waiting for him: count Ugo with all the Florentine troops, *monsieur* de Burie with his *aventuriers* and a unit of

¹²⁸ '... e' cavalli (the light horsemen of the League) vanno fori rarissime volte, et e' loro sono ogni giorno per tutto el paese, et più pericolo è di loro dreto alle nostre spalle che davanti, perché siamo ben riparati' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 31 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128. f. 351 r.

¹²⁹ In the reign of Octavian Augustus.

¹³⁰ They were probably the company of John Stuart, duke of Albany (see Plate XX), count of Boulogne, Auvergne and regent of Scotland.

¹³¹ 'Non si ritennero i cavalli francesi, fra i quali erano le bande de gli uomini d'arme scozzesi... dove il Gonzaga uscendo a tempo fuor dell'imboscata... accerchiando una gran parte di loro co' cavai leggeri, et facendo un grande sforzo li ruppe, et perch'erano carichi d'armi gravi, et erano sopra cavai grossi et tardi, et gli fece prigioni...' Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, pp. 85-86.

Landsknechts, supported by Ferrarese and French men-at-arms, converged on the narrow valley where the unwitting Imperialists were, in their turn, waiting for their prey.

As they observed hundreds of French *gendarmes* charging them ‘in ordinanza’ and cutting them off from the place of the ambush, the Albanians sent to provoke Aversa’s garrison soon realized that this was not a normal sortie. In fact, the French had been waiting for them, and the stradiots had to scatter and to gallop away at full speed, without being able to forewarn Ferrante Gonzaga. Shortly afterwards, the Florentine light cavalrymen and the French and Ferrarese men-at-arms launched a surprise attack on the Imperialists, whose cover had become a trap, while the arquebusiers of the Black Bands, positioned on the steep slopes of the surrounding hills, fired at them. In the thick of the fight, Ferrante Gonzaga was unhorsed and captured by Anguillotto da Pisa¹³², a light horseman in Florentine service, but was rescued by a counterattack of the Imperial Landsknechts, who were routed in their turn immediately afterwards by the *gendarmes*; Jacopo Bichi’s nose was almost cut off by a knife wound¹³³, and the bold son of the late admiral Bonnivet was stabbed in the stomach¹³⁴. To escape capture, Ferrante had to run away on foot and to jump down an escarpment. The Imperial force was dispersed, and avoided annihilation only because *monsieur* de Burie, for unknown reasons, had ignored

¹³² Captured by the Imperialists at the end of the siege of Naples, Anguillotto da Pisa joined the company of light cavalry under the command of count Pier Maria da San Secondo, Giovanni’s half-nephew. During the siege of Florence, Anguillotto deserted the Imperial army and went back into Florentine service. Promoted to the rank of captain, shortly afterwards he was captured and murdered by his former commander; Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina*, vol. 2, p. 294.

¹³³ ‘I cavali legieri de la Signoria Vostra, per quanto è referito, hanno facto bene el debito loro; ma in tutta sua vita si parrà al volto de missier Jacopo Bichi, che gli comanda, per una gran coltellata che gli ha quasi tagliato el naso...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 70 r.

¹³⁴ ‘le seigneur de Bonnivet jeune gentilhomme et vaillant, après avoir fort bien faict son devoir, fut blessé de sorte que les entrailles luy sortirent du corps; toutefois fut porté a Venouze (Venosa) et fut gueri sa playe, mais depuis il mourut par maladie.’ Du Bellay, *Memoires*, p. 113 r.; ‘... il figlio del amiraglio passato che come giovane si misse intra li nimici, che se havessin facto così li altri franzesi non campava homo delli imperiali’ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 25 June, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 17 v.

count Ugo's instructions to seize¹³⁵ the entrance to the tunnel (see Map F), which was the only escape route the fugitives had that would enable them to get back to Naples. The losses of the League were minimal, while the Imperialists lost almost four hundred men between dead and prisoners, and it took them days to reconstitute the scattered companies¹³⁶.

By July, the status of count Ugo as commander *pro tempore*, and without *condotta*, of the Black Bands was becoming embarrassing both for him and for Florence. Eventually, the Ten decided to offer the Bolognese *condottiere* the rank of *Governatore* of all the Florentine forces in the Kingdom of Naples and a *provvisione* of one thousand *scudi*. However, Soderini and del Nero judged this proposal to be dangerously inadequate: both the *titolo* and the *provvisione* (Baglioni had been given the title of captain general of the foot and fifteen hundred *ducati* per year) were insufficient and risked hurting Pepoli's pride, and for this reason they asked the Ten to reconsider their decision. As Pepoli had told them, he and his peers found satisfaction either in a 'titolo onorevole' or in a 'provvisione' generous enough to show the esteem in which a commander was held. Count Ugo expected from the Ten the title of *Governatore Generale* of all Florentine forces or a rich commission. In order to please the Republic, while the war and the 'spese straordinarie' lasted he was ready to renounce the cavalry retinue customarily granted to a *generale*, and even in peacetime he was prepared to have under his command a company of light cavalymen rather than of heavy horsemen¹³⁷; as we have seen, this was a considerable sacrifice for somebody who had been a commander of men-at-arms. After all, del Nero pointed out, between

¹³⁵ 'et se il capitano Buria faceva quel che era l'ordine del conte, si dava loro una meza rotta, perché lasciò aperta la grotta che havea l'ordine di serrare, onde dovevon tornare tutti quelli che son scappati. Non s'è facto in su questa guerra né il maggior, né il più bello conflictò, et è stato più presto stratagemma...' Ibid. f. 17 r.

¹³⁶ On this fight, see Giovio, *La Seconda Parte*, book 26, pp. 86-87; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XIX, chapt. III, pp. 1952-1953; Santoro, *Dei successi*, pp. 87-89.

¹³⁷ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 51 r. – 52 v.

his pay and what he was able to steal, a simple captain made more than one thousand *scudi* per year. Even the Ten's more vague assurances would have been better than a weak offer¹³⁸.

Both the *commissario* and the ambassador liked the Bolognese *condottiere*, since he was investing a good deal of his personal resources just in order to win the Ten's trust, and was planning a long career in Florentine service. However, the dramatic events of the second half of July made all the effort devoted to coming to an arrangement fruitless.

Since the beginning of the siege, both the army of the League and the Imperialists had been afflicted with various epidemic diseases. The Florentines, who had strong commercial links with Naples, knew very well the danger represented by the seasonal fevers that racked the region and by the heat of the Italian summer, and for this reason had hoped for a quick conclusion to the siege. 'Questo aere' wrote Soderini already on 16 May 'è contrario alli oltramontani...'¹³⁹. By June the army of the League was oppressed by 'caldi insuportabili et malattie infinite', and the danger of the 'peste' (the plague) loomed over the camp¹⁴⁰. A clear distinction was made between the 'ordinarie' illnesses, mostly malarial fevers and dysentery, and the so-called plague, which in fact was epidemic typhus¹⁴¹ and progressed slowly until mid-July. The sanitary measures

¹³⁸ 'Et anchora quando e' si discorreva con Sua Signoria (count Ugo) come da noi circa e' titoli o provisioni che desidererebbe, et dicendo lui che li suoi pari si pregiavano in una delle due cose, o nel titolo onorevole o nella provvisione si gagliarda che supplisse a quello, et che quanto al gusto suo non si satisfarebbe di titolo di capitano generale di fanterie né altro titolo minore che di governatore generale overo d'una grossa provvisione che potesse dimostrare in che existimatione tenuto e' fussi. Niente di mancho che quando le Signorie Vostre lo ricercassino che senza alchuno premio o titolo durante questa guerra e' comandasse queste lor genti, era per farlo volentieri, parendogli guadagnare assai s'egli acquistasse la gratia delle Signorie Vostre. Et qualunche simil cose spesso si dichono pro forma, tuttavolta poichè e'si trova entrato in questo governo io credo che nel modo sopradetto e' ci si manterrebbe con più sua satisfatione o mancho discontento che se egli dichiarasse una provvisione [di mille scudi]' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, ff. 248 v. – 249 v.

¹³⁹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 16 May 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 337 r.

¹⁴⁰ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 3 v.

¹⁴¹ The Mantuan ambassador, who died of typhus himself, left a detailed description of the symptoms of the 'peste': 'Nascono febre intestine et lente nel corpo de li homeni, che nel principio pare non doverse existimare, poi in un momento rinascono con tanto furore che di subito amazza, e queando l'uomo è

were grossly inadequate from the beginning, and, as the siege went on, the hygienic conditions of the camp of the League became plainly catastrophic. Moreover, following the advice of Neapolitan exiles, Lautrec had the aqueduct that supplied the city's fountains destroyed, and the river Sebeto flooded the fields, forming pools of stagnant water¹⁴². Under the pressure of the huge and 'licentiosa' army of the League, the delicate balance on which the 'paradise' of Poggioreale was based (see Plate 10) went to pieces, and it became a disease-ridden trap. The only consolation was that the situation was as bad in Naples as it was outside it. In particular, the 'febbre terzana', a form of malarial fever that causes febrile convulsions approximately once every three days, afflicted large numbers of the rank-and-file but also 'homini di qualità' like Navarro, Vaudemont and Lautrec himself. Most of the increasingly numerous daily casualties were due to the 'malattie ordinarie' and were private soldiers, exhausted, undernourished and with no one to care for them when they fell ill or were wounded. However, from April to the end of June, typhus had already killed sir Robert Jerningham, his lieutenant John Carew, the commander of the Mantuan cavalry, the Mantuan ambassador and the papal nuncio. On 30 June, *provveditore* Alvise Pisani died of 'febbre terzana doppia'¹⁴³. Too sick to continue to serve, muster officer ser Bernardino Politi took his leave at the beginning of June¹⁴⁴, and in July (see Table 21)

morto dimostra alchune pentecchie negre per la schiena...' Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 17 April 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 223 r.

¹⁴² Physician-turned-historian Paolo Giovio offered a 'scientific' explanation for the origin of the fevers: 'Onde necessariamente tutta quella quantità d'acqua raccolta da molti luoghi si veniva talmente ad allargare per quel piano, ch'a poco a poco ingorgando et poi fermandosi l'humore, il terreno di quei campi si veniva a marcire, et quindi nasceva una nebbia molto grossa, sollevata sempre, ma non però domata dal sole; la quale perciò generava le febbri et le divulgava per tutto il campo' *La Seconda Parte*, book 26, p. 90.

¹⁴³ On the last days and death of Alvise Pisani, see Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, pp. 167, 174, 185, 190, 207, 237.

¹⁴⁴ 'Sarà aportatore di questa Bernardino di Arezzo, che è stato rassegna per le signorie vostre lungo tempo et ha servito bene et fidelmente, ma per trovarse al presente impedito di grave malattia mi è stato forza darli licentia. Prego vostre signorie l'habin per raccomandato et lo conoschino per lor bono servitore...'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 7 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 14 r.

captain Iacomo Filippo went back to Spoleto and was replaced by Angelo Bastardo¹⁴⁵. To quote commissario Soderini, ‘e’ pericoli della guerra sono e’ minori’¹⁴⁶. Since there was really nothing he could do and since the *peste* had already entered his *casa*, Marco del Nero ‘secured’ himself from the danger by trying not think too much about it and by trusting in divine assistance¹⁴⁷. On the eve of the dramatic turning point of mid-July, the Florentine ambassador estimated that half of the army suffered from some illness¹⁴⁸, while the Venetian *provveditore alle galere*, and future Doge, Pietro Lando was even more pessimistic in his report to the Senate: no one really knew the number of sick soldiers, the dead lay naked and unburied by the score, the miasmas emitted by the swamps that surrounded the camp covered the sun even at midday; ‘Dio ne aiuti. Da ogni parte non si sente salvo ruina e morte...’¹⁴⁹

By June, skirmishes, epidemics and desertion had considerably weakened both armies, but since it had to cover the wider front, these losses, coupled with the fact that Lautrec stuck to his choice of a close-range blockade, harmed the army of the League much more. When, on 18 June, the captain general ordered the drummers of the camp to sound *a l’arme* in order to check the effective strength of his troops, the Ferrarese ambassador calculated that the army of the League amounted to twenty thousand footsoldiers¹⁵⁰, eight hundred lances of heavy cavalry and one hundred and twenty-five light horsemen (see Table XX). However, these quite impressive numbers need to be put in the right perspective. We have to remember the dimensions of the Neapolitan scene of action and the fact that the army of the League was tactically unbalanced: its

¹⁴⁵ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 169 r.

¹⁴⁶ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 22 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 7 r.

¹⁴⁷ ‘... a noi in casa ce ne è già morti servitori in brevissimo tempo che per tutti e’ segni [si giudica sia suta peste]. Ma non ci essendo modo da fare altre provvisioni di guardia, ce ne assicuriamo col pensarvi pocho et confidar nell’aiuto di Dio...’ [in code]. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 201 r.

¹⁴⁸ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 211 r.

¹⁴⁹ Pietro Lando to the Venetian Senate, 19 July 1528. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, p. 293.

¹⁵⁰ In May, Alvise Pisani estimated that there were nine thousand footsoldiers in Naples; see Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVII, p. 494.

superiority in men-at-arms could not make up for its limited powers of initiative caused by its shortage of light horsemen. From the beginning of June, the Imperialists virtually ceased their attacks on the League's fortified line and, taking advantage of the fact that their light cavalry had been in control of the roads since the beginning of the siege, directed their efforts against the League's backlines and smaller garrisons. All the cattle and wheat the Imperial raiding parties managed to bring into Naples was not enough to improve the city's critical logistical situation, but it was enough to give hope to the besieged and to force the commanders of the League to deploy large bodies of infantry outside the camp, an inadequate and costly replacement for the lack of a few companies of light cavalry¹⁵¹.

There were, moreover, other discouraging signals. The excavation of the trench that, by way of the marshes of La Maddalena, was to seal off Naples from the east and to link the camp of the League to the sea, and to the fleet, was never completed. According to *provveditore* Pisani this was due to the marshy soil¹⁵², but both the *commissario* and the Florentine ambassador blamed rather the dangerous inertia and lack of perseverance of the French commanders¹⁵³.

By June it was generally thought that the League's army needed a substantial 'rinfreschamento', that is an injection of 'fresh' units of infantry and light cavalry. However, Lautrec chose another, and far more ambitious, course of action: using the Germans captured by count Ugo at the *grotta* (25 June) the captain general resumed the

¹⁵¹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 24 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 15 v. The *commissario* strongly believed that the recruitment of four hundred light horsemen would have ensured the eventual victory of the League.

¹⁵² 'Come la trinzea si va trovando difficoltà a compirla, perché si trova il fango et paludo, che mal si pol far...' Alvise Pisani to the Venetian Senate, 29 May 1528. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, p. 30

¹⁵³ 'Ma in effetto la natura de'franzesi non porgie diligentia. Fanno spesso buon proposito et buoni ordini, et non gli hanno a pena cominciatu a mettere in opera che se ne raffreddano et è intervenuto questo ancora nella trincera che e'volevono condurre fino alla marina et doveva essere fornita più di fa. Ancora non è amezata. Ché quando per mancamento di guastatori et quando per essere le fanterie occupate in altre factioni, si dismette il lavorare, et pure sarebbe una grande utilità sì per tenergli stretti et sì per impedirgli quando se ne volessino andare alla volta di Calavria. Bisogna pigliarsi da costoro quello che da loro la natura...'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 69 r.

pratica with the Imperial Landsknechts¹⁵⁴, and started a new one with two companies of Albanian light cavalry which were in Naples¹⁵⁵, promising them either safe passage home or employment in French service. The prince of Orange was running out of time, money and wine¹⁵⁶; when the Venetian squadron arrived outside Naples (10 June 1528) with sixteen galleys, it seemed that the Emperor himself had eventually run out of luck. These reinforcements allowed the oared vessels of the League to adopt a more offensive approach: Filippino and his squadron (eleven galleys) went to Pozzuoli, between Ischia and Naples, six Venetian galleys went to support the expeditionary force of the prince of Melfi, who was now a partisan of the French, in its attack on Gaeta, and two patrolled the mouth of the Garigliano¹⁵⁷. To enforce the blockade of Naples, the Venetians relied on smaller *fregate*, the same kind of ship used to run it¹⁵⁸. Navarro even planned to use the remaining available oarsmen to work on the half-finished trench at la Maddalena. At the same time, the Imperial relief army, whose imminent arrival had been announced to the Landsknechts on many occasions, was still in Lombardy, unable to repeat the miraculous ‘leap’ of 1527¹⁵⁹. The morale of the German troops in Naples reached rock bottom. For a while, it seemed that in the city there was not enough wine to make them ‘swallow’ the umpteenth lie¹⁶⁰. The Spaniards’ faith did not waver, but they could not hope to hold the city by themselves.

¹⁵⁴ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 1 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 194 r./v.

¹⁵⁵ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 10 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 40 v.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Il principe d’Oranges poi hiermattina adunando tutta la gente fece un parlamento publico, nel quale si risolvé che tutto il vino s’accumunassi et si distribuissi per equale tanto al piccolo quanto al grande’. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 10 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 39 v. The wine was instrumental in keeping the Landsknechts quiet, if not disciplined, and in making them accept difficult decisions. The importance of wine and beer in the diet of soldiers and in military history has been too frequently underestimated and overlooked as a rather embarrassing issue.

¹⁵⁷ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 51 r.

¹⁵⁸ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 205 v.

¹⁵⁹ On the campaign fought by Georg von Frundsberg (junior) in Lombardy and on the disastrous attempt to storm the walls of Lodi (30 June), see Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, book XIX, chapt. II, pp. 1941-1946

¹⁶⁰ ‘Non lassarò di scrivere a Vostra Excelentia qualmente questi capitanei cesarei hanno ditto a lanzhinechi, che queste galere sono venute per levar Monsignor Lautrech, come altre volte zà levorno il duca de Albania (in 1525), et questo per non havere monsignor luogo sicuro dove ritirarse. Nè potendo aspettar che’l soccorso loro arrivi qua. Io credo, se li lanzhinechi havesser del vino, che forse crederiano

Refusing to set about the recruitment of much-needed reinforcements of infantry and light cavalry, Lautrec based his strategy for the prosecution of the siege on two assumptions: that the collapse of the backbone of the Imperial army was really imminent and that the French fleet would bring the money and fresh troops he needed. What the captain general did not realise was that he was walking on thin ice. Since the failure of the 'impresa di Sardegna' (see Chapter 2) the relationship between Andrea Doria and Francis I had worsened considerably. A series of personal 'faux pas' by the king, coupled with his decision to strip Genoa of some of its most important privileges, like the overlordship of the nearby harbour city of Savona, brought the old *condottiere* of the sea, whose contract was due to expire at the end of June, to reconsider his position in French service at a very critical moment¹⁶¹. Francis I had been responsible for excessive delays in the provision of the monthly payments for the services of Doria's galleys and had claimed for the French crown the prisoners taken during the battle of Capo d'Orso. Moreover, *messer* Andrea resented the fact that, after five years of faithful service, the title of admiral had been given to monsieur de Barbisieux and not to him. Eventually he decided that it was easier to forgive the sack of his native city by the Spaniards years before than Francis' manoeuvres against him and against Genoa's status and prestige. According to a fascinating (and probably false) legend, the marquis of Vasto, prisoner on Andrea's flagship, heard him complain while sleeping about the king's ingratitude, and the next day managed to persuade him into entering the emperor's service¹⁶².

questa baia, ma il mancarli del vino non li lascia credere cosa alcuna...'. Gerardo da ca'di Mosto to the duke of Milan, 11 June 1528. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, p. 116.

¹⁶¹ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XIX, chapt. IV, pp. 1954-1957. On the dealings between Charles V and Andrea Doria, see also Guillmartin, *Gunpowder*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁶² The mediation of Alfonso de Avalos was instrumental in defining the articles of Doria's agreement with Charles V, but by the time he slept on the same galley as *messer* Andrea, the latter had already decided to leave the French service: 'Il marchese dello Vasto accortosi della mala sodisfatione del Doria per mezzo di uno suo servitore che nello porto di Lerice lo haveva inteso in sonno parlare, lamentandosi delo re di Franza. Quale servitore pigliando lo marchese delo Vasto suo padrone per la mano, che stava nella stessa galera, se accostorno tutti due alla poppa, dove dormeva il Doria, et celo fece sentire con le

By the end of June Lautrec started to receive alarming news from Rome¹⁶³ about messer Andrea's manoeuvres, while his informants reported a suspicious increase in the number of ships that were slipping into Naples through Filippino's blockade. Realising the danger, the captain general tried to appease the Genoese commander by giving him back the prisoners 'da taglia' taken at Capo d'Orso and by sending an envoy directly to Genoa. However Filippino had already been instructed by *messer* Andrea to abandon the siege of Naples as soon as possible. Seizing the opportunity provided by some grisly rumours about French attacks on *Doriane* galleys – rumours which had been spread by his own men – Filippino left the gulf of Naples¹⁶⁴ (3 July). The Genoese squadron could not go far without risking an encounter with the French fleet under the command of *monsieur* de Barbisieux¹⁶⁵, which was heading southwards, and took shelter in the harbour of Gaeta, controlled by the Imperialists. Although del Nero dismissed Filippino's move as relatively unimportant, the fact that there was once again a potentially hostile squadron in the waters around Naples forced the remaining ships of the League to shift back to a defensive mode, and the 'mesh' became again too wide.

proprie orecchie. Da lo che pigliato animo il marchese investì il Doria dopo che havevano mangiato insieme, et li persuase a volere lasciare Franza, et accostarsi allo imperatore' Rosso, *Historia*, p. 36.

¹⁶³ Assuming that the pope was once more lying, Marco del Nero appeased Lautrec's anger and dismissed as false the rumours about Andrea Doria's change of allegiances. '[... questa mattina andando a corte trovai Monsignor Illustrissimo mal contento, per lettere che aveva avute dal Papa con una lettera espressa che contenevano come Andrea Doria per mala contentezza si era licenziato dal Re... intendendo io questo opposi che non mi era verisimile... che se (Lautrec) non intendeva questo, stamani già mandava al conte Philippino una ambasciata in collera dolendosi aspramente, la quale era apta – secondo la persona che gli è sensitiva – a fare solo per questo rottura tra loro. Et in quel cambio gli mandò dolce parole et gli restitui Seron, il segretario dello Imperatore... il marchese del Guasto, che fino a qui lo aveva Monsignor Illustrissimo...]' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 55 r./v.

¹⁶⁴ el conte Philippino che hora si truova XI galere bene armate... hieri si levò di qua... Et ne incolpa e' padroni particolari delle galere che hanno voluto così fare, mossi da una nuova la quale dicono havere presentito esser qui in corte, che quella armata del re habbia preso dua delle galere di detto Doria et tagliato a pezo tutti gli huomini. La qual cosa è vero che si è detta, ma cercando la radice si truova che dalle medesime galere del conte Philippino è uscita. Basta che gli ha trovata questa scusa et con effecto da quel poco di disfavore che e' reca questa sua partita in fuori. Quanto allo effecto è di haverla cara, perché a dire il vero e' dava a quelli di Napoli molte comodità di condurre dentro rinfreschamenti di viveri in cambio di impedire quelli che ve ne portassino. Et monsignor illustrissimo per el rispetto che egli havea et per non lo far rompere lo dissimulava el più delle volte' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 4 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 205 r. /v.

¹⁶⁵ Antoine de la Rochefoucauld, great seneschal of Guyenne, lieutenant general of the French Atlantic fleet.

Moreover, the powerful Sirocco would soon start to blow from the south, making sailing ships almost impossible to intercept¹⁶⁶ and, unknown to the besiegers, the French fleet was more distant than they thought. However, the outcome of the siege of Naples was eventually to be decided by a handful of days saved by one side and lost by the other.

Lautrec was convinced that his negotiations with the Landsknechts in Naples would prove decisive. At the beginning of June the prince of Orange had made the Germans swear that they would stay 'ad una vita et ad una morte' with the Spaniards, but in his turn he had promised them that the relief army would arrive soon. On 1 July the Landsknecht general assembly, the *Ring*¹⁶⁷, gathered in a Neapolitan *piazza* for the first time. Many Germans grumbled that if the prince could not pay them, somebody else (Lautrec) would do it. Others argued that, since they had been left without wages and victuals for so long, they should no longer consider themselves bound by the oath of fidelity to the emperor, but should be ready to swear that they would not serve anybody else. Unable to express a common line of action, the *consiglio* met every day, and after every session the Landsknechts broke up into small groups of thirty or so, debating animatedly among themselves¹⁶⁸. On 7 July (Tuesday), Lautrec assured Marco del Nero that by the end of that week the Germans would leave Naples; even if they did not, the League would retain its advantage: the duke of Brunswick was still stuck in

¹⁶⁶ 'El male è che el tempo ne scorre sempre verso la stagione che li venti pesono poi tanto che le galere non possono assediare il porto, che in uno Sciloccho forzato intreranno li navili di Cicilia con tutte le provvisioni che vorranno senza che s'elli possi fare resistenza'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 228 v.

¹⁶⁷ The *Ring*, also called *Gemein*, was not simply a demonstration by all the foot soldiers of a unit to protest against something, but a real assembly whose power, especially during the twenties of the sixteenth century, was respected and feared by the colonels. The Ring had an internal organization which was outside the control of the obrist (the colonel) and, in case of need, elected its own representatives, the *Amissaten*. See Baumann, *I Lanzichenecchi*, pp. 120-123.

¹⁶⁸ 'Non volseno udirlo (the prince of Orange), vociferando molti di essi che e' non gli mancherebbe loro patrone bastante a pagarli. Et alchuni altri dicevono che sendo tenuti senza vettovaglie et senza danari non erono per giurare più di servire allo imperadore, ma che giurerebbono bene di non servire ad altri. De poi referiscono questi dua che e' si sparsono per la terra et se ne vedeva dove XXV et dove 30 a mucchi parlando et disputando insieme...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 1 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 194 r./v.

Northern Italy, while the arrival of the fleet of monsieur de Barbisieux and of the much-needed money was considered to be imminent¹⁶⁹. However, the ‘armata di Francia’ – whose appearance could have caused quite a stir in the Landsknechts’ council – was inexplicably late. In fact, on 15 July all the Venetian galleys, save those sent towards Gaeta, were forced to leave the gulf of Naples to take on supplies of biscuit in Calabria, and a stream of ships loaded with provisions for the besieged entered the harbour¹⁷⁰. As we have seen, the logistical and financial situation of the Black Bands was bad, but the other units did not fare better. The soldiers of the League ventured outside their camp with alarming frequency, not to fight, but to find something to eat¹⁷¹, and the Gascons in particular were leaving the camp *en masse* to offer their services and earn some money during the harvest¹⁷².

In Naples, the prince of Orange and the other Imperial commanders managed to persuade the Landsknecht council that the defection of Andrea Doria opened the way to a seaborne relief expedition from Sicily. The Germans accepted the *scudo* each they had previously refused and promised to remain faithful to the emperor until the end of the month¹⁷³. It was not much, but it was what the prince needed. Philibert de Chalon was indeed desperate to gain time, but he had a plan.

Lautrec believed that his plans had been simply delayed, and not thwarted, but the propitious occasion had past. On 13 July the captain general fell ill with ‘febre terzana’.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Monsignor Illustrissimo tuttavia persevera gagliardamente nell’ [opinione che innanzi che e’ passi questa settimana li lanzi di Napoli debbino pigliare partito come Sua Excellentia mi dice riscontrare ogni giorno per quelli che vanno innanzi et in dietro....] ma pensando come prudente Sua Illustrissima Signoria che pur [potrebbe questo suo disegno mancare desidera grandemente che] l’armata di Francia comparisca, che oltre a tutto gli è molto necessario per conto de’ danari de’ quali si truova in grandissima necessità. Et ne sta con dispiacere, dolendosi a cielo di questa tardanza’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 7 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 187 r.

¹⁷⁰ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 218 r.

¹⁷¹ ‘Et hora son sforzati a viver di rapto et fare mille inconvenienti che si possono loro prohibire, et in ogni occorrentia che si havessino adoperare a combattere se ne troverebbe più fuori del campo a buscare che a rapresentarsi alle insegne, così interviene in tutte quest’altre bande...’ Ibid.

¹⁷² *Commissario* Soderini resented that the Gascons not only had ‘monopolised’ the harvest by driving away all the other ‘*nationi*’, but had left the Black Bands to perform on their own all the duties expected of the light infantry. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 16 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 175 r.

¹⁷³ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 16 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 218 r. /v.

and, thanks to his style of leadership, his absence risked paralysing the already weakened army of the League. Moreover, the worst suspicions of the *collegati* were confirmed by the news that, while they were waiting for it on tenterhooks, the French fleet had been besieging Civitavecchia – the main harbour of the papal state, which had been occupied by the Imperialists after the Sack of Rome – at the request of Clement VII. This was another ‘colpo di amico’ from the pope, as Marco del Nero put it¹⁷⁴.

However, the eyes of the commanders of the League were not the only ones scanning the horizon diligently. Probably no less anxious than their enemy counterparts, Philibert de Chalon and his staff officers were gathering together the remaining Imperial forces, preparing them to deliver a blow that would irrevocably turn the tide of the campaign.

¹⁷⁴ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 12 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 211 r.

3. The Defeat

‘Vedi Napoli, e poi muori’.

Old Italian Saying

The French fleet, which amounted to nineteen galleys, two *fuste* and four *brigantini*, eventually arrived in sight of the seashore of La Maddalena on 18 July, early in the morning. However, that day the rough sea prevented monsieur de Barbisieux from unloading his precious cargo – the money sent by the *Cristianissimo* – and from bringing ashore his illustrious guests, that is the young prince of Navarre¹⁷⁵ and his large retinue of French noblemen.

To fully understand the dynamics of the situation, some more precise information is necessary. The landing place most commonly utilized by the galleys of the League was close to the bridge on the river Sebeto (see Map D), not far from the church of La Maddalena, which was outside Naples’s walls, more or less two hundred *passi* from the Bastione del Carmine, and in sight of the Imperial lookout posts. Moreover, the trenches of Navarro had never reached the seashore, so that the landing place had not been secured and could be safely reached only under heavy escort. When, the following day (19 July), the French tenders started to unload the galleys’ cargo, it was under the protection of the backbone, the ‘nervo’¹⁷⁶, of the troops of the League: the Florentine Black Bands, the Gascons under the command of monsieur de Candale¹⁷⁷, the

¹⁷⁵ Charles de Foix-Albret, brother of the king of Navarre.

¹⁷⁶ ‘... la scorta che era andata alla marina... la quale si può dire fussi el nervo di questo esercito...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 221 r.

¹⁷⁷ Charles de Foix-Candale, count of Astarac According to Blaise de Montluc, young Candale was the very promising protégé of Pedro Navarro himself.

Landsknechts in Venetian service and a large band of French *gendarmes* led by monsieur de Laval¹⁷⁸.

Blaise de Monluc has left in his *Commentaires* an action-packed account¹⁷⁹ of the engagement of 19 July 1528. At the time the future *maréchal de France* was a captain of infantry (see Table XIX); his arquebusiers (more or less ninety men), three-four hundred shooters from Candale's *colonnello*, of which he was not a member (see Table XX), and three-four hundred from the Black Bands controlled the crossroads around the church of La Maddalena. These were advance troops; their respective main bodies were positioned behind the closest of Navarro's ramparts. According to his account, young Blaise was the first to sight the massive sortie of the Imperial troops, both infantry and cavalry, who were trying to reach the landing place of the League by using the walls behind the church to shield their advance and to sneak behind the covering troops of the League¹⁸⁰, whose commanders, at that moment, were almost all at the landing place, intent on giving a very formal, and very long, welcome to the prince of Navarre, who decided to have dinner with them before he left his galley. Montluc, who went personally to warn his superiors¹⁸¹, regarded the delay, almost three hours, caused by all these futile ceremonies as catastrophic, and rightly so. The arrival of the French fleet had not gone unnoticed. In Naples the prince of Orange and Ferrante Gonzaga, who led the sortie, had been just looking for an opening like this. The stretch of land between the half-finished trench of La Maddalena and the seashore was a very conspicuous gap in the League's fortified lines; to bring the much-needed money to their camp, Lautrec's

¹⁷⁸ Jean de Laval, *seigneur de Chateaubriand*, who had been captured at Pavia together with king Francis I.

¹⁷⁹ Blaise de Monluc, *Commentaires et lettres de Blaise de Monluc, maréchal de France* (Paris, 1864), vol. 1, pp. 91-100.

¹⁸⁰ '...j'apperceuz quel la cavalerie sortoit a pied, tenant la bride en une main et la lance en l'autre, se baissant tant q'ilz pouvoinct pour n'estre descouvertz, comme faisoit aussi les gens de pied, qui marchoint en tapinois dernier les murailles...' *ibid.* p. 93.

¹⁸¹ Quite caustically, Blaise the Montluc shouted to the crews of the tenders which shuttled between the seashore and the fleet those 'seigneurs and gentilhommes' who 'estoient encores dedans s'amusant à fere des accolades' that the enemy was coming and that they should think about the combat, 's'ilz vouloient'. *Ibid.*

troops were forced to leave their cover and to face an enemy attack close to Naples's walls for the first time in months. Even though the coffers full of tens of thousand of *ecus d'or au soleil* that the fleet had brought were the main target, the Imperial commanders desperately needed some kind of victory to boost the morale of their troops, and to give their Landsknechts something to think, and to talk, about during their assemblies.

The landing of the prince of Navarre took place in a far less dignified way than expected: as Candale, count Ugo and captain Artigaloub rushed to reach their units, the prince had to leave his luggage behind, and was given a horse to reach the camp of the League at a gallop, while the gentlemen of his retinue had to rely on their legs¹⁸². By that time the coffers had already been brought into the main *alloggiamento*. Located with his unit close to the shoreline, Montluc came under the fire of the League's galleys that mistook his men for the enemy, but managed to repel a first attack of a group of enemy shooters. However, further inland, things were going badly: Laval's *gendarmes* had been caught in the open by the Spanish arquebusiers and, as they started to withdraw at a steady trot, were charged by both the Imperial cavalry and infantry 'de cul and de teste'. The French men-at-arms' *ordinanza* broke up, and those who could galloped back towards the League's fortifications, but found on their way the *colonnello* of Venetian Landsknechts, which was arrayed on the road that led to the gate of the rampart. The Germans could not suddenly open their ranks to give way to the French, and the *gendarmes* were out of control; when the Imperial troops led by Ferrante Gonzaga fell upon them, neither the pikemen nor the men-at-arms, hopelessly entangled, could mount an adequate resistance. With their *ordnung* in disarray,

¹⁸² Again, Blaise de Montluc pointed out how all those gentlemen 'n'eurent pas loisir de s'arrester avec nous...'. Ibid. p. 94.

S.Marco's Landsknechts were quickly defeated, and their flag captured¹⁸³. In vain count Ugo dismounted and led his *lancie spezzate* and forty arquebusiers of the Black Bands into the fray; after offering a stiff resistance to the enemy, most of Pepoli's men were either killed or wounded, and the Bolognese *condottiere* himself was eventually captured¹⁸⁴. The troops of the League outside the rampart found themselves cut off. Colonel Candale was badly wounded and taken prisoner¹⁸⁵, as were many of the French *gentilhommes* who had just arrived with the prince of Navarre. Pursued by Imperial Landsknechts, Blaise de Monluc and his arquebusiers made for the gate, but to cross it they had to force a passage through the ranks of Gonzaga's light cavalry by opening fire on them¹⁸⁶. The gate of the rampart was made of stone and, as Monluc says, it was a pre-existent structure – possibly some kind of arch, or the gate of a *villa*'s park – that had been incorporated into the defensive system designed by Navarro. It had a vaulted roof and a dozen men could have crossed it walking side by side; but, even though it had hinges, there were no doors¹⁸⁷. Having reached the relative safety of the camp, Monluc and his men were forced to take cover in the trenches behind the rampart, as the Spanish arquebusiers arrived and started to open fire from their side of the gate, establishing through it a very localized, but effective, 'killing zone'. The Spaniards could not yet cross the gate but the troops of the League did not dare to approach it.

The situation was desperate: if the enemies entered the defensive perimeter and established a bridgehead, everything was lost. After half an hour of furious shooting, the

¹⁸³ '... [quella (the French cavalry) nel fuggire dette in uno colonnello de'Vinitiani el quale sbarattato et sopravvenendogli gli inimici perse la bandiera et fu rotto...]' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 221 r./v.

¹⁸⁴ '... [il conte Ugo con circa 40 de'nostri archibugieri, che si era spinto innanzi con essi et il resto delle Bande per dare loro animo, et li smontassi et gagliardamente combattessimo alquanto, non poterono però sostenere la piena, et così morti et feriti la maggior parte di loro, il conte rimase prigionero]'. Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Young colonel Candale was also a nephew of Odet de Foix. Three days after his capture he was sent back to the camp 'in su la fede' to recover from his wounds, but there he died after a brief last agony.

¹⁸⁶ 'Et pour gaigner le dit portal, il me fauzist combattre, résolu de passer ou mourir. Je leur fiz fere ung salve d'arquebuzades... Sur ceste salve ilz me firent place' Monluc, *Commentaires*, p. 98.

¹⁸⁷ '... y avoict ung grand portal de pierre, par le quel dix ou douze homess eussent peu passer de front; et croy qu'anciennement il y avoict eu porte, car tout l'arc y estoit faict en voute'. Ibid. p. 92.

marquis of Saluzzo crept into the shallow trenches of the League and told Artigaloub, now in command of the Gascons, to lead his men through the gate. The captain refused to comply, arguing that, by doing so, he would lose too many of them. Desperate, the marquis went to the trenches occupied by the Black Bands, and gave them the same orders. At once, the Italians left their trenches and marched towards the gate, where they were joined by the sheepish Gascons. After a furious assault, the troops of the League regained control of both ends of the 'portal', but the marquis, who wanted to cut the losses at the end of a disastrous day, stopped their advance¹⁸⁸. Fully in control of the field for the first time since the beginning of the siege, the Imperialists withdrew to Naples. As Marco del Nero wrote to the Ten, 'la giornata è stata trista per noi'¹⁸⁹: five hundred soldiers of the League had been killed – one third of them were from the Black Bands – and as many had been captured¹⁹⁰.

Monluc blamed Ugo de'Pepoli for this defeat, who, according to him, had stationed the German pikemen in the wrong place¹⁹¹. The Florentine *commissario* and the ambassador, who resented the capture of their military *governatore*, openly accused the French cavalry of cowardice; they pointed out that the *gendarmes*' incompetence had utterly disheartened the footsoldiers, who, after so many blunders, knew that they,

¹⁸⁸ '« Cappitaine Artigueloube, je vous en prie, levés-vous et donnés, car il fault passer le portal ». Mais luy respondist qu'il ne pouvoit... Monsieur le Marquis, ne se contentant de ceste response, coreust aux bandes noires, leur commandant marcher vers le portal, lesquelles incontinent se levarent et marcharent ver le dict portal... je (Monluc) coureuz au cappitaine Artigueloube et luy diz : « Mon compagnon, vous recevés icy une escorne pour jamais ; car voilà les bandes noires sur ma vie qui viennent au portal pour emporter l'honneur. » Lequel incontinent se leva... donnant la teste baissée au portal...'. Ibid. pp. 99-100.

¹⁸⁹ 'Et se la battaglia di Vostre Signorie, ritirandosi già li Lanzichinech et li Guasconi, non avesse fatto testa gagliarda et combattendo ributtato li Spagnoli, sarebbero venuti fino a'nostri ripari, con troppo danno di tutto lo exercito'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 222 r. Del Nero's report (one hundred dead and one hundred prisoners) was grim enough, but the figures given by Soderini (see next note), who lived among the soldiers, were far worse.

¹⁹⁰ 'Pur si può dire (the League) havere perso 500 homini o più, che vi sia el terzo delle nostre Bande. et e'prigioni son più che altrettanti'. Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 177 r.

¹⁹¹ Even though this is not the place to shift the blame, it ought to be remembered that Ugo de'Pepoli was not in command of the Venetian troops.

unlike their Imperial counterparts, could not count on the support of the cavalry¹⁹². Moreover, both the Imperial troops and their commanders had seen all the weaknesses and limitations of the army of the League, all things the Landsknechts would inevitably remember in their future dealings with Lautrec¹⁹³.

Even worse, the Imperialists had not seen a substantial number of troops disembark. In the days that followed the engagement of 19 July, the situation of Lautrec's army emerged in all its seriousness. Everybody had assumed that, together with the prince of Navarre, the French fleet would bring enough money and troops to 'refresh' the camp. However, besides the prince's household and the usual retinue of gentlemen-adventurers, only eight hundred footsoldiers had landed, and the money carried by the *Cristianissimo's* paymasters was insufficient to free Lautrec from the debts he had run up with his own officers while he was waiting for it. Years later, while writing his *Commentaires*, Blaise de Monluc gave vent to his resentment, but in 1528 the young Gascon and his fellow captains could not help feeling abandoned by their king and disappointed by his ministers, knowing that the enemy was drawing the obvious conclusions from the arrival of such a weak force¹⁹⁴. By the end of July, the Imperial commanders probably knew that the French were no less isolated than they were, and that the final outcome of the conflict would be decided without the intervention of substantial reinforcements on either side.

On 19 July the League had lost control of the field, and had not the means to regain it; the wind had changed, and it was not just the Sirocco that was starting to blow

¹⁹² '... la ributtata che nel fare scorta alli danari et all'admiraglio quando smontò con li altri gentilhomini di galera hebbono e'nostri per colpa delle gente d'arme franzese, che vilmente si messono in fuga...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 228 r.; 'Basta che la giornata è stata trista per noi, il che in maggior parte si attribuisce alla mala prova che hanno fatto questa cavalleria franzese come è intervenuto quasi sempre che ella si ha havuto ad operare in questi giorni. Cosa che toglie assai di coraggio alla fanteria, conoscendo non si potere fidare nel soccorso de i cavalli, come saria necessario. Et come fanno gli spagnioli, che gli hanno perfetti, et se ne servono assai...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 19 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 222 r.

¹⁹³ 'Certamente che tendendo al disegno di far risolvere i Lanzi di Napoli al passare di qua, non è stato punto al proposito...' Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Monluc, *Commentaires*, pp. 102-103.

from the south, swelling the sails of the ships full of provisions that were entering the harbour of Naples. Because of the victory, drinking the water they normally despised became a source of pride to the Landsknechts¹⁹⁵; in droves, they raised their right hands, renewing their oath¹⁹⁶. On 25 July, the Spanish community in Naples celebrated the day of the apostle St. James (*Santiago Matamoros*, St. James the Moor-slayer) with great pomp and ostentation; the good saint, in his turn, ‘ended’ the ‘peste’ (it was typhus) in the city¹⁹⁷.

Outside the city walls, after mid-July, the typhus epidemic, that up to that moment had been somewhat contained, literally exploded, spreading quickly among the troops of the League, including the Black Bands¹⁹⁸. Every day the sick multiplied ‘a meraviglia’¹⁹⁹, and by 5 August, thanks to the report of count Ugo, who had been swapped for five Spanish captains the day before, del Nero believed that the number of soldiers fit for combat available in the League’s camp was more or less equivalent to the whole of the Imperial forces in Naples, that is between six thousand five hundred and seven thousand men²⁰⁰. Pepoli himself was so ill that he had to leave the camp and to go to Capua, where he died three weeks later, shortly before the defeat of the League, without resuming his office of temporary *governatore* or signing a *condotta* with Florence. By the beginning of August, the company of Scipione da Imola was in such a bad state that it was disbanded, and the few remaining soldiers were divided among the

¹⁹⁵ ‘Quanto allo sperare che’Lanzi, per non volere bere acqua, o per non havere denari habbino a fare altro movimento... è cosa vana, perché gli hanno preso in gloria il sopportare ogni stento per vincere et sono più ostinati che mai...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131. ff. 228 v./229 r.

¹⁹⁶ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, p. 95.

¹⁹⁷ Rosso, *Historia*, p. 43.

¹⁹⁸ ‘... in campo sotto Napoli è intrato la peste in quelli de la Banda Negra...’ Pietro Lando to the Venetian Senate, 13 July 1528, Sanuto, *Diarii*, 48, p. 301.

¹⁹⁹ ‘... [li tanti infermi ogni giorno si moltiplicano a meraviglia...] Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f.

²⁰⁰ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 5 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 365 v.

other captains²⁰¹, but this was not enough to make good the losses inflicted by military encounters and disease. Moreover, the soldiers recruited locally were ‘mala gente’ who, being close to home, tended to desert, so that the ambassador asked the Ten to send two thousand Tuscan footsoldiers, ‘sciolti’, that is not organised in companies, by sea, to fill the ranks of the Black Bands²⁰². Of the staff of the *commissario*, the treasurer Filippo Altoviti, the paymaster Marcello Strozzi and Francesco Ferrucci were so ill that by mid-August they could not leave their beds²⁰³; of the sixteen members of the *famiglia* of the ambassador, only his secretary *messer* Bruno and a groom were still alive²⁰⁴. Swept by typhus and by malarial fevers, the Florentine cavalry soon ceased to exist as an operational unit; from his sickbed, Jacopo Bichi asked the Ten to take care of his family, and announced that the Bands were, in practice, the only support left to the army of the League²⁰⁵. Every night Spanish mock attacks caused the camp’s alarm to be sounded two or three times, and exhaustion and sleep deprivation were giving the coup de grace to the already ‘rotti’ soldiers²⁰⁶.

In the rest of the camp, the situation was not different: as monsieur de Lautrec was recovering, with difficulty, from his illness, he started eventually to take note of the real situation of his army, and, for the first time, Marco del Nero noticed the first

²⁰¹ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 9 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 349 r. At the moment of its disbanding, the company was also without a commander. It seems that Scipione had left the camp in July; unfortunately, many of the letters written in July and August were intercepted, and the chancellors of the commissario and of the ambassador were so ill that they could not write many ‘duplicati’.

²⁰² Marco del Nero to the Ten, 5 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 365 v.

²⁰³ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 347 r.

²⁰⁴ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 368 r.

²⁰⁵ ‘Per esser quando io ero sano, continuo qua in le fattioni, so’ stato negligente al scrivere alle Vostre Illustrissime Signorie. Hora per questa quanto più posso le rengratio dello essersi degnate ordinare qui al Signor Commissario m’habbi messo fra l’altri servidor loro... non voglio mancare raccomandarli quella poca famiglia mi è restata costà nelle terre loro, quale con me et dopo me ha sempre a vivere sotto l’ombra delle vostre Illustrissime Signorie alle quale delle cose di qua non dirò altro, se non che se prima le gente loro erano la reputatione di questo essercito, adesso sono si può quasi dire el campo proprio, ché altro non c’è - più di sono - che lo sostenga che queste bande. Né altro ci è restato di formidabile appresso li nimici’. Jacopo Bichi to the Ten, 17 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 132, f. 106 r.

²⁰⁶ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 347 v.

cracks in the mask of confidence of the captain general²⁰⁷. Besides killing or incapacitating the rank and file by the thousand, the epidemics had almost decapitated the army: by the end of July, only messer Ambrogio da Fiorenza was still active ‘per conto del Consiglio’, while, ‘per conto della guerra’, the marquis of Saluzzo, second in command to Lautrec, and Guido Rangoni were the only ‘persone di recapito’ still fit for service, and neither enjoyed Florence’s trust²⁰⁸. Pedro Navarro, Paolo Camillo Trivulzio, the *maestro di campo*²⁰⁹ and *monsieur de Vaudémont*²¹⁰ were either ill or still too weakened to take service, while the captain general of the ordnance was dead. The *gendarmerie* had in practice ceased to exist, as the men-at-arms, either ill or faking an illness, had left the disease-ridden camp of Poggioreale for the more wholesome *ville* around Naples²¹¹. The footsoldiers, as usual, were stuck in their trenches. ‘*C’est grand peine d’aller a cheval, c’est la mort d’aller a pied*’.

However, Renzo da Ceri, who had arrived with the fleet, having no rank in Lautrec’s army and therefore no reason to be afraid of his disfavour, criticised openly the conduct of the captain general²¹² and eventually persuaded him of the need to recruit fresh troops of infantry and light cavalry. *Signor* Renzo was hurriedly (27 July) dispatched to l’Aquila, with the task of enlisting up to four thousand Italian footsoldiers and all the light horsemen he could find between Rome and the Abruzzi. The French

²⁰⁷ ‘... a me pare che a Monsignore Illustrissimo ne sia entrato qualche timore... et vorrebbe hora haver facto quello che mai fini qui se gli è ossuto persuadere...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 235 r.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 235 v.

²⁰⁹ Guillaume de Rochefort, *seigneur* d’Ally, also called ‘Pierrepont’, that is Pierpont, as in Table XIX.

²¹⁰ Louis de Lorraine-Vaudémont, count of Vaudémont; his branch of the family of the dukes of Lorraine had inherited the rights of Charles I of Anjou over the crown of the Kingdom of Naples. He died a few weeks later.

²¹¹ Ibid. f. 235 r.

²¹² ‘...[ma pure (Renzo da Ceri) fa gran frutto in parlare al manco libero, et dire le cose egli le intende a Monsignor Illustrissimo senza curarsi tanto del farlo turbare, come fanno quasi tutti li altri che non ardiscono dirli quello che credono li habbia a dispiacere, intanto che molte cose gli sono tenute occulte, che saria bene le sapessi. Et in vero e’ ne è causa da sé medesimo, per la mala cera che ci fa a chi gli dice quello gli dispiace]...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 25 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 241 r.

treasurer of l'Aquila was to finance the whole operation, and the unlucky Renzo²¹³ promised to be back within twenty days with the reinforcements – 'che se sia fra un mese', wrote del Nero, 'non farà poca diligentia',²¹⁴.

The remaining forces of the League shifted to a purely defensive mode²¹⁵, guarding a defensive perimeter that, Soderini pointed out, had been too long when, at the beginning of the *impresa*, the besiegers had been 'one hundred thousand'. Nevertheless, until the end Lautrec refused to reduce the overextended front of his army²¹⁶. Only a few days after their defeat of 19 July, the troops of the League found themselves besieged in their own camp. The Imperial raiding parties multiplied their efforts, patrolling the *campagna* and constantly probing the enemy defensive capabilities, making any activity immediately outside the trenches positively dangerous²¹⁷. Some daring individuals, disguised, entered the camp itself. Without cavalry, the forces of the League had lost any capacity of reaction.

Frantically, a revived Lautrec multiplied his efforts to recruit new companies of light horsemen; he also recalled the Venetian stradiots from Apulia and ordered the many men-at-arms who were fit for service, but who were 'a rinfrescare' in the nearby villages, to go back to the camp of Poggioreale 'sotto pena della vita'. Given the excellent performance of the Black Bands, the captain general asked Florence to send to

²¹³ Albeit a renowned condottiere and a protégé of Francis I, Renzo dell'Anguillara had the reputation of being very unlucky, and his fiasco at the defence of Rome had considerably worsened the situation. When they authorized him to recruit footsoldiers in Tuscany, the Ten pointed out quite caustically: 'El Signor Renzo è homo sfortunato; pure, di tante, una ne potrebbe colpire. Se ha a fare, facci presto.' The Ten to Antonfrancesco degli Albizzi, 24 September 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e Commissarie, 42, f. 103 r. Even the Ferrarese ambassador in Naples wrote that on 19 July '... signor Renzo con la sua solita disgratia giunse...' Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 31 August 1528. ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, ambasciatori, Italia, busta 9, the folios are not numbered.

²¹⁴ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 28 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 246 r.

²¹⁵ 'Intanto noi ci staremo in su le difese...' Ibid.

²¹⁶ '[Habbiamo un recinto di campo che era troppo quando eravamo centomila... e i più prudenti consigliano restregnere il campo per la sicurtà di esso, risparmiio degli uomini. Non è parso al patrone (Lautrec).]' Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 347 v.

²¹⁷ 'de' nostri saccomanni et bagagli ogni dì ne è presi fino su' ripari – et a me tocchò una coppia di muli – et fino allo abbeveratoio sono venuti a torre e' cavalli...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 24 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 131, f. 228 r.

Naples the two thousand Tuscan footsoldiers previously destined for Lombardy²¹⁸. Lautrec had already asked the general Saint-Pol²¹⁹, who was campaigning with another French army in northern Italy, to send him at least three thousand footsoldiers. However, Saint-Pol did not acknowledge the captain general of the League as his superior²²⁰. Apparently, Odet de Foix had been away from the French court for too long.

The hope excited by Lautrec's new provisions was as short-lived as his recovery from the illness: there was neither the time nor the money to implement them. Without the arrival of substantial reinforcements, the slow breakdown of the army of the League could not be stopped. On 1 August Imperial troops from Naples sacked Somma, without the *gendarmes* and light horsemen stationed here offering any resistance, 'cosa di gran vergogna'²²¹, and one week later (8 August) the Spaniards captured Somma's garrison²²². On 7 August two hundred Landsknechts of the Black Legion were attacked by the Imperialists while escorting a convoy of victuals and, after rushing to take shelter in two houses, surrendered 'molto vilmente', while twelve of captain Gian Moro's arquebusiers, barricaded in a nearby church, kept on fighting and managed to avoid capture²²³. By mid-August, the enemy light cavalry had forced the troops of the League to abandon the landing point to the mouth of the Sebeto, and the camp lost direct contact with the galleys²²⁴. The scarce provisions of bread, wine and meat ran out, the soldiers of the League started to starve, while the horses and the other animals of the camp could not be brought safely to the drinking troughs, which were just outside the

²¹⁸... mi ha molto preghato che replichi alle Signorie Vostre di mandarli 2000 fanti ordinati per Lombardia, ché ha fede sieno buone genti, apresso a queste Bande Nere. li optimi portamenti delle quali li fa desiderare coteste...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, ff. 235 v. – 236 r.

²¹⁹ François de Bourbon, count of Saint-Pol.

²²⁰ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 2 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 376 v.

²²¹ 'Et questa notte hanno cavalcato fino a Somma, et scalato la terra l'hanno tutta saccheggiata. non avendo fatto alcuna resistentia una banda d'huomini d'arme et di cavalli leggieri che si trovavano dentro. cosa di gran vergogna' ibid. f. 376 r.

²²² 'Hiersera tornorono gli Spagnoli a Somma, et di nuovo li dettono un'altra spogliata, et presono ogni resto di cavalli vi si trovava di guarnigione...' Marco del Nero to the Ten, 9 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 361 r.

²²³ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 9 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 361 r.

²²⁴ Giovambattista Soderini to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 131, f. 347 r.

ramparts of Poggioreale²²⁵. As the ‘humore adusto’ and the *terzana doppia* that plagued him progressed, the letters of Marco del Nero became shorter, and he was forced to delegate a part of his duties to the *commissario*. The Ten had eventually granted him the leave he had been requesting, but he could not now abandon the camp: disease-ridden as it was, for him it was nonetheless the safest place to stay²²⁶.

In the night between 16 and 17 August, monsieur de Lautrec died ‘di catarro’, and was buried without pomp in his own quarters, in order to keep his demise secret for as long as possible. There are many versions of the circumstances of his death²²⁷, but almost all agree on one point: the captain general died a desperate man, his spirit crushed by the consequences of the lies he had forced his soldiers to tell him. According to the Ferrarese ambassador in Naples, Lautrec died saying that he could not believe in a god who was giving the victory to the Spaniards²²⁸.

Since monsieur de Vaudemont had also died, Lautrec’s place was taken by the marquis of Saluzzo, but by that time all remaining hopes of either continuing the siege or withdrawing safely from Naples resided in the arrival of the reinforcements led by Renzo da Ceri, who on 22 August, owing to the pope’s ban against the recruitment of troops on his lands²²⁹, was still at l’Aquila with only three thousand footsoldiers²³⁰. However, it was too late. In quick succession, Imperial troops reconquered Sarno (19 August), Nola (22 August) and Capua (28 August). In the same period, Andrea Doria

²²⁵ ‘[Noi siamo assediati da ogni banda di pane, di vino, di carne, di ogni altro refrigerio tale che e’ fanti si muoiono di fame. Ultimamente li Spagnoli ci hanno tolto l’acqua di Poggioreale... e non si può andare senza gran pericolo...]’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 15 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, 131, f. 368 r.

²²⁶ ‘... da quattro dì in qua oltre alla mala disposizione d’uno humore adusto che mi ha afflicto già duo mesi, mi sono posto nel letto malato di *terzana doppia*, che non mi lascia netto... Et pure e’ si debbe ringraziare Dio di tutto quello che e’ manda...’ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 6 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, 131, f. 359 r.

²²⁷ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, pp. 98-99; Santoro, *Dei successi*, pp. 102-103; Rosso, *Historie*, p. 45. The place of his burial, inside the ‘masseria’ of the duke of Montalto on Poggioreale, is still known today as ‘Lotrecco’. After the defeat of the League, his body was stolen and taken as a ‘hostage’, but nobody paid the ransom; see Giovio, *La seconda parte*, pp. 109-110.

²²⁸ Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 31 August 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, ambasciatori. Italia, busta 9, the folios are not numbered.

²²⁹ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, p. 490.

²³⁰ The Ten to Bartolomeo Gualterotti, 29 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Legazioni e commissarie, 45, ff. 56 v. - 57 r.

arrived at Gaeta with his galleys, forcing the Venetian squadron to raise the blockade. To avoid being cut off from the main body, Giuliano and Bernardo Strozzi had to leave Pozzuoli, heading first to Aversa (23 August) and then to Capua (25 August), where they were forced to surrender to Fabrizio Maramaldo²³¹.

The letters of 23 August were the last the Ten would receive from their representatives in the camp of the League. As the back lines of his army were collapsing, the marquis of Saluzzo decided, too late, to reduce the defensive perimeter of the encampment, and to concentrate all the remaining troops and the artillery in the main *alloggiamento* of Poggioreale. It was the beginning of the end. When the Imperialists saw²³² (27 August) that the ordnance was being withdrawn from the *forte* in front of the fortress of San Martino, and how the lack of horses and oxen was slowing down the operation, they attacked the fortified line between the *Fort de France*²³³ and the *campo grosso*, overcoming resistance and cutting off from the main body eight hundred footsoldiers, Gascons, French and Italians of the White Bands. It was a devastating blow; after a first assault was repelled, the earthen bastions promptly built by the Imperialists dissuaded the League's commanders from attempting again to break the ring around the *forte*. In the evening of Friday 28 August, the three surrounded *colonelli* surrendered 'a patti': disarmed, the soldiers reached the main camp, and only colonels and captains were allowed to keep their swords²³⁴.

²³¹ See Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, p. 493. Once in Capua, the men of Fabrizio Maramaldo entered the church where the funeral of Ugo de'Pepoli, who had died there a few days before, was being held and stripped his corpse of the precious necklace of golden seashells, the symbol of the French Order of St. Michel given to him by Francis I; Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, p. 106.

²³² 'El giovedì che fu a li 27 calar del monte l'artegliaria, e la gente che vi alloggiava. Li Imperiali si aveddero del trato, et di et notte stavano alla guardia, per dar loro una stretta...' Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 12 September 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, ambasciatori, Italia, busta 9, the folios are not numbered.

²³³ Du Bellay, *Mémoires*, pp. 112-113.

²³⁴ 'Et quantunque si conoscesse che'l campo grosso era tanto invilito che non era per soccorrerli, nondimeno si fecero tali bastioni tra essi et quel campo grosso, che più non era dubio del soccorso: et heri sera li ditti tre coloneli con le zente si dettero a patti che fossero salve le persone senza arme, excetto li colonelli et li capitanei potesseno portar le spade, et potesseno andar salvi in lo campo loro' Girolamo Morone to Andrea Doria, 29 August 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 167 r./v.

In the meantime, news of the fall of Capua had reached the camp, causing widespread discontent among the troops and forcing the commander to adopt a course of action that the loss of the *forte* had already made inevitable. There was no more time to wait for Renzo da Ceri; with Somma, Nola and Capua in enemy hands, the army of the League had to abandon the siege of Naples immediately before the only remaining road left open to its retreat, the road to Aversa, was blocked²³⁵.

Those who left the camp of Poggioreale on Saturday 29 August at 3.00 a.m., under a violent thunderstorm, were the pale shadow of the *bellissima gente* which scarcely four months before had marched on Naples, eager to divide ‘le spoglie del Regno’. Of an army that, in May, had probably numbered more than twenty thousand men, less than seven thousand soldiers were still able to walk, and even those were mostly broken men (‘rotti’), half-starved, weakened by fevers, worn out by the fighting and deprived of sleep for days on end. Marching in silence, without the beat of the drums, they were leaving everything behind: their comrades who were too ill to march, all of the French ordnance but five light *falconetti* and five carts full of ammunitions, and all the luggage that could slow down or reveal their furtive retreat. In the camp, amid the dead and the dying that lay in their huts and tents, the Imperial scouts found heaps of pikes, arquebuses, halberds and corselets.

However, while organising his residual forces, the marquis of Saluzzo, following rigidly the French ‘school’²³⁶, decided to array them according to the traditional tripartite division, that is vanguard-battle-rearguard. This choice was regarded by the Spaniards themselves as a catastrophic mistake: had the marquis arrayed his troops in a

²³⁵ There are many versions of the disastrous retreat of the army of the League from the siege of Naples, the most detailed (and possibly the most unreliable) being the ones left by Paolo Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, pp. 103-109, and by Leonardo Santoro, *Dei Successi*, pp. 110-121. However, I prefer to base my reconstruction of the events on the letters of Ferrante Gonzaga, who actually led the pursuing Imperial forces, of the Ferrarese ambassador in Naples, of other Imperial officers and, on the side of the League, on the reports of the survivors.

²³⁶ Its persistent fidelity to the tripartite battle array was, according to the duke of Urbino, one of the main weaknesses of the French tactical school. See Rovere, *Discorsi militari*, pp. 31 v. – 32 r.

single 'squadrone', he would have probably reached Aversa suffering minimal losses. For the soldiers of the League were not alone in the night: the light cavalry of Ferrante Gonzaga, the *Marte* of the Imperial resistance, who with this victory laid the foundations of his successful career, had spent the night in the open. While the Imperial infantry and the men-at-arms were still readying themselves, the light horsemen were able to launch their attack immediately after the news of the retreat of the army of the League reached them. While Ferrante saw himself as personally responsible for the victory²³⁷, his claims, albeit excessive, were not groundless. Halfway from Aversa, the Imperial light cavalry caught up with the enemy rearguard, a force of approximately two thousand infantry, made up of Landsknechts of the Black Legion and Swiss pikemen. Even in such dire circumstances, the bitter rivalry between the two *nationi* prevented them from joining forces, and they were, therefore, beaten separately; in less than an hour, the repeated attacks of the light horsemen against their flanks broke first the German, then the Swiss *ordinanza*. 'Stracchi et desperati', and having not been paid for the last forty-five days, the pikemen did not mount much of a resistance; the Imperial light cavalry scattered them, took their flags and what was left of their luggage and let them be once they had dropped their weapons. Afterwards, the black-clad Landsknechts were even accused of betrayal: according to many witnesses, they had not tried to stop the enemy at all, and, at their arrival, had actually 'joined' the ranks of the Imperial Landsknechts²³⁸.

Ferrante Gonzaga quickly resumed his pursuit and caught up with another *squadrone*, whose men, however, were not only marching 'più serrati et con miglior

²³⁷ Ferrante described 'his' victory to his brother the marquis of Mantua in a letter that is highly informative, but reeks of self-satisfaction, written immediately after the fight. Ferrante Gonzaga to the marquis of Mantua, 1 September 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, ff. 189 r. – 190 r.

²³⁸ This is according to the report of Guido Rangoni, Sanuto, Diarii, XLVIII, p. 529; however, it is far more probable that, as Venetian ambassador in Viterbo Gasparo Contarini wrote to the Senate, the Black Legion's Landsknechts were being 'protected' by their compatriots, and that if they joined the Imperial army, this happened after the defeat, *ibid.* p. 476.

ordine', but were also, as he admitted, 'miglior gente': it was the Florentine infantry, arrayed together with other Italian companies. In his *Historie*, Giovio wrote that the Black Bands and the White Bands (Italians in French service) had been overwhelmed by the onslaught of the Imperial cavalry. Ferrante Gonzaga, who was not a modest person, did not claim such a prestigious 'trophy'. Notwithstanding repeated charges, the Bands held their ground²³⁹ until the Imperial commander, who had with him only one hundred and fifty light horsemen left, realized that he was getting too close to Aversa without 'spalle', that is without the support of the infantry, which had still to arrive. Ferrante contented himself with having defeated one third of the enemy army using only a few hundred light horsemen, and halted the pursuit. Slowly, the units of the League that had been able to hold out against the 'domino effect' caused by the attack of Gonzaga's cavalry reached the relative safety of Aversa's city walls.

By midday, the prince of Orange, still convalescent from malarial fever, arrived with Juan de Urbina and the rest of the army. The Imperial captain general was determined to force what was left of the forces of the League to surrender unconditionally, and, after a first assault of the Spanish infantry had been repelled²⁴⁰, he ordered the pieces of ordnance that had been captured in the abandoned *alloggiamento* of the League to be brought up to the walls of Aversa, which, according to Santoro, were quite low, weak and 'old', that is without bastions, and could not withstand the cannonade which started at daybreak, on Sunday 30 August.

Badly wounded in the knee by a shard at the beginning of the bombardment, the marquis of Saluzzo summoned a *consulta*, and all the captains told him that the

²³⁹ On the retreat to Aversa, see the detailed letters written during the first half of September by the Ferrarese ambassador in Naples Girolamo Naselli, and in particular the one of 12 September, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, ambasciatori, Italia, busta 9, the folios are not numbered.

²⁴⁰ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, pp. 103-104; Santoro, *Dei successi*, pp. 113-114.

footsoldiers ‘non volevano combattere a patto alcuno’²⁴¹. Moreover, the citizens of Aversa wanted to surrender, there were no provisions and, in practice, no artillery. Eventually, the marquis agreed to send count Guido Rangoni to parley with the prince, in order to salvage whatever was possible²⁴². The Modenese *condottiere* tried to save at least the face of the defeated army, but Philibert de Chalon rejected his conditions, and reaffirmed his request for an unconditional surrender. Count Guido rejected the draft of the accord, considering it shameful, and, even after the marquis had signed it, shrewdly kept on fighting for his corner until he was set free.

According to the terms of the surrender, the marquis of Saluzzo, the prince of Navarre and Pedro Navarro were declared prisoners of Philibert de Chalon, and could not be freed without the approval of the Emperor. ‘Item è concordato et convenuto che il capitani et tutte le zente di guerra che sono in la ditta città tanto da piedi come homini d’arme, arzieri, franchi arzieri, cavali lezieri tanto italiani come francesi, lanzinechi, sguizari, et altri soldati di qual si voglia nazione existente in ditta città al servitio Regio, debbiano lassare et consignare in poter del prefato signor Principe tutte le bandiere, insegne et... anche tutte le arme, cavali et robe di qual si voglia sorte et quantità siano...’. All the companies and the *colonnelli* were to be disbanded; the French, the Germans and the Swiss soldiers were free to go home, while the Italians first had to swear that, at least for the next six months, they would not serve against the Emperor. The captains and the lieutenants of the companies of infantry and cavalry, along with the men-at-arms, the ‘archers’ and the light horsemen, were allowed to keep one mount

²⁴¹ Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, ambasciatori. Italia, busta 9, the folios are not numbered.

²⁴² ‘... che facesse quel che potesse...’ Ibid.

each, provided that it was either a mule, a ‘cortaldo’²⁴³ or a nag. The others would walk until they had left the Kingdom of Naples²⁴⁴.

Albeit tragic, the events of Aversa were a mere formality; the day before, at 8 p.m., Girolamo Morone had already announced to the world the defeat of the army of the League in a famous letter to Andrea Doria that started with a cry of unrestrained joy: ‘Vittoria, vittoria, vittoria!’²⁴⁵

My adherence to the rule that rhetorical flights of fancy have no place in a thesis has been sufficiently constant, I hope, to permit me a single, minor infraction of it. Maybe, on 31 August, at dawn, outside Aversa, a dozen frayed, worn-out black flags were thrown to the ground, on a heap of other standards. Maybe, for a moment, they even seemed to cover the entire pile completely in black. Then, other flags were piled up on top of them, and black became just one colour among many others.

The lance of Giovanni de’Medici had been broken.

²⁴³ A horse whose ears and tail have been cut off.

²⁴⁴ The marquis also agreed to return all the cities, fortresses and castles of the Kingdom of Naples still in the hands of the Cristianissimo’s soldiers to the Emperor. A complete list of the articles is in Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, pp. 478 ff.

²⁴⁵ ‘Vittoria, vittoria, vittoria! Li franzesi sono et debellati et roti... et non li è dubbio che hozi sarà finita questa guerra...’ Girolamo Morone to Andrea Doria, 29 August 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Napoli e Sicilia, 810, f. 167 r./v.

Table XX
The Army of the League at the Siege of Naples
(18 June 1528)

Mounted Troops		French Adventuriers, under the command of Charles de Coucy, <i>monsieur de Burie</i> :
Light Cavalrymen:		Commanders
Florence	25	Number of companies
Venice	100	
Tot.	125	Names unknown
Men-at-Arms:		Tot. (in theory)
Monsieur de Lautrec	100	Tot. (in reality)
Monsieur de Vandemont	50	Landsknechts in French service (the Black Legion):
Marquis of Saluzzo	100	Commanders
Count of Tenda	50	Number of companies
Duke of Albany	90	
Duke of Lorraine	90	Urglie
Monsieur d'Obigny	90	Brandech
Montpezat	60	Count Wolf
Barbisieux	40	Tot. (in theory)
La Val	30	Tot. (in reality)
Bonaval	50	Swiss in French service, under the command of the count of Tenda:
Tournon	50	Commanders
Lignac	30	Number of companies
Pomperant	30	
La Fayette	60	Names unknown
St. André	50	Tot.
Nègre Pelice	50	The Florentine Black Bands under the command of count Ugo dei Pepoli:
Robertet	40	Commanders
Duke of Ferrara	100	Number of companies
Marquis of Mantua	80	
Renzo da Ceri	50	Names unknown (see Sheet ?)
Paolo Camillo Orsini	80	Tot.
Ugo dei Pepoli	60	Companies in Venetian service:
Guido Rangoni	50	Commanders
Signor Bernabò	30	Number of companies
Francesco Mons..(?)	30	
Giovan Gerolamo Castiglione	20	Five Corsican commanders (names unknown)
Tot. (in theory)	1560	Tot.
Tot. (in reality)	800	2000
Infantry		Landsknechts under the command of count Avogadro
Italian troops in French service, 'decte le Bande Bianche'.		Tot.
Commanders	Number of companies	1000
Gerolamo Castiglione	3	GRAND TOTAL:
Conte Cesare Scotti	2	Men-at-Arms
Marco Antonio Cusano	2	Archers
Giovan Paolo Cossa	2	Light Horsemen
Tot. (in theory)	2700	Foot Soldiers
Tot. (in reality)	2000	20.000
Gascon troops under the command of Pedro Navarro		Venetian Troops in Apulia:
Commanders	Number of companies	2000 foot soldiers
		200 light horsemen (stradiots)
Monsieur de Chandalle	5	Galleys:
Baron of Bergne	2	Venice
Artigaloub	3	France
Three other captains, with one company each	3	(Genoa)
Tot. (in theory)	3900	
Tot. (in reality)	3000	

These data are taken from the estimates that the Ferrarese ambassador Cantelmi sent to his master the duke (ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio principi esteri, Napoli. busta 9, 18 June 1528; the folios are not numbered). Albeit less detailed and probably less accurate than the muster rolls prepared by the Venetians in December 1527 (see Sheet ?), Cantelmi's survey does however provide a better picture of the division of the various '*insegne*' of infantry into bigger ensembles of companies – Cantelmi does not use the word '*colonnelli*' – of different sizes. In the case of the Gascon, of the other French *aventuriers*, and of the Black Bands' Landsknechts, the Ferrarese ambassador assumed, probably to save time, that a typical company was made up of three hundred men. However, Cantelmi also pointed out all the major discrepancies between the theoretical and the real accounts.

In order to understand the real situation of the camp of the League, a few more precise tactical details are needed: most of the men-at-arms and of the archers, for instance, were quite ineffectively garrisoned in nearby towns, and only the light cavalry resided permanently in the camp. Some units of infantry were also far from the camp – two companies of the Black Bands, for instance, were garrisoned at Pozzuoli – while others were busy trying to secure the roads and the flow of supplies. These factors, added to the already high number of soldiers periodically incapacitated by malarial fevers and dysentery, or killed by typhus, reduced considerably, possibly halving it, the effective number of soldiers that the army of the League could count on at any one time.

Table XXI

The Florentine Troops after the Death of Orazio Baglioni:

The Captains of the Black Bands:	foot
Lucantonio Cuppano from Montefalco. Badly wounded and out of combat since the end of April.	400
Pasquino Còrso	320
Giovanni Turrini	310
Giuliano Strozzi [^]	300
Girolamo 'Rossino' de' Ciai. Killed in action. At least at first, his company was entrusted to his lieutenant – name unknown.	250
Amico da Venafro	250
Giacomo Filippo da Spoleto. Fell ill and left the camp in July. His company was given to captain Angelo Bastardo.	250
Scipione da Imola. Fell ill and left the camp. Due to its reduced numbers, this company was disbanded at the beginning of August and the men assigned to other companies.	250
Tommasino Còrso	220
Belriguardo da Castiglione	200
Bernardo Strozzi [^]	200
Francesco Rustichello	200
Gianmoro. Referred as captain of a company on August 1528. Probable 'heir' of Rossino de' Ciai.	
tot.	*3300
Troops previously under the command of Orazio Baglioni:	
Tommaso Gotti Braccio de'Pazzi Gianni di Restino	750
Light horsemen under the command of Jacopo Bichi	84
Light horsemen under the command of Angelo Bastardo – former <i>lancie spezzate</i> of Orazio Baglioni.	15

[^]: These two companies were garrisoned in Pozzuoli after the battle of Capo d'Orso

*: 3300 is also the number of the effectives of the Black Bands according to Marco del Nero. The company of Bino Signorelli (two hundred men) was presumably disbanded by Soderini. Gianmoro, referred to as a captain in August 1528, had been probably given the company of Rossino.

It ought to be noticed that only seven of the thirteen captains who had formed the first group of the Black Bands in May 1527 (see Table IX) appear on this list.

Map D: LEGENDA

1. Harbour
2. Baluardo del Carmine
3. Porta del Mercato
4. Porta Nolana
5. Porta Capuana
6. Porta San Gennaro
7. Porta Santa Maria
8. Porta Reale
9. Fortress of San Martino
10. Castel Nuovo
11. Castel dell'Uovo
12. Area of La Maddalena and of river Sebeto
13. Area of Poggioreale
14. Area of the first 'forte'
15. Area of the second 'forte'
16. Road to Mergellina (and to the tunnel)
17. Road to Somma
18. Mount Posillipo
19. Landingpoint of the galleys of the League

The Lafréry map (1556) depicts Naples as it was after the completion of the works started in 1535 by viceroy Pedro de Toledo. Apparently, there are no maps of the city walls as they were before or during the siege of 1528. It is therefore difficult to ascertain how much the new and formidable fortifications of Naples owed to the earth ramparts and bastions hurriedly built by the Imperialists to strengthen the old Aragonese walls against the threat of the famous French ordnance.

The new city walls were built according to the geometries of the *'trace italienne'*, and were meant to integrate even more the three strongholds (San Martino, Castel Nuovo, Castel dell'Uovo) on which Naples' western defences were based. By 1537, the fortifications on San Martino/Sant'Elmo (the nearby chartreuse of San Martino gave its name to the hill, but the real name of the new fortress was Sant'Elmo) had been rebuilt and had become a formidable six-pointed star-shaped fortress, linked to Castel Nuovo by a line of fortifications. As can be easily seen, the steep slopes of mount Posillipo were accessible only from the east and from the north; for this reason the area of San Martino, placed at the eastern end of the mountain, was of vital importance for defence, while the tunnel of Piedigrotta was important for offensive reasons.

Fortunately for us, even though by the mid-sixteenth century the city was in a period of growth and of population explosion, Habsburg Naples expanded westwards, and not eastwards as during the Aragonese period, so that the section of the city walls that faced the League's fortifications was not radically different from the one depicted here by Lafréry.

Map E: The Strategic Situation Around Naples

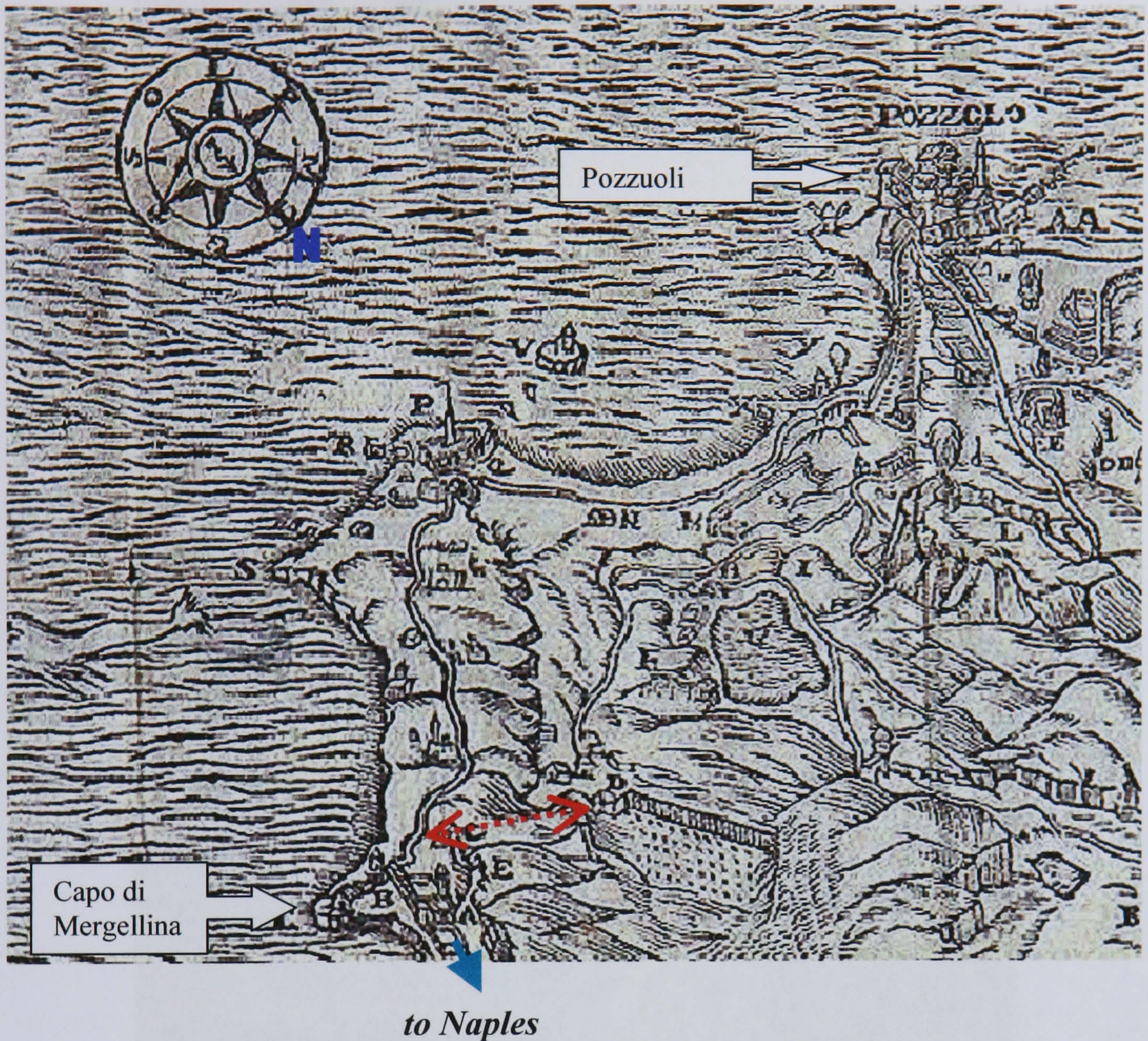


Following the well-established tactic of Consalvo de Cordova, after Troia the Imperial commanders concentrated their forces in the Kingdom's capital and in a few more strongholds, abandoning all the other cities of the Neapolitan area. In this case, Charles V's generals chose to maintain under their control the island of Ischia and the city of Gaeta, north of the river Garigliano. Gaeta was far enough away, and sufficiently well fortified, to force the commanders of the League to station a significant part of their host there for weeks if they wanted to take the city. Moreover, through Ischia, the Imperialists kept open a lifeline at the mouths of Naples' and Gaeta's roadsteads. The harbour facilities of the island were inadequate, but the cannons of Ischia's formidable fortress were big enough to force a squadron of galleys, which had a reduced operative range, to come to a dangerous standstill. At the end of the siege of Naples, thirty-five French and Venetian galleys, determined to make Andrea Doria pay dearly for his volte-face and for the disastrous conclusion of the whole campaign, did not dare to approach twelve Genoese galleys that were at anchor under the protective 'shadow' of the guns of the fortress of Ischia. Eventually forced to leave the waters around the Island and to separate from the Venetian squadron, which headed for Corfù, the French galleys found themselves pursued by Andrea Doria's squadron, which managed to capture a considerable part of the *Cristianissimo's* Mediterranean fleet¹.

It ought to be remembered that, in their attempt to maintain a tight blockade around Naples before the battle of Capo d'Orso (see Appendix 2), the fleets of the League used mainly the harbour facilities of Salerno and of its Gulf.

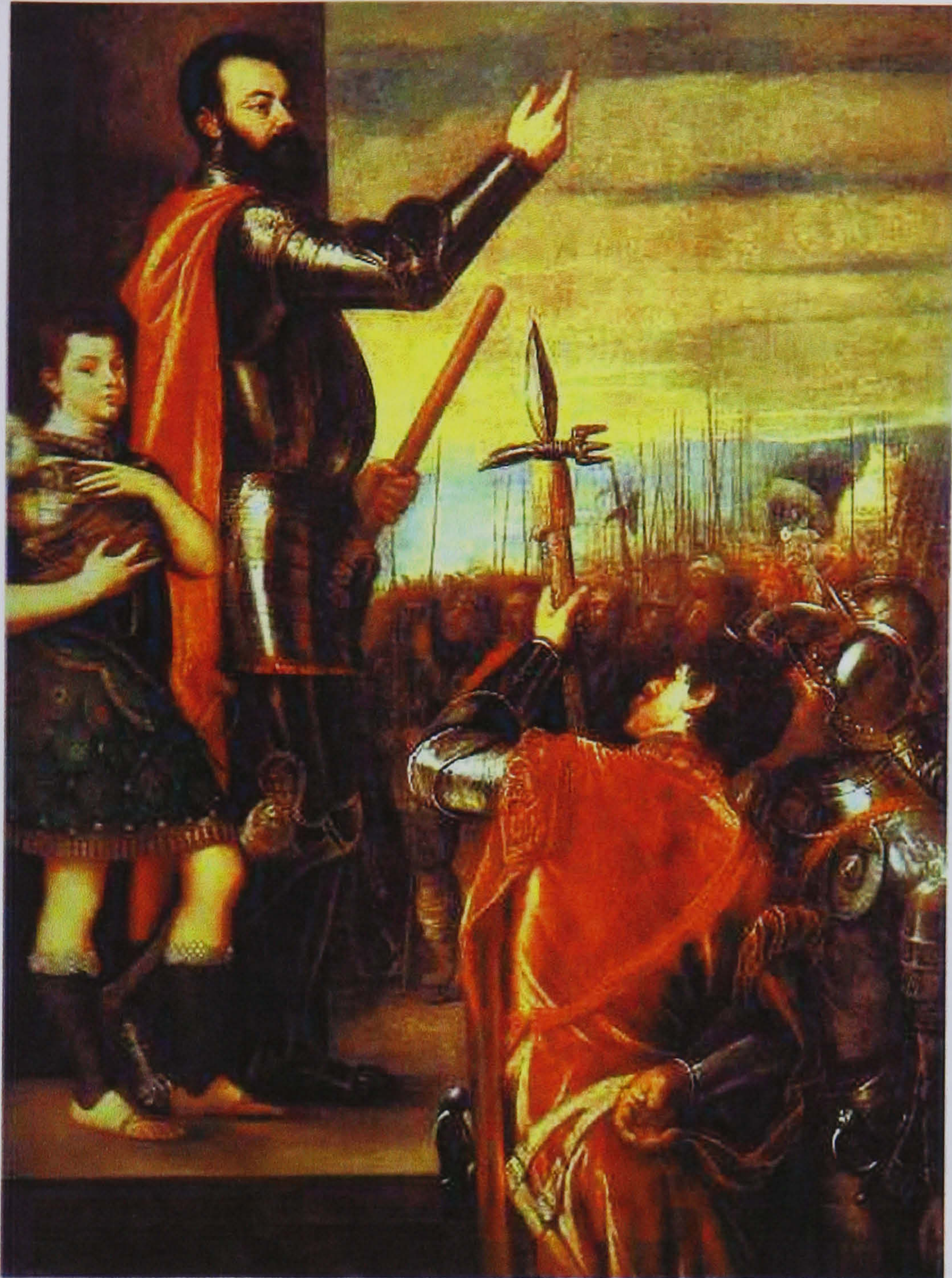
¹ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, pp. 111-112. During the siege of Naples Paolo Giovio was a welcome guest in the house of Vittoria Colonna, wife of Alfonso de Avalos marquis of Vasto. From Ischia, he heard the furious cannonade that opened the naval battle of Capo d'Orso and saw in person this last episode.

Map F
The area of Pozzuoli
(Map of Giuseppe Mormile - 1670)



Red dotted line: the 'Grotta' through mount Posillipo

Plate 8



Titian. Portrait of Alfonso de Avalos, marquis of Vasto, addressing his troops.

The marquis of Vasto (1492-1546), nephew of Ferdinando de Avalos marquis of Pescara, was a veteran of Bicocca and Pavia, and one of the most famous infantry commander of his times. His standing and popularity among the Spanish foot soldiers of the Imperial army were major factors in the long and difficult process of retaking control of the troops that had sacked Rome. During the campaign of Naples he did not play a major military role. Shortly after the retreat of the Imperial army into Naples, he had to flee the city and to take refuge in the island of Ischia after killing the son of the count of Potenza to settle a personal *vendetta*. Recalled and pardoned by viceroy Hugo de Moncada, he strongly supported the latter's decision to attack the fleet of the League. Captured by Filippino Doria – who refused to consign him to Lautrec – after the battle of Capo d'Orso, the marquis of Vasto played a major role in persuading Andrea Doria to change his allegiance from France to the Empire.

Plate 9 – Naples' Defensive System¹ Viewed from East



When Alfonso of Aragon took the city, the defensive system of Angevin Naples was based on fourteen gates and four fortresses: three in the western part of the city, Castel S. Elmo, Castel Nuovo, Castel dell'Ovo and Castel Capuano on the eastern side. Between 1443 and 1458 Alfonso had Castel Nuovo rebuilt according to more modern principles, surrounding it with lower and thicker walls and with a system of ramparts and barbicans that were meant to shield the fortress from direct artillery fire. In the reign of Ferrante, who was frequently at odds with Genoa, the harbour's defences were strengthened and a naval dockyard was built. Castel dell'Ovo lost its role of last refuge, and by 1458 it had been renovated and played a more active role in the defence of the western part of the city. In 1463 the works for the construction of the new city walls started, and the Castel Capuano was incorporated into the city, becoming a *palazzo*. Its place was taken by the powerful Baluardo (Bulwark) del Carmine – here in the foreground. The Castel Sant'Elmo, here called S. Martino, as it was known by the League's soldiers in 1528, had been built in the thirteenth century by Charles I of Anjou to cover the slopes of the hill that dominated the Castel Nuovo. As we shall see, in 1528 its inherently strong position was reinforced with heavy artillery and impressive earthworks. The defensive system of Aragonese Naples was therefore based on a sort of triangle, whose base was the line formed by Castel dell'Uovo, Castel Nuovo – which controlled both the outside and the inside of the city – and the Baluardo del Carmine, which with its guns also covered the entrance of the harbour, while Castel San Martino/S. Elmo was its apex. Aware of the danger represented by the French ordnance, after conquering the city (1503) Consalvo de Cordova enlarged the defensive perimeter of the Castel Nuovo by adding to it a new enceinte of bastions².

¹ Giulio Ballino, *De' disegni delle più illustri città et fortezze del mondo, parte I* (Venezia, 1569)

² On the development and the architectural history of the city of Naples, see Giuseppe Russo, *La città di Napoli dalle origini al 1860* (Naples, 1960), first volume, pp. 230-241; Cesare de'Seta, *Cartografia della città di Napoli* (Naples, 1969), vol. I, pp. 81-123. The third volume of de'Seta's work contains many maps and views of Naples drawn in the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. On Castel Nuovo, see also Simon Pepper and Nicholas Adams, *Firearms and Fortifications* (Chicago, 1986), pp. 20-21.

Plate 10:
The 'TAVOLA STROZZIANA', 1479 – Museum of San Martino, Naples

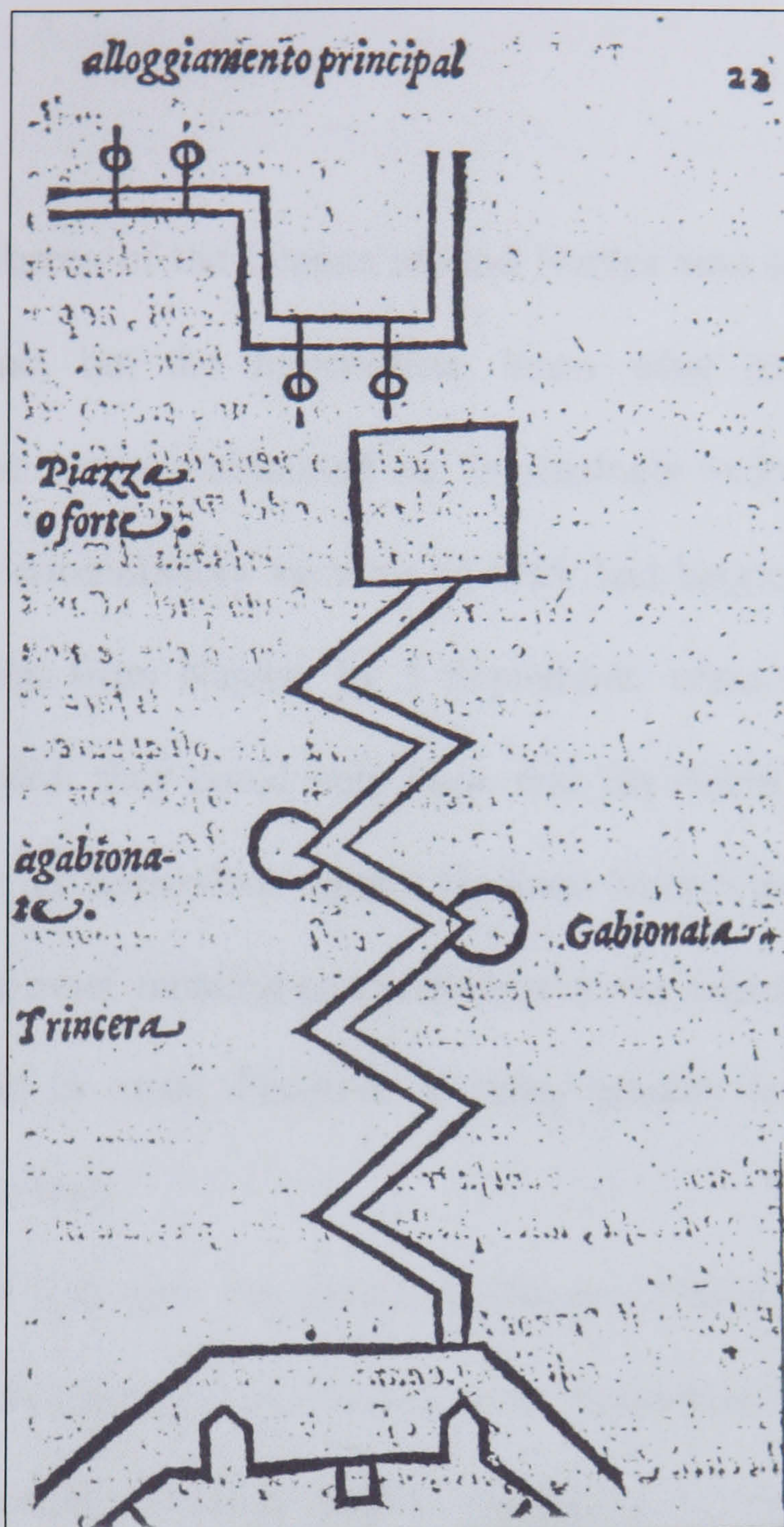


'... serà Napoli et tutte le sua masseritie di fuori ruinato et disfatto, et maxime quelli belli giardini con quelli belli palazzi che al mondo non z'è più ameno loco... mi dole vedere quelli belli lochi esser ruinati da questi barbari...'¹

Notwithstanding wars, earthquakes, Vesuvius and the efforts of its inhabitants, Naples has always been a beautiful city. However, the sight that confronted the army of the League, which was approaching the city from the *strada delle Puglie* – that is from the east – must have been dreamlike. Between 1451 and 1458, the marshes of La Maddalena were drained, the river Sebeto was canalized and the new fields sown with wheat. The Aragonese kings and nobility built their *ville* on the slopes of the hill of Poggioreale. The magnificent *villa* of Ferrante of Aragon, and all the smaller versions which had been built around it, was surrounded by a lush park dotted with stables, fish ponds, fountains with plays of water, and greenhouses. However, such a place of wonders only survived thanks to a carefully and studiously maintained balance between land and water that was shattered by the arrival of the gargantuan army of Lautrec. As the *Capitano Generale* was to learn to his own, and his army's cost, beneath every fragile Italian paradise a hell may be lying dormant.

¹ Cesare Accorsi to Bonifacio Miliono, 18 April 1528, Sanuto, *Diarii, XLVII*, p. 279.

Plate 11



This model of a besieging camp is taken from the *Discorsi Militari*¹ of Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino. The sequence *alloggiamento-piazzaforte-trincea* – from the top to the bottom of the picture – was the same as Navarro’s fortified encampment around Naples, with a difference: the trenches of the duke of Urbino were a prelude to the storming of an enemy bastion (the lowest part of the picture), while Lautrec used them to (partially) surround Naples and to enforce a close-range blockade.

¹ Francesco Maria della Rovere, *Discorsi Militari dell’Eccellentissimo Francesco Maria I della Rovere duca di Urbino* (Ferrara, 1583), p. 22 r.

Conclusion. The Broken Lance

The collapse of the forces of the League around Naples was so sudden and complete that for days no one, but the Imperialists, knew what had happened. As their representatives in the camp maintained an increasingly worrying silence, the Ten received various and contradictory versions of what had happened to the army of the League after its retreat from Naples; by 5 September, when the letter of Girolamo Morone was intercepted, they could only hope that the defeat was not as total as it seemed. However, on 12 September captain Giuliano Strozzi gave the Ten a complete report, confirming the most vaunting proclamations of the Imperial sources: 'la impresa del Regno è rovinata in tucto, l'exercito è rotto, perdute le artiglierie, perdute le munizioni et ogni altra cosa.'¹

The marquis of Saluzzo², the prince of Navarre, Paolo Camillo Trivulzio, the secretary Ambrogio da Fiorenza³ and monsieur de Pomperant⁴ died one after another after a brief imprisonment, overcome by their wounds, by epidemics and by exhaustion. Pedro Navarro, 'ammalato et vecchio', was locked up in Castel dell'Ovo, charged with treason and sentenced to death by the emperor, but died before the execution in

¹ The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 12 September 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 45, ff. 71 v. – 72 v.

² The marquis of Vasto 'gli usò ogni umanità et cortesia. Ma egli poco da poi abbattuto dal dolore della ferita mortale et dal dispiacere dell'animo, quasi in prova, passò di questa vita' Giovio, *La seconda parte*, book 26, p. 108.

³ '... morì in luogo ignobile et vituperoso quel messer Ambruogio da Fiorenza milanese, il quale crudele autore di quel malvagio et veramente fatal consiglio, aveva tirato, come io dissi, Lotrecco a combattere Milano a Napoli, et perciò pareva che mertamente egli portasse la pena della fattiosa malignità sua...' Ibid. p. 107.

⁴ Monsieur de Pomperant had been one of the followers and advisors of the duke of Bourbon during his exile, but had been pardoned by Francis I: 'stando tutto stupido con gli occhi fissi al cielo, pensando a quella sì grande sciagura, et abbattuto di gravissimo dolore subito cascò morto, havendo tuttavia gli occhi fermi; né fu possibile per rimedio alcuno ritornarlo in vita, essendo subitamente morto di dolore...' Ibid.

suspicious circumstances⁵. Pugnacious Giovambattista Soderini, wounded in the head and having lost three fingers⁶, died of illness in Naples while arguing over his own ransom, which he judged excessive⁷. Marco del Nero, ‘homo richissimo di contanti’, was taken prisoner on his litter and died shortly after having agreed to pay a ransom of twelve thousand *scudi*⁸.

On 31 August less than five thousand half-dead men, mostly French and Swiss soldiers – ‘mai vidi le più sozze figure’, wrote the Ferrarese ambassador – started a long march home; given their state of prostration⁹ and the hostility of the ‘villani’, only a few of them would make it¹⁰. Those who had been captured in the camp and outside Aversa were kept outside the Porta del Mercato ‘spogliati et svalisati’¹¹, and most of them died in the Royal Stables at La Maddalena¹². According to Guido Rangoni’s estimates, of the seemingly insatiable host of seventy thousand ‘bocche’ that had entered the Kingdom of Naples, only sixteen thousand remained. Renzo da Ceri had to withdraw his relief force

⁵ ‘... et v’hebbe di quegli che cedettero, ch’egli fosse stato strangolato quivi con avergli messo di molti panni in bocca, perciocché Hicardo (the Spanish castellan of Castel dell’Ovo) compassione avendo all’honore di quel fortissimo capitano.. volle levar dalle mani del boia quel valent’uomo... per tor via il carico che di sì fatta morte poteva nascere all’Imperatore’ Ibid. p. 108.

⁶ Varchi, *Storia Fiorentina* (Firenze 1963), book 6, chapt. XXXVIII, p. 385.

⁷ ‘Il Soderino scarso dell’oro, ma prodigo della vita, ostinatamente negava ch’egli non era per pagare la taglia, che gli era stata messa come troppo grave.’ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, p. 109.

⁸ ‘Fu preso in Aversa l’ambasciatore Fiorentino nomato messer Marco del Nero, homo richissimo di contanti. S’haveva posto taglia 12 mila scudi et è morto qua in Napoli, ch’el era indisposto quando fu preso in lectica...’ Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 12 September 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, folios are not numbered.

⁹ ‘... ma se tiene che pochi di essi giungeranno in Lombardia, perché sono meglio morti... che mai vidi le più sozze figure...’ Gerolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 30 August 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, the folios are not numbered.

¹⁰ ‘... Nostro Signore mi mandava a Napoli, dove li gionsi a li 14, con gran fatica di traversar grandissime montagne, che da per tutto li vilani erano posti a le strade per spogliar francesi, de i quali di 5000 furono acompagnati da spagnoli, non se trova che 200 siano gionti a Roma... et che niuno li vol fa una carità, sono morti per camino et da per tutto le strade ne sono piene di corpi morti, fin a Napoli, con un fetor intolerabile; et quelli pochi son passati sono stà spogliati da vilani etiam de la camisa, et solo se copreno con le foglie, che mai ho visto tanta crudeltà. El conte Guido Rangon referisse che de 70 milia boche erano reduiti a 16 milia’. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLIX, p. 15.

¹¹ Gerolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 30 August 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria ducale, carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9.

¹² ‘... non vi fu né il più brutto né il più infelice spettacolo, che quel della moltitudine minuta, i quali mezzo morti, et come ombre d’huomini, a guisa di bestie erano cacciati nelle stalle del Re, che sono alla Maddalena. Perciocché questo ufficio di pietà fu fatto dal Senato di Napoli, comandando i capitani che fossero quivi pasciuti et medicati. Ma i corpi loro, i quali per cinque mesi continui havevano patito tutti i disagi dell’aere, delle vigilie, et delle fatiche della guerra, appigliandosi mal l’uno all’altro per essere così ristretti insieme, vennero talmente mancando che pochi ve ne rimasero...’ Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, book 26, p. 109.

at l'Aquila, while the Venetian and the French galleys were forced to lift the blockade (see Sheet ?) and to return to their bases. Two thousand Tuscan footsoldiers who were marching towards Naples were recalled to Florence.

The surviving soldiers of the Black Bands were relatively lucky: they had lost their flags and had ceased to exist as a unit, but had not been captured during the retreat. Moreover, they were Italians, and the terms of the surrender only stated that they could not serve *against* Charles V. In order to avoid losing all their possessions, that is their weapons, many of them entered the Imperial service in the Italian *colonnello* of Fabrizio Maramaldo¹³, who was delighted to enlist all those experienced veterans in his new unit. Many of them would soon see Tuscany again as soldiers of the army that was to besiege Florence. Most of the soldiers of the German Black Bands took the same decision, and swelled the ranks of the 'loyalist' Landsknechts. Only a few days after their victory at Naples, the Imperial forces amounted to three thousand Italians, five thousand Germans and – including those in Calabria, Gaeta and Sicily – eight thousand Spaniards¹⁴.

The Ten assembled all the captains of the Black Bands who came back from Naples 'svalisati', and gave them *condotte a provvisione*¹⁵; such was the case of Giovanni Turrini, Giuliano Strozzi, Amico da Venafro, Tommaso Gotti and Pasquino Còrso, while Giovambattista da Messina was appointed sergeant major general of all Florentine forces. Other captains¹⁶ were either dead or had decided not to serve the republic for the time being. When Cosimo de'Medici seized power in Florence after the assassination of duke Alessandro in 1537, he could count immediately on a group of

¹³ Giovanni Borromei to the marquis of Mantua, 12 September 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Firenze, 1109, f. 546 v.

¹⁴ Letter to the marquis of Mantua from Viterbo, Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVIII, p. 490.

¹⁵ To see the details of these condotte, see ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, ff. 21 v.-27 v.

¹⁶ Bernardo Strozzi fought for the republic during the siege of 1529-1530, but his name is not mentioned among those of the captains of the Black Bands 'condotti a provvisione'. The fate of Angelo Bastardo, Tommasino Còrso, Belriguardo da Castiglione, Francesco Rustichello, Gian Moro and Gianni di Restino remains unknown. It ought to be remembered that towards the end of the siege many letters from the camp of the League were intercepted by the Imperialists, and we do not know how many of them were still alive or in Florentine service at the moment of the defeat.

experienced and determined veterans from his father's companies, first of all *colonnello* Lucantonio Cuppano. In the case of Giovanni Turrini, the power of the memory of the Great Devil did not go so far: in 1530 he allowed Maria Salviati and Cosimo to escape after the Ten had ordered him to bring them to Florence, but after the fall of the republic he served loyally under the exile Piero Strozzi and was among the defenders of the Sienese republic.

Notwithstanding the Ten's efforts to salvage what it could, after Naples the Black Bands were, in fact, dead. What makes a regiment – or a proto-regiment, in this case – an elite unit is a very fragile balance between intangible elements like time, leadership, reputation, experience on one side, and very 'material' factors like the soldiers in the flesh on the other. The precious fund of experience accumulated during years of campaigning by the Black Bands, their high morale, their aggressiveness and the skill needed to make all these factors effective on the battlefield, were based on the continuity of internal hierarchies and 'customs' that coincided only partially with the commanders and their staffs. The Bands had sustained substantial losses since the beginning of the siege of Naples, and the defeat at Aversa separated the captains from the bulk of what they regarded as one of their most precious 'properties', that is their veterans, their 'homini da bene' and 'da guerra', soldiers they knew by name, thus dispersing an invaluable accumulation of technical and tactical knowledge.

The dissolution of the army of the League and the loss of the Black Bands were a tremendous blow for Florence. The republic had staked its best troops and its money on the policy of 'combattere Milano a Napoli', that is on the assumption that eventually Charles V would be forced to give Milan to Francis I in exchange for Naples, and that the liberation of the two French princes would be negotiated from a strong position. Albeit relatively small, the Florentine support and troops could have made the difference as long as the siege of Naples lasted, but, after the defeat of Aversa, Florence

soon ceased to be even a minor interlocutor and became subject to the decisions of the greater powers. In fact, now the republic had nothing to offer but its own freedom.

The collapse of the pro-French party in Italy that followed the failure of the siege of Naples hastened the reconciliation between pope and emperor. Clement VII wanted the power of his family restored in Florence, Charles V wanted to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor, Francis I wanted his sons back. When, on 21 June 1529, its last army was defeated at Landriano sull'Olona¹⁷, the League of Cognac was, figuratively speaking, an empty shell. On 29 June Clement VII signed the treaty of Barcelona with Charles V, and when, on 3 August, the so-called 'Peace of the Ladies' between Francis I and the emperor was signed in Cambrai, France's Italian allies found themselves deserted by the *Cristianissimo*. Owing to its refusal to restore the Medici, the growing political isolation of the Florentine republic became quickly an encircling, which was completed by the inclusion, on December 1529, of the duke of Ferrara – whose son Ercole had been appointed the new captain general of all Florentine forces – in the *Lega Defensiva* of all Italian states but Florence, a League promoted, this time, by the emperor¹⁸.

Ercole d'Este signed the *condotta*, cashed his *piatto*, but he never went to Florence to take his place as *capitano generale* at the head of the one thousand footsoldiers he was supposed to recruit. The hopes the Ten had placed in this alliance were quickly dashed when Ferrarese *raison d'état* prevailed over its ruler's 'fede'¹⁹. When, at the end of October 1529, the 'esercito del diavolo' arrived under the walls of Florence to commence a siege that would last almost twice as long as that of Naples, the republic would fight alone.

¹⁷ Pieri, *Il Rinascimento*, pp. 583-584.

¹⁸ Knecht, *Renaissance Warrior*, pp. 278-290; von Albertini, *Firenze*, pp. 112-113, 119-121.

¹⁹ ... antepoñendo il padre (the duke of Ferrara) le considerazioni dello stato alla fede, (Ercole) ricusò di andare ... Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XIX, chapt. XII, p. 2014.

It would be wrong to see the relationship between Florence and the Black Bands in terms of a contrast between a state-of-the-art military unit and a state that, often wrongly, has been accused of chronic military backwardness and veiled hostility to the military world. Many of the tactical choices made by the Florentine republic, such as, for instance, its decision to enlist only companies of light horsemen and not of men-at-arms, were, in fact, rather up-to-date²⁰. In June 1528 the Ten appointed Babbone da Brisighella and Francesco dal Monte as ‘governatori’ and instructors of the revived Florentine ‘ordinanza’²¹, which was different from the one planned by Machiavelli. By the beginning of August 1528, the letters of the ‘rettori’ of the Florentine dominions and of the captains in command of the ‘battaglioni’ to the Ten were full of references to the various problems and issues raised by the re-organization of the ‘ordinanza’, but the overall picture was far from pessimistic²². Moreover, the importance of small firearms had been acknowledged, and forty percent of arquebusiers in a company were regarded as a basic requirement²³. The Ten had no problem in selecting, among its new *battaglioni*, the two thousand veterans, all ‘gente eletta’, which were to be sent to Naples to swell the ranks of the Black Bands²⁴.

In fact, Florence resented being considered by its allies as not ‘buona ad altro che a sborsar danari’²⁵, that is only as a source of financial support. The republic was

²⁰ To see how the other great Italian republic approached the choice between heavy and light cavalry, see Mallett and Hale, *The Military Organization*, pp. 367-379.

²¹ 22 and 23 June 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti, 64, f. 16 v. ; for the structure of the new ‘ordinanza’, see ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Missive, 108, ff. 75 r. – 76r.

²² 1 August – 30 September 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 132, passim. The history of the reorganization of the Florentine ‘ordinanza’ would require more time, words and a separate analysis.

²³ ‘Li signori Nove (the Nove della Milizia) hanno solamente mandato 50 archibusi, che al mancho vorrebbero essere 80, et quando Vostre Magnifiche Signorie operassimo ne havessino sino a tal numero, non mancherebbe alla prefata compagnia cosa alcuna...’. Carlo Strozzi to the Ten, 2 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 132, f. 6 r. Carlo Strozzi was writing about the two hundred men of the ‘battaglione’ of Montepulciano, under the command of Daniello da Castiglione.

²⁴ The Ten to Giovambattista Soderini and to Marco del Nero, 20 August 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 45, f. 46 v.

²⁵ ‘... et senza dubio sarà molto più utile tal concorso delle nostre genti alla impresa che de’ danari... et quando ciò segua oltre al poco fructo che ne risulterà non passerà punto con dignità della città, la quale non sarà riputata buona ad altro che a sborsar denari, cosa certo non solo poco onorevole, ma molto

determined to exploit the political respite granted by the military reputation of the Black Bands, which came ‘in buona parte’ from the Florentine dominions, and to enjoy all the benefits that flowed from having its own troops in the first line²⁶. It was not an empty gamble nor a matter of faithfulness to the military doctrine of Machiavelli and of the first republic: no other Italian state nor great military enterpriser had given birth to a body of infantry whose fame rivalled that of the ‘fanti oltramontani’. However, the exceptional nature of the Black Bands should be put in an appropriate framework.

In a very roundabout way, the Risorgimento biographers and eulogizers of Giovanni de’Medici were right to celebrate him as an unusual figure, and to say that his real name was the one that he had conquered with his valour, that is, Giovanni of the Black Bands. Their perspective should be, however, inverted: since the beginning, we should not consider Giovanni as a Medici. Like others with the same surname, he was born a distant relative of the main branch, and had become an useful tool. To understand his ‘greatness’ we have first to perceive his ‘normality’: had he been something more than a soldier, he would not have been able, or obliged, to do what the other military enterprisers did, and do it better.

In the same way, it could be said that the Black Bands indeed embodied Florence, but they were not its army, nor the last glimmers of a dying world, or the first signs of things to come. The Bands were not a direct manifestation of the Florentine state, but the spontaneous product of some of its components, whose role was simply being given extra emphasis by the growing importance of large bodies of tactical infantry on the battlefield, and by the quantity of the people and of the resources connected to their

dannosa...The Ten to Giuliano Soderini, 29 July 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 45. ff. 25 v. – 26 v.

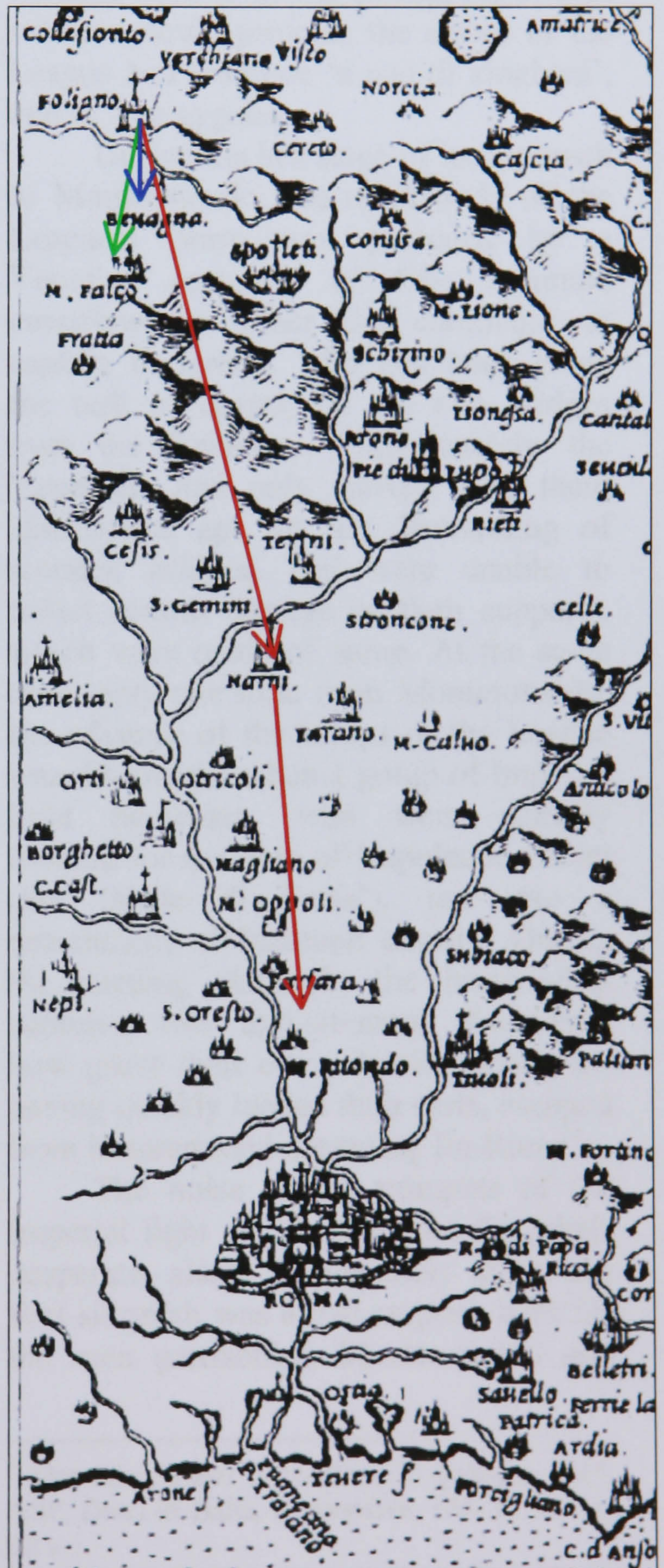
²⁶ ‘... ci rendiamo certi che Quella (the king of France) molto più si satisfarà delle genti che de’danari... sono le decte genti in grandissima expectatione et tutto nasce per li buoni effecti che si son veduti dall’altre genti ch’abiamo a Napoli le quali essendo in buona parte del paese nostro, si presume che le altre del medesimo paese sieno della medesima bontà, la qual cosa iustamente si può credere... per questa cagione insisterete di persuadere alla Maestà del Re che si contenti della contributione di questi 2000 fanti come cosa non solamente più honorevole per noi, ma etiam dio più utile et necessaria all’impresa...’ The Ten to Giuliano Soderini. 23 August 1528. ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Legazioni e commissarie, 45, f. 50 r./v.

organization and command. Florentine society was far from being 'demilitarized', nor was it falling behind in the process of adaptation that, by the second half of the sixteenth century, would allow the Italian military enterprisers to be an integral part of a 'system' that spread across western Europe.

Appendix 1: The Incursion against Monterotondo (October 1527)

Between 12 and 22 October 1527, after months of inactivity, the whole army of the League in Umbria moved southwards taking possession of what were to become its winter quarters and, at the same time, launching an incursion against the Imperial light cavalry, which was garrisoned in Monterotondo, a city dangerously near to Rome itself. The duke of Urbino used the information provided by the Orsini to devise a quite daring plan that, if successful, would have left the Spanish cavalry trapped in a *cul-de-sac* at the convergence of the river Teverone with the Tevere, ready to be destroyed by the surprise attack of all the remaining cavalry forces of the League, gathered *ad hoc* for this incursion. Although this was to be mainly a *'cavalcata'*, the support of infantry was needed, and Martelli had to furnish not only the Mantuan heavy cavalry under the command of Carlo Nuvoloni¹, but also one thousand men of the Black Bands². Between Foligno, the starting point of the incursion, and Monterotondo there lay a distance of approximately 65 miles, which the duke expected to cover in three *'giornate'*. This was the situation of the Black Bands at that moment: the companies of Lucantonio da Montefalco and Giannetto Albanese were besieging the castle of Le Presse³; Pasquino,

Amico, Scipione, Morgante and Giovanni da Turino were sent to Monterotondo, and the remaining companies, together with the Venetians, marched towards Montefalco (green arrow) to take possession of their winter quarters.



Map G: *The Incursion against Monterotondo.*

¹ Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, 22 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, ff. 367 r. – 368 r.

² At the beginning Martelli refused to be involved in such a hazardous plan, but eventually he had to agree to it. Initially the commissario 'offered' 500, then 800 of his precious troops, but he was eventually forced to commit himself to sending one thousand; though in fact, he wrote to the Ten, 'manderone 800'. Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 12 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 235 r.

³ Where Rodolfo da Varano and his wife had took refuge after having been expelled from Camerino by the pro-Imperialist Sciarra Colonna.

The plan of the duke of Urbino was simple: the Imperialists could not know that the camp of the League had moved nearer to their positions, and were not expecting an attack on Monterotondo, where the main body of the light cavalry, one of their great assets, was quartered, and around which the surveillance was reduced. Leaving the *'bagaglie'* behind, moving at the infantry's full speed, bringing food for three days only and, above all, cutting off any escape route behind the enemy by destroying the two bridges on the Tevere, the League's strike force could either take the elusive Imperial light cavalry by surprise or, at the very least, force a disastrous confrontation on it. It was probably the last chance the duke had to do this before the arrival of the winter.

While Montefalco was being sacked (green line on the map) and the Swiss headed towards their quarters in Bevagna (blue line), the duke, the marquis and Federico da Bozzolo, with all the Mantuan, Venetian and French men-at-arms, the Venetian mounted crossbowmen and stradiots (see Table XVIII) and supported by one thousand Venetian foot, eleven hundred men of the Black Bands and from five to six hundred Swiss in French service were heading towards Rome with forced marches⁴ (the red line on the map).

Marcello Strozzi, the Florentine paymaster to whom Lorenzo Martelli had entrusted the five companies that were part of the strike force, never tired of praising the Black Bands and their captains: in two days the eleven hundred soldiers had covered 56 'Roman' miles, resting for 3-4 hours only, waded across a cold river and eaten only nine hundred and twenty loaves of bread. '... dicho a Vostre Signorie che Quelle hanno una fanteria eletta... Vostre Signorie hanno a chonoscere non hanno buttato via i loro denari, et tutte le imprese o chamino pare

⁴ Lorenzo Martelli to the Ten, 15 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 125, f. 197.

loro facile, et al comandarli io li trovo facilissimi et ubbidienti...et a me àno questi satisfatto tanto quanto non lo potrei mai scrivere.'⁵ However, wrote Marcello, the attack on Monterotondo had been poorly coordinated. The French infantry, that is the Swiss, had not arrived on time at the assembly point, Cantalupo, and, lacking good reconnaissance services, which only experienced light cavalry, used to acting in support of foot soldiers, could provide, the troops of the League had marched *'a uso di zinghani'*, that is, like gypsies.

During the last stage of its approach to Monterotondo, the main body of the League's army was preceded by a Venetian company of fifty mounted crossbowmen under the command of captain Farferello, who had been given the task of destroying the two bridges over the Teverone. Unfortunately the Venetians had only carried with them instruments apt for the dismantling of wooden bridges, and were unable to inflict serious damage on their supports, which were made of stone. At the same time, only one mile from Monterotondo, the advance of the troops of the League was discovered when a group of Imperial light horsemen, who were actually looking for the men of Napoleone Orsini (the *'abate di Farfa'*), ran into a detachment of Mantuan cavalry. During the ensuing skirmish, the Imperialists captured two men-at-arms, discovered how grave their own situation was, and, having quickly loaded their carts, escaped from Monterotondo, heading for Rome⁶.

The noise of the trumpets of the Imperial light cavalrymen sounding their desperate alarm immediately after the first skirmish was a bad surprise both for the men garrisoning Monterotondo and

⁵ Marcello Strozzi to the Ten, 21 October 1527, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 124, ff. 91 r. – 92 v.

⁶ Carlo Nuvoloni to the marquis of Mantua, 22 October 1527. ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, ff. 367 r. – 368 r.

for the advancing infantry of the League. 'Restamo tutti spaventati', admitted Marcello Strozzi; had the imperialists had with them two hundred arquebusiers and as many light horsemen, he admitted, 'faciavamo mala pruova, et forse dolorosa fine'. Marcello Strozzi, who was walking ahead of the Black Bands to urge them on, found himself thrown into the action ('... li nimici mi furono a un passo...'), and was just glad that the '*tanto animosi*' captains were always in the first rank with their flags, even after they had marched for two days, just like their men. Although in the past he had expressed a different judgement on the Black Bands, this experience forced him to reconsider it completely⁷.

In the meantime the Venetian light horsemen, who did not know that their comrades had been sighted, had been trying to damage the bridges with their inadequate tools, and found themselves separated from the main body of the force, caught between the retreating Imperialists and the reinforcements sent from Rome. The duke and the forces of the League went back to Umbria and to their new winter quarters, but captain Farferello was forced to surrender with all his men, with the exception of two who drowned in the Teverone trying to avoid capture.

The planning and the execution of the failed attack against Monterotondo were criticised by Florence, which favoured a more defensive strategy. The incursion was a striking failure, which weakened the League's forces, but in fact the strike force had come exceedingly close to achieving a spectacular success. According to Sigismondo della Torre, Mantuan ambassador in Rome, only the *fortuna di Cesare* had saved the precious

Imperial light cavalry from complete annihilation⁸. Given the League's almost complete lack of good light horsemen, and the major role played by the Imperial mounted troops in the following campaign, that would have represented a major victory. In the following months, the military leaders of the League would frequently have cause to regret the failure of a daring plan that had so nearly succeeded.

⁷ '...dicho a Vostre Signorie che Quelle hanno una fanteria eletta e chapitani in tanto animosi che n'è da fare conto, e se mai ne parlai altrimenti la experientia mi fa ridire, perché vogliono combattere, che vi prometto Signori Miei fu mirabile chosa tutti li chapitani a piede havere chaminato dua giorni e di ghaloppo si può dire...'

⁸ '... cosa memorabile. essendoci concorso solamente la pura et sola fortuna dello Imperatore, che veramente la cosa facillima da riuscire. et riuscendo era di estrema importanza a questo esercito...'. Sigismondo Fanzino della Torre to the maquis of Mantua, 23 October 1527, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 875, ff. 210 r.-212 v. See also Sanuto, *Diarii*, 46, p. 294.

before Lepanto have never been investigated. All early modern sources offer different explanations, which are unfounded, or incomprehensible, but invariably insufficient. What could possibly have persuaded Hugo de Moncada, an experienced soldier and a veteran of the Spanish expeditions against Barbary, to risk all of his naval forces in a single, dangerous gamble? From a contemporary point of view, the need to destroy Doria's fleet before it could join the Venetian squadron might seem a good enough motivation, but it was probably not good enough in the sixteenth century. In fact, Mediterranean warfare did not call for the annihilation of the enemy fleet at any cost, but for the conquest, and the protection, of the harbours. To quote Guilmartin, Mediterranean warfare at sea was 'amphibious' in nature. The Neapolitan squadron could have been very useful even in front of a preponderant Venetian/Genoese fleet, both as a deterrent force and as support for the maritime relief expeditions³.

Moreover, the outcome of a confrontation of the size of Capo d'Orso – eight galleys against six supported by smaller ships – was usually easy to foresee, and the force that found itself in the more tactically disadvantageous position tended to avoid the confrontation at any cost. Once the battle had started, the galleys were inextricably engaged and there was no turning back, and the odds were usually easy to calculate. However, in the case of Capo d'Orso we have the unusual case of two relatively small forces that went into battle each trusting in its own superiority.

As in the case of Lepanto, albeit on a much smaller scale, the reasons and the hoped for benefits that brought the Imperial fleet to the confrontation were political rather than military. In his attempt to prevail over the prince of Orange and his

friend of Filippino) and the losers, since he was on a mission for marquis del Vasto's wife, his host in Ischia, who was worried about the fate of her husband. See Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio*, pp. 102-105; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, book XIX, chapt. 1, pp. 1930-1934; Rosso, *Historia*, pp. 28-29; Santoro, *Dei successi*, pp. 70-74.

³ On naval warfare during this period, see the third section of the second chapter of this dissertation. 'The Living, the Dead, the Seafarers'. On the differences between Mediterranean and 'Oceanic' sea warfare, see Guilmartin, *Gunpowder*, pp. 16-41.

supporters, Hugo de Moncada insisted on transferring the struggle to the only area of conflict where his personal experience and reputation were unquestionably superior to those of the Burgundian Philibert de Chalon – the sea⁴.

A hand-picked contingent of six-seven hundred Spanish soldiers and two hundred Landsknechts⁵ (mainly arquebusiers) was embarked on the six galleys, two *fuste*, three *brigantini* and the other smaller vessels⁶ that made up the Imperial fleet. Given the superior numbers and firepower of Filippino's squadron of eight galleys Moncada's plan was to 'grapple' with the *Doriane* ships as soon as possible and to board them in order to utilize his main asset, the dreaded Imperial infantry.

The letters of the ambassadors in the camp of the League testify⁷ to the sense of bewilderment caused by the sight of the sortie of the Imperial galleys (27 April), crammed with arquebusiers and bent on destroying the League's fleet. In a great hurry three hundred arquebusiers under the command of the Gascon captain Gilbert du Crocq were sent to Salerno to reinforce the crews of Filippino Doria's galleys, but no one could really say if they would arrive on time.

Fortunately for the League, the Imperialists first went to Pozzuoli, where they rested during the night. On the next day (28 April) Moncada moved his squadron to the island of Capri, where, before moving towards Salerno, he and his men found the time to listen to the sermon of a resident Spanish hermit, who encouraged them to fight bravely against the Genoese, those 'white Moors' who kept chained so many valiant

⁴ Girolamo Naselli to the duke of Ferrara, 23 May 1528, ASMo, Cancelleria Ducale, Carteggio principi esteri, Napoli, 9, the folios are not numbered. On the rivalry between Moncada and the prince, see also Rosso, *Historia*, p. 27.

⁵ In his letter to Clement, Giovio wrote generically of seven hundred Imperial soldiers. In his *Historie*, he maintained that the Spaniards were selected not only according to their personal valour, but also according to their past experiences in sea warfare and to their origins – Biscayan soldiers, for instance, were less likely to suffer from sea sickness. The two hundred Germans under the command of 'Corradino' were not mixed with the Spaniards.

⁶ These were the main sub-classes of oared vessels in order of decreasing size, number of oars, calibre of artillery and manpower: *galeazza*, *galera bastarda*, *galera*, *galeotta*, *fusta*, *brigantino*.

⁷ '... quando s'intese che questa armata de'nimici andava a assaltare la nostra si temeva forte che 'l danno avessi a toccar a noi'. Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balìa, Responsive, 128, f. 268 r. : '... è stato miraculo grande in favor di questi de la Legha...' Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 1 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 249 r.

Spaniards to the oars. This delay was disastrous. At four p.m. du Crocq's arquebusiers arrived in Salerno, and half an hour after they had embarked, at five p.m., the Imperial fleet was sighted.

Table XXII
Capo d'Orso; 9.00 p.m.

Probable order of Battle of the Imperial Fleet - approaching from East	Probable order of Battle of the League's Fleet - approaching from West
fusta	
fusta	
<i>Gobba</i> ⁸	
<i>Sechanies</i> ⁹	<i>Pellegrina</i>
<i>Villamarina</i> ¹⁰	<i>Donzella</i>
<i>Capitana</i> ¹¹	<i>Capitana</i> ¹²
<i>Perpignana</i> ¹³	<i>Fortuna</i>
<i>Calabresa</i> ¹⁴	<i>Sirena</i>
	Galleys that feigned to escape steering southwards (open sea):
	<i>Mora</i> ¹⁵
	<i>Patrona</i>
	<i>Signora</i>

Even though in his *Historie* Giovio reports the war cry bellowed by the Italian sailors after the speech made by Filippino¹⁶, du Crocq confided to the Mantuan ambassador that before the battle the morale of the soldiers was – to quote an Italian saying – under the keel, and the Italians considered themselves as good as dead¹⁷. Surrounded by many smaller ships and adorned with an incredible number of flags, the

⁸ The *Gobba* was the galley of Fabrizio Giustiniani from Genoa, nicknamed 'Gobbo' (the Hunchback). Cesare Fieramosca was embarked on this ship.

⁹ This was the only galley Giovio left without a proper 'name'. His captain was a Catalan called 'Sechanies'.

¹⁰ The galley of the Catalan don Bernardo Villamarin.

¹¹ The flagship of Hugo de Moncada

¹² The flagship of Filippino Doria.

¹³ The Germans under the command of 'Corradino Glornio' were embarked on the *Perpignana* and on the *Calabresa*.

¹⁴ The *Calabresa* was also called 'Calabresa Oria', since its captain Francesco de Loria was (or at least claimed to be) a descendant of the famous Ruggiero d'Auria, Italian commander of the Aragonese fleet.

¹⁵ The *Mora*, owned by the Moro family of Genoa, was under the command of Niccolò Lomellini, who guided the diversionary manoeuvre of the three Doria galleys.

¹⁶ In the letter to Clement VII the speech of Filippino Doria was very short ('Qua non è da fuggir. Poi che havemo li fanti, attendiamo a far talmente che la Gloria del signor missier Andrea Doria non si perda con la ruina nostra et infamia'). while the version of the *Historie* is quite long and elaborate.

¹⁷ '... in vero se tenevano per morti sul principio e como disperati questi Italiani combattevano havendosi messi per persi...'. Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 1 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 250 r.

Imperial galleys were an impressive sight and looked like the coat of arms of the duke of Sessa¹⁸. However, Filippino and his Genoese *comiti* considered the situation with sangfroid: they knew that only the ships with crow's nests (the galleys) really counted¹⁹; the others were merely a show²⁰. Aware that his was a very narrow advantage, Filippino unchained all his Moorish and Turkish oarsmen, and offered them freedom in exchange for their help against the common enemy.

At 9 p.m., after the ships of the League had left their shelter of Capo d'Orso, the two fleets faced each other, and, with a furious cannonade, the battle began. Three of the Doria galleys, the *Mora*, the *Patrona* and the *Signora*, left the formation and headed for the open sea, seemingly abandoning the battlefield. The remaining five galleys of the League faced a, now, superior Imperial force, which had also the wind in its favour and the sun behind. Overtaking the other ships, Moncada's *Capitana* faced the enemy flagship bow to bow, and was hit by what was probably one of the most famous cannon shots of the sixteenth century, fired by the centreline piece of Filippino's *Capitana*. The ball of the *basilisco* literally 'cleared' the gangway between the rowing benches, which was crammed with soldiers. Almost forty men died immediately, and among them the galley's captain and his staff²¹. Unlike the Spaniards, the Genoese fired their arquebuses while staying crouched behind the broadsides, between the rowing benches. While the two flagships collided and started their deadly struggle, the *Gobba*, the *Sicamas*, the *Villamarina* and the smaller ships attacked the *Pellegrina* and the *Donzella*. The

¹⁸ Consalvo de Cordova, the *Gran Capitan*, was also duke of Sessa. His personal emblem was surrounded by sixty-four little flags, one for each of the cities he had conquered on behalf of his king. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, p. 664.

¹⁹ Ibid. On a galley, during the battles the 'gatti' were crammed (from ten to twenty men) with snipers and sailors with stones.

²⁰ According to Guicciardini, many fishing boats followed Moncada's galleys 'per spaventare gli inimici da lontano'. *Storia d'Italia*, book XIX, chapt. I., p. 1931.

²¹ Among the 'Homini di qualità' killed by the cannonade there was also Luis de Guzman, famous Spanish musician, who decided to join the expedition at the last moment 'per burla si come lo strascinava la sorte...'. Francesco Icardo had the flesh of his thigh up to the buttock wrenched away, but he survived '... con horribile, ma non però con mortal colpo, percioché egli era molto grasso...'; Giovio, *La Seconda parte*, p. 81.

Spaniards boarded them and quickly overwhelmed the Genoese and Gascon resistance. The *Perpignana* and the *Calabresa* ran into the isolated *Sirena*, that had found herself too distanced from the *Fortuna*, and captured a third Dorian galley. Eventually, the *Fortuna* and Filippino's *Capitana* were practically surrounded, and the League's fleet faced a crushing defeat.

The return of the three Genoese galleys that had left the formation at the beginning of the battle reversed the situation. Moncada's plan had worked, but now all of his galleys were committed, and could not manoeuvre in order to face the new threat; their sterns and flanks, equipped with a few counter boarding guns, were totally exposed. Lined up in an echelon, the Dorian galleys opened fire against the Imperial *Capitana*²²; the cannonballs of the *Mora* destroyed the rudder, the *Patrona*'s knocked down the mainmast, the *Signora*'s shattered the spur. While the *Mora* ran into the flank of Moncada's flagship, the two other galleys relentlessly battered the *Gobba* from afar²³. Filippino's Moors, almost naked and equipped with swords and bucklers, regained the *Donzella*. The *Sechanies* and the *Villamarina* were both sunk²⁴. The *fuste* were captured and the other vessels were dispersed. When the captains of the *Perpignana* and of the *Calabresa* saw the Imperial standard fall from the *Capitana*'s mainmast, they decided that the battle was lost, disengaged and went back to Naples²⁵.

²² Hugo de Moncada died fighting, with a sword and a rotella in his hands. All the oarsmen and the one hundred and fifty arquebusiers embarked on the *Capitana* were killed. Even Giovangirolamo da Trani, captain general of the Imperial ordnance, was among the fallen. Alfonso de Avalos and Ascanio Colonna, both wounded and smeared with blood and '*cervella*', surrendered to Niccolò Lomellini.

²³ '... le altre due refrustorno la Gobba con una grandine di archibusate et canonate...'. Cesare Fieramosca was killed, together with one hundred and three Spanish arquebusiers out of one hundred and eight that had made up captain Baredo's company. Seven standard bearers died one after another while holding the company's flag. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI.

²⁴ 'Sechanies valentemente et don Bernardo Vilamarino restorno nella zuffa et furno tagliati a pezzi et posto le loro galie a fondo; don Bernardo fu tutto brusato, Sechanies fu passato da uno archibuso nella gola...'. Ibid.

²⁵ Back in Naples, the captains of the two remaining Imperial galleys were accused of cowardice, since many Imperial officers thought that they had abandoned the battlefield while it was still possible to turn the tide of the battle. Threatened with death, captain Francesco brought his *Calabresa* out of Naples' harbour, moored it on the shore near the besieging camp and entered negotiations with the League.

The battle had lasted from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m., ‘né mai più fu sì crudel et così horrenda baruffa’. Of the Imperial galleys two were captured (the *Capitana* and the *Gobba*), two escaped, two were sunk together with one *fusta* and one *brigantino*. More than one thousand Spaniards had died, but this number alone does not give the real measure of such a loss: they were ‘lo fior del campo et delli veterani’²⁶, the best arquebusiers of the Imperial army²⁷. Among the fallen there were many ‘homini de qualità’, ‘gentilhomini’ and experienced officers; the whole staff of Hugo de Moncada and all of his partisans had been either killed or captured. About one thousand Spaniards were taken prisoner²⁸. The losses of the League amounted to five hundred men between soldiers, sailors and oarsmen.

The victory of Capo d’Orso was the result of Doria’s tactical skill and of the superior numbers and coordination of his squadron. The dangerous decision to engage the Imperial fleet with an, initially, inferior number of vessels allowed Filippino to keep intact the only real asset of the League’s squadron: its superior firepower. The initial gambit gave the three Dorian galleys the time to manoeuvre and to steer their bows – along with their cannons – towards the flanks and sterns of the immobile Imperial vessels²⁹. At that distance, there was nothing that the dreaded Spanish arquebusiers, the winners of Bicocca and Pavia, could do. Moreover, the Spanish and German veteran foot soldiers, embarked for this specific occasion, soon found out that the agile Italian sailors and naval soldiers, besides being tough opponents, were playing at home, and

²⁶ Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI.

²⁷ Marco del Nero to the Ten, 29 April 1528, ASF, Dieci di Balia, Responsive, 128, f. 268 r.

²⁸ ‘In questo ferrar de Spagnoli bisogna che io dica, testimonio del sacco di Roma, et passano mille...’ This phrase, with which Giovio gave vent to his anger as a witness of the Sack of Rome, cannot be found in the official and published versions of his letters, but only in Sanuto’s version of Giovio’s account. Only the wounds and the humiliations suffered by many of his closest friends restrained Paolo Giovio, technically a pro-Imperialist, from showing his satisfaction in seeing utterly defeated those who had ‘ruined the world’ – his world.

²⁹ However, Filippino Doria complained about the fact that the three galleys under the command of Lomellini attacked the Imperialists arrayed ‘ad organo’ (like the pipes of an organ), and not ‘di fronte’, that is maintaining an even front formation. According to him, this fact reduced considerably the effects of their fire.

knew all the tricks of their trade³⁰. Even the Gascon captain Du Crocq admitted that during the battle the Italians, initially disheartened, had performed incredible deeds³¹.

The victory was a powerful boost for the morale of the League's troops, and was celebrated in the besiegers' camp with trumpets blasts and cannonades. However, in the short term and from the tactical point of view, the battle of Capo d'Orso did not produce the desired effects. The losses suffered by the Imperialists had been grievous, but not catastrophic, and, above all, the destruction of the squadron of Naples could not, and did not, reduce significantly the harbour's defensive potential. The League's galleys still could not approach and effectively cannonade it; its logistical and strategic 'shadow' still forced the enemy ships to operate from a distant base, rendering difficult the job of the galleys, hardly the best instrument to enforce a blockade. Pozzuoli surrendered to the League, but Ischia and Gaeta remained in Imperial hands. Moreover, Doria's galleys were now badly damaged.

Elsewhere, at the same time, the relations between Andrea Doria and Francis I were deteriorating, and, as we shall see, the Genoese *condottiere* of the sea was having very bad dreams.

³⁰ 'Da questa bataglia s'è ritratto da l'una et l'altra parte, per il iuditio di periti, che più vale uno marinaio in bragessa con spada et rotella et sassi et partesane (short polearms) da lanciare de'soldati de terra quantunche electi, perché lo mare non li comove, sono asuefati come caprioli et limpardi (leopards) a saltar per galea, conoscono li lochi pericolosi, et pigliano partito in uno momento.'. Paolo Giovio to Clement VII. Sanuto, *Diarii*, XLVI, p. 667. Other 'technical' military details pointed out by Paolo Giovio were the very big arquebuses utilised by the Genovese, whose balls could easily run through 'three or four men' and even through the *pavesate*, that is the wooden temporary bulwarks (buntings?) erected before the battle, and also the *pavesate* utilised by the Italians themselves, thicker than those of the Imperialists.

³¹ 'Referisce (Du Crocq) questi Italiani hanno fatto cose incomprensibile quella giornata...'. Ludovico Ceresara to the marquis of Mantua, 1 May 1528, ASMn, Archivio Gonzaga, corrispondenza estera, Roma, 876, f. 250 r.

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