

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR IN FLORENCE AND VENICE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY

In a famous passage of the *Discorsi*, Machiavelli drew a parallel between the failures of Florence and Venice to gain strength from their territorial expansion because of their unwillingness to adapt their institutions to the new military necessities. By failing to concern themselves with the new demands of defence, and by entrusting that defence to others, they had in fact made themselves "più deboli quando l'uno aveva la Lombardia e l'altro la Toscana, che non erano quando l'uno era contento del mare e l'altro di sei miglia di confini."¹ Venice, as Machiavelli pointed out frequently and with almost polemical fervour, was even more to blame than Florence because she had known success and glory at sea when she was led by her own nobles and defended by her own subjects: "Ma come cominciarono a combattere in terra, lasciarono queste virtù, e seguitarono i costumi d'Italia."²

To question long-standing assumptions about the similarities between Italy's two largest surviving republics in the fifteenth century is one of the aims of this symposium, and it seems to me that on the question of military attitudes and relative military strength we have been seriously misled by Machiavelli. On the other hand, his view that the military attitudes and stances of a society are a reflection of its innermost hopes and fears is a valid and important one. But it is essential to have a clear view of what those attitudes and stances were before we can proceed to a true comparison.

Let us begin by discussing the problems of military preparedness in the two states in three specific contexts: demobilisation after the peace of Lodi, the War of Ferrara, and the protracted crises of the first fifteen years of the Italian Wars. Discussion of these three episodes will reveal some fundamental differences between the Venetian and Florentine approaches to military problems, and these differences will lead to some more general comparisons of the attitudes and postures of the two cities.

In the final stages of the wars which ended in 1454 with the Peace of Lodi, the armies of the Italian states had reached unprecedented proportions. The Milanese and Venetians each had more than 20,000 men under arms in these years, the Florentines between 10 and 12,000.³ The *Lega Italica*, which followed the peace, laid down, not for the first time in an Italian treaty, the

levels of peacetime military establishment expected of the major powers. Venice was committed to a standing force of 6,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry, Florence to 2,000 cavalry and 1,000 infantry.⁴ For Venice the idea of a standing army in peacetime was no novelty; the emergence of such a force had been apparent since the beginning of the century and the contracts signed with her captains stipulated the size of the companies in peacetime as well as in war.⁵ On the conclusion of the peace only two major *condottieri* prepared to leave Venetian service, Jacopo Piccinino and Matteo da Capua.⁶ The remainder of the captains, many of whom had been in Venetian service for at least ten years, settled down into peacetime billets spread over the whole *terraferma*. Bartolomeo Colleoni, the captain general, established his base at Malpaga, close to the vulnerable western frontier; Carlo Fortebraccio garrisoned Brescia; the Gatteschi companies, commanded at first by Giovanantonio di Gattamelata and then, after 1456, by Antonio da Marsciano, the son-in-law of Gattamelata, settled around Verona; Bertoldo d'Este, whose father Taddeo had served Venice for over thirty years, was billeted in Padua until he was sent to the Morea in 1463. During the five years after Lodi there were some further departures from the ranks: Orso Orsini, Giovanni Conti and Ludovico Malvezzi all took their leave. But in 1458 Venice still had about 8,000 cavalry enrolled and a considerable cadre of experienced infantry constables. Demobilisation had taken place to a limited degree within an established framework of companies and captains.⁷

In Florence the picture was very different. The unusual size of the Florentine army in the last stages of the war had been a response to the direct threat to southern Tuscany from Naples. Sigismondo Malatesta and Alessandro Sforza, and finally Jean d'Anjou, had been hired to combat the emergency, but it was clear that Florence had considerably over-reached her fiscal resources. In 1454 the *condottieri* were owed over 70,000 florins in back pay.⁸ On the conclusion of the peace Florence fulfilled her limited obligations for permanent forces by giving three *condotte*, each for three years, to Astorre Manfredi, Simonetta da Camposanpiero and Carlo degli Oddi.⁹ Of these, only Oddi had any long record of service with Florence and Manfredi maintained none of his troops in Florentine territory. These contracts, in fact, resembled much more the old-fashioned *condotta in aspetto* than the Venetian two-tiered *condotta* for permanent service. In 1457, when the *condotte* expired, these men were still owed 65,000 florins.¹⁰ Apart from these three captains Florence retained only a handful of minor *condottieri* in permanent service; the rest of the army was broken up as speedily as possible.

During the next two decades Florence was always dependent on borrowed or hastily recruited troops for her military operations. No serious body of troops was available either to cope with the anti-Medicean conspiracy in 1466 or the revolt of Volterra in 1472.¹¹ With the gradual cristallisation of

the Milan-Florence-Naples axis, Florence's commitment to peacetime military expenditure increasingly took the form of contributions to the *condotte* of leading captains whose natural allegiances were to Milan or Naples rather than Florence and whose troops were normally garrisoned outside Florentine frontiers. Thus in 1480, despite the recent trauma of the Pazzi war, Florence found herself committed to paying large sums to Ercole d'Este and the Duke of Calabria, and having relatively few troops over whom she had direct control. When in 1481 Costanzo Sforza was made Florentine captain general as a result of heavy pressure from Milan, the expense was shared by Milan and Florence, and Costanzo himself was expected to reside in Milan.¹² Furthermore, the appointment of Costanzo temporarily alienated the one notable and effective commander whom Florence had — Niccolò Orsini, Count of Pitigliano — and was accompanied by another Milanese-inspired contract for Giovanfrancesco da Sanseverino.¹³ Thus, on the eve of the War of Ferrara, although Florence was in theory responsible for maintaining 600 lances for the League, the bulk of the commitment consisted, in fact, of contributions to the pay of men who had little or no concern for Florence and did not normally live within the frontiers of the state.

Once again the contrast between the military stances of the two republics is striking. Venice, admittedly the aggressor in the affair, was already mobilising rapidly in January, 1482. Troops were being inspected in their billets all over the *terraferma*; the dispositions, and in many cases the men, were the same as those of twenty years earlier.¹⁴ The Colleoneschi companies, now commanded by members of the Martinengo family since the death of Colleoni in 1475, guarded the western frontier. Bernardino di Carlo Fortebraccio in Brescia was held in reserve, ready either to support the Colleoneschi in the event of a Milanese attack or join the thrust against Ferrara. The attack on Ferrara was to be a pincer movement with the Gatteschi companies from Verona and the Padua garrison forming the northern wing, and the Ravenna garrison supplemented by troops from Friuli moving in from the east. By the end of January 1500 cavalry were already assembled in the Veronese, while Roberto Malatesta, the captain general, was preparing to take command of the Romagna thrust. By February the attack on Ferrara was reported to be imminent; a huge river fleet of 400 craft was being prepared in Venice and negotiations were already at an advanced stage for adding Roberto da Sanseverino to the republic's already considerable military strength. The arrival of Sanseverino in April to take command of the northern thrust completed the preparations; 400,000 ducats were spent in that month alone on the army and the river fleet.¹⁵ On 2 May Sanseverino crossed the marshes between the Adige and the Tartaro on a five-mile long causeway created in two nights by Veronese pioneers, and the war had begun.¹⁶

The contrast between this rapid mobilisation and utilisation of a large

standing army and the dilatory measures of Florence is obviously weakened by the fact that Florence was only one member of the League, but it is nevertheless striking. Despite ample warning of Venetian intentions it was only in late February, 1482, that Florence began to think about military preparations.¹⁷ Costanzo Sforza had already joined the Milanese mobilisation and urgent messages had to be sent to persuade him to come to Tuscany and take command of the army of which he was supposed to be captain general. By March Florence had 200 infantry ready to send to Ferrara, and Bernardo Rucellai, the Florentine ambassador in Milan, when reproached about the slowness of Florence's military preparations could only reply that "le cose di popoli erano d'altra natura che quelli di principi."¹⁸ It was not until April that advances were paid to the troops to enable them to get into order, and a war commissary was not appointed until 11 May, nine days after the Venetian attack had actually started.¹⁹ Costanzo Sforza, without whom it was admitted that nothing could be done, only arrived in Florence on 13 June.²⁰

Florence's commitment to the League was 600 lances and 1500 infantry.²¹ Most of these 600 lances were part of shared *condotte* over which Florence had little control. Venice in 1483 had over 3,000 lances in the field, the bulk of which was made up of the companies of men whose careers in Venetian service can be traced back over the previous two or three decades.²² They also included the new companies of *stradioti* introduced into Italy during the later stages of Venice's war with the Turks to defend the eastern frontier, and now used for the first time, and with great effect, in an Italian war.

The third stage of this factual comparison can be much more brief because it is impossible, within the short compass of this paper, to do full justice to the world of difference between the Florentine and Venetian military establishments during the Italian wars. On the one side, one has the fumbling and uncertain attempts by Florence to find a military solution to the Pisan rebellion; the variety of commanders used, from Giovanfrancesco Secco and Ranuccio da Marsciano in 1495, to Guidobaldo da Montefeltro, Gonzaga, Vitelli and Ercole Bentivoglio later; the constant recriminations which embittered the relations between these temporary commanders and their employers; the disastrous expedient of the Gascon and Swiss mercenaries; and finally the creation of Machiavelli's militia which served eventually to solve the specific problem of the siege of Pisa, but could hardly be seen as a permanent solution to Florence's military problem. On the other side, one sees the relatively static and well organised Venetian army bearing the brunt of the fighting at Fornovo, playing its part in the eviction of the French from Naples in 1496, defending Milan from the French in 1497, conquering Milan in conjunction with the French in 1499, holding off the Turks in 1499 and 1500, and defeating the Germans in 1508. This army in 1509, on the eve of Agnadello, numbered 27,000 professional troops and

10,000 militia; mobilisation had been going on steadily since 1507. It was commanded by Pitigliano, who had been in Venetian service since 1495, and D'Alviano, who had first joined Venice in 1498. Of the 21 leading *condottieri*, ten had fought for Venice at Fornovo fourteen years earlier, and three others were sons of Venetian *condottieri* in that battle; only four new senior captains were hired for the Cambrai crisis.²³

The conclusion one must draw is that by the second half of the fifteenth century Venice had accepted the need for a significant standing army; Florence had not. After 1454 there can have been few moments when the Venetian military establishment in Italy fell below 8,000 men. It would be surprising to find that Florence had more than 1,000 armed men normally available within her own frontiers in peacetime; and these would have been mostly garrison infantry, incapable of being described as an army. Venice had a cadre of professional captains who by 1454 had been settled on estates and fiefs within the frontiers or were already members of *terraferma* noble families. A brief glance at the careers of some of these men will give an idea of the continuity of service and experience involved in this phenomenon.

One of the leading figures in the Venetian army in this period was Bernardino di Carlo Fortebraccio. His father, a natural son of Braccio da Montone, had joined Venetian service in the 1440s and had served Venice for the rest of his life except for his brief venture against Perugia in 1477. He died at Cortona during the Tuscan campaign of 1479 and his son Bernardino took over his company. For the next thirty-five years Bernardino was one of the senior Venetian *condottieri*; his command grew from 500 to 1,000 cavalry and he led one of the main assault columns at Fornovo, where he was badly wounded. He was richly rewarded by Venice for his part in this battle and was on good terms with a number of Venetian nobles who constantly worked for his advancement in the Senate. He was present at Agnadello and in the years immediately afterwards was made *vice-governatore* of the army. He finally retired in 1515.²⁴

Another, slightly less significant, commander was Giovanantonio di Scariotto Banabobi da Faenza. In 1483 he was captured by the Milanese while serving as second in command on the Adda front. This was hailed as a major success by the League and his command at that time of three squadrons of heavy cavalry placed him among the top half-dozen Venetian commanders. Giovanantonio's father had been in Venetian service as early as 1419 and was still active in the mid 1440s, having been engaged in every campaign in the interim. He was allowed to buy some confiscated estates of rebels to form a base for himself in the Padovano. Giovanantonio himself is first known to have held a Venetian *condotta* in 1467; he took part in the siege of Rimini in 1469 and thereafter was normally billeted either at Cittadella in the Padovano or in Ravenna. He was one of the first captains to be sent to

Tuscany in the Pazzi war, and was captured at Poggio Imperiale in 1479. He eventually died in service in 1495, on the eve of Fornovo, and his company passed to his son, Federico, who led it in that battle.²⁵

Both these men were what Machiavelli would have described as foreign mercenary captains, but in fact the permanence of their attachment to Venice is clearly apparent, as is that of another commander, Count Antonio da Marsciano. Antonio's uncle, Guerriero, had been a noted Venetian soldier in the 1430s. Antonio probably joined in the late 1440s and was associated with the Gatteschi companies. He married one of the daughters of Gattamelata, and after the deaths of Gentile da Leonessa and Giovanantonio di Gattamelata he took over command of the companies in 1457. He commanded the expedition to Trieste in 1463, but otherwise was continuously based either on his estates in the southern Veronese or in the citadel of Verona. He led the Venetian advance guard across Roberto da Sanseverino's causeway into the Ferrarese in May 1482, and was captured in the early stages of the war. After some months in prison in Milan he consented to take service with the Florentines on condition that he did not have to fight Venice for six months. He was killed in 1484 at the siege of Pietrasanta.²⁶

A typical example of the enrolment of *terraferma* nobility into the Venetian army was Count Giovanfrancesco da Gambara. He was a Brescian who steadily increased his command from one squadron to three over the period between 1479 and 1509. He fought in all the intervening campaigns and was one of the marshals of the army at Fornovo. It was only when his native city fell to the French in 1509 that he left Venetian service.²⁷

Finally, let us take an example of a minor *condottiere*, Giovanni Villani da Pisa, who emerged as a squadron leader in Gattamelata's company in the 1430s. He distinguished himself at the siege of Brescia in 1438 and was rewarded with his own *condotta*. He then served Venice continuously until his death while garrisoning Cyprus in 1488. His son received a life pension from the republic and his daughters, dowries of 300 ducats each.²⁸

It would be wrong to suggest that all Venetian *condottieri* were models of fidelity and devotion to the state. Desertions there certainly were and also serious breaches of the regulations which aroused the, often ineffectual, wrath of the Venetian government. Bartolomeo Colleoni, with his two notorious desertions and his lingering ambitions to make a great name for himself and possibly win a state, was certainly more characteristic of the traditional view of the *condottiere* than some of the men so far mentioned. But despite these ambitions he did remain Venetian captain general for twenty years and his death left a considerable gap in the military establishment.²⁹

The evidence for such long-serving captains in the Florentine army is small. Jacopo della Sassetta is one of the few who come to mind as a cavalry leader, although there were amongst the minor Tuscan nobility — the Malaspi-

na, the counts of Monte d'Oglio, the counts of Monte Sta. Maria — men who served Florence regularly as infantry captains. Lorenzo de' Medici's correspondent, Pierandrea Corso, was another infantry captain who enjoyed a long period of service with Florence in the 1470s and 1480s, and it seemed to be a part of Lorenzo's policy to seek personal links with *condottieri* which would also serve to tie them more closely to the state.

But Florentine service had few of the attractions of service with Venice; the desire to create a standing army seemed to be singularly lacking. Three things were necessary to attract and retain faithful service from captains and men: reasonably regular pay, generous rewards for special merit, and firm discipline. We have already seen some examples of the extent to which Florence became indebted to her soldiers, and indeed her reputation as an efficient paymaster was steadily declining in the fifteenth century. In 1478 Milanese captains sent to help Florence in the Pazzi war complained that they were being paid in debased and forged currency.³⁰ As far as Venice goes, the financial records are sparse; we know from the Viviani documents in Arezzo that Michele Attendolo's company in Venetian service in the 1440s was paid regularly and in full (an experience it did not enjoy in any other employ).³¹ But more importantly we know that the Venetians had a system which largely prevailed through the fifteenth century and which at least offered some chance of solving the problem of cash supply. Every *condottiere* in Venetian service was given billets in or near one of the main cities of the *terraferma* and drew his pay from the treasury of that city. The income of each city was assessed and the troops distributed accordingly; payment of the local garrisons was always the first call on the income of each treasury.³² Now it was widely realised in the fifteenth century that nothing made troops more unruly and dangerous than poor pay, and by putting the responsibility directly on local treasuries to find the money to pay troops billeted in their areas the Venetian senate seemed to have hit on the way of ensuring that their troops got paid as regularly as possible. This is not to say that there were not complaints from Venetian troops about erratic pay on occasions, and there were frequently moments when central funds had to be used or bankers called upon to make up sums which the *terraferma* treasuries were unable to find.

As for reward systems the Florentine reluctance to grant estates, fiefs, honorary citizenship, large life pensions, etc. to soldiers was in marked contrast to the Venetian enthusiasm for these methods.³³ Certainly this process was more obvious in the first half of the century in Venice than the second, but by 1454 the foundations of a permanent army had been laid and the need for special rewards to attract loyal service was less. Fewer fiefs were given out in this later period because more of the *condottieri* were already *terraferma* nobility; fewer estates were given because territorial expansion had

largely ceased. But the practice of giving pensions to retiring soldiers and to the families of those who died in Venetian service continued unabated.

Finally discipline: the answer to the problem of enforcement of discipline and a proper respect for the regulations was effective supervision and a continuity of military organisation. Regular and careful inspections based on accurate muster-rolls and carried out by permanent officials whose authority was respected by the soldiers and who had the power effectively to fine or even dismiss those who fell below standard: this was the key to the problem of military discipline. Such an organisation was an essential feature of any effective standing army. Such an organisation, as far as the evidence suggests, was not established by Florence. There was the *Ufficio delle Condotte* in Florence, staffed basically by citizens succeeding each other in office at short intervals, with one or two *provveditori*. This office was responsible for the mechanics of hiring and firing and for routine inspections carried out by *provveditori* sent out occasionally for the purpose. Responsibility for the inspection of garrisons seemed to lie with the local rector or *podestà*, who was also a temporary appointment. In time of war commissaries were attached to the army, again on a temporary basis, with rather vaguely defined powers of disciplinary authority. The results of this rather uncoordinated system were summed up by Gianjacopo Trivulzio in 1478 when he was attached to the Florentine army in southern Tuscany:

These Florentine troops are so badly organised that it disgusts me; the men at arms are spread out in confusion often with squadrons mixed up together in a way which conforms to no plan, and squadrons as much as half a mile apart. The soldiers are billeted all over the place without any provision for pioneers or other essential auxiliaries; there are few infantry, about 700 of which only 150 are properly armed, although I have made constant protests about this ... these Florentine officials sell victuals at the dearest price possible without any concern for the regulation of price and quality: the money is debased so that it buys very little³⁴

The Venetian army, like the Milanese to which Trivulzio was accustomed, had a system of *collaterali*, permanent officials who had their headquarters in the terraferma cities and were responsible for recruiting, inspections, distribution of pay, billeting, and various support services. The system developed in the first half of the century when the *collaterale generale* for nearly thirty years was the Vicentine noble, Belpetro Manelmi, who was often held up as the ideal in later senate discussions on how to organise the army. He, by all accounts, seems to have spent his life in the saddle riding around the billets, inspecting and checking up.³⁵ He had five subordinates, *vice-collaterali*, who were each responsible for an area and whose careers seemed to be almost as long as his own. Manelmi died in 1455 and this, coinciding with

the beginning of a peaceful period and a general drive to increase noble participation in *terraferma* affairs, prompted Venice to substitute nobles elected for three years for the professional *collaterali*.³⁶ Despite this relatively long term of office the change was clearly not a success; the essential continuity and experience were missing and by the early 1470s the professionals were back — in at least two cases the same men who had been Manelmi's subordinates twenty years earlier.³⁷ From that moment onwards the *collaterale generale* was once again regarded as a key figure and he presided over a small permanent office of inspectors, chancellors and accountants. In 1484, after the number of *collaterali* had been reduced at the end of the War of Ferrara, the *collaterale generale* Mariotto da Monte, who held the post from 1482 until his death in 1493, had a staff of eight under him.³⁸ Of these at least five were still in office in the 1490s, and at least two went on in their turn to hold the post of *collaterale generale* in the first decade of the sixteenth century.³⁹ This is not only a significant contrast between the military organisations of the two states; it is also a good example of a wider Venetian emphasis on continuity of administrative and bureaucratic experience which distinguishes her methods from those of Florence.

Venice, then, had a standing army, which was a good deal more of a national army than Machiavelli would admit; Florence lacked anything more than the rudiments of such a force. But this is not the beginning and the end of a military comparison; two other means of defence need to be considered — militia and fortifications. The idea of levying all men able to bear arms in time of crisis was, of course, traditional in most parts of Italy, and such levies did not disappear in the fifteenth century. The increased reliance on professional armies made levies less effective from a purely military point of view, but the growing use of field fortifications and the need for labour to prepare roads and emplacements for artillery gave the militia levies a new role as pioneers. The Venetians were particularly noted for their use of such a militia in the fifteenth century largely because the wars in Lombardy in the first half of the century involved large scale field engineering of all types. One of the first acts of the Venetian government as it began to assume responsibility for a *terraferma* state was to compile lists of all able-bodied men for service in the militia,⁴⁰ and there was always a feeling that the *terraferma* should be responsible both financially, and to some extent physically, for its own defence. But any Florentine army of the period was also accompanied by a proportion of local levies. The change that came about in the later years of the century was the revival of a genuine fighting militia in the form of a selected and partially trained force. The growing value of infantry on the battlefield, which was a phenomenon not just connected with the emergence of the Swiss pike squares, produced a demand for growing numbers of trained infantry which the professional infantry companies could

not satisfy. The answer was to develop a system of selection amongst the ordinary militia conscripts, the arming of these selected men by the state with up-to-date arms, and regular training sessions under professional constables who also led the new militia companies in war.⁴¹ As we know, Machiavelli was influential in introducing such a system in Florence in 1506 and the Venetians instituted a selective militia of a similar type in 1507/8 with the veteran constable Lactantio da Bergamo as chief training officer.⁴² What perhaps is less well known is that Milan had already moved in this direction in the 1460s, and Venice herself had also raised such a militia in the 1470s to meet the Turkish threat in Friuli. The so-called *provisionati di San Marco* were a selected militia raised in the terraferma cities and in Venice according to set quotas, and they were assembled in Friuli in 1478.⁴³ In 1490 German hand-gun experts were sent out to each village to train two men from the village in the use of hand-guns.⁴⁴ The Venetian militia ordinance of 1507 was merely a reissue: a revitalisation of an already tried idea in the light of the threatened German invasion. Such a force was, therefore, not a novelty in the early sixteenth century, nor was it, or should it have been, seriously intended as an alternative to a professional army. It was fundamentally a defensive force even though one of the points of the new militia was to create a force which could be used for the defence of the state as a whole rather than just a local area.

Fundamentally defensive also were fortifications, and the extent to which they relied on fortifications in the fifteenth century affords another interesting contrast between Florentine and Venetian military stances. The Venetians, although they became great fortification builders in the sixteenth century, made relatively little effort in this direction on the Italian mainland in the fifteenth century. There was no serious attempt to refortify the terraferma cities until 1509, even though considerable progress in the art of gunpowder fortification had been made in central Italy in the previous fifty years.⁴⁵ To some extent this was perhaps the result of inheriting reasonably effective fortifications from the *signori* they replaced. The only major fortification completed by the Venetians in Italy prior to 1500 was the fortress of Gradisca, built to guard the eastern frontier after the Turkish incursions of the 1470s.⁴⁶ In Florence the story is very different; from the capture of Pisa in 1406 onwards the building of fortifications had been an important feature of Florentine military policy. Brunelleschi was heavily involved in the early stages, both in Pisa and in some of the Appennine towns. But it was the 1470s and 1480s that saw the greatest Florentine activity in this direction; Volterra, Colle Val d'Elsa, Brolio, Sarzana and Poggio Imperiale were all major and costly works of new fortification.⁴⁷ In the telling phrase which I borrow from Sergio Bertelli: "La regola nostra ha ad essere lo scudo et non la spada." ⁴⁸ By 1494, Florence relied on her fortresses to defend her against the

French, Venice relied on her army; both ultimately failed, but it would not be unfair to say that the Florentine failure was a good deal more ignominious and predictable than the Venetian.

With this contrasting attitude towards fortifications in our minds we can now turn to a brief discussion of some of the factors which might lie behind the broad military comparisons which have been made.

First of all there is the economic factor. Whatever one may think of the state of the Florentine economy in the fifteenth century (and it seems probable that the degree of decline and difficulty has been considerably exaggerated in recent historical writing), there can be no doubt that Venice was the richer state and was better able to afford an expensive standing army. On the other hand, the capital outlay on fortifications could soon be offset by low running costs, as only a handful of infantry were needed to garrison them. Certainly Florence seemed to have far greater difficulty in paying troops than Venice; in 1482 when Florence was complaining of spending 150,000 florins a year on her army in wartime, Venice spent 400,000 ducats in one (admittedly exceptional) month, and over 2,000,000 ducats in the two years of the war.⁴⁹ Poor pay leads to poor service and this in turn leads to the sort of disillusionment which we find in Machiavelli. However, parsimony is not just a matter of economic limitations and we need to know much more about the state of Florentine finances and Florentine financial attitudes before we pursue this line of argument too far.

A second fundamental point is geographical and strategic. Florence, largely hemmed in by hills, could envisage a defensive system which relied on fortifications guarding the obvious approaches. She had no open frontiers which required large standing garrisons to defend them. While Venice also had her mountain frontiers, her most exposed flank in the fifteenth century was the Lombard plain, and her most dangerous enemy was Milan. Until the development of long-range artillery this frontier could only be safeguarded by large standing forces and river fleets. The problem was set out clearly in the deathbed oration of Doge Mocenigo in 1423; at that time the doge is reported to have said that the income from the *terraferma* was already consumed in paying for its defence "*Però se passassimo Verona, per essere campagna aperta, non ci basterebbono l'entrata del nostro stato ... a pagare le genti d'arme che noi tenessimo.*"⁵⁰ Furthermore even in the east Venice never succeeded in reaching in the fifteenth century the line of the Julian Alps, which would have been the natural defensive line and which would have enabled her to defend herself with well-placed fortresses.⁵¹ Gradisca on the Isonzo was an uneasy compromise which already allowed the Turks to debouch into the plains.

Mention of the Turks leads on to another even more fundamental problem for the Venetians. Venice, unlike Florence, always had to envisage war

on two fronts. First the Hungarians, and then the Turks, provided a permanent threat in the rear; Friuli had to be guarded even when the main army was fully committed against Milan. It was very clear in the early years of the century that, while the occupation of Padua, Vicenza and Verona committed Venice to maintaining a certain standing force, it was the successful occupation of Friuli in 1420 which led to a massive increase in military commitment.⁵² With the advent of the Turks by the middle of the century the problem was even more acute. It would not be untrue to say that it was Venice's permanent confrontation with the *oltramontani* on two long frontiers that, more than anything else, dictated her peculiar military development.

Certainly this is more significant than any facile comparison between an aggressive Venice and a defensive Florence, although this argument also has some strength. There can be no doubt that after the unsuccessful attempt on Lucca in the 1430s Florentine policies were largely defensive, and this certainly influenced her neglect of a standing army and her preoccupation with fortifications. Venice, on the other hand, although certainly not the aggressive imperialistic power that Florentine and Milanese propaganda depicted her, was always prepared for opportunist expansion, even if only after fierce internal debate.⁵³ These opportunist tendencies became increasingly apparent in the later years of the century, and to seize such opportunities permanent forces, particularly of cavalry, were needed. One did not invest huge sums in the defence of a frontier which was not necessarily a permanent one.

However, the military attitudes and stances of a society are not just dictated by specifically military factors or economic capacity. They are linked to broader aspects of the nature of that society. Florence and Venice in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were transforming themselves from city states into territorial states; the speed and extent of that transformation had a crucial bearing on their military postures. Florence, for many reasons, seemed to undergo the transformation more slowly and more reluctantly than Venice. Florence was obsessed with the problem of maintaining control over her subject cities and confronting revolt in them in a way that Venice was not. Here was another reason for Florence's belief in fortresses as bastions of the power of the mother city; here was an explanation for Florence's reluctance to raise militia from the wider *distretto*, compared to Venice's positive dependence on the subject cities for her militia. But despite the speed of her conquests, one can exaggerate the speed with which Venice's attitudes towards the wider state changed. In the 1470s and again in 1499 Venice was prepared to abandon her Friulan subjects to Turkish depredations rather than over-exert herself in their defence. However, there was in Venice a sense of responsibility for a territorial state, and the need to defend at least part of it, already in the fifteenth century. This contributed to her determination to maintain a large army. In Florence, city state attitudes died harder;

there was still the feeling that in the last resort the walls of the city were the defences and these did not need large forces of cavalry to defend them.

The Florentines, in fact, were far less psychologically attuned to understanding the attitudes and problems of the military than were the Venetians. Venetian nobles frequently had experience of naval warfare and galley command; they were all trained to use the crossbow; because of the geographical security of their city they did not have the obsessive fear of the military coup or the feudal takeover which seemed to dominate the Florentines. They maintained relatively easy relationships with their military captains; they welcomed them as new feudatories and even as honorary citizens. By the later years of the century a number of the professional cavalry companies were commanded by Venetians;⁵⁴ the leader of the *stradioti* was always a Venetian *provveditore*; the river fleets which played a vital part in Lombard warfare were largely manned by Venetians or at least inhabitants of the lagoon. Here was the psychological background to the maintenance of a standing army which Florence lacked. To Florentines, soldiers were either potential instruments of tyranny or they were barbarous and depraved predators; to Venetians they were more or less efficient defenders of the state.

Abbreviations used in this paper:

ASF Archivio di Stato, Firenze
 ASM Archivio di Stato, Milano
 ASV Archivio di Stato, Venezia
 SS ASV, Senato, Secreta
 ST ASV, Senato, Terra

¹ N. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, II, xix.

² N. Machiavelli, *Il Principe*, xii. This theme of Venice's failure to perceive the danger of relying on mercenaries, and hence her extreme military fragility, is repeated many times in Machiavelli's writings. See particularly: *Istorie fiorentine*, I, xxxix; *Arte della guerra*, I; *Discorsi*, III, xxxi.

³ In 1452 Milan was reputed to have 18,000 cavalry and 3,000 infantry in the field, Venice 16,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry (G. P. Cagnola, "Cronache milanesi," *Archivio storico italiano*, (A.S.I.), III, 1842, p. 133). On 3 Apr. 1450 Cristoforo da Soldo estimated Venetian strength at 13,500 cavalry and 7,500 infantry (Cristoforo da Soldo, *Cronaca*, R.I.S.², XXI, pt. 3, p. 98). Florence in 1452 was paying 9,500-10,000 cavalry (ASF, *Dieci, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti*, 19, ff. 68v. ff.).

⁴ G. Soranzo, *La lega italica (1454-5)*, Milan, 1924, pp. 192-3.

⁵ M. E. Mallett, "Venice and its *Condottieri*, 1404-54," in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J. R. Hale, London, 1973, pp. 121-45.

⁶ The proposal to dispense with the services of Jacopo Piccinino at the end of his current contract was made by a senate committee set up to reduce expenditure on 22 Oct. 1454 (SS, XX, f. 40). Matteo da Capua was released from his contract at his own request on 21 Nov. 1454 (ST, III, f. 138).

⁷ SS, XX, f. 143v (23 Feb., 1458). The dispositions of the Venetian army during these years can be reconstructed from the senate proceedings and the *Libri commemoriali*. Further details of this and many other matters relating to the Venetian army will appear shortly in a study of

that army in the Renaissance being prepared by J. R. Hale and M. E. Mallett.

⁸ ASF, *Dieci, Deliberazioni, condotte e stanziamenti*, 19, fols. 157 ff.

⁹ ASF, *Signori e Collegi, Condotte e stanziamenti*, 9, f. 45.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 184 (27 June 1457).

¹¹ Of the cavalry engaged in the siege of Volterra only Jacopo della Sassetta with 100 men was regularly in Florentine employ. The rest of the force was made up of papal troops and the companies of Federigo da Montefeltro hired for the occasion (E. Fiumi, *L'impresa di Lorenzo de' Medici contro Volterra*, Florence, 1948, pp. 128 ff.).

¹² The *condotta* of Costanzo Sforza with Florence and Milan was published by G. Canestrini, "Documenti per servire alla storia della milizia italiana," *A.S.I.*, XV, 1851, pp. 217-24.

¹³ Tommaso Ridolfi, Florentine ambassador in Milan, commented on Pitigliano's reluctance to serve under Costanzo Sforza in a letter to the Otto di Pratica of 27 Oct. 1481 (ASF, *Otto di Pratica, Responsive*, 2, f. 30). By the end of the year Pitigliano was in Rome taking service with the pope.

¹⁴ ASF, *Otto di Pratica, Responsive*, 2, f. 161. This letter of Bongianni Gianfigliuzzi from Ferrara to the Otto of 7 Jan. 1482 describes the advanced stage of Venetian preparations. For further details on Venetian mobilisation, see E. Piva, *La Guerra di Ferrara*, Padua, 1893, I, pp. 69-72.

¹⁵ S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Venice, 1912-21, IV, p. 406.

¹⁶ Piva, *La Guerra*, pp. 76-7.

¹⁷ ASF, *Signoria, Missive, minutari*, 12, f. 143 (19 Feb. 1482). The Otto reported to Gianfigliuzzi that they intended to seek a vote of money to commence preparations for war on the following day.

¹⁸ ASF, *Archivio medico avanti il Principato*, LI, 80 (26 Feb. 1482).

¹⁹ The decision to pay the advances was announced by the Otto to Gianfigliuzzi on 6 Apr. 1482 (ASF, *Signoria, Missive, minutari*, 12, ff. 189r-v). Tommaso Ridolfi was appointed commissary in the Romagna on 11 May, and then to Ferrara on the 16th (ASF, *Signoria, Legazioni e commissari*, 21, f. 41v).

²⁰ ASF, *Signoria, Missive, minutari*, 12, ff. 318-9.

²¹ This commitment was confirmed in the instructions given by Florence to Lorenzo de' Medici on his appointment as official representative to the Diet of Cremona (ASF, *Legazioni e commissarie*, 21, ff. 46-7, 10 Feb. 1483).

²² M. Sanuto, *Vite de' duchi di Venezia*, R.I.S., XXII, col. 1229.

²³ M. Sanuto, *I Diarii*, Venice, 1879-1903, VIII, cols. 217-21.

²⁴ For Bernardino's part in the battle of Fornovo, see D. M. Schullian ed., *Diaria de Bello Carolino*, New York, 1967, *passim*. Otherwise Sanuto, *Diarii*, I-IX, is full of references to him, but he has no entry in C. Argegny, *Condottieri, capitani e tribuni*, Milan, 1936.

²⁵ For Scariotto, see Mallett, "Venice and its *Condottieri*," p. 126. Giovannantonio's activities during the Pazzi War and the War of Ferrara are fully recorded in the main sources for these events. For his death and the transfer of his company to his son, see *ST*, XII, f. 90v (27 Apr. 1495).

²⁶ M. E. Mallett, "Some Notes on a Fifteenth-century *Condottiere* and his Library; Count Antonio da Marsciano," in *Cultural Aspects of the Italian Renaissance; essays in honour of P. O. Kristeller*, ed. C. H. Clough, Manchester, 1976, pp. 202-15.

²⁷ Gambara had been a captain in Roberto da Sanseverino's company before he joined Venetian service. His career can be followed in the senate proceedings and in Sanuto; see also Schullian, *Diaria*, pp. 83-95.

²⁸ Many of the renewals of Villani's *condotte* are in the *Libri commemoriali*. The arrangements made for his family after his death are recorded in *ST*, X, f. 117 (30 Oct. 1488).

²⁹ Prof. Riccardo Fubini drew attention, in the discussion of this paper, to the peculiar and, in a certain sense, anachronistic role of Colleoni and it is certainly true that no discussion of the Venetian army in this period would be complete without some consideration of him.

³⁰ ASM, *Autografi*, 206, fasc. 31: letter of Giovanni Greco da San Vitale.

³¹ We still await the publication of a full analysis by Prof. Mario del Treppo of the account books of the company of Michele Attendolo which he found in the archive of the *Fraternità dei Laici* in Arezzo. For an interim report, see Mario del Treppo, "Gli aspetti organizzativi,

economici e sociali di una compagnia di ventura italiana," *Rivista storica italiana*, LXXXV, 1973.

³² A systematic study of the Venetian financial structure, and particularly of war financing, remains to be written, and it is impossible to do more than refer to the issue in passing. The system of making the terraferma cities directly responsible for army pay was initiated in Nov. 1417 (SS., VI, ff. 175v-6) and remained the norm throughout the century. There were a number of attempts in the second half of the century to centralize the army pay structure, particularly in wartime when troops were away from their normal billets for long periods. But in the early years of the sixteenth century the peacetime pay of the army, which amounted to 235,000 ducats, remained the responsibility of the terraferma treasuries (ASV, *Consiglio de' Dieci*, *Misti*, 32, f. 104, 14 Dec. 1508; ST, XVI, ff. 74v-75v, 16 Dec. 1508).

³³ Mallett, "Venice and its *Condottieri*," pp. 127-30.

³⁴ E. Ricotti, *Storia delle compagnie di ventura in Italia*, Turin, 1893, 1893², II, p. 132.

³⁵ For discussion of the career of Manelmi, see Mallett, "Venice and its *Condottieri*," pp. 137-8 and *idem*, *Mercenaries and their Masters; Warfare in Renaissance Italy*, London, 1974, pp. 126-7. An indication of the way in which Manelmi's activities were etched clearly on the collective Venetian memory is provided by a senate minute of 1477: "Perché l'è tanto deteriorado l'ordine et qualità de le nostre zentedarme cum nostro gravissimo danno da quello che le ierano in tempo di Belpiero che se questo non è proveduto l'è da temer che occorendo alcuna novità el stado nostro non patisca sinistro..." (SS, XXVIII, f. 10, 26 May 1477).

³⁶ ST, III, f. 149 (28 Feb. 1455) and f. 154v (8 Mar. 1455).

³⁷ Evangelista Manelmi, a relative of Belpetro and the author of an eyewitness account of the siege of Brescia (1438), reappeared as *collaterale* in Ravenna in 1469 (ASV, *Collegio*, *notatorio*, 11, f. 58); Valerio Chiericati, a brother of Belpetro's chief assistant Chierighino, also held this post in 1475. In 1477 a professional *collaterale generale* was appointed once more in the person of Giovanni Niccolo Manzini (ST, VII, f. 194v, 24 Jan. 1478).

³⁸ ST, IX, f. 108v (16 Sept. 1484).

³⁹ Gianfilippo Aureliano (*collaterale generale* 1502-5) and Hieronimo da Monte (1505-8) both had more than twenty years experience in the department.

⁴⁰ SS, IV, f. 79v (5 Dec. 1409).

⁴¹ P. Pieri, *Il rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana*, Turin, 1952, pp. 267-9; this book is a fundamental starting point for any study of Italian warfare in the fifteenth century, and many of the ideas expressed in this paper owe their origins to Pieri's work. For the humanistic background to the revival of the militia, see C. C. Bayley, *War and Society in Renaissance Florence*, Toronto, 1961, pp. 219-34.

⁴² Sanuto, *Diarii*, VII, 111; G. Celli, "Le ordinanze militari della Repubblica di Venezia nel secolo XVI," *Nuova antologia*, 1894, p. 99; C. Pasero, "Aspetti dell'ordinamento militare del territorio bresciano durante il dominio veneto," *Commentari dell'Ateneo di Brescia*, 1937, p. 34.

⁴³ ST, VII, f. 189v (14 Nov. 1477); D. Malipiero, "Annali veneti," ed. F. Longo, *A.S.I.*, ser. 1, VII, 1843, p. 116.

⁴⁴ P. Bembo, *Istoria viniziana*, Milan, 1809, I, pp. 74-5.

⁴⁵ J. R. Halle, "The Early Development of the Bastion; an Italian Chronology, c. 1450-c. 1534," in *Europe in the Late Middle Age*, ed. Hale, et al., London, 1965, pp. 466-94.

⁴⁶ A. Mosetti, "La rocca di Gradisca," *Studi goriziani*, IX, 1933. Extensive work was also underway on the rocca di Brancaleone in Ravenna but was probably not completed before 1500.

⁴⁷ E. Rocchi, *Le fonti storiche dell'architettura militare*, Rome, 1908, pp. 135-7; Hale, "The Early Development of the Bastion," pp. 480-3; G. Severini, *Architetture militari di Giuliano da Sangallo*, Pisa, 1970, *passim*.

⁴⁸ See above p. 135.

⁴⁹ For the Florentine expenditure, see ASF, *Signori*, *Legazioni e commissarie*, 21, ff. 46-7 (10 Feb. 1483). The 400,000 ducats spent by Venice in April 1482 (see above p. 159) included advances to the army of several months pay; for the total expenditure on the War of Ferrara, see A. Battistella, *La Repubblica di Venezia nei suoi undici secoli di storia*, Venice, 1921, p. 400.

⁵⁰ Sanuto, *Vite de' duchi di Venezia*, col. 958.

⁵¹ A. Tamaro, *La Vénétie julienne et la Dalmatie*, Rome, 1918, I, pp. 350-70.

⁵² SS, VIII, f. 54v (22 May 1422); at this moment Venetian standing forces were increased

by 25% in the light of the new commitments. This was also the moment in which the Savi di Terraferma were finally established.

⁵³ N. Valeri, "Venezia nella crisi italiana del Rinascimento," in *La civiltà veneziana del Quattrocento*, Florence, 1957, pp. 25-48; N. Rubinstein, "Italian Reactions to Terraferma Expansion in the Fifteenth Century," in *Renaissance Venice*, pp. 207-9.

⁵⁴ Some examples of Venetian nobles commanding troops in this period are: Giovanni Gradenigo, who served under Guido de' Rossi in the German war of 1487 and then received his own company with which he fought at Fornovo; Giovanni Diedo, who served as a *condottiere* in Pisa when he took over the company of Piero Chiericato (ST, XIII, f. 4v); Alvise Valaresso, who served for 24 years in the army and received his own *condotta* in 1491 (ST, XI, f. 86v); and Jacopo Badoer and Vettore Malipiero, who both commanded companies of *lanze spezzate* in the 1470s (Badoer was killed fighting the Turks in 1477).