

FILIPPO DE'NERLI, 1485 - 1556;
POLITICIAN, ADMINISTRATOR AND HISTORIAN.

Kathryn Valerie Underhill.



ProQuest Number: 10107269

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10107269

Published by ProQuest LLC(2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

ABSTRACT.

The aim of this study is to examine the life and work of Filippo de'Nerli and to see what this reveals about the politics, society and historiography of his time. The first part of the study is biographical, tracing Nerli's involvement with politics and administration at various stages of his career. His period as governor of Modena is seen in the context of the war of the League of Cognac, the part which he played in cultural activities in Florence is considered, and in particular an attempt is made to analyse the changes which took place in the role of the Florentine ottimati in the mid sixteenth century as a result of the establishment of Medici absolutism. The second part of the study is devoted to an examination of Nerli's history of Florence. The sources of his work, its nature and the extent to which it served as a source for his contemporaries are considered and Nerli's relations with his fellow historians at Cosimo's court and in the Florentine Academy are discussed. Finally an attempt is made to reach certain tentative general conclusions about the nature and methods of historical writing in sixteenth century Florence. The aim throughout is to place Nerli in his correct context and this reveals him as a typical representative of his class who, for that reason, is a valuable subject for a study such as this.

CONTENTS.

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| I | Introductory. | 4 |
| II | Nerli's Formative Years, 1511-1524. | 29 |
| III | Modena: 1524-1527. | 80 |
| IV | After Modena - Period of Transition. | 132 |
| V | Government under Duke Cosimo. | 183 |
| VI | The <u>Commentari</u> . | 235 |
| VII | Nerli and his fellow historians. | 284 |
| VIII | Historiography in Sixteenth Century Florence. | 331 |
| | Conclusion | 378 |
| | Appendix I | 384 |
| | Appendix II | 386 |
| | Bibliography | 388 |
| | Plate I | 161 |

Chapter I - Introductory.

The historian Filippo de'Nerli was born in Florence on March 9, 1485 and died there on January 17, 1556. His life thus spanned some of the most important events in the history of the city in which he, as a member of one of the leading ottimati¹ families, played an active role. His biography, therefore, not only provides an insight into the life of one of the historians of the sixteenth century but it also gives us some idea of how politics and government in Florence functioned at this period and of the part which the ottimati played in the life of the city. The first part of this study will seek, through a biography of Nerli, to show the kind of political role which men of his class filled and the changes which occurred in that role during the early sixteenth century. Previous studies have concentrated upon the workings of the Florentine constitution and only outstanding men such as Guicciardini and Francesco Vettori have been studied individually.² More such studies are needed before we can fully understand the way in which government functioned in Florence, a city where personalities were of supreme importance in political life. The second part of the study will be devoted to Nerli as an historian; his work and its relation to that of the other

1) Certain Italian terms, including ottimati and dominio, have been used throughout without inverted commas for the purpose of simplification.

2) e.g. R. Ridolfi - Vita di Francesco Guicciardini. Rome. 1960; L. Passy - Un ami de Machiavel. François Vettori, sa vie et ses oeuvres. Paris. 1913; R. Hughes - Francesco Vettori. London Ph.D thesis 1958. A study of Jacopo Salviati would be of particular value.

historians of the sixteenth century.

For the major part of Nerli's life Florentine politics were dominated, as they had been for many previous generations, by the constant struggle which went on between the classes in the city. This struggle dominates the history of Giovanni Villani, Machiavelli is very conscious of it in his Istorie Fiorentine, and Nerli blames the many troubles which have marred Florence's history on the constant class and faction quarrels and feuds. The ottimati strove constantly to maintain their position vis-à-vis both the Medici and the other members of their own class whilst the people, who had no political rights under the constitution, were ever anxious to gain liberty. The slogan of Libertà became the cry not only of the popolo but also of those ottimati who hoped to increase their own power by supporting republican institutions, though few of them had any genuine desire for libertà. In 1494, for example, the ottimati were prepared to ally with the people, who in normal circumstances they feared, in order to rid themselves of the unpopular rule of Piero de' Medici.³ To the popolo the idea of liberty was one to which they clung desperately, looking with envy at the institutions of Venice, but to the ottimati the best form of government was the one which gave them the most power. All too frequently they seem to have had little conception of what was best for the city,

3) See N. Rubinstein - Politics and Constitution in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century, in Italian Renaissance Studies in memory of C. Ady. Ed. E.F. Jacob. London. 1960.

stirring up trouble to suit their own ends. Guicciardini commented of Bernardo Rucellai "⁴..non potette mai stare contento e quieto a alcun governo".

Yet paradoxically it was the *ottimati* who formed the basis of any government in Florence by virtue of their wealth and experience. Neither the Medici nor the republican leaders Piero Soderini and Niccolò Capponi could afford to relinquish their services, and Capponi brought about his own downfall by trying to include experienced pro-Medici *ottimati* in his régime. For the larger part of Nerli's political life it remained true that the government of the city depended upon the *ottimati* but their position was constantly threatened by the attempts of the Medici family to increase their own power and establish themselves as absolute rulers. The attempts of Piero de' Medici and of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, met with strong opposition, but Duke Alessandro was successful in laying the foundations of a Medicean bureaucracy in which the role of the *ottimati* was severely curtailed. The process was continued under Duke Cosimo, who won for himself the title of Grand Duke of Tuscany and virtually reduced the *ottimati* to the position of civil servants, who have no say in the formation of the policy which they have to implement. We shall be able to see how the *ottimati* gradually lost their power and why this happened through our study of Nerli's career.

4) Guicciardini - Storie Fiorentine dal 1378 al 1509. Bari. 1931. Chap. 26, p. 283-4.

At the time when Nerli was born the Medici family seemed firmly entrenched in their position as leading citizens in Florence. It is, however, important to realize that the family did not in fact possess any constitutional powers over and above those enjoyed by other ottimati families and that the Medici were, therefore, always in danger of attack from other members of their class. An ottimati group led by Luca Pitti had sought to overthrow Piero di Cosimo and in 1478 Lorenzo had had to contend with the conspiracy of the Pazzi. Under the rule of the skilful Lorenzo the position of the family did seem reasonably secure, for he succeeded in controlling the ottimati families upon whose support he relied and in manipulating the important office - choosing councils by filling them with his own supporters.⁵ Under the guidance of Lorenzo the city experienced what came to be regarded as a Golden Age, becoming recognized as the foremost centre of Italian culture. Yet the uncertain nature of the Medici position was underlined when, within two years of the death of 'il Magnifico', the ottimati expelled his son Piero from the city and established a 'republican' r`egime. In 1494, when Nerli was a boy of nine, the ottimati, angered by Piero's absolutist tendencies and his refusal to consult them on matters of importance, allied with the popolo to set up a new republican government under the guidance of the friar of San Marco, Girolamo

5) See N. Rubinstein - The Government of Florence under the Medici. Oxford. 1966. This gives an analysis of the way in which the Medici ruled in Florence.

6
Savonarola.

Within a few years Savonarola reaped the whirlwind which he had sown when the opposition of the Pope combined with that of his enemies in Florence to bring him to his death at the stake. The constitution which he had helped to set up was modelled upon that of Venice and its chief feature was a Great Council, designed to ensure that government had a broader basis than it had had under the 'packed' councils of the Medici. However, it proved virtually impossible to run the government in this way alone because of the administrative difficulties caused by the rather unwieldy system, notably the problem of inducing the commercially minded citizens to spare enough time to attend the meetings of the council, and it was therefore decided to elect a permanent leader.⁷ In 1502 Piero Soderini was elected Gonfaloniere for life in an attempt to stabilize the republican constitution, but this form of government proved no more pleasing to the ottimati than had that of the Medici.⁸ They had hoped that Soderini, as a member of their own class, would prove sympathetic to their desires, but once in power Soderini showed a tendency to pay more attention than the nobles felt necessary to the point of view of the lower orders. Opposition to Soderini soon became renewed support for the Medici, especially after the

6) R. Ridolfi - Vita di Girolamo Savonarola. Rome. 1952.

7) N. Rubinstein - I Primi Anni del Consiglio Maggiore di Firenze, in A.S.I. 1954, pp. 151-194; 321-347.

8) Rosalyn Cooper - Piero Soderini, Gonfaloniere a Vita, London Ph.D thesis, 1965.

death of the unpopular Piero, and in 1512 the family was able to profit from the first Italian expedition of the emperor Charles V to return to power in Florence.

This return proved impermanent. The nobles who had not been able to accept Soderini's links with the populace found it equally impossible to tolerate the absolutism of the young Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, or of the Cardinal of Cortona, who ruled the city on behalf of Ippolito and Alessandro de'Medici. The defeat of Clement VII and the sack of Rome by imperial troops in 1527 was the signal for the Medici to be expelled from Florence once more and be replaced by what was to be the last Florentine republic,⁹ under the leadership of the new Gonfaloniere, Niccolò Capponi. Once again the ottimati, especially those with more republican leanings, experienced a disappointment in their gonfaloniere, for Capponi was sympathetic towards Mediceans and carried on negotiations with the Pope which brought about his downfall. The success of the imperial army in the siege of Florence enabled the Medici to regain their hold, and this time they did not relinquish it. With the establishment of the Dukedom of Alessandro the pattern was set for the future aggrandisement of the Medici and the gradual decline of the ottimati. The class struggle which had previously dominated the political scene died away as all classes were forced to turn to the Duke as head of state and giver of justice and the seal was set on this turbulent chapter in the

9) See C. Roth - The Last Florentine Republic. London. 1925.

history of Florence.

Throughout this period Nerli played an active political role, for the most part as a supporter of the Medici, though not in an entirely uncritical manner as we shall see.¹⁰ His position as a Medicean led to his imprisonment at the time of the siege, involving him in hardship and financial loss, but he reaped his reward under Dukes Alessandro and Cosimo and his support for the Medici was in the end profitable to him. Nerli's career is particularly interesting since it illustrates very clearly the kind of role which the ottimati played during the reign of Duke Cosimo, still being concerned with the administration of the city and the dominio but no longer having the power to affect policy. His career shows how vital the ottimati were to the administrative life of the city even after they had ceased to wield the power which they had formerly enjoyed. Nerli was typical of the many members of ottimati families upon whom the smooth running of the Florentine state depended.

Our earliest source for Nerli's life, apart from the official records which contain references to the posts which he held both in Florence and outside it, is an anonymous life now in the Marucelliana library in Florence.¹¹ This life was printed by Francesco Settignano in 1728 when he published his edition of Nerli's history¹² and contains basic biographical details on

¹⁰) See Chaps. 4 and 6.

¹¹) Marucelliana, A. CLXXXI. f. 103.

¹²) Filippo de' Nerli - Commentari de' Fatti Civili occorsi dentro la città di Firenze. Ed. F. Settignano. Augsburg. 1728.

Nerli's career. Added to this we have a number of contemporary comments on Nerli and his work, the majority of which, since they come from republicans like Busini, Varchi and Giannotti, are unflattering but need not be taken at their face value.¹³

References to Nerli before the renewed interest in historiography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries come mainly in catalogues and books of reference and add only slightly to our picture of the historian. He is, for example, included in the Catalogus Scriptorum Florentinorum of Michele Poccianti, which was published in Florence in 1589 and in which he is praised for the value of his history.¹⁴ In his Istoria degli Scrittori Fiorentine of 1722 P.Giulio Negri is enthusiastic, if not very accurate on the subject of Nerli, to whom he refers as,

"..un'Ingegno capace di tutte le Scienze, e Discipline, che formano un degnissimo Cittadino..",¹⁵

perhaps rather an overstatement in view of Nerli's lack of a formal education. Nerli and his family are treated in Eugenio

13) See Chap. 7 for Nerli's relationship with these republicans.
14) Poccianti, op.cit. p.150. "Philippus Nerlius vir consularis gravissimus eloquentia imbutus, peripatheticis doctrinis excultus, et humanis nobiliter edoctus, universas Historias Florentinas in compendium diligentissime, et accurate collegit, quae nondum impressae apud suam nobilissimam familiam asservantur".

15) Giulio Negri - Istoria degli Scrittori Fiorentini. Ferrara. 1722.

16

Gamurrini's work on the Florentine families, though not in
earlier works on the same subject by Ammirato and Paolo Mini.¹⁷
The omission from Mini's work is not perhaps so surprising when
we consider that he gives a list of Florentine historians which
omits not only Nerli but also Segni, Pitti, Giannotti and Nardi.
Salvini, in his Fasti Consolari, only mentions Nerli in connection
with the presentation of his history to Duke Francesco by his
grandson Filippo, to whom the work had been left,¹⁸ and Nerli is
omitted from the Notizie of the Academy, even though this work
purports to be a history of that body from the outset and includes
the other historians, Segni, Varchi and Adriani.¹⁹ The fact that
Nerli is not mentioned in the Dictionnaire Historique et Critique
of Pierre Bayle is not so strange for he did not achieve the
international reputation of Machiavelli, Guicciardini and
Adriani.²⁰ It is clear that the references to Nerli before the
publication of his history are, as one might expect, very slight,
and those which there are deal mainly with his life and the
official posts which he held; in particular they all refer to his

16) Eugenio Gamurrini - Istoria genealogica delle famiglie nobili
Toscane et Umbre. 5 Vols. Fl. 1668-85.

17) Scipione Ammirato - Delle Famiglie Nobili Fiorentine. Fl. 1615;
Paolo Mini - Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze, e de Fiorentini.
Fl. 1593.

18) Salvino Salvini - Fasti Consolari. Fl. 1717. See Chap. 6, p. 239

19) Notizie Letterarie ed Istoriche intorno agli uomini illustri
dell'Accademia Fiorentina. Fl. 1700. See Chap. 7, p. 318

20) Pierre Bayle - Dictionnaire Historique et Critique. New ed.
Paris. 1820-24.

membership of the senate of the Quarantotto from its foundation.

In 1728 the Commentari became available to a much wider public and the kind of brief mention which Nerli had been given in such works as Guiseppe Manni's Serie de' Senatori Fiorentini in 1722²¹ gave way to the fuller appreciation of Domenico Maria Manni in his Metodo per istudiare con brevità e Profittevolmente le Storie di Firenze of 1755.²² Manni's work begins with some general remarks on the utility of histories of one's native land and on the characteristics which he considers a good history should possess. He then proceeds to divide Florentine history into a number of periods, giving what he feels to be a good bibliography for each one. He recommends Ammirato, Buonaccorsi, Bruto, Nardi and Guicciardini for the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and then includes Nerli in his fifth period which covers

"..lo governo di Casa Medici".

It is, he considers,

"di non lieve utile"

to read Nerli's history for he can

"dar conto di molte, e molte cose ne'tempi torbidi, e scabrosi della sua vita accadute, avvegnachè egli si trovò di per se nelle più importanti occorrenze della Patria".

He also points out that the adverse comments of Busini and Varchi may be attributed to their adherence to the opposing faction and

21)Guiseppe Manni - Serie de' Senatori Fiorentini. Fl.1722

22)In A.Santini - La Toscana illustrata nella sua storia con vari scelti monumenti e documenti per l'avanti o inediti, o molto rari. Livorno.1755.

clearly thinks highly of Nerli's work, which has the added value of being written by someone who actually played a part in the events which he is describing.

In the nineteenth century interest in all aspects of the Renaissance increased and for the first time, due to the work of Jacob Burckhardt,²³ it came into its own as a unified period of history. With this development came a new interest in the historians of the sixteenth century and an attempt to study them as a group. Then, as indeed is the case even now, Machiavelli and Guicciardini tended to dominate the scene to the neglect of other writers, even though attempts were made to see the Florentine historians in their general historiographical background. The first critic to adopt this approach was Leopold von Ranke, who wrote his study of historiography in 1874.²⁴ The book is concerned not only with the historians of Italy, of Venice, Milan, Naples, Sicily and Florence, but also with those of Spain, Germany and France, the aim being the ambitious one of providing a synthesis of the trends of historical writing. Ranke gives brief biographical details on each of the Florentine writers, seeking to make clear their political loyalties in order to provide a means of categorizing them, a method which, although it can make for clarity, is not always justifiable since not all the historians fall into one particular political group. To Nerli and

23) Jacob Burckhardt - Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien. Ein Versuch. Basel.1860.

24) Leopold von Ranke - Zur kritik neuerer Geschichtschreiber. Leipzig and Berlin.1874.

his work Ranke gives a good press, writing that, whilst Nerli's sympathies are undoubtedly Medicean and ottimati,

"..nur von 1527-1529, wo auch er gefangen ward, ist er bitterer gegen die entschlossenen Popolaren". 25

Following in Ranke's footsteps the French historian Perrens also considers the historians in one section of his history of Florence, praising Nerli for his precision and clarity at the beginning of the Commentari but criticizing the way in which the work becomes over-detailed and involved in the later sections. 26

At the turn of the century work was done on the group of historians who had worked under the auspices of Duke Cosimo, and this narrowing of the field meant that more detailed work could be done on their lives, their work and their inter-relations. The larger part of this work was done by Guiseppe Sanesi and M. Lupo Gentile,²⁷ and Gentile is especially flattering to Nerli, who he says

"..deve stare in prima linea fra gli storici fiorentini fioriti alla corte di Cosimo I, come il più originale..". 28

The only previous work on Nerli himself was done by Alberto Niccolai who wrote a biography of him and an article on his interest in Dante.²⁹ The biography covers Nerli's life and

25) Ranke, op.cit. p.82.

26) Perrens - Histoire de Florence, depuis la domination des Médicis. Paris.1890.

27) This is discussed in full in Chap.7.

28) M.Lupo Gentile - Studi sulla Storiographia Fiorentina alla corte di Cosimo I De' Medici. Pisa.1905.

29) A.Niccolai - Filippo de' Nerli (1485-1556). Pisa.1906 and Un altro studioso di Dante fra gli storici del 500, in A.Vittorio Cian, i suoi scolari dell'Università di Pisa. Pisa.1909.

includes a discussion of the Commentari but it is not a work of great detail and it leaves untouched various important points. Niccolai, whilst he produces some of the evidence to clear Nerli of the charges of cowardice and neglect of duty which were laid against him in connection with the time when he was governor of Modena, does not give much indication of the kind of work a papal governor had to do, nor does he place the fall of Modena in its context of the campaigns of the League of Cognac. He says little of Nerli's life before he went to Modena or of the part which he played as a member of the Florentine Academy or of the positions which he held during the reign of Cosimo. The criticism which he gives of the Commentari is not particularly detailed and he pays little attention to the problem of Nerli's sources or the extent to which later historians made use of him. It is hoped in the present study to provide more information on all these points, as well as to provide an example of the life of a Florentine noble in the sixteenth century.

At the same time as the more detailed studies there also appeared further works in the tradition of Ranke. In 1911 Eduard Fueter published his work on historiography, giving the historians a slightly more detailed treatment than Ranke had done.³⁰ To Fueter Nerli is the most famous of the Florentine historians of the school of Machiavelli, and he gives him credit for being a political theorist as well as an historian. Modern books of

30) Eduard Fueter - Geschichte der neueren Historiographie. Munich-Berlin. 1911. Especially Volume 3.

reference make brief comments on Nerli, none of which contribute to our existing knowledge. The most recent work on the historians of the sixteenth century as a group is by a Swiss, writing once again in the tradition of Ranke. This is a work by Rudolf von Albertini, quasi-historical in form, which seeks to make clear the influence upon the historians of the momentous political events which shook the city at this time.³¹ It is a work of considerable value, though its arrangement into chapters coinciding with the various periods of Florence's history makes it somewhat difficult to follow through the thought and career of one particular historian.

Alongside these works runs the enormous body of work which has been done on Guicciardini and Machiavelli, above all on the latter, which has led to the neglect of the minor historians of the period.³² There is room for more studies of these historians, of Segni, Pitti, Varchi and Adriani, so that a more complete view of sixteenth century Florentine historiography may be obtained, for it should not be judged to such a large extent on the works of the two most famous historians. The works of the minor historians are in many ways more typical of the age than are the writings of the two 'giants' in the field of historiography.

Filippo de'Nerli, as has been pointed out, came from the

³¹)Rudolf von Albertini - Das Florentinische Staatsbewusstsein in Übergang von der Republik zum Prinzipat. Bern.1955.

³²)For a bibliography of works on Machiavelli see Federico Chabod - Machiavelli and the Renaissance. Trans. D.Moore. London.1958.

ottimati classes. The Nerli family was one of the oldest of the noble Florentine families and claimed that it had originated in Rome. The earliest reference to any member of the family is to a Leone di Giovanni in 904,³³ while Villani writes that in 1006 the Nerli were among the followers of Ugo, Marchese di Brandenburg, the governor of Otto III in Tuscany.³⁴ It was from the governor that the Nerli derived their privileges in Florence and their coat of arms.³⁵ Other privileges were granted to the family by Pope Nicholas II in 1059 and by Pope Alexander III in 1170.³⁶ Due to their Guelph sympathies the family were exiled from the city after the battle of Montaperti in 1260 and it was during this period of exile that they acquired lands in the Languedoc, at Beaucaire. It is not true, as Mondali claims, that the Nerli originated in the Languedoc.³⁷ Their adherence to the Guelph cause meant that the Nerli were on the side originally supported by the poet Dante and he refers to them in the 'Paradiso'.³⁸ This must have been without doubt a great source of pride to them, if the comments of Vincenzo Acciaiuoli are any guide. Acciaiuoli so admired Dante that he is said to have

33)A.S.F. Carte Dei, f.36. The Carte Dei are the papers of Benedetto Dei which contain extracts from various sources relating to the Florentine families.

34)G.Villani - Historie Universali de suoi tempi. Fl.1570. Book 4, p.71.

35)Scipione Ammirato - Istorie Fiorentine. 1853. Book 1, p.106.

36)See Gammurini, op.cit Vol.5, p.3.

37)In Carte Dei, f.39.

38)Dante - Paradiso. Canto 15.

"E vidi quel de' Nerli, e quel del Vecchio

Esser contenti alla pelle scoperta,

E le sue donne al fuso, ed al pennechio".

Canto 16 refers to the privileges they had from Ugo.

considered it a great honour and the most note-worthy thing which had happened to his family that they were mentioned by Dante,

"..anchorchè quel suo di cui si fosse memoria, fosse stato nelle più profonda bolgia dell'Inferno". 39

At least the poet's reference to the Nerli was not derogatory.

On first coming to Florence the Nerli lived in the Mercato Vecchio area but by 1248, according to the somewhat unreliable Malespini, they were numbered

"..tra i Guelfi del Sesto d'Oltrano", 40

having moved to live in the Borgo S.Jacopo because of quarrels with their Ghibelline neighbours in the other quarter. In the Santo Spirito area they had

"..torre, e Piazza e fortissimi casamenti facendo de molti luoghi sani, e sontuosi Palazzi con deliziose giardini". 41

They also owned lands at Farnete del Poggio, which were known as the Nerlaia, but these suffered at the hands of Castruccio Castracani so that by the sixteenth century their property there was in ruins. In the city itself they were the patrons of chapels in a number of the principal churches, including Santo Spirito, the Carmine, Ognissanti, San Francesco al Monte and Santa Croce. By 1532 they also owned the fortress at Montemurlo, described as

"già divenuta palazzo e abitazione dei Nerli". 42

39) Vincenzo Acciaiuoli - Vita di Piero di Gino Capponi. Intro. A.S.I. Vol.4, part 2. 1853. p.13-40.

40) In Carte Dei, f.36.

41) " " " f.39.

42) Ammirato, Book 32, p.146.

It is clear that they were an important and wealthy family; Guicciardini, in his Le Cose Fiorentine, places them in a list of the richest families in the fourteenth century,⁴³ and in his Ricordi he refers to the large dowry which they were able to provide when one of them married into his own house.⁴⁴

In the fourteenth century the Nerli were on the losing side in the internal struggles of the city,⁴⁵ but in the fifteenth century they rose to an important place in the government of Florence. Cosimo de'Medici, on his return from exile in 1434, made the family eligible for the highest offices and they must have done well through advancement by the Medici family. The Nerli, and Filippo in particular, have been regarded as proteges of the Medici, completely committed to support for their rule, but this can in fact be over-stressed. In the Priorista of Francesco Rucellai there is evidence that the Nerli alliance with the Medici was not always a smooth one. Rucellai writes that

"..nel dominio de'Medici, ed in specie nel principio anno goduto i Nerli più scarsamente l'onorevolezze, e cio per essergli stati poco bene affezionati".

In spite of Lupo Gentile's assertion that the Nerli had a tradition⁴⁶ of Medici service one has only to examine the careers of Filippo

43)Guicciardini - Le Cose Fiorentine. Ed.Ridolfi. Fl.1945. Book 1, p.32.

44) " - Ricordi di Famiglia. Opere Inedite. Vol. 10, p.36-37.

45)Machiavelli - Istorie Fiorentine. Milan.1962. Book 2, XL &XLI.

46)M.Lupo Gentile, op.cit. p.65. "Ma almeno il Nerli seguì sempre un'unica bandiera, fu mediceo, per tradizione familiare e per sistema, nè vacillò mai nella sua fede politica,..".

de'Nerli's grandfather, uncle and father to see that it is by no means correct to view the family as exclusively Medicean in outlook, even if Filippo himself did in the end profit from his association with the family.

There is no doubt that foremost amongst the members of the *ottimati* who expelled Piero de'Medici from Florence in 1494 were Tanai de'Nerli and his son Jacopo, Filippo's grandfather and uncle. The accounts of the expulsion are rather muddled and it is a little difficult to distinguish the exact roles played by the two men, but it is clear that they were both leading members of the opposition to Piero. It is probable that their opposition sprang from the fact that they had not profitted as much as they had hoped from Piero's rule, for thwarted ambition was a common cause of rebellion among the Florentine *ottimati*. Tanai was dissatisfied in spite of having held official positions in the city⁴⁷ and being in a position of some authority.⁴⁸ Jacopo, who⁴⁹ was elected to be *Gonfaloniere* on September 8, 1494 is reported as having,

"..liberamente disse, essere hormai tempo uscire di governo di fanciulli",

50
although this remark has also been attributed to Piero Capponi.

In his history of Florence Guicciardini names Jacopo de'Nerli and

47) See *Tratte* 94. Tanai was a Prior in July 1472 and March 1494.

48) *Ammirato*, Book 26, p.139, claims that it was thanks to Tanai that Filippo Corbizi gained the position of *Gonfaloniere* in 1495.

49) See *Tratte* 94.

50) See V. Acciaiuoli - Vita di Piero di Gino Capponi. A.S.I. Vol.4, part 2, 1853.

51

Luca Corsini as the prime movers in the overthrow of Piero.
 In the Storia d'Italia, when he is describing the way in which Piero was refused admission to the Signoria by the magistrates, Guicciardini says

"..de'quali fu il principale Jacopo de'Nerli, giovane nobile e ricco". 52

It is clear that Jacopo was a leader of the revolution from the fact that he was one of the ambassadors sent to the French king, Charles VIII, when he entered the city, and Ammirato says that the part he played at this time was counted in his favour when there were suspicions against him in 1497.⁵³ The Nerli were obviously regarded at this time as Medici opponents for Nardi writes that when Piero was planning to attempt a return to the city in 1495 the idea was discussed of sacking a number of houses, these being those of the Strozzi, Nerli, Valori and Guigni

"..e alcune altre case che s'erano in quei tempi discoperte segnalatamente nimiche de'Medici". 54

In view of the fact that as a small boy of nine or ten Nerli was in this atmosphere of strong opposition to the Medici it can scarcely be claimed that he was brought up as a convinced Medicean.

The most important influence on Nerli's early life was his

51) Guicciardini - Storie Fiorentine. Chap. 11.

52) " - Storia d'Italia. Book 1, p. 71.

53) Ammirato, Book 27, p. 191.

54) Nardi - Istorie della Città di Firenze. 1842. Book 2, p. 133

father, Benedetto de' Nerli, who was not only an extremely learned man but also played an active part in political life. The records of the Consulte e Pratiche show that Benedetto was one of the most active opponents of the rule of the Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini⁵⁵ and was clearly at the heart of Florentine affairs. He also played a part in the trial of the Friar Girolamo Savonarola⁵⁶ and held numerous official posts in Florence. He was one of the twelve 'buonomini' in 1503 and a Gonfaloniere in 1509.⁵⁷ In 1501 he was one of the ambassadors who negotiated the treaty between the city and the French king and he played a similar part in the treaty of 1506 between Siena and the Florentine Republic. In connection with the French peace of 1501 Benedetto went on a mission to Milan to negotiate with the Cardinal of Amboise and the letters which he wrote to the Priors in Florence telling them of the progress of the talks are to be seen in the records of the Signori Responsive. The Cardinal was clearly not an easy man to negotiate with, for he accused the Florentines of being ungrateful in their attitude towards the King and Nerli writes that he told them

"..che dobbiamo molto bene pensare che cosa era haver abusato uno tanto Re".

58

55) See R. Cooper - Piero Soderini, Gonfaloniere a Vita. London Ph.D thesis, 1965. Also A.S.F. Consulte e Pratiche.

56) See Chap. 2, p.32

57) Tratte 94, f.100v - March 1503.

" " f.56v - May 1509.

58) A.S.F. Signori Responsive. Filza 21, f.92-95. Benedetto de' Nerli and Antonio Malegonnella to the Priors. July 16, 1501.

In 1512 Nerli was active in the deposition of Soderini, holding office at this crucial time,⁵⁹ and he also served under the newly restored Medici r`egime. He was one of the embassy sent to congratulate Leo X on his elevation to the Papacy, probably coming into contact once again with his son's father-in-law, Jacopo Salviati, who was a permanent ambassador in Rome at the time.⁶⁰ In 1519 Nerli was a member of the 'Otto di Pratica'. Having helped to bring about the down-fall of Soderini Benedetto de'Nerli was likely to be given office under the Medici, but the fact that his son later wrote to the young Duke of Urbino to try to gain office for him suggests that he was not one of their more favoured supporters, perhaps due to the previous family record.⁶¹

When we turn to other members of Nerli's family we find that not all of them favoured the Medici and in fact some of them were undoubtedly Republican in their sympathies. Antonio de'Nerli, Filippo's first cousin, son of his uncle Pietro,

"..fu...privato di tutti gli onori e cariche
della Repubblica"

62

when the Cardinal of Cortona returned to the city to continue to rule on behalf of the Medici, a sign of Antonio's republican

59) See Tratte 84, f.6. September, 1512 - member of Balìa.
" " f.40. October, 1512 - member of Dieci di

Libert`a e Pace.

60) See Tratte 84, f.81. December, 1519.

61) See Chap. 2, p.41

62) See F.Galvani - Sommario Storico delle Famiglie Celebri Toscane. Fl.1862. Under Nerli.

outlook. Antonio's brother Gianozzo was also of republican sympathies and had close connections with many leading republicans. Varchi records that Gianozzo's name was amongst those on a list which the Cardinal of Cortona sent to the Pope of those citizens who had taken part in anti-Medici activities, and Gianozzo was clearly active in the group of ⁶³ ~~dis~~contents in 1530. He was also on friendly terms with Benedetto Varchi and Piero Vettori, with whom he carried on a correspondence. ⁶⁴ Yet the fact that Gianozzo was a republican did not mean, as one might have imagined it would, that he was on bad terms with his cousin Filippo. On the contrary, they seem to have been on the most friendly terms and there is a charming letter in the Vettori correspondence in which Gianozzo describes the 'cerimonial opening' of a new piece of land which he had purchased at which the family were present and at which Filippo delivered a short ⁶⁵ oration.

It is of course not uncommon at this period to find families who were divided in their political loyalties, often to a large extent. The Strozzi family provide a good example, for at the

63) Varchi, Book 3, p.122.

64) British Museum, Additional Manuscripts, 10267-10281. See also Chap.7, p.328

65) " " " " 10269, f.301. Gianozzo de' Nerli to Piero Vettori, November 24, 1537. "La macchia è posta, et hebbi assai bel tempo a por la penso si doverra appiccare, posi la prima pianta di mia mano, funne presente Filippo de' Nerli, el quale fece un'poco d'orationella,..".

time when Filippo Strozzi was leading the opposition to Alessandro de'Medici his brother Matteo remained one of the Duke's chief advisors. The fact that Nerli was on friendly terms with relatives who had republican views does not necessarily mean that he shared those views, and in fact he never exhibits what might be termed republican outlooks. However, he cannot have failed to have been influenced by the actions and views of his grandfather, uncle and father, from whom he gained his first insight into political life and who were by no means dedicated to the Medici, and were notably antagonistic towards Piero de'Medici. Filippo himself was by no means a republican and it would be absurd to suggest that this was the case, but nor was he as steeped in a tradition of support for the Medici as has sometimes been assumed. Few of the *ottimati* families were so committed to any party that there was no chance of their allegiance changing if this became expedient and the Nerli were no exception to this rule, even if in his later years Filippo did display a considerable degree of loyalty to the Medici.

Filippo received from his father Benedetto not only his first insight into Florentine and Italian politics but also the foundations of his education. This is unfortunately an obscure period of Nerli's life, and it is difficult to say with any certainty exactly what sort of education he did receive. His father was acknowledged to be a man of considerable learning and had earned for himself the title of 'Il Filologo'. He was a disciple of Poliziano and in 1488 he and his brother Neri

published an edition of Homer which, ironically enough, they dedicated to Piero de' Medici.⁶⁶ In 1514 the famous Giunti brothers published an edition of Horace which Benedetto had prepared and which he dedicated to his son Filippo.⁶⁷ The preface is headed "Benedictus Philologus Florentinus Docto Ivveni Philippo Nerlio. S." and Benedetto refers to Filippo as a studious youth. This praise may be an exaggeration of Filippo's talents by his fond father but it does suggest that through Benedetto he received an education befitting his status, even though there is no record of him attending courses at any of the well-known studios. The aim of a humanist education was the formation of a complete man, that is, one well versed in the Classics and in the writings of the Christian fathers, with a knowledge of grammar and rhetoric, and with a character which would enable him to play to the full his role in the political and cultural life of the time.⁶⁸ In the fifteenth century education, its aims and the form it should take, was a popular subject and Benedetto de' Nerli had the writings of Maffeo Vegio, Pier Paolo Vergerio and others to guide him in the formulation of Filippo's education. Possibly one of the ideas put forward

66) W. Roscoe - Life and Pontificate of Leo X. Liverpool. 1805. Book 2, p. 293.

67) Benedetto de' Nerli - Horace. Fl. 1514. "Meus in te amor, humanitas, et praeclarum ingenium tuum, quo mirifice afficio, impulerunt, Philippe, ut tibi politioris literaturae, has Horatii lucubrationes, omnium genere doctrinarum refertas, et per nos modo recognitas, nominatim dicarem".

68) See Eugenio Garin - Educazione umanistica in Italia. Bari. 1966, and Baldassare Castiglione - Il Cortigiano. English translation, The Book of the Courtier. New York. 1959.

by Vergerio lay behind the fact that apparently Filippo stayed in Florence and did not go away from home to study, for Vergerio writes

"..che i figliuoli vengano educati in città splendide, poichè la grandezza e la fama della patria contribuiscono moltissimo a guadagnare sostanze e gloria".

69

No city could have fulfilled that qualification better than Florence.

When Nerli began to play a part in the political and intellectual life of the city he had been well prepared by his father for the position to which his birth entitled him and he must have been able, although still comparatively young, to hold his own in the discussions of the letterati with whom he came into contact in the Rucellai gardens. We shall see in the following chapter how he emerged from the quiet obscurity of his youth into the life of Florence and how he soon became involved in the active civic life which was the norm for most of the young men of his class.

69) Pier Paolo Vergerio - Dei nobili costumi e degli studi liberali della gioventù, in Garin, op.cit. pp.63-119.

Chapter 2 - Nerli's Formative years, 1511 - 1524.

We have already seen that the years of Nerli's youth are obscure and that we can only conjecture as to the way in which they were spent from what we know of life and education at the time. Under the influence of his learned father he must have gained an insight into political life and at least a grounding in education, becoming conscious at an early age of the way in which politics in Florence were organized and of the role which he himself would one day have to play. Between the years 1511 and 1524 he began to play that role, receiving what one might call a second education as he took the first steps in his political career, married into one of the leading Florentine families, the Salviati, and took part in the discussions in the Rucellai gardens. These years of Nerli's life may truly be described as formative, for they gave him a background, both political and intellectual, which was to stand him in good stead for his future official career and for his historical writing.

Nerli's first mention in the Commentari ^{to} his political life is to his membership of the Great Council, or Consiglio Maggiore, where in 1512 he heard the Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini¹ make his speech in defence of his policies to that body. Nerli was at that time twenty-seven years old, which meant that by Florentine constitutional law he had been eligible to be a member

¹)Nerli, Book 5, p.108. "...e però per modo di pratica si consigliò nel consiglio grande, dove fece al popolo una orazione bellissima, che a que'tempi, e in quel caso era molto a proposito, la quale, essendo io allora in quel consiglio, udì quando la fece...".

of the Council for some three years. The workings of the constitution are described by Donato Giannotti² who underlines how important the ottimati were in the government of the city, writing that,

"Questi nostri nobili sono quelli che governano tutta la Repubblica fiorentina, e dentro e fuori;..".

He explains that in order to hold office in Florence a man must fulfil certain qualifications. He must belong to a family which was qualified to hold office, he must not be disqualified for any reason, such as being in arrears with his taxes, and he must be twenty-four years of age. Guicciardini writes with great pride of his appointment as ambassador to Spain before he was officially old enough, for the appointment apparently caused some resentment and jealousy.³

Why Nerli did not hold office as soon as he was old enough we can only conjecture. It may have been due to the fact that his father Benedetto was a prominent member of the opposition to Soderini, and it was possible to manipulate the electoral system to exclude those not favourable to the ruling faction, if not with constant success at least to a certain extent. There may on the other hand be no particular significance in this short time lag. With the restoration of the Medici Nerli began to hold office regularly. His family lived in the Santo Spirito quarter of the city in the gonfalon of Nicchio, and thus he was always

2) Opere Politiche e Letterarie di Donato Giannotti. Ed. Polidori, 1850. p. 17. Discorso intorno alla Forma della Repubblica di Firenze.

3) Guicciardini - Ricordi Autobiografici. Opere Inedite, Vol. X, p. 85.
 "...ed essendosi cimentata la elezione più volte, finalmente..fui eletto io".

elected as a representative for that district. On May 8, 1515 he was elected as one of the four gonfalonieres for the quarter and in September, 1517 he was elected to be one of the eight Priors of liberty. On September 1, 1518 Nerli was elected to hold the office of one of the 'Otto di Custodie' for four months, Francesco Vettori being chosen as the other representative for Santo Spirito. In June, 1521 he was made one of the twelve 'Buonumini' and in September, 1522 he was once more elected a Prior. In December, 1522 he was elected to his first external position as Podestà of Prato, a post which he held for the usual year. With this post went a salary of 22 lire and a certain number of household servants, listed as

"..uno Iudice, uno militesocio, Duobus Notariis, Tribus Domcellis, XV famulis, Tribus equis".

Such positions were not of outstanding importance, especially when one considers that in 1522 Nerli had reached the age of thirty-seven. They were, nevertheless, positions which kept him in more or less constant touch with the government of the city and which gave him a good insight into the workings of the Florentine constitution. This knowledge was of use to him when he came to write the Commentari, in which he shows his considerable interest in the technicalities of government. The year in Prato was the

4)Tratte 94, f.57.

5) " " f.10v. Also B.N.F. Fondo Gonelli, Carte 28, no.2. Nerli to Francesco Vettori. He writes that he is pleased to have been elected with Vettori, "..dalle quale per me ancora poco pratico et inexperto a tanto magistrato non si puo se non imperare..".

6)Tratte 84, f.86.

7) " 94, f.103, June 25, 1521; f.11v, September 1, 1522.

8) " 71, f.33.

only experience which Nerli had of government outside Florence before his difficult appointment to Modena.

During the time when Piero Soderini was Gonfaloniere for life in Florence, between 1502 and 1512, Filippo, still a young man, did not play an active role in politics and it seems unlikely that he had any part in the opposition to Soderini of the young men in the Rucellai gardens, although his father was active against the Gonfaloniere.⁹ His attitude to the rule of Soderini in the Commentari is, as one might expect, not a favourable one.¹⁰ Not only did his father oppose him but Nerli himself held the view that the only satisfactory form of government for Florence was that of one ruler and he felt that Soderini was too weak and well-meaning a man to govern effectively. These views, however, were ones which he expressed in the 1540s and we cannot be certain of what he felt at the time, if indeed at this stage in his development he had any violent views on the matter. This applies to all that we can say of Nerli's political views at this period of his life. We can only theorize concerning his outlook, basing our opinions on what he later wrote in the Commentari and on what we know of the outlooks of his friends and relatives. It is in this connection that we must now consider one of the most important events of Nerli's life, which took place in 1511; that is, his marriage to Caterina Salviati, daughter of Jacopo Salviati

9) See p. 34

10) See Chap. 6 for a discussion of the amount of pro-Medici bias which Nerli displays in the Commentari.

and Lucretia de'Medici.

The Nerli family were, as we have seen, of some consequence in Florence and had both wealth and position, but the family into which Filippo de'Nerli now married was of considerably more importance and wielded greater influence in Florentine affairs and indeed in Italian affairs generally. Nerli must have viewed the match with more than a little satisfaction and an indication of how he must have felt can be gained from the words of his fellow-historian Guicciardini. Guicciardini was also related to the Salviati family, having married in 1508 Maria Salviati, the daughter of Jacopo's brother Alamanno. The marriage did not meet with the approval of Guicciardini's father Piero, but Francesco, who had a great respect for his father, went against him in this matter, for his cold and ambitious mind saw the advantages that this alliance could bring him. There was no question of this being a love match and indeed Guicciardini was often guilty of neglecting his wife. It was a marriage of convenience and above all of ambition, for in his memoirs he points out the outstanding position which the Salviati enjoyed amongst the Florentine ottimati.¹¹ The advantages of such an alliance must have been equally appealing to Nerli.

The Salviati were Medicean in sympathy, not unexpectedly as

11)Guicciardini - Ricordi. Opere Inedite.Vol.X.p.71. He writes that he wanted to marry, "Perchè allora Alamanno e Jacopo di parentadi, ricchezze, benivolenza e riputazione avanzano ogni cittadino privato che fussi in Firenze, e io ero volto a queste cose assai, e per questi rispetti gli volevo a ogni modo per parenti;..".

they were closely related to that family. Jacopo's wife Lucretia was the daughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent and thus Nerli's wife was his granddaughter. During the rule of Soderini Jacopo and Alamanno were the leaders of the opposition to him in the council and it is possible that their inevitable alliance in this matter with Benedetto de'Nerli formed the basis for Filippo's marriage. Jacopo and Benedetto had in fact been connected politically at an earlier stage when they had both played leading parts in the trial of Savonarola, though they had not been on the same side. ¹² Some words of Nerli's in the Commentari suggest that indeed this political alliance led to his marriage, for when he is describing the opposition of Alamanno and Jacopo he writes that they

"S'erano accozzati, ed uniti con molti cittadini d'altre varie sette, ed avevano anche fatti parentadi, ed amicizie con di quelli, che per l'addietro, e nel caso del Frate erano stati molto contrari,..".

13

Lorenzo il Magnifico had used marriages as a part of his political policy and it is quite probable that Nerli's marriage had a political significance behind it. Yet whatever advantages the Salviati may have hoped to gain against Soderini by their alliance with the Nerli it is certain that the marriage brought great advantages to Filippo, for it brought him even closer to the

12)Nerli, Book 4,p.77. "Furono i deputati per la parte del Frate Jacopo Salviati, e Alessandro Acciaiuoli, e per l'altra parte Piero degli Alberi, e Benedetto de'Nerli,..".
 Guicciardini - Storie Fiorentine. Bari.1931. Chap.16, p.153.
 "Furono dipoi deputati circa a venti cittadini alla esamina di Fra Jeronimo e de'compagni, tutti i più fieri degli inimici sua".
 13)Nerli, Book 5,p.98.

centre of Florentine politics, led to his appointment as governor of Modena in 1524 and did much to further his career under the Medici Dukes Alessandro and Cosimo.

It is difficult to discover much information concerning the lives of women at this period and Caterina de' Nerli is no exception. Letters between Filippo and his wife are couched in affectionate if conventional terms. She addresses him as her dear "consorte" and he displays concern for her welfare and for that of their children. On one occasion he writes to her from Modena to assure her that, although he is extremely busy, he is prepared to return instantly to Florence should the health of their son Benedetto become worse.¹⁴ She seems to have been a sympathetic woman, who was of considerable help to one of her sisters when her husband died¹⁵ and, judging by a letter which she wrote to her influential sister Maria, she was the sort of woman

14) Archivio di Stato di Modena. Nerli to Caterina, October 21, 1524. "Atteso l'accordo che in poche giorni potrebbe seguire nostra signore e il duca di Ferrara. Però, non mi pare potere lasciare qui senza uno, che a mio nome dia ricapito alle facende del governo, e d'altra parte e tanta la voglia che io ho di essere costa che sono stato quasi per montar a cavallo senza pensar a cosa alcuna pure, ...e quando voi vi resolviate che io vengo sarò subito a cavallo".

15) A.S.F. Carte Stroziane, Prima Serie. 335, f. 92. Caterina de' Nerli to Lucretia Salviati. August 24, 1530. "Magca. et honorando Madre, con grandissimo nostro dispiacere scrivamo la presente à V.S. significatrice delle disgratie della Francescha nostra, quale come e piacuto al signore privarla del suo Carmo. Consorte, che in verita a molto da dolere per essere lui suto sempre, et di lei et di noi amorevolissimo, ..venne astasi qui meco, dove mi e suto gratissimo per poterla meglio confortare che in verita ne ha di grandissimo bisogno..".

who was turned to by people in distress.¹⁶ Her sister Maria was married to Giovanni de' Medici, Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and it would appear that the two couples were on very friendly terms.¹⁷ Nerli is glowing in his praise of Giovanni in the Commentari and we know that Caterina was present at the birth of Maria's son¹⁸ Cosimo who was to become the first Grand Duke of Florence. Both¹⁸ Lucretia de' Medici and Maria were women of considerable character¹⁹ who tried to play as much part in political life as they could. From the lack of information it seems that Caterina was of a quieter disposition, but she too must have been a capable woman,

16) A.S.F. Archivio Mediceo avanti il Principato. Filza 85, Part 2. f.635. Caterina de' Nerli to Maria Salviati, May 12, 1529. "...e venuto a me una donna amica di casa di nostro padre, quale havendo uno figlio che molto desidera farsi frate de servi, et per essere lei povera persona richercha un poco di favoure dal R.do priore di quel'luogho, per essere quivi acceptato,...che con favore d'una vostra lettera al priore facilmente lo obterra,...".

17) See Nerli, Book 7, p.145. He writes of the "...grandi qualità del Signor Giovanni, le quali furono di sorte, che anco dopo la morte sua si son fatte gloriosamente conoscere;...". It must of course be remembered that Cosimo, under whose auspices Nerli was writing, was Giovanni's son and that Filippo would therefore be anxious to give him a good press.

18) See Lettere inedite di Giovanni de' Medici. A.S.I. 1858, Vol.7, Part 2; Vol.8, Part 1; 1859, Vol.9, Parts 1 & 2. Vol.8, Part 1, pp.6-7. Francesco Fortunati to Giovanni de' Medici, June 11, 1519, describing Cosimo's birth. "In questo parto si è trovato in sua compagnia madonna Lucrezia de Alamanno Salviati, la Catherina de' Nerli sua sorella, la Maria,...".

19) Lucretia Salviati displayed a keen interest in the events taking place at the time of the League of Cognac. She wrote constantly to Nerli whilst he was in Modena, receiving information from him on the movements of foreign troops in Italy. See Nerli's letters in the Archivio di Stato di Modena.

Maria Salviati attempted to influence the government of her son Cosimo, though with doubtful success. See Chap.5, p.190

for Nerli entrusted to her certain matters concerning the family
 business affairs.²⁰

Caterina and Filippo had five children, three girls and two boys. One of the girls went into a convent, whilst the other two²¹ married. Over the upbringing of his two sons, Leone and Benedetto, Nerli was assisted by his brother-in-law, Cardinal Giovanni Salviati. It was decided that Leone should pursue an ecclesiastical career and he was therefore sent to the household of his uncle to receive a suitable upbringing and training. Unfortunately Leone did not have any inclination towards the life which had been chosen for him and letters between Salviati and Nerli show the difficulties which the former experienced with his young nephew. Leone was eventually sent home and his place in the²² Cardinal's household was taken by his brother Benedetto. Benedetto proved a much more adept pupil and through the help of

20)C.S. P.S. 158, f.158. June 16, 1525. Nerli to Cardinal Salviati. "A quelli de muli andro provendendo alla giornata benche mi truovi ali do di danari per che la mia moglie Caterina me ne ha tratti e trahe per racconciare la peschaia del mulino che oltre al altre mia disgratie di questo anno mi stara una spesa di ducati dugento..".

21)See the life of Nerli in the 1728 edition of the Commentari. Maria was "Monaca Cavalieressa di San Giovanni Gerosolimitano." Cassandra married Gualterotto de'Bardi de'Conti di Vernio and Contessina married Count Ulderigo Scotti di Piacenza.

22)C.S. P.S. 37, f.19. October 8, 1535. Cardinal Salviati to Nerli. "Con molto mio piacere ho la vostra di 2 di questo, vedendo che havete pigliato il rimandare di Leone per quel modo et verso che si doveva, l'amor ch'io vi porto et desiderio ch'io tengo di beneficiare vostri figlioli et voi insieme. Lo sapete come me, e se ben non si è fatta bona electione in Leone habbiamo a rengratiare dio che ce ne ha fatto acorgiere si in tempo, et per me, ne ho sempre sperati bene,..".

his uncle achieved ecclesiastical preferment.²³ He was appointed to the bishopric of Volterra in 1543 and held that position until his death in 1565, achieving the dubious distinction of being one of the few Tuscan bishops who succeeded in avoiding attendance at the Council of Trent.²⁴ He was during this time the servant of his cousin the Duke Cosimo and went on a number of missions for him, as too did his brother Leone who was also on good terms with his cousin and seems to have spent much of his time at the ducal court. The names of both brothers appear on a list of

"..persone designate per ambasciatori, oratori ec."
as suitable to send as

"Ambasciatori per complimento"
and Leone is also considered suitable as one of the

"Ambasciatori da negotii e per risedere".²⁵
There is an amusing letter in the Carteggio Mediceo which refers to a gift of mules which Leone had made to Cosimo; one of these mules had almost thrown Cosimo into the Arno, an occurrence which had so frightened and annoyed the Duke that he ordered the mules to be returned to Leone and severely reprimanded his secretaries

23)C.S. P.S. 37, f.22. May 30, 1542. Cosimo to Nerli, expressing his pleasure, "..che il Car.li Salviati ha concessa a m. Benedetto vostro figlio...vescovado di Volterra".

24)See H.Jedin - La politica conciliare di Cosimo I. Rivista Storica Italiana. 1950. pp.345-374; 477-494.

25)C.S. P.S. 13, f.96. Undated.

for not seeing that he had satisfactory mules.²⁶ The incident provides an amusing insight into the character of the Duke, who was in fact well served by Nerli and by both his sons.

The year after the marriage of Filippo and Caterina the rule of Piero Soderini was overthrown, due to the discontent of the ottimati with his attempts to rule without consultation with them and to the failure of his foreign policy. The Medici returned to the city with the aid of Spanish troops and negotiations began as to the amount of power which the family was to have. Both Nerli's father Benedetto and his father-in-law Jacopo Salviati were involved in these talks with Giuliano de' Medici which aimed at stabilizing the Medici position.²⁷ Both men were also members of the Balià of 66 in 1513 which returned to the Medici the powers which they had enjoyed in the time of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Giuliano and Giulio de' Medici ruling on behalf of Lorenzo, son of Piero. Although Jacopo Salviati was a Medici supporter it seems that in these negotiations he was not happy about the amount of power which the family succeeded in acquiring and he was thus regarded as a danger by extreme Mediceans. This

26) Carteggio Mediceo, 1176, Ins.7, f.46. December 20, 1550, Tomaso de' Medici to PierFrancesco Riccio. "La Ill.ma S. duca porto hieri un grandissimo pericolo che per colpa d'uno di quelli muli di Lione de Nerli fu per precipitare in Arno cosa che mi spaventa a ricordarmene, et nessendo dispiacere non piccolo poi che S.E. mi disse hiersera che e per colpa di V.S. et mia che non pensiamo a provederla di buoni muli vuole che questi di M. Lione de Nerli si rendino".

27) Nerli, Book 6, p.111. Giuliano talked "..con i principali cittadini della città, e con quelli massimamente, che per essere stati contro a Piero Soderini, o che per esser parenti, o amici più dichiarati de' Medici, erano più a quelli in fede, per dar ordine di riformare la città,..".

was the reason for his appointment in 1513 as ambassador in Rome, his friend Matteo Strozzi being sent with him in order to soften the blow. This was not the last occasion upon which Jacopo found himself at odds with the extremists of his own party, for all his life he opposed any Medicean attempts at absolutism. Nerli, who does not seem to have been so firm and resolute a character as his father-in-law, was more prepared to support Medici absolutism, differing from Jacopo in his belief that the rule of a Prince would be of advantage to Florence.

It is difficult to estimate the immediate value which Nerli gained from his relationship with the Salviati at this time. One would have thought that he would in fact have benefitted equally from the Medicean sympathies of his father, but in practice this does not seem to have been the case. Mediceans naturally hoped for tangible rewards when the family returned to the city, but it seems that these hopes often remained unrealized. In the Commentari Nerli records that this

"..a molti dette da pensare, e fece molti risentire". 28

It was not until three years later that Filippo was elected to his first official position, hardly suggesting that the Medici felt any great obligation towards those who had helped them return

28) Nerli, Book 6, p.121. "...i più dichiarati amici de' Medici, e quelli, che s'erano mostri più caldi in favore del nuovo stato, erano molto addietro degli altri ne' favori;..".

to power. It is probable that the Nerli family felt resentful at the treatment they received, for there is a letter from Filippo to Lorenzo de' Medici in which he makes a very pressing request that his father should be given the position of Gonfaloniere. The letter is prefaced by the traditional flattering remarks on the goodness which Lorenzo has shown towards the family, but in view of the rest of the contents there is no reason to take these comments at their face value. The letter continues with the request that Benedetto be made a Gonfaloniere at the elections in the following March, 1514, for he is a worthy man for the position and will be a good servant to the Medici. He is now sixty-five and his son feels that he should be given the office before it is too late. There are many things which he could say in support of his father, writes Filippo, but he will include just one more point. It is this point which provides the sting in the tail of the letter. Nerli writes,

"..io sono stato in questo desiderio già più tempo
fa e non mi pare havere conosciuto tempo nel quale
la Mag.tia vostra con sua commodita ci possa havere
concessa questa dignita più facilmente".

He adds that in view of the favourable circumstances he has high hopes that the request will be granted. The implication is clear. The Nerli have waited long enough for their reward and they now want it without any more delay. The letter does not seem to

29) A.S.F. Mediceo avanti il principato, Filza 116, December 26, 1514. Nerli to Duke Lorenzo.

have achieved the desired effect, however, for Benedetto did not hold office for some time after this and when he did, in 1519, it was as a member of the Otto di Pratica and not as one of the Gonfalonieres.³⁰ Probably Nerli's relationship to Salviati was of greater use to him at this time.

Within a very few years of the defeat of Soderini the government of Florence had been passed, not without a certain reluctance, by the Medici Pope Leo X into the hands of the young Lorenzo, son of Piero. The short reign of this headstrong youth was for Nerli the first time he had witnessed an attempt by a Medici at absolute rule; the first time that is that he had seen Medici government in action since Piero de' Medici had been expelled from the city in 1494. Now he was to see for himself how a Prince ruled and to have an opportunity of evaluating the merits of this form of government. Lorenzo's rule might almost be considered as a model for that of Cosimo, the first Grand Duke, under whose auspices Nerli wrote the Commentari, for both sought to run the state through a bureaucracy and both had to contend with criticism of the amount of power wielded by the ducal secretaries, although this criticism was considerably more vigorous in the time of Lorenzo, since his was a more unprecedented attempt. Neither Cosimo nor Lorenzo tried to rule entirely without the aid of the ottimati, but they did rely increasingly

30) See Tratte 84, f.81. December, 1519.

on their secretaries, whose allegiance was to them personally, to implement their wishes in spite of the opposition of the nobles. It is interesting to see the reaction of Jacopo Salviati to Lorenzo's rule, for it shows if nothing else that the idea of a principle in which one could firmly believe was not entirely dead in Florence.

When Leo X, who had been raised to the Papacy amid great joy and expectations in Florence, realized that he could not govern the city effectively himself as Pope, he decided that it should be ruled by Lorenzo, who, however, was intended to rely heavily on the advice which he received from Pope Leo and from Cardinal Giulio de'Medici in Rome. The other possible candidate for the lordship of the city was Giuliano de'Medici, a more worthy man to judge from all reports of him, who was instead made a commander of the papal forces and married to the French Princess, Filiberta of Savoy. This division of offices and honours did not cause as much trouble as did the later one between Alessandro and Ippolito de'Medici, but even the mild and studious Giuliano did not take kindly to being passed over for what was regarded as the most important position which the Medici had to offer. Ammirato, recording the death of Giuliano, comments that

"..fu opinione che l'alterezza di Lorenzo grandemente gli fusse dispiaciuta, benchè come savio e modesto studiosamente s'ingegnasse di ricoprirlo".

31

Leo, who knew what a difficult place Florence was to govern

31) Ammirato, Book 29, p.309.

effectively, clearly wondered whether Lorenzo would be able to cope there, for in 1513, when the new ruler went to Florence, he sent him a list of instructions, telling him the best way in which to manage the affairs of the city.³² The advice begins by stressing the importance of having friends upon whom you can rely, especially in the most important of the offices, which Leo lists as the Signoria and Gonfalonieres, the Dieci di Balìa and the Otto di Guardia. Without faithful and wealthy friends to hold office and support them the Medici could not maintain their power in Florence, but it was difficult to achieve the correct balance and ensure that the 'friends' did not become so powerful that they constituted a threat. This was danger of which Lorenzo the Magnificent had always been aware. Not only could too much power constitute a threat, but so too could any offence which you might give to these friends, and Leo warns Lorenzo not to offend the powerful *ottimati* houses in Florence, houses like the Salviati; one may give offence in

"..dare la dignità a quelli di manco tempo, lassando quelli chi prima si venisse".

Leo emphasises the constant care which must be taken over all aspects of government, the way in which all angles must be considered and no opportunities lost. One of the people whom he recommends Lorenzo to make good use of as a friend and advisor is Jacopo Salviati, who in fact returned from Rome to Florence with

32) See Documenti riguardanti Giuliano de' Medici e il Pontefice Leone X. A.S.I. Appendix Vol.1, 1842-4. pp.291-324; 359.

33

Lorenzo. Leo suggests Jacopo as an advisor over appointments to the office of the Dieci, an office which by its nature needed to be filled by men who were "sufficienti et reputati". In order to ensure that the right sort of men are appointed and that they carry out their offices satisfactorily officials should be set up to superintend their proceedings and Leo writes,

"A me non occorreria meglio che Jacopo Salviati e 'l Lanfredino".

Thus from the outset of the new rule of Lorenzo Nerli's father-in-law was at the heart of the government.

That Lorenzo heeded the Pope's advice in this matter, though he did not always heed it in others, can be seen by the many references to Salviati in the correspondence of the Duke's secretary, Goro Gheri. That Salviati himself found it impossible to serve a man of Lorenzo's ideas and ambitions is also clear, and in fact he reacted rather in the way that Leo had warned that the ottimati were likely to react. Salviati was at first one of the members of the group of councillors around Lorenzo, a group which advised on government and indeed directed policy, at least on a minor level, during the long periods when the young Duke was absent from the city on campaign. This group was exclusively formed of men from the ottimati class; it was also to a large extent formed of men who were related to each other through

33) There is an irony in this, since one of the main reasons for Jacopo's departure from Rome was his anger that the Pope had not made his son a Cardinal.

marriage, a constant factor in Florentine politics. Ottaviano de' Medici and Francesco Guicciardini, for example, were both related to the Salviati and it is clear that affairs and intrigues of state must have been discussed amongst them outside the specific 'council' meetings. It is fair to say that in this way Nerli must on numerous occasions have heard and benefitted from such discussions and that, even though he himself held only minor offices under Lorenzo, he must have had an extremely good idea of the way in which affairs were being run. He himself admits in the Commentari that he heard Jacopo discussing state affairs and without a doubt his father-in-law was an important source of information for him.

We have seen how, at the time of the Medici restoration, Jacopo had been in favour of a broader based form of government than the extreme Mediceans were prepared to allow and how he had been sent to Rome so that he would not prove a danger to the new régime. It seems somewhat optimistic to have hoped that on his return to the city, displeased with the Pope's failure to grant his desires for his son, he would be prepared to support the increasingly autocratic rule of Lorenzo. At first, however, he took his part in the government of the city together with the other leading ottimati, and his name appears regularly in Gheri's descriptions of the meetings. In August, 1514, Gheri writes,

"et questa notte passate siamo stati fino ala VII
hora M.Piero Alamanni, Lorenzo Morelli, Lanfredino,

34) See Chap. 6, p. 264

Jacopo Salviati e io per consultare, esaminare
questa cosa",

35

the matter in question being Lorenzo's foreign policy. As late
on in Lorenzo's rule as November, 1517 he was still taking part
in these discussions, for Gheri writes to the Duke,

"Hiersera io fui a casa M.Piero Alamanni dove
furono Lorenzo Morelli Lanfredino et Jacopo
Salviati solum per ragionare..".

36

Such discussions as these, often concerned with the electoral
procedure which lay at the base of Florentine politics, were of
great importance, especially since during periods when Lorenzo
was absent on campaign the organization fell very heavily upon
the ottimati. There is a possibility that Nerli's own interest
in the machinery of elections sprang from what he learnt from
Salviati of these discussions.

Not only was Salviati important to Lorenzo as an adviser,
but he also accompanied the young Duke on campaign ³⁷ and loaned
money to the régime. In Gheri's letters there are a number of
references to these loans. In June, 1518, for example, the
secretary tells Benedetto de Buondelmonti that,

35) A.S.F. Carteggi di Goro Gheri. Vol.2, f.461. August 14, 1514.
Gheri to Baldassare da Pescia.

36) " " " " " Vol.4, f.1. November 22, 1517.
Gheri to Lorenzo.

37) Carteggi di Guicciardini. Vol.2. April 2, 1517. Gheri to
Guicciardini. "...e questa mattina qui sono stati fatti tre
commissari per andare in campo e visitare Sua Eccellenza, messer
Luigi della Stufa, messer Matteo Niccolini e Jacopo Salviati,
quale era con Sua Eccellenza ma privato".

"..li faccia rimettere g (i.e. an amount of money)
a Jacopo Salviati". 38

One thing which must always be kept in mind is the social relationship of the ottimati with each other and with the Duke. These men did not meet 'in vacuo' to discuss state affairs; they were in constant touch with each other, often being, as has been pointed out, related to one another. Equally they all took part in the social life of the Medici palace and a man such as Salviati might himself offer hospitality to the Duke. In September, 1518, for example, Gheri comments that,

"..Mons. Rmo. de Rossi, la Exa. del Duca questa
mattina sono stati a desinare al palagio con
Jacopo Salviati". 39

As Jacopo's son-in-law Nerli was almost certainly present at such meetings and must have been on friendly if not intimate terms with the Duke and his family. That Nerli was in fact on quite close terms with the Duke is proved by the fact that, after Lorenzo's death, Filippo acted as an escort to his widow.⁴⁰

Amicable relations between Lorenzo and Salviati could not last for very long, for the way in which the young Duke wanted to rule could not meet with Jacopo's approval. Ammirato claims that

38) Carteggi di Goro Gheri. Vol.3, f.18. June 8, 1518. Gheri to Buondelmonti.

39) " " " " Vol,2, f.110v. September 23, 1518. Gheri to Buondelmonti.

40) Machiavelli - Lettere. Milan, 1961. Nerli to Machiavelli. August 1, 1520. "La causa perchè non s'è prima risposto, ne è suto causa, perchè la lettera mi trovò fuori di questa terra; et venni con la donna di Lorenzo sino presso a Lucca a tre miglia,..".

in fact it was not Lorenzo himself who was ambitious but his mother, Alphonsina. When discussing the aggressive campaigns of Lorenzo against Urbino, for example, he writes,

"Ma l'origine principale di questo movimento, per quel che ciascun credette, fu l'ambizion d' Alfonsina Orsina madre di Lorenzo. La quale non le parendo avere il figliuol signore, mentre con un tacito e quasi mutolo principato Firenze governava, come cosa che consisteva più in effetto che in apparenza, desiderava ferventemente che egli s'acquistasse alcuno Stato particolare, del quale e in nome e in opera fusse libero e assoluto signore,..".

41

Clearly in spite of Jacopo's fears Alphonsina did not feel that Florence alone offered Lorenzo sufficient scope. Francesco Vettori also takes the view that Alphonsina was an important factor in the increasing absolutism of Lorenzo's rule, and since he was one of Lorenzo's chief supporters his evidence is even more reliable than that of Ammirato, who was writing some time later. Vettori gives a most unflattering portrait of Alphonsina in his Sommario;

"Facevagli ancor molto odio ed invidia madonna Alfonsina sua madre; la qual sendo donna avara, da' Fiorentini, che avvertono ogni piccola cosa, era tenuta rapace: ed egli, sebbene desiderava correggerla, non potea; perchè, come a madre onesta e nobile, gli portava troppa reverenzia".

42

Vettori was in a position to know the amount of influence and power which Alphonsina had, but the Gheri correspondence makes one wonder if this may be over-stated, for there are few

41) Ammirato, Book 29, p.310.

42) Vettori, op.cit. A.S.I. Appendix Vol.6, 1848. pp.328-329.

references to her in the letters and little sign that she had an important role in state affairs. What is clear is that Lorenzo was very much under the guidance of Rome and that this hampered his designs and in fact prevented him from being as absolute as he would have liked.

The increasing importance in state affairs which Lorenzo's secretary Goro Gheri came to have illustrates the attempt which the Duke of Urbino was making to free himself to some extent from the *ottimati*, though Gheri was bound to become important because of Lorenzo's frequent absences from the city, and his power came almost as much through natural evolution as from deliberate policy. Gheri had previously been governor of Piacenza⁴³ and during the time when he served Lorenzo he maintained his connections with the towns in that area, writing on the Duke's behalf to give directions to the men who served as governors there. The correspondence which he had with Francesco Guicciardini, at that time governor of Modena, illustrates the extent of his involvement in external affairs and the way in which he often acted on behalf of the Duke.⁴⁴ From November, 1516 onwards Guicciardini's letters are directed almost exclusively to Gheri, to whom he sends any information which he receives and who in return keeps him informed of the situation in Florence and of the progress of the Duke's campaigns. In January, 1518

43) A.S.I. Appendix Vol.6, 1848, also contains the correspondence of Gheri during the time he was in Piacenza.

44) See Carteggi di Guicciardini, Vols. 1 & 2.

Guicciardini writes to Gheri about a law suit in Modena involving Count Gherardo Rangoni and the son of Jacopo da Foiano, asking him to use "autorità sua" in the matter.⁴⁵ It is also to Gheri that Guicciardini writes when he is in need of money.⁴⁶ We have already seen that Gheri took part in the council meetings at which electoral policy was discussed, reporting these meetings to Lorenzo when the Duke was out of the city. The dominant position of Gheri, combined with Lorenzo's campaigns and his assumption of the title of Duke of Urbino, was bound to arouse Jacopo's fears; the reliance on paid officials, often not natives of Florence herself, and the desire for new lands and titles were the stock in trade of would-be tyrants, and Nerli was to see such methods once more in action, and with greater success, in the reign of Cosimo, the first Grand Duke.

Jacopo began to resist the Duke's plans and in so doing naturally incurred his displeasure. At the time of Lorenzo's wedding Ammirato records the festivities which attended the event but adds,

"..come che i cittadini grandi fussero alquanto sbigottiti, per aver veduto prestamente sbattuti due de' principali della città, Lanfredino Lanfredini e Jacopo Salviati,..".

47

These two leading councillors had fallen into disgrace because,

45) Carteggi di Guicciardini, Vol.2. January 5, 1518. Guicciardini to Gheri.

46) " " " " April 27-28, 1517 and September 9, 1517.

47) Ammirato, Book 29, p.328-9.

shortly before, when Lorenzo had returned to the city with his bride,

"..per mezzo di Goro da Pistoia suo segretario, e il quale molto del governo partecipava, fatto proporre tra quei cittadini, che in casa sua per le faccende pubbliche si ragunavano, che era bene mandargli ambasciatori incontro per onorarlo."

48

This Lanfredino and Jacopo were not prepared to agree to, because they claimed that Lorenzo had no rights over and above those of an ordinary citizen. The matter may seem trivial, and in the end the protest was to no avail, but such ceremonial as this can be viewed as being of great importance to a Prince, who should be attended by considerable splendour and deference. ⁴⁹ It was a matter which touched the heart of Salviati's beliefs and his dislike of principates. As a result he fell from favour and, writes Ammirato,

"..fu fatto intendere, che il duca si sentià mal servito di lui. Il che fu cagione, che egli con la moglie a Roma se n'andasse, nè a Firenze ritornasse prima, che dopo la morte del duca".

Leo X's initial warning that friends could all too easily become opponents was demonstrated to be true. Goro Gheri had also seen clearly that a man of Jacopo's type could, though an able and valuable servant, prove a danger if he disagreed with the régime. He wrote of his fears in March, 1518 to Baldassare da Pescia;

"..pure Jacopo e sempre vissuto in modo che ha cercato haver gratia con lo universale: et certo

48) Ammirato, Book 29, p.329.

49) For a discussion of this point see Felix Gilbert - The Humanist Concept of the Prince, and "The Prince" of Machiavelli. Journal of Modern History, Vol.9, No.4. December, 1939.

modo non lo fa manco a questi tempi: che si facesse a quell'altro stato puo essere facilmente che questo sia suo instincto naturale: nondimeno nelli stati di questa natura uno homo di autorita: di nobil casa: ricco: et che ha poi un figliuolo Cardinale et un altro priore di Roma marita tutte le sua figliuole a signori et fuori della civilita di questa cipta: queste cose tutte mi fanno pensare un certo che et vegliare et l'opere et le parole delli homini come si debbe fare nelle cose di stato nelle quali bisogna fidarsi tanto quanto la ragione et la natura di quelli con chi si conversa vuole et richiede:et chi e capo debbe exaltare et beneficare le membra ma in modo che sempre habbino causa di essere inferiori:..".

50

One of the things which Gheri was particularly afraid of was that Jacopo might exert his influence over his son-in-law Giovanni de'Medici to the detriment of the régime.

That Salviati's view influenced Nerli to any great degree is doubtful. The kind of government which Lorenzo wanted to set up was the kind of which Nerli, at least in his later years, approved and which he came to view as the only one which would be able to solve the problems of the city. He was thus more committed to the support of the Medici family than was Salviati and it does not seem that he was affected by Jacopo's fall from grace. His attitude is clear in the letter which he wrote to Francesco Vettori, after they had both been appointed to the Otto in August, 1518.⁵¹ In this he praised Vettori for the great service which he had done the "Illustrissima casa de Medici" in previous appointments, and commented that all the work done by the

50) Carteggi di Goro Gheri, Vol.4, f.178v. March 29, 1518. Gheri to Baldassare da Pescia.

51) See above, note 5.

officials is for the

"exaltatione di quella casa Illustrissima e a
mantenimento e stabilita del suo stato..",

expressing his satisfaction that office will enable him to contribute to this end as well. The tone of this letter is nothing if not enthusiastic and Nerli must by now have got over the disappointment he and his family had suffered in the earlier years of Lorenzo's reign. The fact that he was at this time appointed to the Otto, one of the most important offices in the city, supports the idea that he did not in fact suffer from Salviati's disgrace. Nerli is not entirely uncritical of the events of these years in the Commentari, pointing out that the way in which Lorenzo ruled meant

"..che più appariva in lui grandezza, e qualità
di Principe,....., che mai avesse fatto alcun altro
di Casa Medici in que'sessant'anni,..".

52

He does hint, however, that to a certain extent the high-handed way in which affairs were carried on could have been due to the attitude of Gheri as much as to that of Lorenzo, a sign perhaps that he feels it necessary to find some excuse for the young Duke's behaviour. The influence of Jacopo Salviati can be traced here, however faintly.

In 1519 Lorenzo died, leaving an infant daughter, Caterina, and Cardinal Giulio de'Medici came to take charge of the city. The Cardinal had no need to take any drastic measures to secure Florence because of the care which Gheri had devoted to this

52)Nerli, Book 6, p.131.

matter during the young Duke's last illness. Before we consider Nerli's attitude to the rule of the Cardinal it will be helpful if we discuss his membership of the group of intellectuals who were meeting at this time in the Orti Oricellari, which belonged to the Rucellai family. This is important since it shows the influences to which Nerli was subject at this formative period of his life and it is also vital because it was from the Orti group that the main opposition to the Cardinal came. The time is one which might be considered as the most anti-Medicean of Nerli's whole life and one at which he was in closest contact with the thought of his day, both intellectual and political. It is therefore valuable to give some description of the nature of the Orti meetings, the people who attended them and the subjects which they discussed.

During the late fifteenth century, mainly in the fourteen seventies, the cultured men of Florence had gathered together for discussion at the villa of Lorenzo de' Medici at Careggi. Lorenzo was a great patron of the arts and of scholars, as his grand-⁵³father Cosimo had been, and amongst those whom he encouraged and patronized was Marsilio Ficino. At Careggi the letterati of the day could gather to listen to Ficino discoursing on the works of Plato and the Neo-Platonists and the meetings thus gained the name of the "Accademia Platonica". This body had originated in 1439, when Gemisthus Plethon and Bessarion had come to Florence for the council of union, at a time when there was a revival of

53) See E.H. Gombrich - The Early Medici as Patrons of Art, in Italian Renaissance Studies, ed. E.F. Jacob.

the term "Accademia" throughout Italy. Academies similar to the one which met at Careggi were to be found in many Italian cities, gathered around wealthy or cultured people such as Isabella d'Este and Giangiorgio Trissino. They were informal in character, with none of the fixed rules and conditions of membership which they were later to acquire in the sixteenth century.⁵⁴ Such was the nature of the meetings which were held at Careggi and such too was the nature of the meetings which were held by Bernardo Rucellai and his sons in the gardens of their palace.

There has been some debate over the problem of the link, if there was a link, which existed between these two groups of meetings; between the circle around Lorenzo il Magnifico and Ficino and that which gathered during the time of the Republic around Bernardo Rucellai and the teacher Francesco da Diacceto, who had himself taken part in the Academy under Ficino. Professor Kristeller, arguing in terms of the philosophic outlook of the two groups, maintains that there is no connection between them. He denies that the Accademia Platonica survived the death of Lorenzo and points out that Diacceto, a pupil of Ficino, cannot be considered as the successor of the master as head of the Academy. His main point is the difference which is evident between the ideas of the two men. Diacceto,

54) See N. Pevsner - Academies of Art past and present. Cambridge. 1940; G. Prezziner - Storia del Pubblico Studio e delle società scientifiche e letterarie di Firenze. Fl. 1810; Maylender - Storia delle accademie d'Italia. 5 Vols. Bologna. 1926-30. See also Chap. 7.

"..abandons Ficino's attempt to accomplish a synthesis of Platonism and Christianity, but rather admits the dualism and grants superiority to religion".

Kristeller further argues that the idea of a link between the two groups is disproved by the existence of a body called the Sacred Academy of the Medici, between the years 1515 and 1519. Little seems to be known of this group, other than the facts that it was organized, held regular meetings and that it consciously regarded itself as a revival of the Platonic Academy. Its members included Nardi, Cerretani and Michelangelo, whose names all appear on a petition which the members signed concerning the reburial of the bones of Dante. Kristeller's argument is that had the meetings in the Orti been a revival of the Platonic Academy there would have been no need for this body.⁵⁵

Whilst we must of course defer to Professor Kristeller's judgement in the matter of the philosophic differences between the two groups it is hard to agree that there was no link whatsoever between them. The fact that the Sacred Academy regarded itself as a conscious imitator of the Accademia Platonica does not rule out the possibility of the existence of a link between the Orti group and that body. The two later bodies may well have been rivals. The interests and views of the men who took part may have been different but on a more mundane level there are very obvious

55) See P.O. Kristeller - Francesco da Diacceto and Florentine Platonism in the Sixteenth Century. Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati 4. Città del Vaticano, 1946.

connections between the two Academies. For one thing the physical surroundings in which the men met were similar. The Rucellai laid out the beautiful gardens which surrounded their villa in 1500,⁵⁶ and they formed the background not only for intellectual discussions but also for the kind of festivities in which the Florentines delighted.⁵⁷ The death of Lorenzo il Magnifico and the subsequent expulsion from the city of his son Piero had meant for Florence not only a new republican régime but also the loss of the family which had provided the focal point of Florentine social life. In such circumstances the meetings held under the auspices of Bernardo Rucellai, Lorenzo's brother-in-law and a member of the circle around him and Ficino, must surely have appeared as a revival of the days, still within memory, when men had met and conversed at the Medici villa.

Nerli refers to his membership of this group in the Commentari, writing,

"..(e io era di Niccolo, e di tutti loro amicissimo, e molto spesso con loro conversavo)..".

58

There would seem to be no reason to doubt this statement in view of Nerli's friendship with Machiavelli and other references to him in connection with the group, but it is curious that his name

56) See Henri Hauvette - Un Exilé florentin à la cour de France au XVI^e siècle. Luigi Alamanni, 1495-1556, sa vie et son oeuvre. Paris. 1903.

57) See Leader Scott - The Orti Oricellari. Fl.1893. When Leo X became Pope the Orti celebrated with a performance of a tragedy, Rosamunda, which had been written by Giovanni Rucellai.

58) Nerli, Book 7, p.138.

59
 does not appear in contemporary lists of those who took part.
 This suggests that Nerli, who lacked the knowledge and experience of many of those taking part, did not play a very important part in the meetings. There is in the Poligrafo Gargano in the Biblioteca Nazionale, usually a reliable source, a reference to one of the dialogues of Antonio Brucioli, another member of the circle, which is said to be between Nerli and AntonFrancesco degli Albizzi. A dialogue of this nature would be, of course, of great value, since in all probability it would serve as a guide to Nerli's political outlook at this time. Unfortunately, however, the reference would seem to be an error for there is no trace of such a dialogue in any of the printed editions of Brucioli's
 60
 work.

Among the men who took part in the Orti discussions the members of the Rucellai family themselves were of course of considerable importance. The young Cosimo Rucellai was an extremely popular figure in the gardens and seems to have won the affection of all who knew him. Due to the contraction of venereal disease Cosimo was forced to spend his time in a litter, but this did not prevent him from becoming one of the dominating figures in the group. Machiavelli, to whom he gave financial help, referred to him as

"..uomo nel quale fusse il più acceso animo

59) Nerli is not included in the lists given by either Varchi or GiovanBatista Gelli.

60) See below, note 86

alle cose grandi e magnifiche..",

61

and Nerli says that he was

"..in grande aspettazione di letterato,"

62

a promise which his early death prevented him from fulfilling.

Giovanni Rucellai was distinguished for his play Rosamunda, the

first of its type to appear in Italy, whilst Bernardo Rucellai

had a keen interest in history and travelled to Naples to discuss

the matter with Pontanus who had an Academy there. It is

interesting that of the men who came to the Orti a considerable

number were to be historians of the city, though bearing in mind

the social and intellectual background of the times this is

perhaps not surprising. Benedetto Varchi attended the meetings as

a young man and refers to them in his Lezzione della Poesia and

in his life of Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, which prefaces his

edition of Diacceto's I tre libri d'Amore. In this work he

gives a list, though not a complete one, of the master's followers,

including Alessandro de'Pazzi, Pierfrancesco Portinari, Palla,

Giovanni and Cosimo Rucellai, Filippo and Lorenzo Strozzi, Luigi

Alamanni, Zanobi Buondelmonti, Jacopo da Diacceto, Antonio

61)Machiavelli - Arte della Guerra. Milan.1961. Book 1.

62)Nerli, Book 7,p.138.

63)See Chapter 8,p.350

64)Lezzioni di M.Benedetto Varchi. Fl.1590. Della Poesia. p.647.

"..e si perche mi ricorda che già, essendo io fanciullo, con Zanobi Buondelmonti, e Nicolò Machiavegli, messer Luigi (Alamanni) essendo garzone andava all'horto de Rucellai, dove insieme con messer Cosimo, e più altri giovani udivano il Trissino,..".

65)Varchi - I tre libri d'Amore di Diacceto. Venice. 1561.

Brucioli, Donato Giannotti, Filippo Parenti and Piero Vettori. 66

All these attended Diacceto's house in order to hear his discourses and also formed part of the Orti group. Another historian who attended the meetings, although he is not mentioned in Varchi's list, was Jacopo Nardi, who describes in his history the character of the meetings.

"..quel luogo" writes Nardi, "era uno comune ricetto e diporto di così fatte persone, così forestieri come fiorentini, per la umanità e cortesia e amorevole accoglienza usata loro dal detto Bernardo e da'suoi figliuoli". 67

The young GiovanBatista Gelli, who was later, like Varchi, to be a member of the Accademia Fiorentina in the reign of Cosimo, has also left descriptions of the meetings which, as Nardi points out, were sometimes attended by distinguished visitors from other parts of Italy. 68 Among these visitors was Giangiorgio Trissino, who had spent some time at the court of Lodovico il Moro at Milan and who assisted Giovanni Rucellai with the publication of his Api. Trissino also took part in the discussions on Dante and his work which took place in the Orti. 69

Yet of all the many famous and learned people with whom Nerli came into contact at this time the most influential, both from his point of view and from that of the group, was Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli first came to the Orti in the years

66) Varchi - I tre libri d'Amore di Diacceto. p.186.

67) Nardi, Book 7, p.85-86.

68) See GiovanBatista Gelli - Opere. Ed. Agnoro Gelli. Fl. 1855.

69) See Bernardo Morsolin - Giangiorgio Trissino, 1478-1577. Monografia di un letterato nel secolo XVI. Vicenza. 1878.

1516 to 1519, his close friend Francesco Vettori also being a member of the Rucellai circle. To judge from Nerli's own account it seems probable that it was due to Machiavelli that he joined the Orti group, for it is of his friendship with the secretary that he makes especial note, though this may of course spring from a desire to associate himself with the most notable member of the group, a figure of European, not merely Italian, stature. The association was not, however, a forced one, for letters between the two men show that true friendship did exist, even if the tone of some of Nerli's letters suggests that it was not always a completely amicable relationship. A letter from Machiavelli to Luigi Alamanni in Rome in 1517 places Nerli firmly in the circle of Machiavelli's friends, even when he was not in Florence. The friends clearly kept in contact with each other and met together for discussion even when they were not in the congenial atmosphere of the Orti.

"So che vi trovate costì tutto el giorno insieme col Rev.mo de' Salviati, Filippo Nerli, Cosimo Rucellai, Cristofano Carnesecchi, et qualche volta Anton Francesco delli Albizzi, et attendete a fare buona cera, et vi ricordate poco di noi qui, poveri graziati, morti di gelo et di sonno,"

70

writes Machiavelli and in other letters Nerli gives him news of his friends and their doings. He says how the group misses Machiavelli when

70) Machiavelli - Lettere. Machiavelli to Alamanni. December 17, 1517.

"..co'poeti et con muse si parlò della lingua
molta a lungho.."

and continues that he knows how much his friend would love to be taking part too and hearing their discussions.⁷¹ Nerli sends greetings too from "questi amici di meriggio", a sign that he did not only visit the gardens when Machiavelli was in Florence, even if Niccolò was his closest friend there. The letters between them show that it was not only friends which they had in common but also interests and Nerli displays an interest in Machiavelli's political views and in his writing, an interest which was to be evident in his own history. When writing to tell Machiavelli of the birth of a son to Zanobi Buondelmonti, for example, he makes a joking remark that Zanobi is thus providing another man to fight against the Turks, relating this to Machiavelli's ideas on the militia in a gently mocking vein which is characteristic of his humour.⁷² Writing from Rome he tells of his interest in Machiavelli's life of Castruccio Castracanni and in his work on the art of war, telling his friend of the works which he has been reading to his mother-in-law, Lucretia Salviati, during his stay in Rome.⁷³

71)Machiavelli - Lettere. Nerli to Machiavelli. August 1, 1520.

72)Ibid. "..perche tanti più ci nasce maschi, tanti più provvigionati hareno contro al Turco. Voi non pensate a queste cose; le'mportono più che voi non credete:..".

73)Machiavelli - Lettere. Nerli to Machiavelli. November 17, 1520. "La 'Vita di Castruccio', che io l'havessi non ne fu altro; e del libro 'De re militari, ut supra'. Sappiate che io lego la sera a madonna Lucretia Justino et Quinto Curtio 'De rebus gestis Alexandri'".

The friendship between the two men did not cease when Nerli left Florence to take up his appointment as governor of Modena, for they continued to correspond and Machiavelli visited Filippo at a time when he was finding his position in the city extremely difficult. In a letter which he wrote to Guicciardini Machiavelli described the meeting which he had with Nerli and painted a very amusing picture of the governor's despair. He found Nerli wringing his hands and lamenting,

"È egli però possibile che io habbi fatto mai cosa che bene stia?"

Machiavelli cheered his friend by saying that it was a year in which no one had been successful and this seemed to comfort Nerli.

"Et così", writes Machiavelli, "si finè il primo atto della commedia,..".

74

Nerli, in spite of being away from Florence, continued to take a keen interest in his friend's work, including his history, which he was probably amongst the first to read.⁷⁵ In February, 1525 he writes to "Niccolò carissimo et come fratello honorando"⁷⁶ that he has heard of the open-air performance of one of his friend's comedies, not only through the letters of friends but also through common report, the event has had such an effect. There

74)Machiavelli - Lettere. Machiavelli to Guicciardini. November 5, 1526.

75)A.S.F. Acquisti e Doni. Vol.59, No.2. Nerli to Machiavelli. November 1, 1526. "...però ricordatemi di mandarci e dua più mi libri di quella historia et vi si rimanderanno in termine di XV giorni et potete poi rimandare li altri..".

76)Such forms of address are fairly common and are not in themselves signs of great friendship.

is in this letter a hint of the aristocrat in Nerli finding it somewhat degrading that the work should enjoy success with the lower orders as well as with the cultured members of society, for he writes,

"..io so de'conviti non solo alli primi et più nobili patritii della città, ma ancora a' mezzani et dipoi alla plebe; cose solite farsi solo per li principi".

77

Nerli, whilst he did sometimes find it possible to help in the complications of Machiavelli's amours,⁷⁸ seems on occasion to have been revolted by the coarser side of his friend's nature, and it may be that the difference in their backgrounds was the cause of Nerli's sarcastic 'digs' at Machiavelli.⁷⁹ This difference in background also proved somewhat of a handicap to Machiavelli in his dealings with the haughty and aristocratic Guicciardini. Nevertheless, in spite of these differences Nerli did feel affection for Machiavelli and can express his pleasure at the success of his friend.⁸⁰ In spite too of his regret at the vulgar popularity of the Clizia he does ask for a copy to be sent to him

77)Machiavelli - Lettere. Nerli to Machiavelli. February 22, 1525.

78) " " " " " August 1, 1520.

This shows that Nerli knew Riccia, a famous courtesan of the period, in whom Machiavelli had an interest. He writes, "Sarete ricevuto da lui, per amore della Riccia et mio, et per le vostre buone qualità, molto amorevolmente".

79)Machiavelli - Lettere. Nerli to Machiavelli. September 6, 1525.

"Ho bene havuto caro d'intendere d'onde tanto favore sia proceduto; et poichè dipende di Barberia, et da qualche altra vostra gentilezza,..".

80)Ibid. "Che voi siate entrato nello squittino, et che vi siano stati fatti cenni, et chiuso l'occhio dalli accoppiatori, ne sono molto contento;..".

and similarly he had clearly read the Mandragola.⁸¹ That Machiavelli valued Nerli's friendship is shown by the fact that he made him one of the executors of his will.⁸² He also dedicated to him a Capitolo dell'Occasione,⁸³ a poem which was concerned with the Goddess Fortuna, an interesting point, since Fortuna and the effect which she had upon man's life was of considerable importance to the historian, and Machiavelli's dedication of this particular poem to Nerli may be an indication of the common

81)Ibid. "...vi potrebbe in su questa fama essere fitto qualche porro di dietro, che vi potrebbe far sudare gli orecchi altrimenti che a messer Nicia". Nicia is a character in Mandragola.

82)B.N.F. Magl. Cl.25, Cod.396,f.48. November 27, 1522. The other executors were Francesco del Nero and Carlo Machiavelli.

83)Machiavelli - Il Teatro e tutti gli scritti letterari. Milan. 1965.

Capitolo Dell'occasione a Filippo de'Nerli.

"Chi se'tu, che non par donna mortale
di tanta grazia el ciel t'adorna e dota?
Perchè non posi? e perchè a'piedi hai l'ale?"

"Io son l'Occasione, e pochi nota:
è la cagion che sempre mi travagli
è perch'io tengo un piè sopra una rota.
Volar non è ch'al mio correr s'agguagli,
e però l'ali a'piedi mi mantengo
acciò nel corso mio ciascuno abbagli.

Li sparsi mia capei dinanti io tengo:
con essi mi ricuopro il petto e 'l volto
perch'un non mi conosca quando io vengo.

Drieto dal capo ogni capel m'è tolto,
onde invan s'affatica un se gli avviene
ch'i' l'abbi trapassato o s'i' mi volto".

"Dimmi: chi è colei che teco viene?"
"È Penitenzia: e però nota e intendi:
chi non sa prender me, costei ritiene.

E tu, mentre parlando il tempo spendi,
occupato da molti pensier vani,
già non t'avvedi, lasso! e non comprendi
com'io ti son fuggita tra le mani".

See Chap. 8 for a discussion of the role of Fortuna.

interest in history which the two men shared.

Not only was history a subject of common interest to Nerli and Machiavelli, it was also one of the topics discussed at the meetings of the Orti Oricellari. It was at this time that men were beginning to concern themselves more with politics, turning to more concrete studies in an attempt to understand the events of the early sixteenth century. ⁸⁴ The discussions undoubtedly had an effect on Machiavelli, for Nerli writes that the Orti group,

"..mediante le lettere, nelle lezioni dell'istorie, e sopra di esse, ed a loro istanza compose il Machiavello quel suo libro de'discorsi sopra Tito Livio, e anco il libro di que'trattati e ragionamenti sopra la milizia".

85

Bernardo Rucellai too had a great interest in history and the Orti themselves formed the background for the archaeological collection of his family. The invasion of the French in 1494 had turned mens' attention to politics and taught them to approach history with new eyes. Without a doubt Nerli's interest in history must have sprung from this period when he was in contact with the most learned men of the city and above all with Niccolò Machiavelli. However, it would be untrue to give the impression that the Orti members confined their discussions to the study of history alone. In fact they ranged over a wide number of subjects, for it was not until later in the century that Academies began to limit themselves to one particular topic. The variety of subjects

84) See D. Cantimori - Rhetoric and Politics in Italian Humanism. J.W.C.I. Vol.1, 1932. See also Chap.8.

85) Nerli, Book 7, p.138.

covered can clearly be seen in the Dialogi of Antonio Brucioli, which deal with such things as marriage, the government of an exiled family, the shortness of human life and human misery. In the 1526 edition of the dialogues they are written as taking place between well-known Greek figures, or between personifications of abstracts, but in the 1537 edition they are between contemporary figures, many of whom had been in the Orti.⁸⁶ For example, the Sixth Dialogue is a discussion of the idea of a Republic and takes place between Machiavelli, Bernardo Salviati, Gianiacopo Leonardi da Pesaro and Giangiorgio Trissino. Any subject of interest to men in their social, political or private lives might come under discussion. There is no need to stress the enormous advantage which his contact with this group must have been to Nerli at such a formative period of his life.

It would appear that the Orti enjoyed two periods of activity, the first being in the very early years of the sixteenth century, when the gardens became the centre of criticism of the Gonfaloniere, Soderini.⁸⁷ Both Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de' Medici and Bernardo Rucellai were opposed to Soderini from the outset, as were later the Nerli and Salviati, but due to the early death of Lorenzo and the voluntary exile from the city of Bernardo their

⁸⁶) See Antonio Brucioli - Dialogi della cuorale filosofia. There were editions in 1526, 1537, 38; 1544; 1538-45. See above, p. 59

⁸⁷) See Felix Gilbert - The Orti Oricellari. J.W.C.I. Vol. 12, 1949.

opposition did not amount to very much. In about 1506, however, Bernardo returned to Florence, and from that time onwards, Nerli says,

"..nel suo molto dilettevol giardino convenivano spesso de'cittadini, e massimamente una certa qualità di giovani, che avevano cominciato ad urtare il Gonfaloniere, e quivi senza rispetto alcuno si parlava di lui, era biasimata ogni sua azione,..".

Soderini, either because he felt generously disposed towards them or because he felt that they could not harm him, took no action against this group but, with the increased opposition to the government of the Salviati in the Great Council, the abuse of the young men in the gardens grew. They felt, says Nerli, that they were free to speak freely within the Orti and that, in the event of any trouble, they would be protected by the powerful Salviati faction. Disrespectful masques were performed in the gardens and Soderini became the butt for the youthful wits of his opponents. Nerli does not mention that he himself took part in the Orti meetings until Book 7 of the Commentari and it would appear therefore that he did not attend these earlier gatherings. From the tone of his account it would seem that he did not altogether approve of the way in which the youthful element lampooned the

88)Nerli, Book 5,p.93. "Questa prima opposizione, che ebbe il Gonfaloniere nel principio del suo magistrato, non fu cagione per allora di molti mali effetti, e disordini d'importanza, perchè Lorenzo di Pierfrancesco de'Medici visse poco dopo questo tempo, e Bernardo Rucellai s'assentò dalla città mal contento dello stato, e del Gonfaloniere".

89)Nerli, Book 5,p.98.

unfortunate Gonfaloniere, but since his father was a leading opponent of Soderini it is by no means impossible that Nerli did take part in the meetings. It is possible that, when an older, and if Varchi is to be believed, more pedantic man, Nerli preferred to forget this part of his youth.

The second period during which the Orti flourished, which we have already described, came during the reign of Cardinal Giulio de'Medici when once again the Orti played its part in the politics of the day. Cardinal Giulio did much to dispel the dislike of the Medici which had been aroused by the behaviour of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, for his government was at first mild and he displayed, at least on the surface, a desire and willingness to consider any ideas for reform which the citizens might put before him. According to Nardi he acted as if he held the same views as these reformers who therefore took courage and put their ideas into writing. Amongst these was Alessandro Pazzi, a member of the Orti group, who not only wrote a discourse on reform⁹⁰ but also delivered an oration on the subject at a dinner at which⁹¹ Nerli was present. This oration was passed to the Cardinal who, says Nardi, did not improve his reputation by giving it to his subordinate, Niccolò della Magna, to read and comment on, since

90) Discorso di Alessandro de'Pazzi, al Cardinale Giulio de'Medici Anno 1522. A.S.I. Vol.1, 1842, p.420. See Albertini, op.cit., for a discussion on the existence of two works by Pazzi on this theme.

91) Nerli, Book 7, p.137. "...dove io mi trovai a udirla leggere, e recitare, e avendone avuta copia, la mandai a Roma al Cardinale Salviati".

he himself was very busy at the time.⁹² In the discourse Pazzi points out the disappointment which had been felt in Florence that more had not been gained from the election to the Papacy of Leo X, and warns the Cardinal that, although he has done much to improve things there still remains a great deal to do, especially since many Florentines regret the loss of the Great Council, which had been abolished on the return of the Medici. He lists the other difficulties with which the Cardinal has to contend, including the fact that since he has no successor his friends are less willing to give him their wholehearted support, and then goes on to describe the kind of constitution which in his opinion the city needs. Showing little originality he turns for a guide to the Venetian constitution, as had Savonarola in the reforms of 1494, and suggests the setting up of a Senate, though he seems unsure as to the amount of opposition there would be to this. He concludes that he has not as yet worked out his ideas in sufficient detail, and says he will discuss the matter with the Cardinal in person. Machiavelli also wrote on the problem of reform at this time⁹³ and, more important, he wrote in his Discorsi on the organization of conspiracies in a way which was to

92) Nardi, Book 7, p.84. "Avendo adunque Alessandro presentato al cardinale la detta sua orazione, pregandolo che si degnasse di vederla e di rendergli interamente il suo vero giudizio, risposegli il cardinale che, essendo per allora occupato, la portasse a frate Niccolò della Magna, dicendogli che la leggesse, e a lui ne referisse poi il suo giudizio".

93) Machiavelli - Discorso per rassettare le cose di Firenze, in Arte della Guerra. Milan. 1961. pp.245-277. Machiavelli points out the difficulties of setting up a principate in Florence.

influence Nerli when he came to write the Commentari.⁹⁴ Not only did he influence Nerli, he also influenced the young men of the Orti who heard his words and ideas at a time when they were feeling very discontented and who now conspired against the rule of the Cardinal. What Machiavelli said had so much influence on these discontents that Nardi writes of his role,

"..in tanto che de'pensamenti e azioni di questi giovani anche Niccolò non fu senza imputazione". 95

Nerli says nothing of his friend's guilt in the matter, perhaps out of loyalty. He does, however, suggest that the Cardinal let the opposition, of which he was aware, continue unchecked for too long, so that it finally got beyond his control.⁹⁶

The aim of the plot which the young men of the Orti now hatched, with the aid of Cardinal Soderini in Rome, was the murder of the Cardinal and the overthrow of the rule of the Medici in Florence. It failed since the conspirators did not act upon Machiavelli's advice about the vital need for secrecy in such matters and their plans were uncovered. The immediate cause of the plot was the disillusion which was felt in Florence in May, 1522 when the reforms which had long been hoped for failed to materialize and the reformers turned towards more drastic action.

94) See Chap. 6, p. 257

95) Nardi, Book 7, p. 86.

96) Nerli, Book 7, p. 137-8. "Andarono tant'oltre questi ragionamenti, e sene favellava tanto liberamente, e in tanti modi, che al Cardinal de' Medici pareva pure alla fine averli lasciati troppo trascorrere, e pensava a' modi di ritirarli, e aveva, sendo scorsi così di sua volontà, e per suo ordine, delle difficoltà a fermarli".

The leaders of the movement were the young poet Jacopo da Diacceto, not the philosopher of the same name, and a young relative of Luigi Alamanni, who bore the same name.⁹⁷ Their plot was revealed to the Cardinal by a French courier and their arrest was followed by their execution on June 6, 1522. Other members of the Orti group were so deeply implicated that they felt it prudent to flee the city and among these were Luigi Alamanni, Antonio Brucioli and Zanobi Buondelmonti, who fled to France. The names of all five of these men figure largely in the records of the proceedings of the Otto against the conspirators, though the name of Machiavelli does not appear and neither does that of the elder Diacceto, whose examples of classical tyrannicides had also done much to inspire the young men in their action.

What part, if any, did Nerli play in this conspiracy? We have seen the degree to which he was influenced by Machiavelli and that he does not blame his friend for the conspiracy to the extent which Nardi does. He points out in the Commentari that classical models played a part in motivating the conspirators but he is reticent on the discovery of the plot and the fate of those involved. He tells us that Buondelmonti, Alamanni, Batista della Palla and Brucioli were implicated and that they were therefore "fatti rebelli", the Cardinal succeeding in stabilizing his state

97)C.Guasti - Documenti della Conguira fatta contro il Cardinale Giulio de' Medici. Giornale Storico degli Archivi Toscani. Vol.3, 1859, pp.121-150;185-232;239-267. p.122. "Intorno a'20 di maggio del 1522, ad un corriere francese ritenuto in Firenze fu estorta non so quale confessione: dopo di che furono presi Jacopo da Diacceto, giovine letterato, e un Luigi Alamanni, diverso dal poeta".

and protecting it from this attack, but he gives no clue as to his own views on the matter nor as to the motivations of the conspirators, though he must have been in a position to know these. Here, as on other matters where his personal knowledge might have been of great value, he is very reticent. He does, however, give us one piece of information which shows that he was most probably more closely involved in the plot than one might at first suppose.

This is the clue which he gives us about his relationship with Zanobi Buondelmonti, one of those most deeply implicated in the conspiracy, with whom he had in fact discussed the proposals for reform which were then current. Nerli writes that on the day when the news of the arrest of the young poet Diacceto became known he was walking in the Piazza in Florence with Buondelmonti who, when he heard the news became very disturbed and worried. It would have been unwise in the extreme for Buondelmonti to have shown his fear to anyone who did not sympathize with his views for fear of harsh repercussions and it would therefore seem that he regarded Nerli as in sympathy with the aims of the conspiracy, even if he was not a close associate of the conspirators. Other evidence shows that of all the members of the Orti group, after Machiavelli, Nerli was probably closest to Zanobi, and thus must have known of the plot. In August, 1520 for example, writing to Machiavelli to give him news of what is going on in his absence, he tells him,

"con Zanobi comunicai la vostra, et ne facemo quel iudicio che delle cose vostre si fa sempre, per arrearvi voi queste cose in cazzelleria. Eravamo lui et io in animo questo giorno rispondervi a comune; ma lui ha havuto figliuolo maschio, e per questo io non li ho voluto dare noia".

98

Later that same year, in November, when Nerli was in Rome on what must have been a visit to his Salviati in-laws, he writes to Machiavelli, sending his regards to Zanobi in particular, and refers to a meeting which the two have planned. ⁹⁹ Their mutual friendship with Machiavelli clearly helped to draw Nerli and Buondelmonti closer together.

Yet one would not have expected to find Nerli involved in a plot to overthrow the Medici, for in 1518 he had expressed his devotion to the family when writing to Vettori, ¹⁰⁰ in spite of his earlier discontent that Mediceans were not receiving the rewards which they merited. It is difficult to visualize Nerli supporting a group which aimed at the overthrow of the Medici and the establishment of a republican government of the type which the city had enjoyed before 1512. The fact that in September, 1522, three months after the execution of the leading conspirators, Nerli gained the office of Prior certainly does not point to the régime being suspicious of him. Yet he must have known what was happening and given his tacit consent, even if more out of loyalty to his friends than from conviction. Unless, of course,

98)Machiavelli - Lettere. Nerli to Machiavelli. August 1, 1520

99)Ibid. "A Zanobi Buondelmonti dite che io mi raccomando a lui, et che si ricordi della promessa del venire".

100)See above, note 5.

he hinted to the Cardinal about what was going on and this is the basis for his comment that Giulio should have moved against them more swiftly than he did. He may have hoped that if action were taken at an early stage the conspirators would not be treated so harshly.

It is difficult to tell exactly what part Nerli played and it is of course possible that in 1522 he was feeling discontented with the Cardinal's rule and therefore had sympathy with the conspirators. The fact that Jacopo Pitti claims that the leaders of the conspiracy were supporters of the Medici adds further weight to the idea that Nerli may have played a part in the
101
opposition to the Cardinal.

There are two other pieces of evidence which also point strongly to Nerli having been involved in the plot. These are a discourse written in October, 1524 to the Cardinal, after he had become Pope Clement VII, by Niccolò di Lorenzo Martelli, one of the chief conspirators, and the record of Martelli's trial in
102
1526. Martelli evidently hoped to ingratiate himself with the

101) Pitti - Apologia de' Capucci. A.S.I. 1842. p.327. Publico; "Le congiure danno tanto spavento a chi tiene lo stato, che non se ne assicura così per fretta; massime essendo i capi di esse degli amici della casa, perchè de' popolani avrebbe avuto men sospetto: tanto che il cardinale prese per guardia della sua persona Alessandro Vitelli, con certi fanti, per tórre a'maligni l'animo di assaltarlo".

102) Guasti, op.cit. p.216. Discorso di Niccolò di Lorenzo Martelli in cui ragiona di ciò ch'e' farebbe per ordinare un reggimento, e in specie quello della Repubblica di Firenze, quando ne potesse divenir signore. p.239. Processo di Niccolò di Lorenzo Martelli.

Pope and Nerli is implicated in what he has to say. He discusses what action he would take if he were in charge of the city in order to construct a situation where the citizens were dependent on him and not vice versa. He suggests a method of disposing of dangerous citizens, who he says he would send to

"..ufficii di guadagno e onorevoli", so that "o lor sarieno stati amazzati da quelle gente bestiale, che non si lassono governare, e saria fuor di lor inimicitie; se non, io mi sarei in modo fondato e achoncio, che quando e'tornassino, io non harei paura di lor conive e ghiribizi".

103

Amongst those in the list of men whom Martelli suggests ought to be treated in this way are Nerli and Machiavelli. The discourse continues with the following words,

"E per non multiplicar in parole in distender e nominar questi ciptadini si prolissamente, io tratterei in questa forma, tutti quelli che io sapessi fussino pel passato o manomessi stati o presi a suspetto da'mia antecessori, e che havessino machinato e operato contro a loro e la casa mia, o loro o le case loro, pel passato".

104

It may be that in suggesting that Nerli would be of less danger outside the city Martelli was simply flattering Clement for, after a spell in Prato in 1522 to 1523, he had in fact been appointed governor of Modena in May 1524. Perhaps indeed Clement had hoped that in this position Nerli would come to grief at the hands of the "gente bestiale"!

Whatever the reason behind Nerli's appointment it is clear that Martelli, who should have been in a position to know,

103) Guasti, op.cit. Discorso.. , p219.

104) " " " " p.220.

regarded him as a possible danger to the régime and the record of Martelli's trial provides an even stronger indictment of Nerli. In this Martelli names Nerli as one of the people upon whom Zanobi Buondelmonti felt he could rely, although he adds that, since Zanobi was waiting to see what help would come from the French king, he does not know if Nerli and the others were in fact approached on the matter.¹⁰⁵ Martelli also says that the conspirators aimed at restoring Soderini with a government formed of eight Signori and the office of the Otto. The latter was to be very powerful and in the list of those who were to be members Martelli includes

"Filippo, o Benedetto suo padre, de' Nerli".

He also strongly implicates Machiavelli in the plot.

Martelli's accusations point to Nerli having been deeply implicated in the plot but the matter must remain something of a mystery, for none of his letters written at this time survive to help us solve the problem. It must be said in Nerli's defence that his name does not appear in the official reports of the conspiracy and to judge from his past and future career as a servant of the Medici his participation seems unlikely. Yet his friendship with Machiavelli and Buondelmonti and the light in which Martelli presents him make one wonder if, for this brief time, he did in fact espouse, at least tacitly, the cause of the

¹⁰⁵Guasti, op.cit. Processo.. p.244. "Li quali soprascripti ciptadini eron quelli che decto Zanobi disegnava ricercare; ma se lui li ricercò o sì o no, nol so;..".

anti-Medici party. It may be that he too was fired by the ideas which he heard expounded in the Orti and that he too fell under the spell of the Brutus-inspired concept of tyrannicide.

The years between 1511 and 1524 were of great importance for Nerli's development for they provided him with valuable experience of public life and a knowledge of the most important men and ideas of his time. Such knowledge and experience were to be of value to him during the next three years of his life for, as papal governor of Modena, he was to need all the resources at his command.

Chapter 3 - Modena, 1524 - 1527.

In 1524 Nerli was appointed to be governor of the city of Modena on behalf of the Pope. Thus on his first major appointment he was ultimately responsible not to the government of Florence but to the Pope, via his brother-in-law Cardinal Giovanni Salviati, his immediate superior, who had been made papal legate for Modena, Reggio, Parma, Piacenza and Ferrara in the year of Nerli's own appointment. Doubtless Nerli owed his appointment to the influence in Rome of his Salviati relatives. His father-in-law Jacopo was at this time one of the leading advisers to the Pope and Jacopo's son, Cardinal Giovanni, held numerous diplomatic posts under Clement, being sent as an extraordinary nuncio to Spain in May, 1525. It is more than probable that these two men used their influence with the Pope to secure the governorship for Nerli at a time when, as we saw in the preceeding chapter, his position in Florence may have been somewhat difficult. At first the office presented few difficulties and Nerli, though tending to refer even relatively minor problems

1) Tommasino de'Bianchi, detto de'Lancellotti - Cronaca Modenese. Monumenti di storia patria delle provincie modenesi. Serie delle cronache. Vols. 2-13. Parma. 1862-84. Vol. 2, p. 283-84. "1524. Mercordì a dì 10 mazo. Vene in Modena el magnifico misser Filippo Nerlo Fiorentino da hore 20½ cognato del reverendissimo cardinale Salviato legato de Modena el quale misser Filippo è venuto per governatore de Modena;..". Varchi, Book 5, p. 312-13. "..mandatovi da Clemente per lo essere egli genero di Jacopo Salviati". Niccolai - Filippo de'Nerli. He wrongly dates the beginning of Nerli's office as 1523.

to the Cardinal, met with a reasonable amount of success. His task was soon to become more difficult for Modena was of considerable importance during the struggles between the Pope and the League of Cognac on the one hand, and the Emperor Charles V on the other. Nerli's task was to maintain papal control in the city and to prevent its recapture by Alfonso d'Este. In this he failed for in June, 1527 Alfonso retook Modena, and for this failure Nerli has been severely criticised. Busini, in a letter to Varchi on January 6, 1549 tells him that

"Filippo de' Nerli aveva per dappocaggine lasciato
Modena nel conclavio di papa Chimente:.."

2

and this judgement tended to hold sway until Niccolai sought to correct it in his monograph on Nerli.³ In order to determine the justice of this judgement numerous factors must be considered. Firstly, the position of Modena in the war of the League of Cognac; that is, Nerli's position as a papal governor must be seen against the failure of the League and the general mismanagement of the papal forces. Secondly, Nerli's position as a papal governor must be considered, for dislike of church rule was undoubtedly an element in the re-instatement of the Este family. Thirdly, the efforts which Nerli made to keep control and retain the city for the papacy must be considered and evaluated. After this has been done a more general examination of his qualities as a governor and a comparison of his term of office with that of Guicciardini

2) Lettere di Giovambattista Busini a Benedetto Varchi sopra l'assedio di Firenze. Ed. Milanese. Fl. 1860. p.73, January 6, 1549.

3) Niccolai, op.cit.

may be made, which will also help to throw some light on whether or not Nerli was justified in handing over the city.

In discussing these problems use can be made of numerous sources which combine to give a reasonably clear picture of the situation in Italy and in Modena in the eventful years 1526 and 1527. Nerli himself deals briefly with the period in the seventh book of his Commentari, Giovio considers it in his history, and the whole matter is given a detailed analysis in Guicciardini's Storia d'Italia. Guicciardini was in charge of the papal forces⁴ of the League of Cognac and in his history and in his letters we have a record of his aims and actions and an insight into the management of the League. There are also two chronicles written by Modenese citizens who lived through this period of crisis. One is a rather summary account by Alessandro Tassoni,⁵ whilst the other is the very detailed description of life in the city at this time by Bianchi.⁶ This latter account must be treated with a certain caution since Bianchi was later honoured by Alfonso d'Este,⁷ but it does provide useful information on the outlook of the Modenese citizens. There is manuscript evidence in the State Archives of both Florence and Modena. The Carte Stroziane contain numerous letters written by Nerli to Cardinal Salviati

4) Carteggi di Francesco Guicciardini. Pub. in Fonti per la Storia d'Italia. Rome. 1938-62. Opere Inedite di Guicciardini. Fl. 1863. Vols. 5 & 9.

5) Cronaca modenese di A. Tassoni, in Monumenti Storici XV. 1883. The chronicle covers the period 1488 to 1562.

6) Bianchi, op.cit. covers 1506 to 1554.

7) Bianchi, Vol.3, p.357, records that on April 20, 1528 Alfonso gave him the order of "cavalero a speron d'oro".

during the early part of his governorship, and in the Modenese archives there are seven volumes of Nerli's 'copia lettere',⁸ which span the whole period of his office, continuing until a few days before the final surrender. Material on the problem is by no means lacking.

In order to make clear the exact position of Modena in the time of the League of Cognac it is necessary to trace its history from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Modena had formed part of the lands of the Dukes of Ferrara since the thirteenth century and was inherited in 1505 by Duke Alfonso, whose interests had been linked with those of the papacy since his marriage in 1502 to Lucretia Borgia, daughter of Alexander VI. Under the war-like Julius II Alfonso fought with the forces of the League of Cambrai and was made a gonfaloniere of the church. However, when Julius withdrew from the League because he realized, amongst other things, that the weakness of Venice was preventing her from protecting Christendom against the Turks, Alfonso refused to be pushed into following suit. The result was a papal attack on Este lands, which French aid could not avert, and after the defeat of the French forces in 1511 Alfonso was forced to go to Rome for negotiations. There he narrowly escaped imprisonment by the Pope, who now sent the Duke of Urbino to occupy Reggio. The problem of Modena, which was now in papal hands, remained unsettled, at least

8) See A.S.F. Carte Strozzi, Prima Serie, Vols. 151-158. (November, 1524 - June, 1525). Archivio di Stato di Modena. Vols. 5571-5577. The family archive of the Guicciardini in Florence also contains a little information relating to this period.

from Alfonso's point of view.

During the pontificate of Leo X Alfonso's Cardinal brother sought repeatedly to bring negotiations to a conclusion, but Leo was chiefly concerned with his ambitions for his young Medici relatives, Lorenzo and Giuliano, and none of his frequent promises to the Este produced any apparent result. In 1522 an exasperated Alfonso issued an angry 'apologia' to the Emperor and princes of Christendom in which he explained his position.¹⁰ His alliance with France against the Pope, of whom he is a feudatory for certain territory, is not, he claims, of his own desire but is a stand into which he has been forced by the Pope's attitude. Leo has constantly promised the restoration of Reggio and Modena,

"..il quale di tempo in tempo con nuove scuse trovava cause di non servare la sua giurata fede".

The Pope's intransigence has continued in spite of the concessions which Este himself has made. In fact in 1519 when Alfonso was ill the Pope, anticipating his death, had gone so far as to send the Bishop of Ventimiglia into his lands to seize Mirandola. The Duke remained technically a papal ally but he bent all his energy towards the recovery of his territory, and of Modena in particular, and his alliances were aimed towards this end. If he was to be an active supporter of papal policy against the emperor Clement VII would have to make some concessions on this matter of

9) See Cesare Cesari - Modena. Storia municipale d'Italia. Rome. 1929.

10) An Italian translation of this 'apologia' can be found in the Carte Stroziane, P.S. 271.

the Este lands.

In the winter of 1526-27, when the troops of the League of Cognac stood opposed to those of the Emperor, the matter of Alfonso's allegiance was of vital importance, for his cooperation could sway the balance of the war in favour of whichever side obtained it. Guicciardini realized this and was at pains to point out the gravity of the situation to Clement VII. Guicciardini's concern over this matter is clearly revealed in his letters to Giammatteo Giberti, the papal datary, in the late summer of 1526.

"Dare al Duca di Ferrara, Modena et Reggio è di grande importanza; et non sarà forse di tanta utilità, perchè lui, vedendo la necessità del Papa, starà facilmente in sullo asino,..", 11

he writes in late August, clearly concerned that if the vacillating Clement does not make up his mind to make concessions to Este within a reasonable space of time he will find it harder to come to terms with the Duke. Speed and firmness of purpose were two things which Guicciardini constantly urged on Clement. In February, 1526 for example, he advised,

"Però è necessario fermare el punto et, stabilito che l'huomo l'habbia, andare a quel camino senza ritornare ogni di in nuove dubitationi o retardare l'executione di quello che sia stato risoluto",

and again,

"Però è necessario che Sua Sanctità si risolva, fermi el punto suo et non perda nè tempo nè occasione conveniente al fine che determinerà..". 12

11) Carteggi, Vol.9. Guicciardini to Giberti. August 22, 1526.

12) Guicciardini - Scritti Inediti sopra la Politica di Clemente VII dopo la Battaglia di Pavia. Fl. 1940. February 20-22, 1526.

Clement must make up his mind on this vital issue which could bring about the defeat of the League.

"Ricordo bene", writes Guicciardini, "che per niente non si lasci andare el Duca di Ferrara alla volta loro, perchè vi darà perduta la guerra, et non ci sarà rimedio". 13

If allowed to ally with the Emperor Alfonso could, and in the event did, greatly facilitate the passage of the imperial forces into Italy by the aid of money and troops. The imperial party without a doubt were well aware of the use which the Duke could be to them, for the imperial minister Gattinara wrote in a document on policy composed shortly after the defeat of the French at Pavia that Charles V,

"..would be justified in closing his eyes if the Duke of Ferrara took it into his head to sieze Modena". 14

He would also have been a great asset to the papal side since he was an extremely able military leader and the death of Giovanni de'Medici on November 30, 1526 in a skirmish with Frundsberg's troops in Brescia left the League sorely in need of such a leader. Guicciardini records how the Pope's advisers urged him,

"..a pensare a fare qualche composizione (da che sempre era stato alienissimo) col Duca di Ferrara; non tanto per assicurarsi de'movimenti suoi quanto per trarne somma grande di denari, et per indurlo a cavalcare nello esercito come capitano generale di tutta la lega". 15

Yet in spite of the many cogent arguments in favour of an agreement with Este Clement for a long time refused to give way on

13) Carteggi, Vol.9. Guicciardini to Giberti. September 9, 1526.

14) K.Brandi - Charles V. Trans. C.V.Wedgewood. London. 1939.

15) La Storia d'Italia di Francesco Guicciardini sugli originali manoscritti a cura di Alessandro Gherardi. Fl. 1919. 4 Vols. Vol.4, Book 17, p.78.

the matter; Modena, under the governorship of Nerli, was to remain part of the papal states. The situation hung for a long time in the balance, a fact which could not have made Nerli's position in the city any easier, and then at length the Pope gave in to the advice of the councillors at the Curia and agreed that Guicciardini should go to Ferrara to negotiate with Alfonso.

Even now, in November 1526, with the imperial troops threatening from northern Italy, Clement does not seem to have been fully convinced that it was vital for him to make concessions to Alfonso if the League was not to fail. Although he gave Guicciardini

"..uno breve di mandato amplissimo",

he also restricted the commission,

"..a consentire di reintegrare il Duca di Modena et di Reggio, col ricevere da lui in brevi tempi dugento-mila ducati,...et con molte altre condizioni: le quali non solo erano per se stesse quasi inestricabili, per la brevità del tempo, ma ancora il Pontefice, che non ci consendava se non per ultima necessità, aveva commesso che non si facesse, senza suo nuovo avviso e commissione, la intera conclusione".

16

Clement was clearly anxious that as little as possible should be conceded to Alfonso and that the papal party should gain as much as possible in return for those concessions which were allowed. In the event, however, the Pope's half-hearted movements towards the Duke came too late. On November 24 Guicciardini was in Modena, hoping to arrive in Ferrara the next day for a meeting

16) Storia d'Italia. Vol.4, Book 17, p.78.

with the Duke. On November 25 he had to write to Giberti that the meeting would not take place since the Duke had received an offer of investiture with Modena and Reggio from the emperor.¹⁷ This news was brought to Alfonso via the imperial troops who had just landed in Corsica, the emperor's offer also including the marriage of the Duke's son Hercole with his natural daughter Margherita of Austria. This news, says Guicciardini, caused Alfonso,

"..che prima con grandissimo desiderio aspettava la venuta del Luogotenente..",

to change his mind, as too did the arrival of the army, which made the emperor's position stronger.¹⁸ It is ironic that Clement's decision should have come too late by such a small margin, for Alfonso was not very anxious for an alliance with Charles V, since this was likely to involve him in considerable expense, and in his negotiations with the imperial party during 1526 he had shown himself capable of as much vacillation as the

17) Carteggi, Vol.10. Guicciardini to Giberti. November 25, 1526. "Uscendo hoggi di Cento per andare stasera a Ferrara, incontrai messer Jacopo Alvarocto, mandato in poste dal Duca, quale mi fece intendere che, el di medesimo che vi fu la seconda volta el Garimberto, era arrivato di Spagna uno huomo dello Imperatore, quale portava la Duca la investitura di Modena et Reggio et la conclusione del parentado della figliuola naturale al figliuolo, di che si era facta la stipulatione per verba de futuro;..".

18) Storia d'Italia. Vol.4, Book 17, pp.78-9. "Ma era già diventata vana la volontà del Pontefice, perchè in su l'armata medesima era uno uomo del Duca di Ferrara il quale, spedito dal luogo predetto con grande diligenza, non solo significò al Duca la venuta della armata ma gli portò ancora da Cesare la investitura di Modena e di Reggio, e la promissione, sotto parole del futuro, del matrimonio di Margherita di Austria, figliuola naturale di Cesare, in Ercole primogenito del Duca".

19
 Pope. Had Clement been more willing to make concessions and less anxious to exact a large payment from the Duke the matter might have been settled.

On hearing the news of the agreement Guicciardini decided not to risk the Pope's reputation by proceeding to Ferrara for negotiations which were almost certain to prove fruitless and remained in Modena. It can have been of little comfort to Nerli, now faced with the certain opposition of the Este forces and most probably with that of the imperial troops also, to learn that in Guicciardini's opinion Modena was quite likely to be the first object of attack.²⁰ Even now, however, the lieutenant had not given up all hopes of an alliance with Alfonso, for his agent in Ferrara, Giovanni Casale, reported that the Duke had acted from a desire to regain Modena but that, if offered the right terms, he might yet revert to the papal side.²¹ The imperial alliance was

19) Giuseppe Salvioli - Nuovi Studi sulla Politica e le vicende dell'Esercito Imperiale in Italia nel 1526-27 e sul sacco di Roma. Archivio Veneto. Vol.16, Part 1, 1878 and Vol.17, Part 1, 1879.

Vol.16, Part 1, 1878, p.293. "Le cose del Duca di Ferrara oscillavano in questi avvenimenti tra il Papa e l'Imperatore".
 20) Carteggi, Vol.10. Guicciardini to Giberti, November 25, 1526. "Hora noi siamo qui et possiamo essere chiari che li lanzchenech, co'quali credo che si uniranno pure di quelli che sono in Milano, facta forse prima la impresa di Modena per satisfactione del Duca, pigleranno el cammino di Toscana o di Roma, et forse l'uno drieto all'altro;..".

21) Opere Inedite, Vol.5. Guicciardini to Giberti, January 6, 1527. Commenting on the report of Giovanni Casale who has been to see the Duke, "Giovanni fa giudicio, che lui per la voglia di avere Modona sia per precipitarsi ogni cosa; ma che per cognoscere che proposiro l'averla dal Papa che da altri e per fuggire la spesa, sendogli data, lascerebbe in ogni modo Cesare".

clearly an uneasy one and Guicciardini, whose personal relationship with Alfonso had always been good,²² might well have been able to persuade him. His attempts to reach an agreement with Este seem to have continued for some time, but the Pope did not give him sufficient support for he did not agree with Guicciardini's contention that there was only one way in which the situation could be saved,

"..e questo e che Sua Santità gli lasci avere Modona, o dandogliene scopertamente o permettendo la tolga;..". 23

From Guicciardini's point of view to jeopardize the whole campaign for the sake of keeping Modena and Reggio was foolish in the extreme and subsequent events proved that he was right. Nerli too points out the importance of the alliance of Alfonso with the emperor which meant that the imperial army came into Mantuan territory with the expectation of aid and supplies from the Duke of Ferrara.²⁴ It would seem that Nerli had himself been involved in Guicciardini's final attempt to come to an agreement with Alfonso.²⁵

22) André Otetea - François Guichardin, sa vie publique et sa pensée politique. Paris. 1926. p.176, note 2.

23) Opere Inedite, Vol.5, Guicciardini to Giberti. January 6, 1527.

24) Nerli, Book 7, p.144. "Laonde fece l'Imperadore sotto Monsignor di Borbone nemico, e rubello del Re scendere in Italia un esercito validissimo di Tedeschi, e scese da principio quell'esercito in sul Mantovano, con isperanza d'aver comodità di passo, e di vettovaglie per mezzo del Duca di Ferrara, il quale non avendo trovato luogo col Papa, se non fuori di tempo, e poichè quel Duca s'era già accordato coll'Imperadore, fu tale accordo di grandissima importanza per facilitare a Cesare la passata di quell'esercito".

25) A.S.M. Nerli to Jacopo Salviati, January 17, 1527. Concerning two mercenary captains, Vargas and Varolo, he writes, "..hanno facto poco fructo con Ferrara in questa loro gita et sene sono tornati male resoluti..".

As yet, although the situation was very serious, the imperial troops did not have the upper hand, for the two leaders, Georg Frundsberg and the Duke of Bourbon, had many obstacles to face in their attempts to unite the two halves of the imperial army. It was at this point that the help supplied to the imperialists by the Duke of Ferrara began to be of considerable importance. Even in November 1526, when the alliance was not final, Ferrara had sent help to Frundsberg's troops which, although it was not a lot, had come at a very opportune time.²⁶ These troops, first causing great fear in Tuscany, turned instead to Milan, where they awaited the arrival of the Duke of Bourbon. He, hampered by bad weather and by lack of money, was unable to move very swiftly, and the Milanese suffered at the hands of the Spanish troops who remained within their city.²⁷ On December 31²⁸ the Duke of Ferrara finalized his agreement with the emperor and by the end of January Bourbon, thanks to opportune help from

26) Storia d'Italia. Vol.4, Book 17, p.80. "Preseno dipoi i Tedeschi, a'ventiquattro, la via di Borgoforte; dove, non avendo loro artiglieria, arrivarono quattro falconetti, mandati loro per Po dal Duca di Ferrara: aiuto in sè piccolo ma che riuscì grandissimo per beneficio della fortuna". One of these weapons killed Giovanni de' Medici. p.81."..e a'venti otto dì, passato il Po a Ostia, alloggiarono a Rovere: dove, soccorsi di qualche somma di denari dal Duca di Ferrara e di alcuni altri pezzi di artiglieria da campagna,...si volseno al cammino di Lombardia per unirsi con le genti che erano a Milano".

27) Storia d'Italia. Vol.4, Book 17, p.82. "..gli Spagnuoli minacciavano non volere uscire di Milano se non erano pagati del vecchio, e già cominciavano a saccheggiare". See below, note 29.

28) The main points of this treaty were that the Duke was obliged to take action against enemies of the emperor and to be his Captain General in Italy, with 100 men at arms and 200 light cavalry, supplied at his own expense. He was to pay 200,000 ducats when Modena was restored to him and the emperor was to protect him and not conclude peace without him.

Alfonso, was in a position to continue the imperial advance. At first he seemed to be heading for Bologna, which gave rise once more to anxiety in Modena, but Alfonso urged him to lose no time and to make at once for Florence or Rome, probably because he had no wish to find himself faced with providing for the imperial troops for a long period of time. Both Bourbon and the Marchese di Guasto had received help from the Duke, using his money to keep order in the army which was constantly threatening rebellion if not paid.²⁹ The aid given by Alfonso may have been relatively small in quantity but it was sufficient to enable the imperialists to continue where they might otherwise have been forced to halt. Had the Duke been on the papal side the sack of Rome might well have been averted.

Bourbon now moved on towards Rome, which his soldiers, greedy for money and spoils, saw as a great prize. Even now his situation was by no means a strong one and in the spring of 1527 Guicciardini says he was even contemplating peace, had he not received more aid from the Duke of Ferrara.³⁰ In April the

29) Storia d'Italia. Vol.4, Book 18, p.91-2. Refers to the Spanish troops, "...i quali, non avendo ricevuti danari in nome di Cesare, ma sostentati con le taglie e con le contribuzioni, e avendo in preda le case e le donne de' Milanese, continuavano volentieri nel vivere con tanta licenza; ma non potendo negarlo direttamente, dimandavano di essere prima sodisfatti degli stipendii corsi insino a quello dì".

30) Storia d'Italia. Vol.4, Book 18, p.109-10. The Vicar told the Pope "...che il Duca di Borbone fusse inclinato alla concordia, per le difficoltà che aveva a procedere nella guerra (perchè sempre aveva dimostrato a lui desiderarla)..". "E nondimeno, nel tempo medesimo, venivano, per ordine del Duca di Ferrara, allo esercito provisioni di farine guastatori carri polvere e instrumenti simili..".

the presence of the imperial troops near Florence caused the first movements against the Medicean régime there, a régime which Guicciardini had long since criticized to the Pope, his criticisms falling on deaf ears.³¹ Leaving Arezzo at the end of April Bourbon continued to Rome and the holy city soon fell to his troops, though he himself was killed in the attack. Rome now suffered sack and pillage at the hands of the troops and the Pope himself suffered the indignity of imprisonment. The Republicans in Florence seized their opportunity and the Medici were expelled from the city, an action which earned the Florentines the lasting enmity of Clement, who felt very bitter that the city for which he thought he had done so much should have acted thus in his hour of need. Now too Alfonso d'Este seized his opportunity and on June 6, 1527 he achieved his longed-for ambition when he re-took Modena, Nerli having capitulated and left the city on the previous day. The capitulation is reported in the following terms by Galvani,

"Spaventato il governatore senza neppur trarre la spada gli cedè vilemente la Città".

32

Yet this harsh judgement seems unjust when we have seen that the fall of the city was not an isolated event but part of the collapse of the League of Cognac, a collapse which had been caused, at least in part, by the Pope's refusal to come to terms at the outset with Alfonso d'Este. At least since November, 1526 Nerli

31) See C. Roth - The Last Florentine Republic. London. 1925. p.20, note 46. Also Chap.4.

32) Francesco Galvani - Sommario Storico delle Famiglie Celebri Toscane. 1862. Vol.2. Section on the Nerli family.

had been facing the possibility of Este or imperial attack, living on a razor's edge whilst trying to ensure that there were adequate supplies in the city and that the defences were properly maintained. Now he saw Rome collapse, the Pope imprisoned, Florence fall to the republicans and the situation of the League deteriorate into chaos. Eight days after the fall of Modena Guicciardini himself was writing in despair that

"Lo stato della Chiesa sta tutto sospeso e in aere, e si maraviglia ognuno che da Nostro Signore non venga qualche ordine particolare circa il governo di esso;..". 33

In such circumstances as these Modena was almost bound to fall to Alfonso, who was certain to take the opportunity offered to him for achieving what he had been working for over so many years. This is evident from the accounts of Guicciardini and Giovio, who both point out that in re-taking Modena Alfonso was taking advantage of the papal situation. Modena was no longer in papal hands, wrote Guicciardini,

"..perchè il Duca di Ferrara, non pretermettendo l'occasione che gli davano le calamità del Pontefice, minacciando di dare il guasto alle biade già matura, gli costrinse a dargli il sesto dì di giugno la città;..".34

Giovio points out that Alfonso had taken Modena,

"..veggendo l'occasione del Papa pessimamente trattato dalla Fortuna,..". 35

Nerli can hardly be blamed for the entire failure of the League

33) Opere Inedite, Vol.9. Guicciardini to the Pope. June 15, 1527.

34) Storia d'Italia, Vol.4, Book 18, p.130-131.

35) Giovio - Storie dei suoi tempi. Venice. 1581. Book 27, p.48.

of Cognac.

The failure of the League may be attributed partly to the character of Pope Clement and partly to the general conditions in which it worked. It was hampered at all levels by lack of money and by constant disagreements and lack of communication amongst its leaders. The inability to act together without petty jealousies which the League displayed was of the sort that Machiavelli had often warned against. The commander of the Venetian forces, the Duke of Urbino, and the Marchese di Saluzzo, in charge of the French troops, were both self-interested and reluctant to obey immediately those commands which did not suit their ends. In the summer of 1525, for example, Urbino had led an attack on Cremona which had not only wasted money but had hindered the papal forces in their attempt to stop the Duke of Bourbon from reaching Milan. Guicciardini himself was not an easy man to work with and in fact seems to have found only Giovanni delle Bande Nere, out of all the military leaders, to his satisfaction, another reason why he would have welcomed the support of Alfonso d'Este, with whom his relations were good. Count Guido Rangone, Governor General of the Church army, with whom Nerli came into close contact over the defence of Modena, seems to have been an extremely difficult man, ready to quarrel with anyone. Nerli, in the Commentari, records that,

"..occorsero ne'tempi di quella guerra intra il Sig. Giovanni, e il Conte Guido, perchè non bene

convenivano insieme, dimolti dispareri;..", 36
 and Rangone eventually relinquished his responsibility to his
 brother Lodovico because he refused to submit any longer to the
 authority of Guicciardini.³⁷ Let down by the commanders in the
 field the League was also disappointed by the rulers who had
 promised their support at the outset. Guicciardini writes
 bitterly of this in the Storia d'Italia, saying of the French,

"..le provisioni de' Francesi amplissime di parole
 riuscivano, ogni di piu, scarsissime d'effetti,
 come continuamente avevano fatto dal primo di insino
 all'ultimo di tutta la guerra", 38

and he also complains of the Venetians and the English.³⁹

Lack of money also gravely hindered the policies of the
 League and contributed to the Pope's indecision and tendency to
 negotiate for peace at intervals throughout the campaign.
 Clement had entered the war with insufficient money and was
 reluctant to employ the time-honoured method of creating new

36) Nerli, Book 7, p.143-144.

37) A.S.M. Nerli to Guicciardini, November 11, 1526. He writes
 to report Guido's resignation. "..et questo disse di fare perche
 non intendeva a pacto alcuno di volere per inanzi stare a
 obedientia di V.S....". On the same day Nerli wrote to Jacopo
 Salviati that Guido, "..concluse che non era piu per pigliare
 alcun'carico ne alcuna briga ne darsi alcuno pensiero per la
 guardia di questa citta come haveva facto sino a hora....per
 conoscere il Guicc.no poco intendente delle cose della guerra..".

38) Storia d'Italia, Vol.4, Book 18, p.107.

39) " " " " " " p.108. "E i conforti et gli
 aiti del Re di Inghilterra erano troppo lontani e troppo
 incerti".

40

Cardinals in order to improve his financial position. It was this need of money which contributed to his intransigence towards Alfonso d'Este.⁴¹ Guicciardini was forced to write endlessly to the Pope for sufficient money to keep his troops in the field and to provide adequate defences against Bourbon. As early as August 21, 1526 he wrote to Clement pointing out how frequently he had sent requests for money to Jacopo Salviati and Giammatteo Giberti and continued,

"..io prego V.S. che si ricordi che le gente non si pagheranno con disegni in aria; et che quando è el tempo delle paghe, bisogna mandare danari et non conti o ghiribizzi incerti".

42

This problem obviously affected Nerli too and if Guicciardini sent regular pleas to the Pope for more money the governor of Modena sent equally frequent pleas to the lieutenant. In October, 1526, he writes about his difficulties over the troops of the military captain Bernardino which,

"..per pochi di porra stare assai commodamente"

in Modena and must then be removed from the city, which cannot support the burden.⁴³ Throughout the whole time Nerli's letters

40) Storia d'Italia, Vol.4, Book 17, p.85. "..il Pontefice, perduto totalmente d'animo e esausto di denari, appetiva grandemente l'accordo, e predicando a tutti la sua povertà e il suo timore, nè volendo creare Cardinali per denari come era confortato da tutti, accresceva l'ardire e la speranza di che disegnava di offenderlo".

41) Ibid. for the Pope's financial situation in general.

42) Opere Inedite, Vol.5. Guicciardini to Giberti, December 25, 1526. "..mi truovo alle spalle tra Modona e qui più di dumila fanti, che è passato il tempo della paga; nè ho altro assegnamento che di questa cartuccia, nè so che fare".

43) A.S.M. Nerli to Guicciardini. October 31, 1526.

to Guicciardini, to Jacopo Salviati and to the Pope's treasurer, Alessandro del Caccia, are full of references to payments which have to be made to troops and for supplies of grain, and it is evident that the papal lack of money made Nerli's position extremely difficult. On May 10, 1527, just one month before he capitulated, Nerli wrote to Jacopo Salviati of the difficulty of keeping order without money, and he complained that his letters to Guicciardini had received no reply, a complaint which he later repeated to Guido Rangone.⁴⁴

This evident lack of money, which hampered all Guicciardini's activities, raises the problem of whether in fact the defences of Modena and of the other towns in the area were adequate to resist attack, or whether the mismanagement of the Pope had left these cities wide open to the onslaught of the Duke of Ferrara. Guicciardini's letters, whilst making clear his need for more money, suggest that in his opinion the towns, and Modena in particular, were at least adequately defended, and he shows a reluctance to pay heed to Nerli's claim that more troops are needed for the defence of the city. One wonders if the lieutenant was in this matter at least a little affected by his firm conviction that Modena should not have been allowed to jeopardize the whole course of the war but should have been handed over to the Duke of Ferrara. Faced on all sides with a shortage of men and money Guicciardini was not likely to regard Modena as one of

44) A.S.M. Nerli to Guido Rangone. May 30, 1527. Says he has written to Guicciardini, "...dal quale non si hebbe risposta alcuna..".

"..per andare a guardare Modona, non so come possa
guistificarlo nè con Dio nè col mondo, ne con
Nostro Signore, nè con sè medesima, sapendo lei la
fede gl'ha Sua Santità". 47

Guicciardini should not be blamed too heavily for taking this attitude in view of the circumstances in which he found himself, but it does seem clear that Modena was not adequately defended, and this view is borne out by other evidence.

Nerli himself, who it must be admitted did sometimes show a tendency to panic and exaggerate, claims that the city is not in a strong enough position to defend herself. In November 1526, when an attack seemed possible, he wrote to Jacopo Salviati that,

"..qui restera assai male guardata", 48

and his frequent requests for men and supplies reflect the poor state of the city. Giovio, in his life of Alfonso d'Este, says that the Duke was encouraged to attack Modena,

"Per haver risaputo prima che vi era poco guardia..". 49

There is also evidence in dispatches of the time to show that,

"..il duca di Ferrara, sapendo Modena sprovvista di
genti, approfittando delle circostanze, si diresse
verso la città il 1 Giugno: ivi le truppe pontificie
non essendo pagate stavano per sciogliersi". 50

Modena had undoubtedly suffered from the general poverty and disorganization of the League, being left without sufficient means to defend herself against the Duke of Ferrara, who made good use of the opportunity provided him by the fall of Rome to

47) Opere Inedite, Vol.5. Guicciardini to Rangone. May 10, 1527.

48) A.S.M. Nerli to Jacopo Salviati. November 13, 1526.

49) Giovio - La Vita di Alfonso da Este Duca di Ferrara. Trans. Gelli. Fl. 1553. p.175.

50) Salvioli, op.cit. Vol.17, Part 1, 1879. p.29-30.

recover the city.

Combining with this general disintegration in which Nerli found himself involved was another important factor which made it more difficult for him to retain control of the city for the Pope. This was the dislike of the Modenese for papal government and the amount of good feeling which remained in the city towards the Duke of Ferrara. The background against which this problem must be seen is that of Reformation Europe, a Europe where new religions were making conquests and where the reputation of the Papacy no longer held the sway it had once enjoyed. Nardi might claim that the kings of England and France were horrified by the

"..persecuzione che faceva Cesare a santa Chiesa..", 51
 but Guicciardini's bitter comments in the Storia d'Italia show just how little they were prepared to do in defence of the Holy See. It is true that in Italy, where the Papacy was regarded with a certain pride, the new theological ideas did not gain a firm foothold, but this by no means meant that the papacy was free from Italian criticism and dislike.⁵² Guicciardini himself maintained that, were it not for the fact that fate had forced him into supporting the power of two popes, he would have loved Martin Luther more than himself, in the hope that

"..his sect might demolish, or at least clip the wings, of this wicked tyranny of the priests". 53

51)Nardi, Vol.2, Book 8,p.148.

52)See the bibliography for works on the subject of heresy in Italy by Delio Cantimori.

53)Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman. New York. 1965. Series B. no.124, p.126.

However, although this general decline in respect for the papacy and the clergy must have had an effect, the basic cause of dislike of church rule was not an ideological but an economic one.

Like most communities the Modenese were prepared to give support to a ruler who did not constantly exact taxes from them and Guicciardini had made use of this fact during his time as governor of the city. In 1523, on the death of Pope Adrian, Alfonso d'Este had planned to attack Modena, but Guicciardini, by bribing the citizens with promises of reduced taxation, had managed to maintain papal control.⁵⁴ Under Clement VII the financial situation of the papacy was such that the promises could not be kept and Nerli reaped the discontent which his predecessor had sown in this way. In time of extreme need, in May, 1527, Nerli asked the citizens for a loan which they refused to give,

"..perchè altre volte che ne hano prestato àl tempo de M.Francesco Guiziardin governatore non sono stati restituiti, e più ge stato roto la deputazion e tolto la intrata dela Camera che era stata consegnata per prestito".

55

Guicciardini, who had used Modena as a stepping-stone to higher office, had been able to stave off the consequences of papal exactions but Nerli could not. Bianchi's chronicle reflects the anger which the people of Modena felt at the heavy taxation they were forced to bear, and the bitterness which was aroused when

54) Bianchi, Vol.2, p.244. This was at a time when Bianchi says Guicciardini was "...in grande suspeto de perdere la Cità per santa madre Giesia,..".

55) Bianchi, Vol.3, p.225.

Cardinal Salviati visited the city and was offered an expensive present.

"Vero è," writes Bianchi, "che la Giesia se ha fatto deli presenti a nui e dele exemptione, ma tute ge retornano in borsa a lori, e a nui resta solamento el danno grandissimo". 56

On the sixteenth of November, 1524, he writes,

"La santità del Papa vole fare scodere una decima al presente, e una ne ha hauto pochi di fa, e una altra ne vorà a Pasqua che venirà", 57

and on April 2 he complains,

"..nui de Modena habiamo tanta graveza che el non se ge po durare:..". 58

This heavy taxation, after Guicciardini had led them to expect some relief in this direction, was a bitter blow to the Modenese, who had also suffered under papal rule from the frequent billeting of foreign troops in their territory. Under Julius II foreign troops had been in the area so often that the citizens had even adopted foreign dress.⁵⁹ Thus the Modenese had no reason to be fond of papal rule or to respond to Nerli's pleas that they should be faithful to mother church. Bianchi in fact claims that since the time when Julius II took over the city things there had gone

"..de male in pegio..". 60

Together with this considerable amount of feeling against papal government there also existed a large amount of sympathy towards the Este family in the city. Giovio goes so far as to

56) Bianchi, Vol.2, p.292.

57) " " " p.293.

58) " " " p.306.

59) See T.Sandonnini - Modena sotto il Governo dei Papi.Modena.1879.

60) Bianchi, Vol.3, p.156.

claim that when Alfonso investigated the feelings of the Modenese prior to making his attack he found them,

"..inclinatissimi, et devotissimi alla casa da Este", 61 but since this remark is made in his life of Alfonso, and Giovio was often censured for his tendency to flatter his patrons, it cannot be taken merely at its face value. Modena was by no means wholly devoted to the Este but, like so many other cities in the sixteenth century, was a hot-bed of factions and rivalries, as Guicciardini discovered when he became governor. The Rangone family itself, one of the most prominent in the city, was divided in its allegiance between church and Duke, and it seems that the numerous noble families were prepared to support whoever would give most importance to their own claims of rights of jurisdiction and property. In order that he might cope with this situation effectively at the beginning of his office Guicciardini was given special powers of jurisdiction when he took up his appointment. However, whilst this background of rival factions is worth remembering, it is fair to claim that the Duke of Ferrara did have a considerable amount of support in the city. This fact Guicciardini complained of in a letter to Cardinal Giulio de' Medici in 1517,

"Le cose di questa città sono in termini che 'rebus sic stantibus', ogni volta che el Duca di Ferrara voglia malignare e levarcela su con uno furto, lo può fare facilmente per la vicinità dello Stato suo, per le dipendenzie de'feudatari che ha in questa città e persone che hanno credito e attitudine; e da altro

61)Giovio, op.cit. p.175.

canto noi essere qui senza forze e con pochi amici
che si scoprissino per noi,..". 62

The difficulties which the Modenese had to endure during the next ten years of papal rule meant that the number of the Duke's friends did not in all probability decrease, and Guicciardini again mentions this pro-Este group in a letter in September, 1526.

"El Duca vi ha delli amici: el Conte Guido delli inimici", he warns, adding "E necessario che el Governatore use buona diligentia,..". 63

There were clearly citizens prepared to support Alfonso should he attack the city, and some accounts even say that they in fact invited him to return. 64 Busini writes that the enemies of Guido,

"..che furono i Tassoni, Carandini e Bellinzini, e parte dei Rangoni, andorno a Filippo a dire, che si volevano dare al duca per non rovinare la città loro:..", 65

this plea being influential in Nerli's decision to leave Modena. This is given some weight by Bianchi's description of Alfonso's triumphant entry into the city, when the people were loud in their cheers for him, making a contrast with their feeble cries a few days earlier when Nerli had exhorted them to support the church. 66

62) Carteggi, Vol.2. Guicciardini to Cardinal Medici. May 11, 1517.

63) " Vol.9. " to Giberti. September 10, 1526.

64) Salvioli, op.cit. Vol.17, Part 1, p.30. "..ma contro gli aderenti del Papa che volevano resistere, il partito estense mandò ad offrire la città al Duca".

65) Busini, op.cit. p.96. To Varchi, January 31, 1549.

66) Bianchi, Vol.3, p.233. June 2, 1527. Nerli and Lodovico Rangone announced that they had asked the Pope to extend the exemption "del vino e dele porte" for another five years "e promettono la Sta. del Papa aprovarà ditto bando e confortano ogni persona che sia fedele a Sta. madre Giesia et se cridò gexia, gesia non molto alegramente,..". p.242."..la Extia. del Duchia Alfonso de Ferrara fece la sua intrata in Modena per la porta Citanova, ala quale gera li Foian con molta zente armate et ge presentorno le chiave dela Cità dentre da San Zirolimo con grande alegrezza del populo,..".

Whether the citizens sent to Alfonso before Nerli left the city is disputable, but it is clear that there was sufficient anti-papal and pro-Este feeling for the Duke's re-entry to be accomplished with reasonable ease and Nerli was most probably influenced by this knowledge. The Este ruled in Modena from this time until the line died out in 1796.

Nerli was placed in a virtually untenable position by the failure and disorganisation of the League of Cognac and by the dislike of papal rule which existed in Modena. In view of this it is hard to find justification for the harsh criticisms of his action in capitulating to Alfonso without first putting the city to the test of a siege which could scarcely hope to be successful. It remains to examine his actions in this time of crisis and determine whether he can be cleared from the accusation that he could have done more to resist the Duke and keep Modena in papal hands. In his chronicle Alessandro Tassoni records the events in the following manner,

"..et die sext Junii Alfonsus AEstensis Dux habuit Mutinam concorditer, civibus se deditibus, quia precedenti die Gubernator ecclesiasticus et Lodovicus Rangonus cum militibus Ecclesie fugerant Bononiam".

This bald statement tends to suggest that the two men deserted the sinking ship, but other evidence shows them in a rather better light. Nerli's letters show that for months prior to the fall of the city he had been sending request after request for money, men and supplies. These requests often met with no response and were repeated over and over again by the governor as he strove to keep Modena loyal. Supplies were an especially

important problem, for a starving populace was not likely to be a loyal one, and here Nerli was faced not only with a shortage of grain but also with the difficulty of transporting it safely to a city in the middle of turbulent country. In February, 1527, for example, Nerli was engaged in trying to extract from the commissioner and vice-president of the Romagna, Jacopo Salviati, the supplies which had been granted to the city by the Pope, and on February 24 he writes angrily that,

"Il vice Presidente non ha mai voluto concederne ancora insino alla meta et quella si e concessa si tardi che la habbia quasi tutta in compromesso..". 67

Another example of the lack of cohesion in the League with which Nerli had to contend. Bianchi records the efforts which the governor made to stabilize the price of bread in Modena at this time and reading between the lines of his account it seems that he also tried to make some provision for later by storing some of the grain.⁶⁸

Not only did Nerli try to alleviate the sufferings of the citizens and retain their loyalty by harrying his superiors constantly on their behalf, but he and Lodovico Rangone, who was in charge of the city with him, also wrote to the surrounding towns asking for any help that could be sent. On May 15 Nerli wrote to the Cardinal of Cortona, pointing out the critical

67)A.S.M. Nerli to Guicciardini. February 24, 1527.

68)Bianchi, Vol.3,p.135. The Modenese also borrowed money from Nerli in order to buy supplies and this may be the origin of later complaints that Nerli acted dishonestly over this matter. Tiraboschi - Storia della Letteratura Italiana. Vol.7,Part 3. records that because of this a decree was later published in Modena against Nerli.

position of the Pope and asking what help the Modenese can expect from Florence, for he was convinced, though Guicciardini apparently was not, that the Duke of Ferrara intended to attack the city. He writes that they,

"..stare alla misericordia di dio et colla discretione della sorte secondo che il Duca si muoveva o non..".

69

On the same day he points out to Guicciardini the gravity of the situation,

"..per che li 400 scudi che accacta Alex. del Caccia per sotvenire alli 900 fanti sotto 4 Cap.ni sono consumati,..",

70

and the Captains will not continue to serve. On May 17 he wrote in despair to the Cardinal of Cortona that,

"..et il conte Lodovico et io ne habbiamo scripto piu et piu volte et mandato corrieri apposta per havere risposta per sapere in che modo ci havessino a governare in uno accidente come questo, et mai si e potuto havere risposta alcun..";

71

they need supplies and a better defence and the money which Alessandro del Caccia promised to send them has not been forthcoming. On May 20 he again wrote to Guicciardini explaining how

"Io ho scripto molte et molte lettere et cosi ha facto ancora il Conte Lodovico, non solo alla S. V. ma ancora al Conte Guido al Cardle. di Cortona al Conte Ruberto et al Alex. del Caccia et a tutto il mondo per essere provisti delle provisioni della guardia di questa Terra..",

72

none of these letters having produced any result. The tone of the letters hardly suggests a man who had no interest in

-
- 69) A.S.M. Nerli to the Cardinal of Cortona, May 15, 1527.
 70) " " to Guicciardini, May 15, 1527.
 71) " " to the Cardinal of Cortona, May 17, 1527.
 72) " " to Guicciardini, May 20, 1527.

preserving the city and who made no attempt to do so. They suggest rather a man who was trying to explore every avenue available to him in the face of enormous odds and who was meeting with a heart-breaking lack of success due to the general situation.

The collapse of the Medici régime in Florence must have increased Nerli's despair, though he managed to write a most diplomatic letter to the new government, which he can hardly have welcomed, saying that he hopes they will remain loyal to the church and that with God's grace the government may function to the general satisfaction of the Florentines.⁷³ With the fall of Rome and of Medici rule in Florence however, the position was desperate. On June 1 Nerli and Rangone exhorted the people to remain loyal to the church and to pay the taxes which were being demanded. On the following day they sent a bold defiance to the Duke of Ferrara in answer to his trumpeter, who came to demand surrender, saying that they would continue the struggle.⁷⁴ The city at this time seems to have been verging on a state of chaos and rumours about the situation of the League were rife. On June 5 Nerli held a meeting to discuss the course of events with the councillors of the city. At this meeting, Bianchi records,

73) A.S.M. Nerli to the Otto di Pratica, May 21, 1527. He thanks them for the news "della nuova reformatione dello stato pregando Dio che ne conceda gratia di stabilire le cose di cotesta citta a universale satisfatione di tutti e Cittadini, et a preservatione del bene publico et della liberta..". He also informed Cardinal Salviati of the changes which had taken place.

74) Bianchi, Vol. 3, p. 234. "...et ge risposeno che uno era el Governatore l'altre el defensore, e che erano posti in dito offitio per la Stà. de Papa Clemente et la volevano governare e defenderla a Stà. Gesia, ..".

Lodovico Rangone gave many reasons why,

"...non potere tenere questa città de Modena ala Sta.Gexia."⁷⁵

Nerli himself pointed out that they were without men or provisions and that requests for help to Venice, Bologna, Florence, Parma and Piacenza had met with no response. Both men, not wishing to witness the downfall of the city through siege, had decided to leave it. On their departure from the city the Modenese sent ambassadors to the Duke, who then entered the captured town in triumph. Of his account of these events Bianchi comments,

"Io lo scrivo perchè lui me l'ha dito, sel non è verso suo danno".

76

This does not indicate that Nerli felt that there was in his behaviour anything unworthy which ought, for expediency's sake, to be kept hidden.

Evidence on this meeting in the Modenese Archives has been used to suggest that the decision to leave was taken in spite of an element of feeling which wanted to continue the struggle and which Nerli could, and ought, to have made more use of. The Conservatores of the city were, it seems, somewhat surprised at the decision to leave and asked the reasons for it, to which Nerli and Rangone replied,

"..che non vi era rimedio, che la fanteria voleva subito i denari, e che le soldatesche ducali erano già sotto la città avendo passato il fiume Secchia".

77

75) Bianchi, Vol.3, p.239.

76) " " " p.241.

77) Sandonnini, op.cit. p.71.

The Conservatores did not seem very happy at the prospect of the return of the Este and kept demanding an explanation of the decision, so that in the end Nerli spoke to them in the following terms;

"..non saressimo venuti a questo ragionamento se havessimo conosciuto potersi difendere, ma perchè la difesa non ci è et semo venuti a questo parlamento, 'ne haec civitas depopulata sit', che sempre renderemo fede a S.S. del loro buon animo e fedeltà, e che ricordando della buona amicizia sperava anche da loro essere raccomandato",

78

with which words he left the meeting. In view of the situation which has been shown to have existed in Modena at this time it seems rather extreme to claim that because of this desire on the part of the Conservatores not to give in to the Duke Nerli should have continued the struggle, but some explanation of their rather curious attitude is necessary. It is unlikely that they were unaware of the gravity of the situation, which must have been obvious to all, however little they may have known of Nerli's attempts to get help for the city. In view of this there would seem to be only one plausible explanation of their attitude and that is that they saw in the return of the Duke a threat to their own power and were therefore unwilling to see reason on the matter. It is reasonable to suppose that they would be given less say in the affairs of the city under the autocratic Duke than they had been under the papal governor, for Nerli had been careful to treat their opinions with respect in order to avoid trouble. Hence their attempt to persuade Nerli to carry on resistance and

risk a harmful attack on Modena when it was clear that such resistance would be useless.

By now enough has been said to show that the criticisms of Nerli's actions are unjust; that he was in a position where the internal state of Modena and the external failures of the League of Cognac made further resistance pointless and that before taking his decision, which he had made with the full agreement of Lodovico Rangone, he had done all in his power to get help for the threatened city. Guicciardini himself, though he had not scrupled to criticize severely Nerli's previous actions, made no personal criticism of the Governor on this occasion. He wrote of the fall of Modena in the following dispassionate terms;

"Il duca di Ferrara con tre o quattromila comandati entrò in Modenese, e minacciando dare il guasto, la terra costruisse il conte Lodovico Rangone che vi era dentro e il Governatore a partirsi: a'6 del presente si dettono al Duca, quale è in Modona,..". 80

There is no sign in this letter that Guicciardini attached any especial blame to Nerli for what had occurred, though the governor cannot be exempted from his more general comments on the failure of the campaign;

"..ma oltre al fondamento di tutti i mali, non potette Sua Santità essere peggio servita dai suoi medesimi; che tutti, non eccettuando nessuno, si accordarono a non tentare nulla e poi ritirarsi". 81

79) See below, p.119

80) Opere Inedite, Vol.9. Guicciardini to the Pope. June 15, 1527.

81) Ibid.

Guicciardini himself cannot be exempted from these criticisms for he had been reluctant in the extreme for Guido Rangone to go to the aid of the city and in the event the Count had arrived too late.⁸² As the impending failure had become more evident Guicciardini had sunk into an outlook of gloomy despair, convinced that the emperor's good fortune would once more bring him victory, and the only advice which he could offer the neighbouring cities of Parma and Piacenza was to do nothing.⁸³ In view of this the matter for comment is not Nerli's failure to retain Modena but the length of time for which he did hold out. Clearly the Pope did not consider that Nerli had failed in his duty to him for he later entrusted him with an important mission to the Florentines.⁸⁴

The fact that Nerli is not guilty of the charges laid against him at the time of the fall of Modena does not mean, however, that his governorship was perfect and that he does not deserve to be criticized for the way in which he managed the affairs of the city. An examination of the nature of his office, the degree of independence which it gave him and the way in which he exercised it will show that, though in the main a conscientious servant of the Pope, Nerli was not always an effective governor.

82)Opere Inedite, Vol.9. Guicciardini to the Pope. June 15, 1527. "Il Conte Guido, inteso i moti del duca di Ferrara, andò verso Modena, ma non è stato a tempo, e si fermo in Romagna,..".
 83)Opere Inedite, Vol.9. Guicciardini to Giberti. June 24, 1527.
 84)See below, Chapter 4.

His character was such that he did tend to panic in difficult situations and to avoid making decisions by constantly referring problems to his superiors. A comparison of his rule with that of Guicciardini will demonstrate how differently the powers of the office could be interpreted by two very different men. Nerli, not a particularly ambitious man, seldom shows the grasp of situation and the determination of the extremely ambitious Guicciardini.

Not all of Nerli's term of office was passed at the crisis level of the last years and it is interesting to note that in fact the period of his governorship was one which marked a cultural flowering in the city.⁸⁵ There is no evidence to connect Nerli with this cultural activity but in view of his membership of the Orti Oricellari and his interest in intellectual matters it is more than probable that he did have some link with the Modenese movement, which may have served to make his time in the city more pleasant. It was not in any case entirely a time of gloom, for there were periods of gaiety, notably the wedding of one of the members of the Rangone family.⁸⁶ During periods

85) Biblioteca della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria dell'Emilia e della Romagna. Sezione di Modena. No. 14, 1957. La Medicina a Modena. "La prima metà del Cinquecento vide fiorire in Modena un periodo di feconda attività nel campo delle lettere e delle arti,..".

86) C.S. P.S. 152, f. 203. Nerli to Cardinal Salviati. December 12, 1524. "...per hora senza altro dire maxime essendo alle nozze del Magnifico Conte Claudio Rangoni..". To Salviati, December 14, f. 258 "Motta eravamo partiti et sua S. et io dalle nozze del Conte Claudio dove tucta nocte stemo ad festeggiare et anche questa nocte chi ne volessi un'altra nocte la ha nel medesimo luogo e con le medesime donne la potrebbe havere, ma io che comincio ad sentire del vecchio non ho voluto la seconda..".

such as these Nerli was occupied in seeing that the city remained free from trouble, principally by settling law suits and taking action against criminals, and in sending information to his superiors and seeing to the forwarding of letters which were being sent to other papal officials via Modena. In his letters to Cardinal Giovanni Salviati Nerli's tendency to ask for advice on how the government of Modena should be managed becomes apparent, a tendency which most probably proved rather irritating to his busy superiors. On November 24, 1524, for example, he wrote to the Cardinal for advice on how he was to deal with the impending

87

arrival of troops in the city, and four days later he allowed his wife to send a rather apologetic letter, apologising for bothering the Cardinal yet again but asking for his support in a dispute which she is having with a local abbot, who otherwise will

88

"..menarmi in lungo a suo modo".

Nerli was extremely tenacious in these requests and when an answer or solution was not forthcoming he would write again and again until he obtained satisfaction. In April, 1525, for example he wrote a series of letters to the Cardinal about the troops of Giovanni de' Medici, which were causing considerable trouble in the area and which both Nerli and the Conservatores of the city wanted removed. The citizens, who had suffered in the past from the billeting of troops in the area, were angry about the situation

87)C.S. P.S. 151, f.198. He says he does not want to stay in suspense and asks Salviati "di advisarne come ci habbiamo a Ghovernare..".

88)C.S. P.S. 151, f.252. Caterina to Salviati, November 28, 1524.

and Nerli, anxious to escape their censure, wrote to the Cardinal asking him to make sure that the Modenese realized that the responsibility for their presence was not his. ⁸⁹ He is afraid that their presence will cause disorder and, whilst he says he is sorry for the fuss he is making, ⁹⁰ he points out that he is

"..forzato di advisare la S.V.Rma. di ogni cosa che possa causare disordine in questa cipta e suo contado",

and that the troops are very likely to cause trouble in an already disordered countryside. On April 16 he refers to the area as,

"Questo povero contado che e tanto affatichato, che non puo piu..",

91

saying that the Conservatores are themselves planning to write again to the Cardinal on the matter. On the same day, when news had reached him that the troops had refused to go to their billets, he wrote angrily that,

"..e una delle crudelta che si udissi mai il tenere una Gente come questa adosso a subditi gia un mese senza speranza di liberarsene o di

89)C.S. P.S. 156, f.60. Nerli to Cardinal Salviati, April 6, 1524. "*..et questi Conservatori et questa mag.ca comunita si tiene questo charico da me per che la S.V.Rma. nello scrivere che l'ha facto a questa mag.ca comunita mai ha facto mentione di questo Sre Giovanni ne ancora ne ha mai parlato in modo agli ambasciatori che sono venuti costa che l'habbi expresso la mente sua essere che in su questo contado habbi non ad stare le Gente del Sre. Giovanni..*"

90)C.S. P.S. 156, f.118. Nerli to Cardinal Salviati, April 13, 1524 "*Io desiderrei dare alla S.V.Rma. piacere e consolatione et mi dispiace havere tanto spesso ad fare il contrario..*".

91)C.S. P.S. 156, f.140. April 16, 1525.

vederne pure la fine..",

92

and he stresses the bad condition that the contadini are in. He was now beginning to show signs of desperation, for the troops still refused and he

"..non so piu che farne ne dove battermi la testa..". 93

On this occasion his desperation does not seem to have been unjustified for there is a letter from Guido Rangone to the Cardinal which endorsed Nerli's claim that the troops were causing havoc in the contado.⁹⁴ Eventually the task of moving the troops was entrusted to Francesco degli Albizzi, the Governor of Bologna, and to Antonio Numaio, and on April 24 they actually left, though by this time Nerli was being harassed by requests for billets from Spanish troops.⁹⁵

This correspondence is important as it demonstrates a number of points concerning Nerli's position in Modena and his attitude to it. It shows for one thing how relatively powerless a papal governor could be. Nerli has not sufficient authority to move the troops from the area on his own and must therefore make repeated requests to the Cardinal, for he can do nothing without a direct order from his superior. This is a limitation which can be seen in other parts of the correspondence. On December 7, 1524, for example, he writes that he is unable to supply the Count della

92) C.S. P.S. 156, f.141. April 16, 1525.

93) " " " f.145. " 17, "

94) " " " f.187. " 22, "

95) " " " f.195. " 23, ". The Modenese complain to the Cardinal about the Spanish troops.

Motta with provisions without Salviati's permission. A letter from Guicciardini to Nerli on October 14, 1526 shows the governor's dependence on his superiors. In this letter the papal lieutenant tells Nerli of an agreement that certain Spanish and Italian troops, now in Cremona, are to be given a safe-conduct to go into the kingdom of Naples. Guicciardini is not in favour of this arrangement and he tells Nerli that he is not to let them pass through his land,

"..se prima non hanno commissione spetiale da Sua Sanctità".

The same lack of power is evident during the struggles of the League of Cognac when, in spite of the fact that the letters preserved in the archives in Modena show that Nerli was writing frequently to Guicciardini, the letters printed in the volumes of Guicciardini's Carteggi have few references to the governor of Modena, who seems to have been of no account when policy decisions affecting the city were being made. On infrequent occasions Nerli was consulted,⁹⁸ but in the main it is to Guido Rangone that Guicciardini turns when matters affecting Modena are under discussion, and quite frequently the lieutenant makes his decisions entirely independently.

96)C.S. P.S. 152, f.117. December 7, 1524. A copy of the letter which Nerli wrote to della Motta on the matter of supplies.

97)Carteggi, Vol.10, Guicciardini to Nerli, October 14, 1526.

98)Carteggi, Vol.9, Guicciardini to Giberti, August 11, 1526. "La nocte passata hebbi la di Vostra Signoria de'7. Alla strada di Modona non si può fare altra provisione che usare la diligentia, in che ci siamo convenuti e Governatori et io, et fare correre e cavalli che vi sono, che sono hormai tanti che si fanno sentire".

The fact that Guicciardini rarely consulted with Nerli at this time, however, cannot be taken simply as a reflection of the lack of power of papal governors, for it is to a large extent a reflection of Guicciardini's rather low opinion of Nerli's ability. This opinion is clearly expressed in a letter which he wrote to Nerli in August, 1526; a letter which is a far more damaging indictment of the governor than any of the criticisms levelled at him for surrendering the city.⁹⁹ In this Guicciardini accuses Nerli of not making proper use of the money allotted to him for the payment of troops and claims that,

"..la è governata di sorte che si può male ricoprire".

He resents in particular that Nerli has written to him about the lodgings of troops,

"..imputando quasi me di non so che patenti che io ho facto a quella comunità, che io non veddi mai cictà che non obbedissi quando chi la regga la sa o vuole comandare".

He obviously feels that Nerli should take a firmer line with the military captains in Modena and not risk the Pope's money being squandered. Yet behind these accusations, which must have a certain foundation in fact for Nerli did tend to do anything to avoid trouble, there lies Guicciardini's fear that Nerli will lay the blame at least partly at his feet,¹⁰⁰ since he had previously

99)Carteggi, Vol.9. Guicciardini to Nerli, August 7, 1526.

100)Ibid. "Io vi lasciai Modona più pacificata, più ordinata, più obbediente che cictà che havessi lo Stato della Chiesa: come sta al presente et come sia conducta socto el governo vostro, voi lo sapete et gratia di Dio lo sa ognuno. Però non cercate voltare adosso a altri quelle colpe che sono tucte vostre".

ruled in the city. Since Guicciardini's handling of the taxation problem had caused Nerli difficulties it is likely that so too had his policy towards the captains, and behind his fierce attack on Nerli's governorship there lies his need to defend his own. He maintains that he reduced Modena to order, though it had previously been very disorganized, adding sarcastically in a way which betrays his jealousy of Nerli,

"..nè ero però cognato di uno Legato, nè genero di Jacopo Salviati che governa el mondo, nè marito di una nepote del Papa".

Guicciardini's jealousy is eloquent proof of the advantage which Nerli's connections with the Salviati had been to him.

The letter ends, perhaps somewhat hypocritically in view of its contents, with the words,

"La affectione che io porto a Vostra Signoria mi ha facto scrivere così, desiderando che questa basti a ricorreggervi et a ricognoscervi, senza che io habbia a essere sforzato a parlarne altrove".

However, Guicciardini showed in the future little faith in Nerli's ability and on September 11 he expressed resentment at a demand for more troops in Modena because he claimed that had those already there been well-managed they would have been sufficient. 101
In October he complained that, because of his fear of the captains,

101) Carteggi, Vol.9. Guicciardini to Giberti, September 11, 1526. "Se fussino bene maneggiate, sono forze abastanza per guardarsi da'furti et tractati et sicurare e danari. El resto bisogna che faccia chi è in facto, perchè da lontano non si può provvedere a'casi particolari, et certo io non sta senza suspension".

Nerli had disobeyed an order to give them half-pay only. Whilst there may be some truth behind these accusations we have seen how Guicciardini consistently underestimated the number of troops necessary in Modena and how Nerli had to write repeatedly in order to get money for their payment. Also Nerli, on the spot and in contact with the captains, must have known better than Guicciardini how they had to be treated if they were to remain loyal to the papal cause. The criticism of the hardpressed papal lieutenant must not be taken at its face value, even if Nerli's character suggests that it was at least partly justified.

Another element in Nerli's position which the correspondence with Salviati reveals is that his was not the only power in the city. He had constantly to consider the views of the Conservatores, with whom he held councils to decide policy. He was most anxious that his relations with this group should be smooth, for the unpopularity of church rule meant that there was an ever constant threat of revolt. It was this fear of revolt that had prevented Guicciardini from trying out Machiavelli's idea for a church militia in the Romagna. This need for co-operation Nerli expressed in a letter to Cardinal Salviati, where he says,

"..io guidico sempre ma in questi tempi piu essere bene di havere le comunita bene disposte..". 103

102) Carteggi, Vol.10. Guicciardini to Giberti, October 9, 1526. "A Modona havevo scripto di campo che a'700 fanti che vi sono si dessi la meza paga, per ordinarci poi del numero et de' capi. El governatore, per timore che gl'hanno facto intorno 4 fantaccini, l'ha data intera".

103) C.S. P.S. 151, f.96, Nerli to Cardinal Salviati, November 17, 1524.

In the instance of the troops Nerli's relations with the citizens seem to have been smooth, for he sympathized with their predicament and did all he could to plead their cause with the Cardinal. They were not unappreciative of his efforts which they praised in a letter in February, 1525.¹⁰⁴ It is interesting that they also act independently on these matters, writing directly to the Cardinal on problems which gave them concern, a fact which lends support to the theory that they would be unwilling to see the Duke of Ferrara return as this would undermine their own independence. The Pope had ordered the election of these twelve advisers in the interests of better justice,¹⁰⁵ but it is unlikely that they had much influence under ducal rule. On the whole Nerli seems to have kept on reasonably good terms with the Conservatores, though disagreements inevitably arose over the problem of taxation, and they seem to have felt a certain amount of respect for him.

Not only did Nerli have to refer constantly to his superiors and maintain friendly relations with the Modenese, but he also had to work in harmony with the Rangone brothers, Lodovico and Guido. Guido, as captain of the church forces, was superior in rank to

104)C.S. P.S. 154,f.226. Conservatores to Cardinal Salviati. February 17,1525. "Il Nro.S.Gubre. ha facto con gran diligentia..".
105)Bianchi,Vol.2,p.286. July 4, 1524. "Fu presentato in el consiglio de Modena uno breve dela santità del Papa de dì 3 zugno proximo passato como Sua Santità haveva elletto 12 persone infrascritte che havesseno a essere sempre in consiglio con li adionti, videlicet".

Nerli, and is described by Bianchi as "defensore de Modena".¹⁰⁶
 He was not, of course, always in the city, for he and his troops were constantly on the move, going from one trouble-spot to another as they were needed. Nevertheless, on occasions when he was in Modena, we find Count Guido giving the kind of orders which one might have expected the governor himself to give. On March 13, 1525, for example, Bianchi records that he,

"..ha fatto dare l'aqua ale fosse dela città de Modena, e dato el quartiere a soi soldati, e fa fare bona guarda di e note",

107

and in October we read that he,

"..fa lavorare ali bastioni, e fossi dela Città, perchè el se dubita de grande guerra venendo lo Imperatore in Italia".

108

Evidently the success or failure of the Modenese defences did not depend on the actions of Nerli alone, for throughout the winter of 1526 to '27 Guido Rangone made periodic visits to Modena to check up on them and to improve them. In the last few months of his governorship it was Lodovico Rangone, rather than his brother, with whom Nerli had the most contact and we have seen how the decision to leave the city was taken jointly. The two men seem to have been in complete harmony over this decision and in fact Lodovico has come into as much if not more criticism for the surrender. Giovio refers to him as,

"..huomo molto debole di consiglio, et molto smarrito, et sbigottito in quel tempo, per la rovina, et presa

106) Bianchi, Vol.3, p.84. March 3, 1526.
 107) " " 2, p.304. " 13, 1526.
 108) " " " p.319. October 23, 1525.

del Pontefice",

109

whilst he makes no mention of Nerli at all. If any guilt were to be attached to Nerli for the fall of the city it would not be his alone.

As regards the internal government of Modena Nerli seems to have been most concerned that, in spite of the difficult circumstances, things should run as smoothly and justly as possible, and much of his time must have been spent in dealing with the legal disputes so beloved by the men of the sixteenth century. In this respect he could act as an intermediary between the Modenese and Cardinal Salviati, not only over matters which concerned the Conservatores but also over the petitions of private citizens. On April 16, 1525 he wrote to the Cardinal on behalf of M.Giovanpiero de Cancillieri,

"..che si truovo qui (and) mi ha ricercho con grande instantia per che io voglio intercessere per lui apresso a V.S.Rma. per che quella si dispongha a volere operare che il Thesaurieri di costi gli paghi la provisione sua di certe paghe che resto indrieto per conto della roccha..".

110

He also asked the Cardinal for advice on certain cases, just as
 111
 he asked for instructions on how to govern.

His actions as an administrator of justice seem in the main to have been to the satisfaction of the citizens, who appreciated that he had a genuine sympathy for them as well as a desire for justice. When necessary he was quite capable of dealing severely

109)Giovio - Vita di Alfonso d'Este. p.175.

110)C.S. P.S. 156, f.142. April 16, 1525.

111) " " " f.151. " 17, " Nerli to Cardinal Salviati, asking for advice on a case between Cambio Nuti and Lodovico de Fossio.

with the problems which arose, as is witnessed by a letter to Cardinal Salviati referring to a dispute between Filippo Tassoni and M. Gherardino della Molza, in which he says firmly that in this case it is necessary to make an example of the culprits, though his normal attitude of deference to the Cardinal is also evident in this letter.¹¹² He often wrote to the Cardinal on behalf of the citizens and at their request, as in 1524, when he wrote about the matter of some money which Guicciardini had ordered Cesare Colombo to repay to the city.¹¹³ Perhaps the best illustration of his fairness is Nerli's conduct in the case of Prospero del Forno. Del Forno had committed a murder and the governor was naturally severe towards him, but at the same time he had no wish to cause suffering to the man's innocent brothers. He was clearly extremely just over the matter for Prospero himself writing to the Cardinal over the problem, refers to Nerli as "vero gentil huomo". Since he was trying to ingratiate himself with Salviati in this letter it cannot be taken at its face value, for it was obviously to Forno's advantage to stress his admiration of Nerli, but even so the governor's justice must have made an impression on him.¹¹⁴ Such cases as this, together with problems such as those of the Modenese merchants, who often

112)C.S. P.S. 151, f.29. November 7, 1524. "...e ben necessario farne dimonstrazione," but this is followed by the words, "sono anchora dubio se io condanno quello che ha errato, senza aspectare V.S.Rma."

113)C.S. P.S. 151, f.96. November 17, 1524. "...mi hanno preghato che io debba intercedere per loro appresso di V.S.Rma. et desidererebbono di essere favoriti in corte.."

114)C.S. P.S. 154, f.370. Forno to Salviati. February 22, 1525.

experienced difficulties in the unsettled conditions of the surrounding countryside, took up a large amount of Nerli's time.

Another matter which also absorbed his attention was the organization of elections to offices within the city, which was an aspect of Nerli's work in which he seems to have taken great interest. It is curious that in the matter, which seems to have been close to his heart, Nerli shows much less caution and less inclination to defer on every occasion to those above him. In a very detailed letter to Cardinal Salviati in January, 1525, his interest in these affairs is very evident. He begins the letter with a formal declaration of his feelings of duty towards the "stato ecclesiastico", and continues by praising the new arrangements which the Pope has made for offices in the city, arrangements which have done a lot to restore confidence among the citizens in the church and to ensure,

"..loro buona fedelta verso sancta chiesa".

Nerli has, however, a criticism to make of the arrangements. It was, in his opinion, unwise of Clement to elect officials with no indication of how they were to be elected in the future, since this would mean that confusion would result every six months when new officials had to be elected. Nerli suggests that a letter should be sent dealing with the method of organizing the squittino and laying down as a rule that the governor can only allow office,

"..a cittadini di Modena habili agli officii et di sei mesi in sei mesi et tempo per tempo servato leta e edivieti et ogni altra cosa che per capitoli di questa mag.ca comunita sopra di cio facti et da farsi in tutto

e per tutto si dispone, o, si disponessi".

115

He expresses his hope that the Cardinal will find his idea acceptable because of the trouble it will save. No sign is evident here of the uncertainty and deference to higher opinion which can often be seen in Nerli's letters.

The administration of justice and the arrangement of official posts in the city must have been two of Nerli's more interesting jobs and he must have found that much of his time was absorbed by very boring routine. He had, as did most papal governors, the mundane function of an intermediary for correspondence between other officials in the service of the League of Cognac, for in an age when communications were by no means secure even in peace time the safe arrival of letters became a nightmare in time of war. Hence it was vital that Nerli should forward immediately any letters that came into his hands and also that he should always be sure to inform others of the letters which he had received and handled. Without a conventional note acknowledging the receipt of a letter the sender had no indication of whether or not it had arrived. In order to safeguard against the possible loss of letters the same information was often contained in more than one, and this is one reason why we find a considerable amount of duplication in Nerli's correspondence. This duplication is not only due to Nerli's tendency to worry and exaggerate! More important passages or entire letters would be written in code in

115)C.S. P.S. 153, f.50. Nerli to Cardinal Salviati. January 4, 1525.

order to prevent the enemy discovering important information. Both sides in the war had spies who tried to intercept such letters and Nerli himself had a group of spies collecting information that could be passed on to Guicciardini. He also sent information to the governors of other towns, such as Parma, Reggio and Bologna, to the Cardinal of Cortona in Florence and to his Salviati relatives. In particular the constant stream of information which he sent to his mother-in-law, Lucretia Salviati, shows that his spy system must have been reasonably efficient.

We have already seen that in certain respects the position of a papal governor was not one of great power and we have evidence that Nerli himself felt this and was irritated by his situation. ¹¹⁶ Yet to some extent the amount of power which a governor wielded depended on his personality and his attitude to his office. This can be seen if we compare the way in which Nerli governed with the way in which Guicciardini had done so. Guicciardini was by nature much more ambitious than Nerli and regarded his post in Modena as a means of proceeding to higher office. He was also a man of broader vision than Nerli and did not see his position in isolation but in relation to that of the whole of Italy, commenting upon events in this light in a way that Nerli did not. In February, 1517, for example, he wrote to his brother Luigi of his fears of the possible developments which

116) A.S.M. Nerli to Jacopo Salviati. November 9, 1526. "...e mi pare molto strano havendoci facto le executioni che io ci ho facte et restandoci tante forze in mano d'altri che una si piccola parte non mi sia concessa nella man mia..".

might take place should the situation around Urbino deteriorate, for he can foresee more fighting and feels that the French will seek to take advantage of the fact that the Pope needs them. His letters to Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino and to the Duke's secretary Goro Gheri are written in the same vein and he is more likely to give Lorenzo his ideas of the character of the French than to bore him with a long exposition of day to day events in Modena. Yet even Guicciardini sent very regular reports to Florence of events in the city and turns to Lorenzo over matters of justice and finance. However independent he may have felt he could not afford to omit these reports.

Nerli did in fact have somewhat fewer powers than Guicciardini, who had been given special powers on his appointment so that he could cope with the very disordered situation in the city. In spite of these powers Guicciardini found it necessary to write in terms of deference to his superior Lorenzo, although in fact this is a surface courtesy rather than a reflection of Guicciardini's lack of power. He may write humbly but he never leaves any doubt as to his own opinion on a point, or as to the course of action which he would advise. He may, for example, begin a letter,

"..non ho voluto innovare cosa alcuna senza intendere

117) Carteggi, Vol.2. Guicciardini to Luigi Guicciardini. February 11, 1517.

118) " " " " to Lorenzo. March 13, 1517.
"Costoro sono della natura che sono, e a volerli satisfare in modo che non aombrino, bisognerebbe porgere le cose molto a punto e dimostrare di stimarli e di tenerne conto".

119) See Otetea, op.cit. p.77.

la mente di Vostra Eccellenzia, da chi aspetterò
risposta, e secondo quella procederò;..",

but he continues,

"..ma a mio iudicio sarebbe bonissima opera el
risolversene come di sopra".

120

He shows none of the reluctance to make decisions which we find in Nerli, for to him the position is a challenge, whereas Nerli too often seems to view it with considerable trepidation.

Guicciardini may have been obliged to write to Gheri, asking him to use "autorità sua" in a Modenese law-suit and he may have felt it expedient to show deference towards his superiors, but he did not allow the limitations of his position as governor to handicap him, nor did he become submerged in local administration but always retained the ability to view Italian politics as a whole.

Nerli has been cleared of blame for the loss of Modena to Alfonso d'Este and in fact we have seen that in view of the extremely difficult circumstances in which he found himself he is rather to be praised for managing to hold the city for so long. His interest in justice and administration meant that he was in many respects an able governor and one whom the people of Modena seem to have respected. On occasion he could exaggerate his difficulties and be a nuisance to his superiors, writing endless and not strictly necessary letters. Yet he was at least efficient at passing on useful information. He could panic and lose heart, as on the visit which Machiavelli paid to him when everything

120) Carteggi, Vol.1. Guicciardini to Lorenzo, June 30, 1516.

121

seemed to be going wrong, and he did not have the force of personality or the ambition of Guicciardini to help him to overcome the limitations of his office. Nor did he have Guicciardini's ability to see events on more than a local scale. To ignore his shortcomings would be absurd, for Nerli is not in the front rank as an administrator. He did, however, have an extremely difficult city to administer, and at a particularly difficult time, and in view of this fact and considering his own shortcomings it is perhaps surprising that he survived as well as he did. The period of his governorship was not by any means one of total failure and it provided him with experience of administration outside Florence which was to be useful during his official life under the rule of Grand Duke Cosimo.

121) See Chapter 2, p.64

Chapter 4 - After Modena - Period of Transition.

Nerli's return to Florence from Modena cannot have been a very happy one. His first important mission had not ended auspiciously and although, as we have seen, his failure has been exaggerated by his critics, it must have weighed heavily upon him. Furthermore he must have felt some anxiety as to his fate in Florence as a man of Medicean sympathies and connections, for the city was no longer under Medici rule. The high-handed attitude of the Cardinal of Cortona and his young Medici charges, Alessandro and Ippolito, had aroused opposition, and the republicans had profitted from the Pope's embarrassment and the general disorder of the times to expel them from the city. A man of Nerli's sympathies was likely to find his position difficult under the new régime. He had learnt of the changes while still in Modena and had written a letter to the new Otto di Pratica in most diplomatic terms to wish success to the new government, clearly realizing the importance of not antagonizing the new rulers.¹ It seems unlikely that Nerli was excluded from Florence when he tried to return there from Modena, as Tiraboschi claims,² for we find various references to his life in the city at this time, though these are not numerous and do not give a very clear picture of his situation. Even though he was not excluded from the city, however,

1) See Chapter 2, note 73

2) Tiraboschi - Storia della letteratura italiana. Fl. 1805-13. Vol. 7, Part 3. "...ne fu escluso col Guicciardini". This statement is not true of Guicciardini either, for he in fact returned to Florence on June 26, 1527. see Ojetea, op.cit. p.211.

he must have viewed his return with some trepidation, for he knew that changes of government in Florence could bring harsh reprisals against the defeated party.

Initially, however, the position of the pro-Medicean ottimati in the city was reasonably secure under the new régime. Many of them had themselves been opposed to the rule of the Cardinal of Cortona³ and fully accepted the need for reform, especially since the new gonfaloniere, Niccolò Capponi, was a member of their own class who they felt would bring in only a mild reform of the régime which they would have no need to fear. Nerli describes Niccolò as a man who had,

"..in tutto il tempo della vita sua dato sempre saggio in ogni sua azione così pubblica, come privata, d'essere buono, e netto cittadino, e d'animo molto libero,..",

4

and who therefore represented no immediate threat to the Medici faction. Nerli's father-in-law, Jacopo Salviati, was himself a friend and supporter of Capponi, while Guicciardini, who would never support any attempt to place more power in the hands of the people, allied himself to the Gonfaloniere's family, a move which brought criticism of Capponi from the more extreme republicans.⁵ At the time of the revolt in Florence Capponi had succeeded in avoiding bloodshed but had been forced to placate the citizens by agreeing to measures which were more extreme in character

3)Angiola Borghese - La Restaurazione Medicea in Firenze dal 1512 al 1527. Siena.1937. Borghesi attributes the unpopularity of the Medici largely to the behaviour of the Cardinal of Cortona.

4)Nerli, Book 8,p.164.

5)Guicciardini's daughter married Capponi's son in 1528.

than he really desired, though it was still possible for the Mediceans to wield some power in the newly re-established Consiglio Maggiore. The emphasis on the continuity of this new government with that of 1494-1512, together with its theocratic nature, won for Capponi the support of the followers of Fra Girolamo Savonarola, the Piagnoni, but the mild nature of his rule did not command the support of another group in the city, the Arrabbiati. This group, although numerically small, was composed of violent and revolutionary young men, drawn mainly from the lower orders of the Arti Minori. It also had the adherence of some of the older men and was under the leadership of Baldassare Carducci. Capponi viewed the Mediceans as able and experienced administrators and therefore sought to use them in his government, but this was not to the liking of these extremists. They forced Capponi, against his will, to bring in anti-Medicean legislation, in particular the re-establishment of a body known as the Quarantia, a criminal tribunal which had first been used under Soderini and was now used as a means of enforcing taxation, mainly upon the upper classes and in particular upon the Mediceans.⁶

In spite of Capponi's attempts to produce stable government and harmony between the various factions this group of extremists

6) See Roth - The Last Florentine Republic. pp.65-67. The Venetian ambassador reported that "the taxation was piled upon those who could not bear it, and particularly the partisans of the Medici". The verdict of the Quarantia could only be quashed by a two-thirds majority in the Consiglio Maggiore. Benedetto Buondelmonti, a strong Medici supporter, was one of its first victims.

eventually succeeded in bringing about his downfall. His attempt to conciliate the outraged Pope by giving the Mediceans a larger share in government could not fail to arouse their opposition. The strain of his situation, constantly trying to act with moderation and to win the city over to negotiating with the Pope whilst the extremists blocked all his efforts, began to tell on Capponi and in February, 1529 he sought to relinquish his office at the time of the election of the new Signoria, but he was not allowed to do this. He had for some time been in contact with the Pope in the hope of reaching some agreement with him, and it was the interception of one of his letters on this matter which finally brought about his downfall. The negotiations with Rome were carried on through Jacopo Salviati, whose servant Giachinotto Serragli carried the negotiating letters, and there can be little doubt that Nerli must have known what was taking place. The Pope had enlisted the help of the emperor in his struggle with Florence and because of the danger which thus threatened the city some of the ottimati felt that the time had come to negotiate with Clement. Busini writes that Nerli was amongst those who favoured sending ambassadors to the Pope, but according to Busini Nerli did not in fact take this view because he really felt that Florence was in danger but because he wanted a change of the régime under which he, as a relative of the Medicean Jacopo Salviati, was

7) See Gilbert - Florentine political assumptions in the age of Savonarola. J.W.C.I. Vol.20, 1957. He says Capponi was criticized for consulting only his friends in the government pratiche, or private meetings.

8
 suffering. Considering that a change of régime would have been to Nerli's personal advantage it is possible that he himself was involved in Capponi's negotiations with Rome, although there is no concrete proof of this. It is clear from a letter which he wrote to Salviati at this time that he also made use of Serragli to carry his letters and corresponded with his father-in-law about the government of Florence.⁹

After the downfall of Capponi and the failure of the last minute attempts to come to terms with the Pope and Emperor Florence was besieged by imperial troops in 1529. Whether or not Nerli had aided Capponi in his negotiations with Clement he was by this time regarded as a threat to the Republic and he was amongst those Mediceans who were imprisoned in the Palazzo Vecchio.¹⁰ The Florentines were determined to defy the Pope and

8)Busini - Lettere. To Varchi, January 6, 1549. "...e fra quelli che mostravano paura, era Giovanni Serristori, il quale credo che dicesse daddavero, e Filippo de'Nerli, ma costui fingeva, come quello che era non ricco, e sbattuto per conto di Jacopo Salviati".

9)Nerli to Jacopo Salviati, October 3, 1530. (See Niccolai who gives the wrong reference to the letter in the Magliabechiana). "Io conferi ancora con Giachinotto certe altre mia oppinioni circha le cose qui della ciptà et quello che bisogna occorressi per consolidare bene le cose nostre in effecto che si stabilissino in modo che non si avessi a comportare più a discretione di chi vennono stati et volle Giachinotto che io lo mettessi in scriptis ...per potere meglio conferirli, io lo fece volentieri perche Vostra Magnificentia li leggessi et li considerassi..". See Roth, op.cit. for the financial effects of the siege on the ottimati.

10)Nerli, Book 10, p.198-9. Varchi, Vol.2, Book 10, p.182. "...furono di quivi a poco creati sei uomini, i quali insieme col magnifico gonfaloniere dovessero quei cittadini dichiarare, che da loro fussono giudicati, per esser partigiani della casa de' Medici, o per qualche altra cagione, sospetti della libertà del presente stato". Nerli was one of those so named.

could not risk the possibility of treachery by Medicean sympathisers.¹¹ Perhaps surprisingly the conditions of this imprisonment do not seem to have been very harsh and it appears that the prisoners were aware of the discussions which went on at this time in the Palazzo.¹² Imprisonment, even though not in conditions of great hardship, cannot have been a very pleasant experience for Nerli, who remained there from October 13, 1529 till August 10, 1530. Perhaps more serious was the financial loss which the family suffered at this time, for the new gonfaloniere, Carducci, had no thought to spare Mediceans, who were heavily taxed in order to help off-set the expenses of the siege.¹³ The Salviati were amongst those who were declared rebels and had their money and property confiscated¹⁴ and Nerli himself clearly suffered for he wrote to Jacopo that the siege had turned him from a

11) A.S.I. Appendix, Vol.1. 1843-44. p.457. Documenti di Storia Italiana dall'anno 1522 al 1530. Gregorio Casale to Montmorency, 1529. "Qui si intende che Fiorentini e il signor Malatesta Baglione fanno pendiere di tenersi ad ogni modo. Il papa et questi Fiorentini che sono in Roma nol credono. Io intendo per lettere di Fiorentini, che loro fanno dieci mila fanti, oltre i cinque mila che hanno delle ordinanze. Il Signor Malatesta ha molta gente. Imperiali danno all'uno et all'altro assai tempo da prepararsi".

12) Roth, op.cit. p.205. "...and it was thus that Filippo Nerli the historian, was able, through the garrulity or infidelity of his guardians, to obtain such intimate knowledge of the official deliberations". On this see further Chapter 6, p. 262

13) Modesto Rastrelli - Storia d'Alessandro de' Medici. Primo Duca di Firenze. Fl.1781. Vol.1, p.120. "Nota delle Imposizioni fatte al tempo del Popolo dall'anno 1527 all'anno 1530"; this lists the impositions and the amounts though not the names of those taxed. In view of the fact that he was imprisoned Nerli could hardly have escaped taxation.

14) Roth, op.cit. p.135.

relatively rich man to a poor one.¹⁵ It may be that Nerli began to write his history in 1534 in the hope that he might gain financial reward from the Medici which would help to recoup the losses that he had incurred on their behalf.

In spite of their determination the Florentines were unable to withstand the imperial siege, especially when one of the military leaders, Malatesta Baglione, unwilling to continue the struggle against unequal odds, threw in his hand and made peace with the Emperor. The Medici were reinstated by the Spanish troops, first as private citizens but very soon after as rulers. Varchi records bitterly the way in which republicans were treated at this time of Medici triumph.¹⁶ After his period in prison Nerli once more began to play a part in political life, for the first time since his return from Modena. Both Nerli and Jacopo Salviati were members of the council of 200 which was ultimately set up to reform the government after the overthrow of the Republic.¹⁷ The time was one of uncertainty for the Florentines, who were not sure what form the new government would take and who were well aware of the anger of the Pope against their city. Clement had not forgiven the Florentines, whom he considered he

15) See below, note 56, p. 156

16) Varchi, Vol. 2, Book 12, p. 510. "...avendo papa Clement significato benchè a pochissimi e segretissimamente la sua volontà, si cominciò in Firenze a perseguitare senza non pur pietà, ma rispetto alcuno tutti coloro i quali s'erano in quello stato popolarmente scoperti o amici della libertà o nimici della casa de' Medici e degli aderenti e seguaci loro; alcuni de' quali furono decapitati, alcuni sbanditi, alcuni afflitti con varie e diverse pene, e la maggior parte in vari e diversi luoghi confinati,..."

17) Varchi, Vol. 2, Book 12, p. 535-6.

18

had governed justly when a Cardinal, for turning against him at the time of his defeat by the Emperor, and he was determined that Medici rule should once more be firmly established in the city. The cunning and devious Pope did not at first make clear his intentions for he wanted there to be a period of transition before the eventual instatement of his relative, Alessandro de' Medici,¹⁹ as ruler in Florence. A return to the 'status quo' was not sufficient for Clement and he hoped that, by delaying the final decision, he could successfully gain increased powers for Alessandro and make it appear as though this increase in Medici status had come about as the direct wish of the ottimati themselves. He realized that the only hope which the nobles had of wielding any power in the city lay in supporting him, and that they would therefore be forced into concurring in his plans for Alessandro, even though the idea of an absolute Medici ruler would be distasteful to them. The unfortunate ottimati were placed in a cleft stick by the wily Pope, who played on their fear of popular government. It was not long before, with the Consiglio Maggiore finally abolished and the Medicean instruments of government restored, Alessandro became ruler of Florence with

18) See above, Chapter 2, for a discussion of Clement's government of Florence.

19) See Roth, op.cit. p.12. Alessandro and Ippolito were the sons of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino and Giuliano de' Medici. There was, however, considerable doubt about their parentage and it was rumoured that Alessandro was in fact the illegitimate son of Clement himself, rather than of Lorenzo.

the backing of the Emperor.

The first step of Clement's plan to establish Medici rule was to consult his followers on their ideas on the way in which they felt government should be set up in Florence. Discussions were held amongst those who were at the Curia in Rome and those who were not in the holy city were asked to send their opinions to the Pope in writing. Chief of those to whom the Pope turned in his seemingly innocent search for a new constitution were Jacopo Salviati, Filippo Strozzi, Benedetto Buondelmonti, Ruberto Pucci, Bartolommeo Lanfredini, and the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi, all of whom took part in the discussions which were held in Rome. Luigi and Francesco Guicciardini, Francesco Vettori and Ruberto Acciaiuoli all put their ideas on reform into writing at the Pope's request. Jacopo Salviati soon made his feelings on the matter plain. They had not changed since the days when he had withdrawn from Florence rather than support the absolutist tendencies of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino. For him the government of his father-in-law, Lorenzo the Magnificent, remained the ideal and he was reluctant to countenance any increase in Medici power. In Jacopo's view the Pope would be better advised to win the

20) Nerli, Book 11, p. 255. "Tornò dipoi intorno al principio di quella state, e stando le cose della maniera di sopra esposte, il Duca Alessandro dalla corte di Cesare spedito da quella Maestà felicemente, ed aveva anche l'Imperadore già fatta la dichiarazione del modo del governo, per virtù della rimessione fatta in Sua Maestà nella capitolazione;..". The choice of Alessandro as ruler angered Ippolito de' Medici, whose Cardinal's robes did not fit him well. Nerli, Book 11, p. 252 comments, "..parendogli aver fatto cattivo scambio dello stato di Firenze al Cardinalato;..". He had earlier enjoyed the position of ruler in the city.

support of the city by mild and just government than by trying to force it into submission by the establishment of a tyranny. He strongly opposed the idea of building a fortress in Florence and rebuked Filippo Strozzi for giving this idea his support. Strozzi seems to have felt it politically expedient to agree with the Pope on this issue. As far as Jacopo was concerned however,

"..il governo della città di Firenze dovesse bene essere nelle mani e nella balià di così nobile e benemerita famiglia, ma in quel modo però, e con quella maggioranza ch'egli era stato tant'anni". 21

It was not long before Jacopo's views led to his exclusion from the discussions, though his position and the respect felt for him meant that he did not fall into deep disgrace but was simply out of touch with these plans and talks.

The content and dating of the discourses on reform written by those who were not in Rome at this time has been discussed by Felix Gilbert,²² who shows that they were in fact written in two groups, the first in the spring of 1531 and the second early in 1532. A comparison of the views expressed in these discourses reveals the way in which the ottimati attitude developed at this period. At first the nobles hoped to gain power through an alliance with the Medici but in the end, due to the way in which Clement VII, by refusing to commit himself, succeeded in alienating them from the populace, they found themselves forced to give the Medici more complete backing than they had at first

21)Varchi, Vol.2,Book12, p.5.

22)F.Gilbert - Alcuni discorsi di uomini politici fiorentini e la politica di Clemente VII per la restaurazione medicea. A.S.I. 1935.Part 2,pp.3-24.

intended. The earlier writings show a moderate and cautious degree of support for Clement and his plans for Duke Alessandro, with the hope still alive that the ottimati will play an important part in the direction of affairs. The later writings, composed at a time when the ottimati had come to realize that they had no alternative, show a more whole-hearted support for the Pope.²³ Gilbert sums up the situation as follows;

"I nobili erano stati costretti ad aderire ai Medici in conseguenza del loro fallito tentativo di politica autonoma, avevano aderito anche largamente ai progetti del Papa riguardando la trasformazione della costituzione, ora non potevano più opporsi sulla questione della responsabilità per la riforma".

Clement had succeeded in his intention of making the reform the responsibility of the nobles rather than letting it appear to be the result of his own desires.

Jacopo Salviati, as we have seen, preferred to withdraw from these discussions rather than to compromise his views on the amount of power which the Medici should have in Florence. Nerli, on the other hand, does not seem to have viewed the matter in the same light as his father-in-law for, as an advocate of princely rule, he was prepared to support the Pope's plan for Alessandro, just as earlier he had been prepared to give more support to Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, than had Jacopo. It would seem, to judge from the views which he expresses in the Commentari, that Nerli's support was genuine and was not based on expediency, as

²³) See Discorsi intorno alla riforma dello stato di Firenze, by Francesco Vettori, Ruberto Acciaiuoli, Francesco and Luigi Guicciardini and Benedetto Buondelmonti, in A.S.I. Vol.1, 1842.

was that of Filippo Strozzi. Nerli, who was in Rome at the time when the discussions on reform were taking place, did not take part in them himself, but Varchi writes that

"Filippo, il quale ancorachè non fosse intervenuto in quelle pratiche, sapeva ottimamente la voglia del papa,..",

and it is probable that he was able to get his information about the early stages of the discussions from Jacopo Salviati. When Jacopo left the discussions because of his view point he became, according to Varchi, a political leper, shunned and omitted from the conversations of those who had previously been his friends.²⁶ From this point onwards Nerli would have been unable to get his information from Jacopo and, if what Varchi says is true, Nerli, as a relative of Salviati, may also have fallen under a cloud himself, at least to a certain extent. However, his brother-in-law, Cardinal Salviati, with whom he was on fairly close terms,

24) Varchi, Vol. 2, Book 12, p. 579. "Era stato avvertito Filippo (i.e. Strozzi) da Benedetto Buondelmonti suo grandissimo amico, ma più della casa de' Medici, della mente del papa, mostrandogli con efficacissime ragioni, quello essere il tempo nel qual bisognava, o che egli acconsentisse a tutte le cose che proposte gli fussero, e così verrebbe a scancellare i sospetti passati, o che contraddicesse non solo in vano, ma con suo pericolo manifesto. Onde Filippo...rispose (ancorachè alcuni dicono cio essergli paruto strano) che farebbe a puntino, senza preterire un iota, tutto quello che ordinato e comandato gli fosse,..".

25) Varchi, Vol. 2, Book 12, p. 582.

26) " " " " " p. 581. "...i cittadini i quali prima l'arebbono portato in palma di mano, si riguardavano da lui, nè conferivano seco cosa alcuna di quelle che si praticavano, e quegli stessi i quali innanzi dependevano da lui e da lui favoriti erano, quando lo vedevano da discosto si scantonavano e lo fuggivano".

was also involved in the talks and Nerli could have continued to get his information from him. He could also have got it from Benedetto Buondelmonti, an old friend of his days in the Orti Oricellari, with whom he shared office in Florence in the summer of 1531.²⁷ Add to this the fact that it must have been virtually impossible to keep discussions entirely secret in a place so subject to intrigue as the Roman Curia and it is not difficult to see that Nerli could have had a very clear picture of the way in which the discussions were progressing.

However and from whoever Nerli got his information it is clear that he was in touch with the negotiations and that he was known to sympathize with the Pope's plans, for when Clement wanted someone to relay his intentions to the citizens of Florence it was to Nerli that he turned. That Clement was prepared to make use of Nerli for this important and delicate mission at a time when his father-in-law was temporarily out of favour is ample proof that he had by no means fallen completely from papal favour as a result of the surrender of Modena. Nerli refers to his mission in the Commentari, recording how the Pope summoned him personally and, telling him that affairs had reached the twenty-third hour, said that he wanted the Florentines to be told that he intended to establish the rule of his house in the city

27) Nerli, Book 11, p.256. Re Buondelmonti, "(ed io intra gli altri ero allora seco de' Signori). Magl. II, IV, 309, f.170, Benedetto to Francesco Antonio Nori in 1531 shows the extent to which he was involved in the discussions. He refers to the ideas of Luigi Guicciardini on reform.

once again, this time so strongly that it could never be over-
 28
 thrown. Nerli, possibly exaggerating the degree of Medici support in Florence, claims that the reaction of the citizens to whom he spoke was favorable, the majority expressing a desire to support the family. Filippo, according to Varchi,

"..fece l'ufficio gagliardamente, mostrando, che il ciò fare era non solamente utile, ma necessario; i cittadini gli risposero nel medesimo modo, offerendosi pronti e parati a ubbidire qualunque volta gli fosse comandato:..".

29

Clearly Nerli intended to be a firm supporter of the new régime under Alessandro and was doubtless anxious that the Pope should recognise him as such so that his services would not go unrewarded.

With Alessandro firmly in control of Florence Nerli did indeed receive recognition, for as a Medicean who could undoubtedly be trusted he was given a place as one of the original members of the new senate of the Quarantotto. This body was the main feature of the new government which was set up and was designed to take the place of the old Signoria. According to Nerli himself it was intended that in this body should rest,

"..tutta la somma podestà, e balià dello stato",

that it should be responsible for the appointment of officials
 30
 and for the deliberation and enactment of laws. From amongst

28) Nerli, Book 11, p.261. Nerli says that he had been in Rome, "*..da tre mesi, e di quelle pratiche avevo avuto qualche notizia*", and he quotes Clement's exact words to him.

29) Varchi, Vol.2, Book 12, p.582.

30) Nerli, Book 11, p.265. See also Chapter 5, p.199

its members the Duke selected his councillors and it was without a doubt the most important administrative body of the new régime. Nerli's position as one of the first senators is in keeping with the kind of political role which he played all his life. He was not of sufficient stature to be a member of the more important Balìa of twelve citizens which organized the reform of Florence and which included Guicciardini, Francesco Vettori, Matteo Strozzi, Ruberto Acciaiuoli, and other leading members of the Medici party who were later to play important parts in the early years of the reign of Duke Cosimo. In a city where participation in government was the 'sine qua non' of a successful life, as Lorenzo il Magnifico had realized,³¹ Nerli was never far from the administration and government of the city and must have seen the necessity of playing a political role. He did not, however, have sufficient ambition to play the dominating role of a man like Guicciardini.

Of Nerli's activities during the reign of Alessandro we know very little. After his election to the Quarantotto in April, 1532³² he must have taken a fairly active part in government, attending the meetings of the senate, and we know that, even before this, he had been involved in the government of the city in the period immediately after the siege. On February 10, 1530, for example, he was one of the four officials in charge of meat

31) See W. Roscoe - The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici. Liverpool. 1795. Vol. 1, Chapter 3, p. 130.

32) Nerli, Book 11, p. 264.

allocation for the city, a task which must have been a difficult one in the time of shortage after the siege.³³ In September, 1532 he was elected as one of the four Provisores for the Gabelle,³⁴ having in the previous month been elected as one of the twelve Copulatores, an office which was held for three months.³⁵ He was again elected to this office in May 1533, August 1534 and May 1535.³⁶ From May 29, 1531 he was one of the twelve Reipublica Procuratores,³⁷ and in December, 1533 he was elected a member of the reform commission for Pisa.³⁸ In 1535 he was appointed Captain of Pisa from January till June of that year, his first official post outside Florence since Modena.³⁹ The records available give little information other than the dates of election to office and the length of the appointments and all that can be said is that Nerli seems at the very least to have been a trusted member of the ottimati and was used by the Duke in minor and less minor positions on a number of occasions. There were many such offices in Florence and in the dominio and they were bound to fall to members of the ottimati, since this was the only class with political experience and sufficient wealth to be able to accept offices which were mostly unpaid.

33)Tratte 85, f.23.

34) " " f.103

35) " " f.186v. This office was most probably concerned with the enforcement of laws.

36) " " f.187, 187v, 202.

37) " " f.182. Another office most probably concerned with public order.

38)Magistrato Supremo 1, f.138v. December 17, 1533.

39) " 72, f.1.

Although at the beginning of his rule Alessandro had a firm body of support amongst the ottimati families, especially from the group around his close friend Filippo Strozzi, it was not long before his behaviour alienated him from an important section of this class.⁴⁰ The administrative side of Alessandro's reign, which formed the basis for the work of his successor Cosimo, will be dealt with later,⁴¹ but some comments are necessary on it at this point in order to show why the ottimati turned against him. Alessandro ruled the city with the aid of the Pope and with the help of men who he brought in from outside Florence; he placed very little reliance on men of the ottimati, who did not form part of his inner council, and this roused their resentment, just as earlier they had been angered when Piero de' Medici and then his son Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, had behaved in a similar way. We have seen the dislike which was felt for Goro Gheri⁴² and the opposition to this form of government which the ottimati felt can be clearly seen in the pages of Guicciardini's Dialogi.⁴³ Chief amongst Alessandro's advisers was his secretary, Francesco

40) See Segni, Vol.2, Book 6, p.25.

41) See Chapter 5 for the administration of Alessandro and Cosimo.

42) See Chapter 2, p.51

43) Guicciardini - Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze. Bari. 1932. Vol.1, p.28. Capponi complains of the way in which offices have been re-distributed under the Medici, "...perchè el principale obietto non è mai stato di dargli a quelle persone che per la qualità della casa, per le virtù o altri meriti se gli convenghino, ma fargli girare in chi hanno riputato amico, e confidente, e contentatione ancora spessi gli appetiti più leggieri". See also below, Chapter 5, p.206

Campana, a man of lowly origins from the Florentine dominio. To the ottimati such government was abhorrent, for it struck at their influence in the city and they were angered by a situation where

"..la maggior parte delle faccende fuori o dentro della Città di Firenze, erano amministrare da forestieri agenti, o da uomini del Dominio,..". 45

When he was not relying on men such as these Alessandro played a large personal part in the government of Florence and however much the ottimati may have objected to what they saw as the onset of tyranny there seems to be little doubt that, whatever his faults, the young Duke did administer justice fairly. An autocratic régime, especially when compared with the period of republican rule immediately before, seemed unbearable and it seems that Alessandro's proud nature and his fondness of lecherous amusements did little to endear him to the Florentine nobles. He did have certain good qualities and some of the ottimati, such as Guicciardini, felt it to their own advantage to support him. Luigi Guicciardini in fact praised him in a letter to his brother Francesco, saying that,

"..la Eccellenza del Duca dimostra più l'un giorno dell'altro essere sopra la età sua paziente, intendente e iusto..". 47

44) Francesco Dini - Francesco Campana e suoi. A.S.I. Vol.23, 1899, pp.289-323; Documents, Vol.24, pp.13-22.

45) See Segni, Book 7, p.57.

46) Ammirato, Book 31, p.115. "Ma queste esecuzioni fatte dal duca in una città usa a viver libera, dove in uno stato vecchio sarebber state riputate per sante, parevano aspre, rigide e intollerabili,..".

47) Guicciardini - Opere Inedite. Vol.9. Luigi to Francesco Guicciardini, June 10, 1533.

The men who opposed Alessandro almost certainly did so because they had not gained the power which they had hoped for, rather than because they had any devotion to the cause of liberty. Baccio Valori, for example, had been disappointed in the hopes of high office which he had had when the Pope had sent him as his commissioner to Florence at the end of the siege. Filippo Strozzi, at first a supporter and close friend of Alessandro, also felt disappointed and discontented and his angry departure from the city was brought about by the way in which the Duke dealt with a quarrel between his son Piero and Giuliano Salviati. Filippo did not feel that Piero was given the preferential treatment to which he was entitled as a member of the Strozzi family and this incident provided the final straw to his discontent. He and his family moved to Rome to join the group of discontents which was forming around Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici.⁴⁸

Some of the exiles from Florence who gathered together in Rome opposed Alessandro from a genuine love of liberty and a desire to see Florence once more under a Republican régime. Amongst these was the historian, Jacopo Nardi, who always remained true to his republican principles and refused to return to Florence when he was invited to do so by Duke Cosimo. The majority of the exiles, however, were discontented ottimati who had no high principles but who were motivated almost entirely by self-interest.

48) Varchi, Vol.3, Book 14, p.81, says that Strozzi was resentful, "...non gli parendo che gli fosse stato avuto in questo caso dal duca quel rispetto che a lui pareva che gli fosse dovuto avere...".

Nerli's relatives the Salviati had been estranged by the Duke because of his attitude over a dispute which involved their property near Pisa and because of the slighting treatment which they had received at his hands. Cardinal Salviati, together with Cardinal Ridolfi, was one of the most prominent members of the opposition to the Duke.⁴⁹ Varchi, in his analysis of the motives which inspired the plotting against Alessandro, is particularly hard on the two Cardinals who, he says, acted,

"..stringendo molto più ciascheduno degli uomini l'interesse proprio, che il pubblico, perciocchè ei pareva loro che eglino ed i loro fratelli dovessero essere ragionevolmente eredi di tutta la riputazione e di tutte le ricchezze di quel ramo della casa de' Medici, che discendeva da Cosimo il vecchio, le quali ei vedevano con grandissimo loro sdegno possedere al duca Alessandro,.". 50

Very rarely did the Florentine ottimati act from any motive other than self-interest. Nerli, in spite of the fact that the Salviati were supporters of Ippolito, obviously felt that it was more to his advantage to support Alessandro, from whom he was receiving official posts, and the Commentari, begun in 1534 when Alessandro was experiencing his gravest difficulties with the exiles, does not express any opposition to the Duke's rule.

49)Varchi, Vol.2, Book 14, p.84. Lucretia Salviati was angered when she failed to get satisfaction over a dispute with Chiarissimo de' Medici. p.85. Varchi refers to a dinner at which Alessandro made fun of Cardinal Salviati. "..mentrechè ei (Salviati) si cenava, il duca andò sempre in una maniera ed in un'altra schernendo il cardinale, ora dicendo: "Questi signori cardinali veramente son gran signori; pure noi altri siamo anche qual cosa"; e così in vari modi l'andò quella sera sempre beffando; il che fieramente dispiacque al cardinale".

50)Varchi, Vol.2, Book 14, pp.82-83.

Since Alessandro's position in Florence had been confirmed by an agreement with the emperor it was to the emperor that the exiles addressed their grievances, claiming that the Duke had deviated from the form of government laid down by the imperial representative after the siege and that it therefore rested with Charles V to restore the city to its former liberty. The exiles suggested that Ippolito should rule in Florence instead of Alessandro but the premature death of the Cardinal, who was quite possibly poisoned, robbed them of this alternative to the Duke. The emperor, busy with the affairs of the empire, did not take any action which satisfied the exiles for some time, and it was not until he returned from his expedition to Africa that matters came to a head. Both the exiles and Duke Alessandro and his court went to Naples to greet the emperor on his return and to lay their respective cases before him. With Alessandro travelled not only his closest advisers, headed by the lawyer Francesco Guicciardini, who argued the Duke's case before the emperor, but also a considerable bodyguard and a large number of gentlemen of the court. Both Varchi and Ammirato lay stress on the large number of people who accompanied Alessandro to Naples. Ammirato writes,

"..accompagnato, oltre la sua corte, della quale era maiordomo Domenico Canigiani, dalla cavalleria leggiera e da quaranta archibusieri a cavallo, e da tanta frequenza di gentiluomini Fiorentini così vecchi come giovani, che avrebbero quasi potuto fare un' altra corte da per loro".

51

51) Ammirato, Book 21, p.118.

Nowhere in the Commentari does Nerli state that he was a member of the ducal entourage on this visit to Naples, but it is not unusual for him to omit mention of himself and it is quite likely that he did in fact make the journey. Another relative of Alessandro, Cosimo de'Medici, soon to succeed him, was amongst those who went and Nerli may well have gone with the young Cosimo, son of his sister-in-law, Maria Salviati. Certainly the description of the meeting between the Duke, the exiles and the emperor in Naples which Nerli gives in the Commentari reads rather like that of an eye-witness. It is one of the most eloquent passages of the whole work, in which Nerli records what an impressive sight it was to see so large a proportion of the citizens of Florence, representatives of both political view points, gathered together before the emperor to discuss the future of their city.⁵² It is of course equally possible that Nerli was relying in this instance upon the report of someone else who had been present in Naples, but it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that he was there himself.

At Naples both sides put their cases before the emperor for his arbitration and the way in which the matter was conducted and the accusations which were made against him angered Alessandro so much that Guicciardini had to restrain him from leaving.

52) Nerli, Book 12, p.279. "Era cosa notevole, e da considerarla con ammirazione, e compassione grandissima, il vedere tanto gran numero di cittadini nobili di una medesima patria condotti in Napoli in tanta dissensione tra loro, domandando tutti a Cesare in diversi modi la salute della loro città".

Guicciardini, as we have seen, felt like Nerli that his interests lay in supporting Alessandro, for in his view the exiles had little chance of success. He wrote to his brother Luigi that,

"..sia come si vuole, il giuoco nostro ragionevolmente ha da essere di correre in tutto e per tutto la fortuna col Duca; e io per me ne son risolutissimo, sì per le obbligazioni che ho con la Casa sua, come per l'interesse mio, che so non mi posso fidare di questi ribaldi;..".

53

He defended Alessandro against the charges of the exiles, denying that much of what they said was true but being in some cases forced to fall back on the argument that much of what the young Duke had done could be excused by his youth and by

"..licenza del Principato".

54

It would seem from this that at least some of the charges made against Alessandro were justified. The emperor eventually gave his judgement in favour of Alessandro, basically because it was to his own advantage to do so. The Duke was, after all, already in charge of the city, so that there would be no need for any change of government, and he was in addition imperial in his sympathies, whereas the traditional loyalties of the citizens lay with the French. The new alliance was to be cemented by the marriage of Alessandro to the emperor's daughter Maddalena, and the Duke returned in triumph to Florence. He continued to rule in an autocratic manner and his licentious behaviour continued to

53)Guicciardini - Opere Inedite.Vol.9. Francesco to Luigi Guicciardini, November 18, 1534.

54)See Rastrelli, op.cit.

outrage even the Florentines. His friend and confidant in his 'amours' was Lorenzino de' Medici, but Lorenzino's friendship was assumed, for he turned against Alessandro and in 1537 murdered the Duke, claiming that he had acted from a desire to rid the city of a tyrant, although in fact it seems that to a large extent his motives were personal.⁵⁵

The few years of Alessandro's reign were for Nerli years of continued support for the Medici family, during which he earned some reward for his sufferings as a Medicean sympathiser at the time of the siege by being given a share, albeit not a large one, in the government of the city, the aim of all ottimati. His official duties at this time do not seem to have been too demanding for they left Nerli with time enough in which to start on the writing of his history, possibly inspired by the arguments which had been put forward by the opposing parties in Naples to commence his defence of principates. As well as gaining reward through office it would also seem that Nerli's financial position improved at this time. His long letter to Salviati which we have already referred to, suggested that, as a result of the siege, Nerli lost a considerable amount of money, and this accords with the general picture that the pro-Medicean ottimati did suffer large financial losses at this period. By 1534, however, Nerli appears in the records as one of the most wealthy men in the quarter of Santo Spirito, if not in the whole city. In the

55) See Ferrai - Lorenzino de Medici e la società cortigiana del Cinquecento. Milan. 1891. pp. 255-260. Also, Lorenzino de' Medici - L'Apologia. Milan. 1935.

Catasto of 1534 Nerli was assessed individually to pay the sum of 318 scudi, which means that he can be considered as being among the top 10% of taxpayers in the city.⁵⁶ His cousin, Tanai de' Nerli, was also heavily assessed at 303 scudi, and we know that Tanai and Filippo shared business interests which were later to be the cause of a long and bitter dispute between them.⁵⁷ Tanai's brothers, Gianozza and Giovambatista de'Nerli were assessed jointly for 399 scudi, but not all the members of the Nerli family were as wealthy as this. The assessments of Bernardo and Maso de' Nerli were only 43 and 29 scudi respectively. On the other hand, Tanai's wife Contessina was assessed separately from her husband for 161 scudi. It is difficult to arrive at a true picture of the wealth of the various families since in many cases assessments were made on a joint, rather than on an individual, basis,⁵⁸ but by any standards Nerli was a wealthy man in 1534 and it seems that his support of Alessandro must have proved of financial advantage to him. It is possible that his complaints to Salviati were excessive, being in reality the moans of a wealthy man who is now rather poorer, rather than those of an impoverished man, or it may be that he is thinking in terms of ready cash, whereas his assessment is based on the value of the property which he owned in Florence and outside. He does not seem to have been forced to

56) I am indebted to S. Berner of the University of California for drawing my attention to the existence of these figures in the volumes of the Decime Granducali, A.S.F. Volumes 3557, 3563, 3564 and 3583 have been cited.

57) See Chapter 5, p. 201-2

58) E.g. Francesco Guicciardini was assessed with his brothers, Luigi, Jacopo and Girolamo for a total of 1122 scudi.

sell any of his property because of the exactions of the Republic, but later, during the reign of Cosimo, he again complains of lacking ready money with which to buy a house,⁵⁹ probably because of his costly litigation with Tanai de'Nerli. Whatever the reason for Nerli's complaints of lacking money, however, he had undoubtedly managed to recoup his losses by 1534 and clearly profitted from his adherence to Alessandro's cause.

The murder at dead of night of Alessandro by Lorenzino created in Florence a dangerous situation from which all were likely to try to profit. Men such as the military leader, Alessandro Vitelli, and the scheming Cardinal Cibo, who had had an important position under Duke Alessandro, were bound to seek personal gain from the situation, whilst overshadowing all the events immediately after the murder was the fear that the emperor might impose his control on the city. The obvious successor to Alessandro was the one man who was out of the question, his murderer Lorenzino and thus, after a period of discussion and uncertainty, Cosimo de'Medici, the young son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, was elected head of the city. The negotiations which led up to this decision took place over a period of two days, the leading ottimati first meeting amongst themselves and then relaying their views to a full meeting of the senate of the Quarantotto. This body formally elected Cosimo on January 9, 1537. As Cosimo's uncle and a close friend of his mother Maria Salviati

59) See Chapter 5, p. 202

and his dead father Giovanni de' Medici it would seem reasonable to suppose that Nerli would have been closely involved in the events leading to the election, yet there is no mention of his name in any of the contemporary reports of the events of January, 1537. His name does appear in connection with the early years of Cosimo's reign, when he played an important part in the negotiations with the exiles at this crucial period,⁶⁰ but at the time of the actual election there is no record of the part which he played, not even in his own account of the events in the Commentari. As with the problem of whether or not Nerli took part in the visit to Naples we can only hazard a guess as to the role which he played at the time of the election. Yet in one respect we are not quite so much in the dark on this point, for there is one source which shows that Nerli did play a role in the election and which suggests that this was of greater importance than the roles which were played by the other minor members of the council of the Quarantotto.

This 'source' is a painting by Giorgio Vasari, (see plate 1), which is to be seen in the room of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence which is dedicated to Duke Cosimo, a painting which has been discussed from another point of view in an article by Paolo Guicciardini.⁶¹ This painting, together with the others which Vasari executed for the room, is described in the artist's own

60) See below, pp. 178-82.

61) Paolo Guicciardini - Il ritratto vasariano di Luigi Guicciardini. Contributo per la iconografia fiorentina all'avvento di Cosimo I. Rinascita. No. 25. 1942. pp. 247-72.

work on the subject, I Ragionamenti. In this book Vasari conducts Cosimo's son and successor, Francesco, around the palace, describing to him the significance of each of the paintings in turn. The one with which we are concerned is a tondo on the ceiling of the chamber and which is described by Vasari in the sixth of the Ragionamenti, which are written in the form of a dialogue between the artist and Francesco. Even Vasari, in listing the various men who appear in the tondo, does not mention Nerli by name. He simply states that the work shows the second meeting of the Quarantotto, that is, the full meeting which took place on January 9, after the preliminary discussion had been completed. Vasari also writes that, due to lack of space because of the shape of the painting, he has been forced to limit the number of figures represented to those who were most important in the proceedings.⁶² What we see portrayed is the young Duke seated in the midst of his councillors with Cardinal Cibo seated near him and with the secretary, Francesco Campana, reading from a document. This document, Vasari tells Francesco, is the imperial decree of October 28, 1530, the document which made clear Cosimo's right of succession. One of the councillors who is shown in the painting and who is described by Vasari as one of the "più principali" is Filippo de'Nerli.

That one of these figures is in fact Nerli, although Vasari

62) Ragionamenti del Signor...Giorgio Vasari sopra le inventioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel Palazzo di loro Altezze Serenissime..
Fl. 1588. "...per la strettezza del luogo non ce n'ho potuti fare di più; mi sono bene ingegnato ritrarci li più principali".

does not actually say so in the Ragionamenti, we know because a close examination of the work reveals that the artist has painted in the name of each of the men depicted and that of Nerli is clearly shown on his cap, as are the names of several of the others. Nerli stands to the left of the picture, slightly behind Cosimo and, perhaps significantly, between Francesco Guicciardini and Francesco Vettori, both of whom had been important members of the state under Alessandro and who we know played leading parts in the election negotiations. In his article Paolo Guicciardini describes Nerli as having,

"..faccia aristocratica dalla ben curata barbetta", perhaps a facile but not an altogether inaccurate description of his somewhat sad countenance. It may be argued that Nerli is represented in this painting, which was executed in 1559, because of his close relationship to Cosimo and because of the importance of the service which he rendered to the Duke later in his reign. Vasari may simply have wished to please the Duke by the inclusion of one of his most trusted servants. On the other hand it is equally possible that Nerli did in fact have a close connection with the election negotiations and this is a point which it is worth while examining. Not only is it interesting from the point of view of Nerli's own life but it also helps to throw some light on the atmosphere in which the election took place and the attitudes of the councillors who were involved in the preliminary negotiations.

It is evident that, since the formal election of Cosimo as



(Ed. Alinari) P. 2. N. 4455. FIRENZE - Palazzo Vecchio. Sala di Cosimo I. Cosimo creato Duca di Firenze. (G. Vasari.)

Duke was the work of the Quarantotto, of which Nerli had been a member since its inauguration under Alessandro, he must inevitably have been concerned with the negotiations, but it is more difficult to judge to what extent he was involved. The various contemporary accounts of the election can help in trying to assess this, and they also show the attitudes of the various historians towards the event. Varchi, Segni and Nardi all give slightly varying accounts which are coloured by their feelings on the form of government best suited to Florence, whilst Giovio's rather romanticized description is clearly the result of his desire to flatter his patron Cosimo. All the accounts add something different to the total picture and by considering each of them in turn we can arrive at a reasonably clear and accurate reconstruction of what actually took place in the days immediately following the murder of Alessandro.

Nerli's own account is disappointingly short, especially when we consider that he usually gives more detail on the events covered by the last chapters of his work, of which he had a more personal and intimate knowledge. He gives a lengthy analysis of the possible motives of Lorenzino in murdering Alessandro but he becomes much less verbose when he reaches the crucial election. He describes how, at first, the news of Alessandro's murder was kept from the people of Florence, while Cardinal Cibo recalled Alessandro Vitelli from Città di Castello and got in touch with the other military captains in order to ensure the security of the city. Then, writes Nerli,

"..furono chiamati Messer Matteo Niccolini, Messer

Francesco Guicciardini, Roberto Acciaiuoli, e Matteo Strozzi, che erano del segreto consiglio del Duca, ed Ottaviano de' Medici, Francesco Vettori, ed altri de' più confidenti dello stato, e furono tenuti intra di essi molti ragionamenti sopra di quello, che fosse da fare per mantenere lo stato fermo nella casa de' Medici, e a devozione dell'Imperatore".

63

He gives no indication that he himself may have been amongst the "altri" whom he mentions. He records that Cardinal Cibo was given powers as lieutenant "per alcuni giorni" and that troops were stationed round the Medici palace and in the Via Larga for security. He also admits that the councillors, who were fearful of another popular régime being set up, felt that they had to act with the utmost speed in electing a new head of state. Nerli stresses, as do the other historians, that fear of the emperor was another element in this concern for speed. He concludes his account by claiming that,

"..liberamente e molto unitamente si risolverono per liberi suffraggi di elegger il Signor Cosimo in luogo del morto Duca Alessandro".

The new ruler was given the title of "capo del reggimento" which had been agreed between the emperor and Alessandro after the siege.

Nerli does admit that there were in fact two dissident voices in these discussions; those of Giovanni Canigiani, ⁶⁴ who spoke in favour of electing Alessandro's natural son, Julio, and Palla Rucellai, who felt that decisions of such importance should not be taken while such leading exiles as Filippo Strozzi were still

63) Nerli, Book 12, p.291.

64) Canigiani is referred to as Domenichi by some historians.

absent from the city. Canigiani's proposal, says Nerli, was easy to overcome, since as Julio was illegitimate he did not qualify for the succession under the terms of the imperial agreement of July 6, 1531, but Rucellai proved harder to pacify, even though Vettori and others spoke firmly to him. In the end, however, writes Nerli,

"..fu adunque senza altre contraddizioni eletto il Signor Cosimo de' Medici a dì 9 Gennaio del 1536 dall'Incarnazione Capo della Repubblica Fiorentina e del reggimento di essa".

Nerli's brief account seems to aim above all else at putting forward two main ideas. That the election was carried out strictly in accordance with the city's agreement with the emperor, and that the decision to elect Cosimo was a unanimous one with no real discord.⁶⁵ This latter point is not really particularly surprising since Nerli's aim in writing his history was to show how Florence had achieved unity under the government of Cosimo and that as a result of the election the

"..principali cittadini dello stato ne rimasero contenti e soddisfatti".

Yet was this in fact true? Was there really the general agreement about the election which Nerli talks of or is his account that of a Medici apologist who would obviously want to make it appear a unanimous decision? The other accounts of the event show that in fact the negotiations were not so amicable and straightforward as Nerli would suggest and this poses the

65) Ammirato's account is similar to Nerli's in suggesting a large degree of unanimity. Ammirato, Book 31, pp.127-131.

question of whether Nerli deliberately omitted any mention of his own part in the election in order that the tensions and disagreements could also be omitted. A discussion of the other accounts of the election may reveal Nerli's true role at this time.

Varchi and Giovio, both probably mindful that Cosimo was their patron, praise his behaviour on the occasion. Giovio speaks of his modesty and his reluctance to take power,⁶⁶ while Varchi writes of his bravery in front of the citizens, who his mother feared would try to harm him.⁶⁷ Yet this desire to praise Cosimo does not lead Varchi to show the scene as one of complete unity and he gives an account of the amount of discord which was present. He puts forward the suggestion that Canigiani was 'put up' to backing Alessandro's son as his successor by Cardinal Cibo, who hoped that he would be able to rule the city through this infant. This does not seem an unlikely suggestion for we do have other evidence which shows that Cibo was not at first prepared to give Cosimo his wholehearted support because he was anxious to gain as prominent a position in the new régime for himself as he possibly could. Cosimo was obviously aware of this and regarded

66) Giovio, Book 38, p.246v. refers to Cosimo as "..garzone pieno di nobil modestia". Giovio - Lettere. Rome. 1956-8. To Varchi, April 16, 1551, he claims that he gained his knowledge of the election, "..di bocca del Duca".

67) Varchi, Vol.3, Book 15, p.249. "..la madre tenerissima di sua natura, e non avendo più che lui, veggendo tant'arme e tanto popolo, cominciò, ancorachè fosse di grand'animo, a confortare e pregare il figliuolo che non volesse andare, mostrandogli quant' eran dubbie le cose, ed a quai pericoli si sottentrasse. Ma egli:.. risposto sempre modestissimamente, che si contentava di quella fortuna che gli aveva lasciata suo padre,..".

Cibo with a considerable amount of suspicion. This can be seen from a letter which Cosimo wrote in 1539 in which he states that,

"..tutto lo sai meglio di me massime che innanzi che e creassino duca me il cardinale haveva fatto ogni sforzo che facessino Julio ma non vi fu omer che vi volessi acconsentire..".

68

The Duke was clearly aware of where possible danger might lie. Varchi also attaches more importance to Rucellai's opposition than does Nerli saying that it was countered by both Vettori and Guicciardini, and he also describes another element of discontent which centred on Bertoldo Corsini and Alamanno Salviati. This group was republican in sentiment and desired to see a return to liberty in Florence, conspiring together with this aim in view in Alamanno's room. Corsini held the keys to the munitions and he was "provveditore della fortezza" and Varchi, naturally enough for a republican, feels that with a leader of sufficient calibre these men could have been of great importance. Salviati, however, was cautious and inclined to bide his time, a mistake at such a crucial point for it enabled Cibo and Guicciardini who, writes Varchi,

"..senza dubbio era il capo di tutti i palleschi",

to reach an agreement on what was to be done. Cibo, aware of the plotting that was going on and realizing that there was a large amount of support for Cosimo, decided to throw in his lot with the young Medici. The full meeting of the Quarantotto on January 9 was held with the populace clamouring outside and Varchi accuses

68)Carteggio Mediceo 639, Insert 4. 1539. Cosimo to Giovanni Bandini, his resident agent in Spain.

the chief councillors, Guicciardini, Niccolini, Acciaiuoli, Strozzi, Vettori, Giuliano Capponi, Jacopo Gianfigliuzzi and Raffaello de' Medici of acting with such greed and ambition that they reduced the proceedings to such a level that Cosimo was elected,

"..non altramente che si facciano l'ellere alle taverne, ⁶⁹..".

The result of the election does not seem to have been greeted with the universal enthusiasm which Nerli implies for, according to Varchi, it was only the previously primed soldiers of Vitelli who raised the traditional shout of "Palle, Palle". The councillors, says Varchi, supported Cosimo mainly because, since he was still a very young man, they hoped that they would be able to use him merely as a figurehead and Guicciardini in particular hoped to wield power in this way. He was to be gravely disappointed in this hope.

Even allowing for Varchi's undoubted republican bias in his account it is still clear that Nerli glosses over a good deal of unrest in the Commentari in his anxiety to make the election appear unanimous. Segni's account, which he says was "più volte ⁷⁰racconti" to him by men who took part in the "segreti consigli", also tells, like Varchi's, of discord and of the fear that unless decisions were taken quickly the emperor might take control of the city. Segni too mentions the conspiracies of Corsini and Salviati and the lack of a resolute leader which hampered the republican

69)Varchi, Vol.3, Book 15, p.255.

70)Segni, Book 8, p.134.

plots. He names Vettori, Guicciardini, Strozzi and Acciaiuoli as the leading councillors and says that it was Vettori who made Guicciardini aware of the dangers of delay. Segni also suggests that in fact the election of Cosimo was secretly agreed by these councillors, Cardinal Cibo having retired into the fortress from fright, and that Canigiani put forward his idea for the election of Julio because he had no knowledge of this secret arrangement. Segni gives in full Rucellai's objections, claiming that many others secretly agreed with him but kept silent through fear, and he says that it was hoped that the election of Cosimo would to some extent pacify Cardinal Salviati, one of the leading exiles and Cosimo's uncle. Maria Salviati was in secret communication with her brother the Cardinal at this time. All these details show that the proceedings were far more complex than Nerli allows and the account of another republican historian, Jacopo Nardi, also shows the complicated nature of the situation very clearly. Nardi claims that in writing his history he is writing,

"..le pure e nude sentenzie, perchè io non so nè
voglio comporre poesie".

71

Nardi's account ends with the general support of the Quarantotto for Cosimo and with the general approval of the city, but he does point out the problems which preceded this much more clearly than does Nerli. Like Varchi Nardi says that Cibo originally supported the election of the natural son of Alessandro, though unlike him he argues that this solution could have been

71)Nardi, Book 10, p.355.

made acceptable to the emperor. He gives Palla Rucellai's plea for the liberty of the city and says that after this there was a secret meeting between

"Ottaviano de' Medici e gli altri più congiunti uomini della casa con Alessandro Vitelli,..".

at which it was agreed that Cosimo should be the new head of state. This Medicean group then persuaded the other members of the Quarantotto to their way of thinking, also managing to convert Cardinal Cibo. Considering the tumult outside, writes Nardi,

"Credesi bene, per lo spavento che ebbero quei cittadini d'un tumulto nato tra'soldati, su la strada, ei fussero costretti così tosto a fare tale elezione".

72

Nardi's account tallies fairly closely with Nerli's since he too concludes with a picture of universal harmony and he also seems to have much more sympathy with the men involved than does Varchi, for he does not accuse them of greed and ambition, even though he was himself an ardent republican.

From these varying accounts a picture of the election does emerge. Speed was obviously a key factor, forcing the councillors to make a decision before either the emperor or the republican element in the city could make a move. This is an element which comes through clearly in all the accounts and which cannot be disputed. The general fear of disorder is also clear. Nor can there be any argument about the fact that the two most important men in these negotiations were Guicciardini and Vettori. What is more debatable is how far these two and their supporters

72) Nardi, Book 10, p.357.

were satisfied with the election and whether, given more time and no pressure from the extreme Mediceans, they would have preferred to have seen Cosimo elected with more limited powers. Both Nardi and Varchi say that the *ottimati* would have liked more powers for themselves, and Varchi claims that Cosimo was not at first given the title of Duke because Guicciardini and his associates hoped that they would be able to use him as a puppet. It seems that lack of time, fear, and pressure from a more ardently Medicean group did in fact force the *ottimati* into conceding more than they wished to concede and forced Cardinal Cibo into accepting Cosimo as the new head of Florence. Evidence that the election was not unanimous but even involved a measure of force is also to be found in a letter which was written to Cosimo later in his reign by one of his principal secretaries, Bartolomeo Concini. In this letter, which is written in very outspoken terms considering that Concini was the Duke's servant, the secretary warns Cosimo not to delude himself as to his own situation and to avoid the danger of becoming a tyrant. The Duke's power, Concini reminds him, does not have an entirely firm and legitimate basis, for

"..tu epso sai che fusti eletto da quatro scelerati,
e per forza, et con altre conditioni che quelle che
tu ti sei arogate,..",

73

by which he is referring to the increase in his powers which Cosimo had succeeded in gaining during his reign. Obviously Cosimo's position at the outset was extremely uncertain and it was

73)Carteggio Mediceo 404, f.218,218v & 219. Concini to Cosimo. August 13, 1551. He is presumably referring to Guicciardini, Vettori, Matteo Strozzi and Acciaiuoli.

only later that he was able to gain the power that Guicciardini and Vettori had sought to keep from him. The danger of republicanism and disorder had worked to his advantage, but his election was by no means the straight-forward affair which Nerli tries to suggest and the hesitancy of the emperor in his support for Cosimo underlines the rather shaky position which he was in at the beginning.

Where does Nerli himself fit into this picture and how can his reticence in the Commentari be explained? He was present at the general meeting of the Quarantotto and from Vasari's painting it would seem that he was an important figure, but how closely was he concerned with the negotiations which took place behind the scenes beforehand? It must be pointed out that much of what follows in an attempt to clarify Nerli's position can only be regarded as speculation, although it does have a certain factual basis. We have seen that Segni says that he gained much of his information on the secret meetings which took place before the final decision was made from the men who took part in them.⁷⁴ We also know that Segni was on friendly terms with Nerli and that he made use of the Commentari as a source for his own history.⁷⁵ It would therefore not seem impossible that one of the men who took part in the secret negotiations and who told Segni of them was Filippo de'Nerli. This theory is strengthened by Nardi's report of a secret meeting of the "più congiunti uomini della casa"

74) See above, p. 167

75) See Chapters 6 and 7.

Medici, since Nerli, as the brother-in-law of Maria Salviati and Cosimo's uncle must surely qualify for this description. These two pieces of evidence, together with Vasari's painting, support the view that, although he himself does not mention it, Nerli was closely involved in the election; it now remains to discuss in what capacity he might have been concerned with the negotiations and why he says so little in the Commentari about the problems and discussions surrounding the election.

The answers to these questions are not to be found in any body of evidence but can only be deduced from what we know of Nerli and from our information of the circumstances of the election. As Cosimo's uncle by marriage and a supporter of the Medicean state one would expect to find Nerli backing the election of his young nephew, and this would be in accordance with his argument in the Commentari that the best type of government for Florence was the rule of one man. Yet in Vasari's painting he appears between two men who had very strong reservations about the amount of power which Cosimo should have, Francesco Vettori and Francesco Guicciardini, both of whom would have preferred a solution which left more power in the hands of the ottimati. Nerli must have known Vettori at least a little through their common friendship with Machiavelli, and he had a closer acquaintance with Guicciardini. Not only had he worked under him during the campaigns of the League of Cognac, but he was related to him through the Salviati family,⁷⁶ and was conversant with the

76) See above, Chapter 2, p.33

Storia d'Italia. If we accept Nardi's account of the Mediceans winning over the less enthusiastic members of the ottimati it is then possible to suggest that Nerli could have played an important part in bringing about agreement between the two sides, since he had links with both groups. The role of mediator was one which he was to play not long afterwards in trying to win over the exiles, and in a letter which Lucretia Salviati later wrote to Cosimo his tact and diplomacy in delicate matters is praised.⁷⁸ It is thus more than likely that he earned his position in the painting between Guicciardini and Vettori through his work in bringing harmony between the two groups.

How then can we explain the sparsity of Nerli's account if he had taken such an active part in the negotiations and was thus in a position to record them fully? The main reason for his reticence might be his desire to make the decision appear unanimous, received with universal rejoicing, a desire which probably sprang both from a need to praise Cosimo and from the demands of the structure of the Commentari, which reaches its climax with this 'unanimous' election. To point out the division between the members of the Quarantotto, the fear of republicanism, the violent atmosphere in which the election took place and the

77) Nerli, Book 5, p. 108. He refers to Soderini's speech of defence which he says Guicciardini has "molto elegantemente scritta".

78) Carteggio Mediceo 364, f. 295. Lucretia Salviati to Cosimo. December 28, 1543. "...io ci fatto tutta quella buon opera che potrò et con Filippo de Nerli, et con Girolamo degli Albizzi, per essere pure parenti et anche conoscere il pericolo grande che si puo tirar dietro questa cosa..".

part which he himself played in bringing about unity would have harmed the conception of princeliness upon which the Commentari is based. It was essential that Cosimo should appear as the perfect ruler, chosen unanimously to bring an end to the divisions from which the city had suffered for so long. Hence Nerli was silent on the details of the negotiations with which, as we have seen, he must have been closely connected.

There are certain objections which could be raised against this theory of Nerli's participation in the election and these must be considered before we deal with the part which he played in the conciliation of the exiles. The chief argument against the theory is that if Nerli did play an important part in the negotiations it is surprising that the fact is not mentioned in any of the other accounts. That Varchi omits Nerli's name could be explained by the fact that Varchi felt no love towards a man of Nerli's Medicean outlook and all the references which he makes to him are slighting; it is thus unlikely that he would feel disposed to give him any importance or credit over the matter of the election. Segni, if he did in fact get information on the election from Nerli, could have been asked by him to keep his name out of the account, for the same reasons that Nerli did not include it in the Commentari. Segni does not in any case give the names of any of the men who took part in the meetings. Nardi's silence presents a bigger problem, but he too was a republican and also he was writing his history in Venice, further removed from accurate sources of information than the other historians,

another possible explanation of this omission. It might be added that it is not unusual for those who do 'behind the scenes' work of this type to get no recognition, even if their existence is known. It is of course always possible that Vasari included Nerli in his painting simply because of his close relationship to the Duke and because of the fact that he was one of Cosimo's most trusted and respected servants. However, there would seem to be sufficient evidence, besides the painting in the Palazzo Vecchio, for putting forward the hypothesis that Nerli played the role of mediator in the election negotiations.⁷⁹

Any idea that from the moment of Cosimo's election onwards all went smoothly in Florence is belied by the ensuing conflict with the many exiles from the city, a conflict which severely threatened the Duke's position in the early days of his reign. Rucellai had objected that the election should not take place without the participation of the many important exiles, and now these exiles remained to be satisfied. Cosimo was also faced with the task of establishing his control over the territory of the dominio, which was always ready to try to profit from any slackening of governmental control in Florence, and the Duke also had to protect himself from possible encroachments on his power by the ottimati. For a boy of eighteen, whose expertise had

79) See Agostino Rossi - La Elezione di Cosimo I Medici. in Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, lettere ed Arti. Series 7, Vol. I, 1889-90. pp. 369-435. In this article evidence from diaries and biographical material is used. Rossi says that Giovio's account, though detailed, may be suspect because, in deference to Cosimo, he has smoothed over the dissensions.

previously only shown itself in the hunting field, it was a difficult challenge, and one in which he had every need of the experience and support of men like Nerli to ensure that he did not lose possession of his state.

The group of exiles in Rome, grouped around Filippo Strozzi and the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi had, as we have seen,⁸⁰ lost their case when they had placed it before the emperor at Naples and the murder of Alessandro had momentarily offered to them another opportunity to regain the liberty of the city. They felt angry, on hearing of the election of Cosimo, that they had been thwarted in their aims by

"..la grandissima viltà e dappocaggine de'cittadini",⁸¹ and hoped that with French help they might yet be able to retake Florence. Pope Paul encouraged them in this idea and it seems that there was a certain amount of support for them inside the city itself. Nardi claims that when the citizens heard that the Cardinals were to visit Florence for discussions with Cosimo they had visions of regaining their liberty and celebrated,

"..quasi come loro particolari salvadori mandati da Dio". With the emperor fully occupied with his struggle against the Turks Cosimo's position was not enviable, to say the least, and according to Cresci many Florentines felt that their position was

80) See above, p.154

81) Nardi, Book 10, p.359

worse than it had ever been before. Cosimo's main hope lay in the fact that the exiles were divided amongst themselves, and also in their reliance on French help which at the best of times was extremely unreliable. An informant writing from Venice, which at a later stage in the conflict became Strozzi's headquarters, and from where many negotiations were arranged, tells the Duke that the exiles are trying to raise arms, but he also writes of the divisions amongst them. Whereas exiles like Jacopo Nardi wanted to see a truly republican régime in Florence Cosimo's informant writes that he has been told by Anton Francesco degli Albizzi that

"..ne Filippo, ne li Cardinali sono per consentir' a stato che sia quello d'lla Republica del'28 et finalmente lo trovo come ho detto che si contentierieno a uno stato poco diferente dal'vostro..".

In particular Cardinal Salviati, according to information which Albizzi has gained from the French,

"..non e caldo al rompere la Guerra et venir' alla impresa di Firenze con genti ma sconforta del'metter' mano alli armi..",

whilst

"..la impresa di mettersi a fare fanterie et da un giorno da un altro turbata, o, messa avanti senza risolversi. Piero Strozzi si mostra qualche volta chaldo per la republica et qualche volta si raffredda". 83

82) Cresci - Storia delle cose accadute in Italia dal 1525 al 1546.
An eighteenth century copy, B.N.F. Magl.II,III,66. f.154.

"..essendo ancora malvolusti dalli tre Cardinali Fiorentini, e da molti altri Fuorusciti, che pareva loro la Patria star'peggio di primo..".

83) Carteggio Mediceo 3, f.4v. To Cosimo from his anonymous informant, March 7, 1537.

That this should be reported of the hot-headed Piero Strozzi, who ultimately pushed his father into armed conflict with Cosimo, shows how undecided and wavering the exiles were. The free pardon and invitation to return freely to Florence which Cosimo had issued to them after his election had been spurned, but in view of this indecision amongst them the Duke still hoped that some agreement could be arrived at through negotiation, in particular with his uncle, Cardinal Salviati. The man chosen to conduct these negotiations at one stage was his other uncle, Filippo de' Nerli.

On first hearing the news of Alessandro's murder Strozzi and his supporters had moved to Bologna and Nerli was not the first man to be sent to try to come to an agreement with the exiles. He himself records in the Commentari that first Francesco Bandini and then Matteo Niccolini and Luigi Ridolfi were sent,

"..per doverli confortare a dover venire, e desistere dal muover armi,..",

84

for Cosimo wanted the cardinals to come to Florence for talks with him. When these envoys met with no success Nerli writes that

"..fui mandato ancora io a Figline, dove egli erano già comparsi perchè più particolarmente essendo cognato e molto domestico del Cardinal Salviati, lo doversi persuadere, acciocchè egli si disponesse a doversi contentare di quello che si era fatto,..".

In spite of his close relationship with the Cardinal, however, Nerli was not successful in persuading him to accept his nephew's rule, although the Cardinals did pay a brief visit to Florence.

84) Nerli, Book 12, p.294.

This did not achieve anything and when the Cardinal's house was surrounded by troops he became fearful for his safety and felt it wise to retire from the city.

The exiles now became somewhat more united and continued their negotiations with France, but even now there was not true unity amongst them. Many of the genuine republicans were very suspicious of men like Bartolomeo Valori and Piero Strozzi, who, says Nerli,

"..procedevano in ogni loro cosa di tal maniera, che piuttosto pareva, che e'disegnassero di tornare in Firenze Principi e Signori, che cittadini". 85

The true republicans did not find it easy to act in accord with such men as these, keeping together for the sake of the cause but with the firm intention of returning Florence to the form of government of 1527 if they were victorious. When the emperor's agent, Conte Sifonte, visited Florence for the purpose of negotiation he could reach no solution, for he found nothing but discord between Cosimo and the representatives of the exiles, Donato Giannotti and Giovanmaria Greco. The only positive result of his visit was that Alessandro Vitelli was authorized to take command of the fort on the emperor's behalf. Further attempts at negotiation were useless and both sides prepared for conflict, a conflict which ended in the total defeat of the exiles at the battle of Montemurlo.

As with the negotiations at the time of the election it is

85)Nerli, Book 12, p.296.

difficult to discover the exact course of events and the people who took part in them, because of the way such matters were shrouded in secrecy. Nerli says very little about the part which he played in the attempt to win over Salviati and it is not mentioned by the Sienese ambassadors, who were aware of what was going on and sent back daily reports.⁸⁶ A letter which was written by Nerli whilst he was on his mission to the Cardinal survives, but since it was written before Nerli had actually met the Cardinal, having been held up on the way by heavy rain, it gives no clue as to the form which their discussions took. It seems from the letter that Nerli was perturbed about how he should approach his mission, for he writes to Cosimo to ask for direction on the matter.⁸⁷ The tone of this letter is somewhat reminiscent of the many that Nerli wrote from Modena to ask for advice from his various superiors. It is possible that these negotiations were in fact somewhat different from the description of them that Nerli gives in the Commentari. Varchi says that Nerli did not go to the exiles simply as a negotiator for Cosimo, but that he

⁸⁶) See Cesare Paoli and Eugenio Casanova - Cosimo I de' Medici e i fuorusciti del 1537. (Da lettere di due Oratori Senesi). in A.S.I. Vol. 11, 1893. Since this is only a published selection of their letters it is possible that Nerli may have been referred to in others, though this does not seem likely since they are the most important letters.

⁸⁷) Carteggio Mediceo 330, f. 414. Nerli to Cosimo, August 19, 1537. "...non mi occorre altro se non pregare Vostra Signore che si degna farmi scrivere da sofare qui..".

went in the guise of a sympathizer with their cause in the hope that in this way he would be able to find out information about their plans which would be of use to Cosimo.⁸⁸ Varchi claims that the exiles were not taken in by this, but what he says may well be correct for in a much later letter to Cosimo Nerli, referring to this mission implies that there was a need to keep it secret. He talks of his visit to Bologna and Ferrara,

"..dove mi fu forza la executione di quanto la mi commisse di praticare con li allora fuorusciti et rebelli come di tutto vostra Eccellentia fu advisata da me",

89

and asks that the nature of his visit should remain hidden. The way in which Varchi describes the letters which Nerli wrote also lends credence to his story, for he writes as though he himself had seen and handled these letters. There would, on the other hand, seem to be little truth in Varchi's earlier suggestion that very soon after Cosimo's election Nerli left Florence because he was discontented.⁹⁰ One would not expect such a reaction from

88)Varchi, Book 15, p.299. "Vennevi ancora Filippo de'Nerli infingendosi malcontento dello signoria di Cosimo, quasi preponesse la liberta al parentado; ma i fuorusciti dubitando di quello che era, non si fidavano, come scrive egli medesimo, di lui; pur egli tornandosi con Salviati suo cognato, e trattenendosi con Filippo e con gli altri, avvisava di per di con una cifera di figure d'abbaco, fatta a guisa d'una muta di regoli, tutto quello che egli o dal cardinale o da altri poteva spillare".

89)Carteggio Mediceo 385, f.45. Nerli to Cosimo. October 15, 1547.

90)Varchi, Book 15, p.281. "In questo tempo, o non bene contento dello stato, o giudicandolo in trespoli,...,o non gli parendo che egli gli deterisse e si confidasse in lui quanto doveva a un marito d'una sua zia, ancorchè fusse molle ed effeminato uomo, si partì di Firenze Filippo de'Nerli, e andossene a il che diede (tanto era tenere in quel principio le cose) qualche sospetto e massimamente a coloro i quali ogni menomissima occasione pigliavano per grandissima".

someone who had been as closely involved in the election as had Nerli, and the only plausible explanation of this claim is that Nerli's departure was the first stage of Cosimo's plan to use him as a spy amongst the exiles.

The period between Nerli's return from Modena and the defeat of the exiles at Montemurlo in 1537 was one of transition, during which the city changed from a republic, both in form and practice, to a principate, during the course of which the Medici family were soon to become absolute and autocratic rulers. For Nerli it was a time when his fortunes, political and financial, were brought to a very low ebb because of his adherence to the Medici but were then consolidated and improved for the same reason. The period immediately after Alessandro's murder saw him playing an important behind the scenes role in politics, which formed the beginning of the many years of official service which he was to render to Duke Cosimo in the time before his death in 1556. With the succession of Cosimo, after an extremely troubled phase in the history of Florence, Nerli entered into what was perhaps the most untroubled period of his life, a period during which he served the Medicean state in an official capacity without interruption. The importance of the developments of these troubled years for the history of Florence was to become clear during the reign of Duke Cosimo, especially in the sphere of administration, and we will see how much this earlier period deserves to be referred to as a time of transition.

Chapter 5 - Government under Duke Cosimo.

In spite of the fact that in some respects Nerli's theme in the Commentari reaches its climax with the election of Cosimo it would be wrong to consider this event as signalling the beginning of an era of peace and prosperity for Florence. We have already seen that, due to the opposition of the exiles, Cosimo's position was far from secure at the outset of his reign, and even after the battle of Montemurlo the Duke had to face many more problems, working hard to establish his power for many years. His reign was essentially a continuation of that of Duke Alessandro and should not be viewed as a water-shed in Florentine history.

Much research work of the type which Gene Brucker has done for the fourteenth century ¹ remains to be done before a clear picture of the structure of government and society at this time can be gained, although much valuable work has already been done by Anzilotti, upon which any study of Cosimo's reign must inevitably draw. ² Anzilotti demonstrates how the history of Florence had been one of constant inter-class struggle, the ottimati displaying Medicean or Republican sympathies largely according to how they felt their interests would best be served. With the reign of Duke Alessandro this pattern had begun to undergo a change, for Alessandro had relied to a lesser extent than his predecessors on the advice of a small ottimati council.

1)Gene Brucker - Florentine Politics and Society, 1343-1378. Princeton. 1962. Also Rubinstein - The Government of Florence under the Medici. Oxford. 1966.

2)Antonio Anzilotti - La costituzione interna dello Stato Fiorentino sotto il duca Cosimo I de'Medici. Fl.1910. and La Crisi Costituzionale della Repubblica Fiorentina. Fl.1912.

and had begun to appoint officials who formed the nucleus of the developing bureaucratic state.³ Alessandro still made a lot of use of Medicean supporters, such as Guicciardini, but government was beginning to focus more on the Duke himself and on his servants and under Cosimo this tendency was continued and developed so that the place of the ottimati in the government of the city was gradually decreased. The sources which are available indicate that Anzilotti is correct in his analysis of the form of government which operated under Cosimo and in giving a place of considerable importance to the ducal secretaries, but what remains somewhat of a mystery is why the ottimati did not protest at this usurpation of their powers. Cosimo, at the time of his accession, was young and inexperienced, yet he acted as an autocratic ruler and paid little heed to the early attempts of men such as Guicciardini to control his actions. In considering the way in which government functioned during his reign and the part which Nerli played in it our findings will be related to this problem of the submissiveness of the ottimati, in the hope that some explanation for their behaviour may be found. What exactly was the role of the ottimati in Cosimo's 'New Society'? Were they in fact relatively powerless and why did they offer so little resistance to Cosimo's absolutism after the defeat of Montemurlo?

Montemurlo did much to stabilize Cosimo's position but it did

3) Anzilotti - La costituzione interna dello Stato fiorentino..
p.113. One of the things which the exiles complained of at Naples was the fact that Alessandro had set up 'auditori' to help him in judicial matters.

not mark the beginning of a period of untroubled rule, for in fact Cosimo had many problems to deal with in the dominio and much work to do in order to establish his position as an absolute prince in the eyes of the other Italian princes, and of the emperor. The young Duke could not as yet regard his position in Florence as unassailable, and Segni comments on the protective measures which he took because of his suspicions of trouble,⁴ whilst even as late as 1548 he felt it necessary to promulgate a law which laid down punishments,

"..contro a quelli che machinassino avverso la persona, o Stato di S.E. o de'sua Illustrissimi Figliuoli, o Descendenti..",

5

a sign that he did not feel completely sure of his position and wanted to discourage possible opponents. He was, however, determined to be an absolute ruler and laid great stress upon the establishment of his rights of precedence over other Italian rulers, and upon the acquisition of the title of Grand Duke. He displayed great tenacity and indeed ferocity over the question of precedence, especially in asserting his claims over those of the

4) Segni, Book 14, p.94. "Il sospetto, che aveva il Duca di tutti, era tanto grande per la vicinità di questa guerra e per la ribellione di tanti gentiluomini, che il Duca aveva fatto serrare le porte con comandamento, che potesse entrar dentro chi volesse, ma che nessuno, salvo che certi contadini, potessero uscire senza espressa licenza sua, che aveva ordinato in Palazzo, si desse per mezzo de'suoi ministri, con questo nondimanco, che di molti egli solo voleva sapere il nome, e concederla".

5) Legislazione Toscana. Ed. L.Cantini. Fl. 1800. Vol.2, p.54. March 11, 1548.

6

Este family, who opposed his pretensions to superiority. He states his position in a letter to Don Francesco of Toledo, writing that he wants it made clear to Este,

"..che le dignita accrescono li honorie et le preminentio alli Stati, et non le diminisco, et, un Principe libero, et assoluto come io sono deve precedere a uno che e feudatario et Tributario, qual'e lui..".

7

There was obviously no doubt in Cosimo's mind that he had the position of an absolute Prince.⁸ Yet, while he could adopt this attitude in Florence and in his relations with other Italian rulers, Cosimo had to be more circumspect in his dealings with the emperor. At the time of Cosimo's election fear of imperial control had forced speed upon the councillors and the Duke's powers had been based on those conferred upon Alessandro by the emperor in 1532. It was upon Charles V that Cosimo relied for the extension of his powers and it was from him that he received Siena as a feudal concession in 1555, whilst it was from Maximilian II that he at length gained the title of Grand Duke of

6) L. Carcereri - Cosimo Primo Granduca. Verona. 1926. When the emperor accorded Cosimo precedence in December, 1547, "in tutti quei luoghi e cerimonies di Corte, nei quali solevano intervenire i reppresentati dei minori Stati italiani" he did not sign the document himself, a sign that he was rather reluctant to admit Cosimo's position.

7) Carteggio Mediceo 9, f.111-12. Cosimo to Don Francesco, October 21, 1547.

8) On this see Danilo Marrara - Studi Giuridici sulla Toscana Medicea. Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza della Università di Pisa. 1965. He says that Cosimo "pose, a Firenze, le basi di un principato di tipo moderno, profondamente trasformato nelle sue strutture istituzionali e caratterizzato dalla nuova posizione assunta dal principe, cui l'acquisizione del titolo ducale...assicurava le qualifica di vero e proprio sovrano".

Tuscany. The deference which Cosimo felt it wise to show towards the emperor can be seen in the tone of his letters; in one he refers to himself as "servante et schiavo" of the emperor,⁹ and in another he writes,

"..io mi riposo sotto l'ombra et protectione di S.Mta. Cesare alla quale havendo fatto intendere il desiderio mio, et di tutta la Cita..". 10

Segni claims that Cosimo's devotion to the emperor was so great that he was little more than an imperial tool, making no independent decisions, especially in the sphere of foreign policy.¹¹ Yet in view of Cosimo's conception of his position it is likely that he did try to avoid subservience to the emperor, and indeed there are signs of his independent nature in a comment made by Lorenzo Pagni, one of the ducal secretaries, to another secretary, PierFrancesco Riccio. Pagni points out that,

"..S.Ecca. e amica et non feudataria dell'Imperatore..". 12

Within the Florentine state government was carried out by a number of different groups, some inter-relating, some more or less independent, each with its own function, which could quite often be duplicated or impinged on by one of the other groups.

9)C.M. 1, f.273. Cosimo to his Ambassador in Rome. November 4, 1540.

10)C.M. 1a, f.58. Instructions to Gio.Baptista Ricasoli concerning negotiations with Andrea D'Oria. Undated.

11)Segni, Book 10,p.255. "Per dire il vero, in quei primi anni di Cosimo, non si fece cosa alcuna memorabile;nella Città fuor di quelle, che da me finora sono state racconte; perchè il Signor Cosimo, poichè ebbe preso il nome di Duca, datosi tutto agl' Imperiali, e congiuntosi con matrimonio Spagnuolo, non faceva altro, che intrattenersi per amico e per buon suddito (per parlar meglio) dell'Imperadore".

12)C.M. 1174.Inserto 6,f.2. Pagni to Riccio. November 19, 1548.

It is not easy from the material available to gauge the exact power and responsibility of each of these groups, and the following analysis may possibly err in its judgement since it is the result of studies primarily devoted to the role which Nerli played during Cosimo's reign, rather than to the governmental structure of the period. One thing which emerges, and which is undoubtedly true, is that at the head and centre of these groups, actively controlling and organizing them, stood Cosimo himself. The focal point of the court and society, the source of authority for the Magistrato Supremo, the ambassadors and other state officials, Cosimo directed much of the administration personally, as his correspondence in the many volumes of the Carteggio Mediceo shows clearly. He had an amazing capacity for dealing with even unimportant problems in the minutest detail, which was a necessity for a man who seems to have been reluctant in the extreme to relinquish any authority to his officials and who demanded that he be kept in touch constantly with affairs in the state by his secretaries at times when he was absent from Florence. Segni writes that Cosimo,

"..più che nessun altro di Casa Medici, avendo ridotto in sè stesso tutta l'autorità e l'onore pubblico, s'era ancora impadronito assolutamente di tutte l'entrate,"

13

and Varchi also refers to the considerable amount of power which the Duke wielded, taking part to such an extent that no one did

13) Segni, Book 11, p.335.

or said anything to which he did not give his approval.¹⁴

Cosimo did not live permanently in Florence but travelled around the dominio, to the villa at Careggi, to Pisa, Livorno and other subject towns. With Cosimo travelled his court; his Duchess Eleanor of Toledo and their children,¹⁵ Eleanor's relatives, the court officials and the secretaries, and those members of the ottimati closest to the Duke. Amongst this group was Leone de' Nerli, the Duke's cousin and Filippo's son.¹⁶ The amount of influence which this group of courtiers exerted is very difficult to judge, for there is no record of the kind of meetings at which they may have proffered advice. From what we know of Cosimo's autocratic nature it seems unlikely that the Florentine nobles had much influence at all, but the group of Toledians who had come with Eleanor seem to have been more important. Don Francesco of Toledo was of particular importance, and the Duchess

14)Varchi, Book 15, p.300. "Nè sia nessuno che si maravigli, che io dica sempre Cosimo, e non mai lo stato, o i quarantotto, nè i consiglieri; perciocchè non lo stato, nè i quarantotto, nè i consiglieri principalmente, ma Cosimo solo governava il tutto, nè si diceva o faceva cosa alcuna, nè così grande, nè tanto piccola, alla quale egli non desse il sì, o il no".

15)Bronzino's portraits of the Duke and Duchess and their children are to be seen in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence.

16)Domenico Mellini - Ricordi intorno ai costumi, azioni e governi del sereniss. Gran Duca Cosimo I. Fl. 1820. p.9. "Usò d'aver quasi sempre qualche Signore a mangiar seco in piè di tavola, e alcuni Gentiluomini Fiorentini, come M.Alamanno Salviati suo zio, Pandolfo Pucci, Leon de'Nerli suo cugino, e Piero di Gino Capponi". Also, Marucelliana, Cod. A. 229. The Ricordanze of Lorenzo di Niccolo Machiavelli. "Ricordo come questo di 31 di Gennaio la Xa. del duca Cosimo de Medici mi fece intendere come lui voleva andassi in maschera, nel presente carnovale a correre in su e cavalli dietro alle bufole con uno compagno in compagnia di Liono di Filippo de Nerli e di Giovanmaria di Alessandro Segni".

herself seems to have wielded a certain amount of power, particularly after the death of Cosimo's mother, Maria Salviati, who is said to have influenced the earlier part of his reign.¹⁷ Clearly those who saw the Duke every day are most likely to have exerted some influence on him, but this is extremely difficult to assess.

The secretaries, who also travelled with the court, formed a group separate from the courtiers, and Anzilotti has pointed out the considerable extent to which Cosimo relied on them. In the late fifteenth century the Medici family had begun to try to make use of paid secretaries, in an attempt to free themselves, if only to a limited extent, from the tutelage of the Florentine ottimati,¹⁸ and during Cosimo's reign the secretaries assumed even greater importance. Not all of the secretaries who travelled with the Duke were of such importance however, for many, such as Tommaso de' Medici,¹⁹ were concerned with purely household affairs.

17) Segni, Book 9, p.214. "...governò la Repubblica con più suo arbitrio, usando assai il consiglio di Madonna Maria sua Madre, che amministrava coll'autorità sua molte faccende". He later says, Book 11, p.337, that although Cosimo did consult certain of the ottimati, "...nel vero si risolveva egli da sè stesso, e col consiglio di Madama Leonora sua moglie e di Don Francesco di Toledo suo zio, che quasi sempre stava in Firenze sotto titolo d' Ambasciadore, come per guardia di quello Stato".

18) Guicciardini complained of this in the Dialogi. See Chapter 4, p.148

19) It seems that Cosimo took a personal interest even in these household affairs. C.M. 1176, Insert 1, f.44. Tommaso de' Medici to the Majordomo, Riccio, January 27, 1550. "Questa mattina con agio negotiai con S.E. Illma. tutte le nostre faccende dove io stetti piu d'una hora et minutamente da principio à fine gli lessi tutta quella nota e scandiglio fatto delle spese della casa drento et fuori".

A list of members of the court in 1543 gives the names of nine secretaries, of whom only four appear frequently in the correspondence of the time and had obviously important positions.²⁰ In the main those secretaries who were of importance to Cosimo functioned simply as agents of his will; they kept him informed through constant dispatches of any important events and of news which they had received;²¹ they prepared summaries of important correspondence so that he could digest it more easily;²² they dealt, at his command, with the payment of officials, and they formed a link between the Duke and the Magistrato Supremo, the main administrative body in Florence. The tendency was for the secretaries to come mainly from outside Florence, an element in the general improvement in the position of the dominion which had been going on for some time and which one would have expected to have aroused the disapproval of the ottimati.²³ Francesco Campana for example, who served the Medici from 1516 till his death in 1546 and had a considerable amount of experience to put

20) This list is to be found in C.M. 631. The secretaries of importance who are listed are Francesco Campana, PierFrancesco Riccio, Ursolino Grifoni and Lorenzo Pagni.

21) e.g. C.M. 387, f.500. May 23, 1548. Riccio sends Cosimo news of the arrival of the Marchese di Vico, "Detto Marchese vien di Napoli ordinariamente et va alla Corte del Impre. et scrive l'alligate a S.Ex. come v'e' una di Filippo de Nerli, et una del P. d'Arezzo, et a V.S. quanto posso mi raccomando,..".

22) C.M.384, f.85 has a "Summario di lettere di Roma de 16 de 17 e 19 d'Agosto 1547" and contains summaries which give Cosimo an immediate picture of what is happening.

23) Guicciardini - Dialoghi. Book 1, p.48. Bernardo says, "Vegnamo ora alla altra considerazione della nobilità e condizione delle case; in che io mi ricordo che da' Medici furono abilitati molti allo stato che erano inabili". See also Chapter 4, p.

24

at Cosimo's disposal, came originally from the region of Colle in the Val d'Elsa and in fact even usurped the name Campana,

"..per nascondere la umiltà delle sue origini, e confonderli con quelle di altra illustre famiglia fiorentina di questo nome".

25

Campana had a considerable importance in Florence and by 1532 he was being referred to as "il gran Segretario della Repubblica Fiorentina", remaining close to Cosimo until his death. Lelio Torelli, a nobleman from Fano, took over the position of first secretary on Campana's death and during his period of office was of particular use to Cosimo in matters involving the intellectual

26

life of the city. PierFrancesco Riccio was one of Cosimo's

27

principal secretaries, frequently sending him reports on news and events, and having particular responsibility for financial

28

transactions, a most important function. The names of these

24)Adriani - Istoria de'suoi tempi. Fl. 1583. Book 2, p.48 "M. Francesco Campana, il quale per la lungo pratica dello Stato, e della Città, e del Dominio era vie piu che altr'huomo informato delle condizioni di cotali cose,..".

25)See Dini, op.cit.

26)D.M.Manni - Vita del celebre senatore Lelio Torelli. Fl. 1770.

27)C.M. 2, f.284. Cosimo to the Vicar, October 13, 1539, refers to his high opinion of Riccio. "..fece chiamare a se in casa et alla presentia del Sor. Pirro Colona M.PierFrancesco Riccio mio segretario a me tanto grato, quanto merito uno antico costumato et fedele servitor' quale lui è stato a me insino dalla mia pueritia et al quale io per la experientia, che piu tempo fa ho havuta della fede et integrita sua commetto, come occorre alla giornata qualche faccenda per l'intente al governo, cosi della casa, come dello stato, conforme alla sua professione:..".

28)C.M. 638, a volume of Riccio's correspondence, contains a note by Carlo Strozzi explaining that he was "..precettore di Cosimo I, posteriormente fu il suo maestro di Casa, sua Maggiordomo Maggiore, e Proposto di Prato..", he was used for "..l'espedizione de suoi affari segreti, delle sue cose domestiche di casa, ed in specie per tutto quello che riguardava rimesse di denari".

three appear frequently in the Medici correspondence and clearly the state and its smooth organization was to a large extent dependent on them and the other secretaries, including Lorenzo and Cristoforo Pagni, Bartolommeo Concini and Ugolino Grifoni.

Cosimo's instructions to these secretaries were often written in such detail that it would appear that their rank was no more than that of a member of a civil service, executing the Duke's command but having very little say in the management of affairs, except at a minor executive level. On some occasions, however, men like the Pagnis and Concini could act with more initiative and carry on negotiations on the Duke's behalf which demanded that they used their own judgements. In 1547, for example, Lorenzo Pagni was entrusted with negotiations with Don Diego di Mendoza over the future of Siena and Piombino, and letters written by Cosimo show the trust which he placed in Pagni. The Duke wrote to Don Diego,

"Lorenzo Pagni mio secretario viene da V.Sria. per ragionare con essa del negotio di Piombino rispetto alla commissione che la n'ha di nuovo havuta da S. M.ta la priego a dirli liberamente quanto sopra di ciò li occorre per potermelo referire et a prestarli la medesima fede et credenza che farebbe a me proprio,.". 29

Clearly the secretaries were closely enough in touch with Cosimo to be aware of his plans and desires so that they could work in the way they knew he would wish, even when they had received no direct order from him. That they were generally considered to be influential can be seen from the number of petitions which were

29)C.M. 9, f.97. Cosimo to Don Diego, October 16, 1547.

directed to Cosimo through them. Nerli himself wrote to Pagni when he was trying to secure a place in the Otto di Guardia for one of his servants,³⁰ and Riccio also received a large number of such petitions. The secretaries seem to have been in this respect at least far closer to the Duke than were the ottimati, who felt it to be to their advantage to keep on good terms with them.

Whilst the secretaries could on certain occasions be used to negotiate matters of policy this was a task which generally fell upon another of the governmental groups, the ambassadors. Since, because of the nature of his duties, an ambassador had to be a man of noble birth and wealthy they were usually chosen from the ranks of the ottimati. The ambassadors, like the secretaries, had to carry out the Duke's instructions but it is obvious that an ambassador will inevitably be faced with problems which he has to deal with on the spot, without consultation, and this is bound to have happened far more frequently in an age of bad and uncertain communications. The ambassador took his decisions independently, working on the basis of the knowledge which he had of the Duke's aims and intentions. It is clear from the Medici correspondence that the ambassadors were people of considerable importance, who could supply Cosimo with extremely useful information of the ruler or city with whom they were in contact; hence Cosimo advised Don Diego in the negotiations over Piombino that,

30)C.M. 385, f.6. Nerli to Pagni, March 30, 1547. He is writing on behalf of one of his servants, "Il quale ha altre volte supplicato et hora di nuova supplica per essere delli Otto di Guardia et io molto desidero che possa ottenere tal Gratia..".

"..particolarmente il Niccolino è informato delli
humori di quella città..". 31

Ambassadors could be entrusted with difficult matters needing skill and experience and the ability to treat important rulers diplomatically. For example, when Cosimo was trying to gain custody of Filippo Strozzi after Montemurlo he did so through Averardo Serristori, his ambassador at the imperial court,³² and Varchi refers to his reliance on Agnolo Niccolini, another of his ambassadors,

"..nella cui rara prudenza e rarissima fede
grandissimamente confidava,..". 33

Any member of the ottimati who achieved the rank of ambassador could have found it more than adequate compensation for the power which they had lost in the city itself, providing, of course, that this manner of life, with the travel and negotiation which it involved, was attractive to them.

In Florence the day to day administration of the city and dominio was carried on by the Magistrato Supremo and by the select 'ad hoc' committees which that body appointed from among its own members. The Magistrato had been set up in the reign of Duke Alessandro with the intention that it should replace the old office of the Signoria.³⁴ From the total membership of forty-eight four councillors and a lieutenant were elected every three

31)C.M. 9, f.126. Cosimo to Don Diego, October 23, 1547.

32)Segni, Book 9, p.210. To get hold of Strozzi Cosimo, "..faceva ogn'opera per mezzo d'Averardo Serristori suo Ambasciadore appresso a Cesare,..".

33)Varchi, Book 15, p.333.

34)See above, Chapter 4, p.145

months to meet regularly with the Duke and discuss the affairs of government with him. From the time of Alessandro provision had been made for a replacement for the Duke to be elected for meetings which he could not attend personally. Besides being responsible for the election of the majority of the state officials, at least in theory,³⁵ the Magistrato also dealt with the many legal quarrels which developed between the citizens, acting as a body of appeal, and they helped Cosimo to bring in the reform legislation in which he was so interested. One of the Duke's main concerns was to improve the justice and organization of the city and the preambles to the numerous measures which he introduced often stressed this point.³⁶ The 'ad hoc' committees, formed from the forty-eight, dealt with a wide variety of matters, ranging from fiscal organization and reform to the functioning of the Florentine studio, and they also sought to ensure that the measures passed by the Magistrato were actually implemented,³⁷ not always a simple matter. The Magistrato was primarily an ottimati

35) See below, p.200 In practice the Magistrato seems to have acted largely on the Duke's instructions over this matter.

36) Cantini, op.cit. Vol.2, p.128. Preamble to law on January 25, 1549. "...con manco spesa, disagio, et perdimento di tempo che sia possibile, ogn'uno, et massime li poveri, la possin conseguire, et che li suoi diletteissimi cittadini, a' quali ne appartiene la cura, la possin con comodo prontamente, come è lor costume, amministrare, et avvertendo che s'è bene e non si manca del dovere a persone,..."

37) e.g. Magistrato Supremo 8, f.8lv. A select body to enforce taxation was set up on July 17, 1543, "...volendo dare il complemento ala provisione questo giorno ottenuta nel consiglio de prestantissimi 48..", a sign that they felt the law would be better observed if this rider were added to it.

body and the familiar noble names appear in the lists of its members - Guicciardini, Della Stufa, Vettori, Strozzi, Nerli. We will discuss shortly how much power this body actually possessed.

In the dominio administration was divided between the captains and podestà, appointed by the central Florentine government to keep order in the many subject towns, and the military leaders, in charge of the militia, who moved from place to place with their troops as their presence was required. The militia, drawn from the inhabitants of the dominio in the way in which Machiavelli had advocated, had been formed, like so many of the organs of government of which Cosimo made use, under Alessandro, and had increased and become a more manageable force in the dangerous years during which the exiles had constituted a serious threat to Cosimo's régime.³⁸ Cosimo strengthened the militia and made the Florentine state more secure by building and repairing forts, being aided in this by a member of one of the old Florentine families, Girolamo degli Albizzi.³⁹ Men from outside Florence, like Ridolfo Baglione and Stefano Colonna, also aided Cosimo, who relied to some extent in this sphere on the members of the old condottiere families. The power of these

38) See Jolanda Ferretti - L'Organizzazione Militare in Toscana durante il governo di Alessandro e Cosimo I de' Medici, Rivista Storica degli Archivi Toscani. 1929, pp.248-275; 1930, pp.58-80, 133-151, 211-219.

39) Segni, Book 11, p.311. He describes the troops which Cosimo sent to help the emperor as "...fanti della miglior gente Toscana del suo dominio, nel quale aveva l'Ordinanza descritta in gran numero, e molto maggiore che non aveva il Duca Alessandro, perchè Girolamo degli Albizzi Commissario perpetuo sopra quella Ordinanza l'aveva ampliata assai, ed armatala sufficientemente".

military leaders was quite extensive and could over-ride that of local officials. The men who held office in the dominio were drawn almost without exception from the ranks of the ottimati; from the noble Florentine families who had always held such posts and who therefore possessed the necessary experience. As Guicciardini so often stressed, these were the only men with the necessary qualifications whom no administration could afford to ignore.

Having given this brief description of the various parts of the government and the way in which they functioned it remains to discuss the role which Nerli himself played at this time and, through this, to try to show the position of the ottimati as a class and suggest reasons why they were prepared to accept their situation. The nature of the administrative records of Cosimo's reign make this task a difficult one, and the amount of control which the ottimati wielded in the city is hard to tell, but some picture at least can be gained of their position through an examination of Nerli's political role.

We have seen that Nerli had been a member of the Quarantotto since its beginning and his name appears regularly in the records for Cosimo's reign.⁴⁰ These records are not of the same value to

40) Volumes consulted:-

- Magistrato Supremo I - 17. 1532-1557.
 " " (Giornaletti) 838 & 839. 1552-1556.
 " " 1067 - 1073. 1553-1562.
 " " (Suppliche et Lettere) 1118 & 1119. 1538-1560.
 " " 3656 - 3658. 1541-1563.
 " " (Deliberazioni Pubbliche) 4307 - 4309. 1546-1559.
 " " (Giornale) 4411. 1544-1545.

the researcher as the earlier Consulte e Pratiche for they do not give a full account of all the debates held in the council but are merely a record of the problems which were dealt with and the decisions which were taken. It is thus difficult to know how much these decisions were the result of prolonged and careful debate and how much they were merely 'rubber stamps' of approval for decisions which Cosimo wanted to implement. Nerli himself gives a detailed description of the Magistrato and its powers and it is worth quoting this at length since it affords an idea of the way in which the body was regarded by a member, albeit a Medicean member, of the ottimati class. Nerli attributes to the Quarantotto quite considerable power. He writes,

"Nel qual sopradetto Senato de' Quarantotto vollero, che s'intendesse essere, e che in effetto fusse tutta la somma potestà, e balià dello stato, e di quel nuovo governo, e tutta quella, e quanta autorità aveva la balià;..".

Nerli is also very clear on the duties and the range of powers which the new council possessed.

"..fu deliberato ancora assolutamente doverci creare, e deliberare le leggi, le provvisioni del Comune, e l'imposizioni de'danari, senzachè tali leggi, e provvisioni dovessero prima deli berarsi o ne'Priori, o in alcun altro Magistrato, ma assolutamente vollono, che bastasse per la spedizione di esse, ch'elle fossero solamente proposte ne' Quarantotto dall'Eccellenza del Duca, e suoi Consiglieri; e vollono ancora, che tal Consiglio de' Quarantotto avesse autorità d'elèggere, e deputare tutti i magistrati di più importanza della città, e così d'elèggere ancora Commissari, e Ambasciadori ed anche gli ufficiali di fuori nelle città del Dominio, e nell'altre terre, e luoghi riserbati a quel Consiglio, come governi, ed uffici più importanti, ed in somma, come è detto di sopra, fu concesso al detto Senato de' Quarantotto, ed alli loro successori in tal grado tutta l'autorità della balià, e

tanta quanta per alcun tempo ne fu mai conceduta ad
alcun'altra balià,..".

41

If their powers appeared in this light to other members of the Magistrato then it is comprehensible that they should have been prepared to accept Cosimo's government with little question. Yet was the power of this new Senate as great as Nerli claims? How far did Cosimo succeed in deluding the ottimati, taking the real power for himself and his officials and leaving them with only the semblance of power?

Anzilotti maintains that the Quarantotto as a whole body had very little power indeed and that although in theory it was the Magistrato Supremo who made decisions they had become in reality simply the mouth-pieces of the Duke, by whom they were chosen.⁴² It is certainly true that the records of the Magistrato do not give the impression that it was a body with any great power. Nerli tells us that it was responsible for appointments to the majority of offices within the Florentine state, yet it is obvious from the large number of letters petitioning for office which were written both to the secretaries and to Cosimo himself that such appointments were not made simply by election in the Quarantotto. Nerli himself, when he wanted to gain office in

41) Nerli, Book 11, p.265.

42) Anzilotti - La costituzione interna dello Stato Fiorentino..
p.38. "...cambiando ogni tre mesi ed essendo spesso formata da membri scelti dal duca, per sostituzione degli eletti, poteva piu facilmente approvare le deliberazioni che premevano al principe ed eludere la vana opposizione legale del consiglio".

either Pisa or Arezzo, wrote directly to the Duke to mention the matter and to ask for his favour.⁴³ The most striking thing about the records of the Quarantotto is the apparent unimportance of many of the problems with which they dealt and the minor nature of the decisions which they took. Once again, as we found with the period of Nerli's governorship in Modena, minor matters of justice and jurisdiction absorbed much of the councillor's time. In August, 1539, for example, when Nerli was one of the four councillors, amongst the matters which he had to consider was a petition presented by his brother-in-law, Alamanno di Jacopo Salviati, on behalf of his brother Bernardo, against Averardo and Piero Salviati,

"..per conto di certe compagnie..",⁴⁴
 a petition which the council referred to the Sei di mercantie. Such petitions and law suits were extremely frequent and Nerli was himself involved in one with one of his cousins, Tanai de' Nerli, which concerned their respective business assests and which must inevitably have cost Filippo a considerable amount of

43)C.M. 406, f.557. Nerli to Cosimo. December 13, 1551. "..non voglio mancare di ricordarmi all'Exta. Vra. Illma. per quello che io gli ho scritto desiderare di andar fuori in offitio questo anno advenire ed ho messo in consideratione a quello Arezzo perche non vi fu mai et Pisa dove io non fu mai se non sei mesi.." He was appointed to be Captain of Arezzo from November, 1552. See below, p. 232

44)Magistrato Supremo, 5, f.2v.

45
 money. Sometimes these quarrels were so complicated that a special commission had to be set up to deal with them separately, and this happened in Nerli's own dispute and in that of the Zati family which occurred in 1549.⁴⁶ The ottimati who held office in the Quarantotto must have found that such matters as these occupied a large part of their time and Nerli frequently served on such committees and as a councillor.

The setting up of special 'ad hoc' committees to deal with

45)The course of this dispute, which was extremely long, can be traced in the Magistrato Supremo (Vols. 13,14,15 & 16; 1551-1554) and in the Carteggio Mediceo. It seems to have concerned family affairs which stretched back over many years and which Tanai now chose to bring to court. Nerli writes angrily to Cosimo about the dispute on April 24, 1551, saying, "...prego ben vra. ecc.tia che non voglia comportare che Tana voglia havere dormito gia quant'anni questo negotio come havevono dormito i nostri padri per volere occuparmi tutte le mie faculta con gli interessi.." (C.M. 402, f.430). The case took many years to settle, and in fact there seems to be no record of a final settlement, because there was considerable difficulty in collecting together all the necessary evidence and judgement was suspended on a number of different occasions. On December 13, 1551, Nerli writes to the Duke to say that it is not through any fault of his that the proceedings have been held up in this way. He has not written before, "...perche volevo havere prima giustificato il Polverino Auditore della Ex.tia vra che Tanai de Nerli et non io e quello che allunga la nra. calculatione come quello che vorebbe sotto il mantello della poverta ricoprire il disegno tanto ingordo che quella fatto sopra le faculta mie, et da lui resta et egli e la cagione principale che si calculi adagio.....niega di dare et occulta i libri ne quali io ho interesse et sono gia stati nelle lor mani piu di cinquanta anni..". (C.M. 406, f.557) The last recorded suspension of judgement is in May, 1555, and since Nerli died in 1556 it is likely that he did not see its conclusion. It must certainly have been costly to him and indeed in 1543 he appears in a list of debtors (C.M. 363, f.58) and in the same year complains of being short of ready money to buy a house.(C.S. P.S. 115, f.176).

46)Magistrato Supremo 12, f.165.

specific problems was one of the most important functions of the Magistrato. Matters which needed careful attention and action could not be left to the whole council, or to the Supremo of four councillors and a lieutenant, who would not have sufficient time to devote to them, but had to be delegated to a body which had been specially appointed from the Magistrato for that purpose. The records of the Quarantotto show the number of times on which Nerli was a member of such committees, as in October, 1535, when he was elected, together with Raphael de'Medici, Taddeo Guicciardini, Bernardo Carnesechi and Vincenzo Dini, to deal with reform in Pisa.⁴⁷ These committees covered all manner of problems relating to the smooth administration of the city and dominio and helped to ensure that the citizens were able to lead peaceful lives and obtain justice. This was a matter of importance to Cosimo who wanted to improve the many injustices which existed in the city and used the Magistrato to help him to do this.⁴⁸ This concern for justice was ultimately to Cosimo's advantage, for it earned him the support of the lower orders in the city and dominio thus contributing another element to the gradual break away from the type of government which had tended to function solely for the benefit of faction interests.

The Magistrato and its 'ad hoc' committees were essentially

47)Magistrato Supremo 2, f.163v.

48)See Cantini. Vol.2, p.98. September 18, 1549. "Volendo l' Illustrissimo et Eccellentissimo Signore Duca di Firenze, riordinare in meglio i maneggi de'Capitani di Parte, et degl' Uffiziali di Torre, per più espedito governo, e reggimento delle cose pubbliche, e per migliore, e più facile Amministrazione di una santa, e perfetta Giustizia,..".

bureaucratic bodies, through which the Duke implemented his decisions and carried out reform, ensuring that government in Florence and the dominio ran smoothly, at least on a purely administrative basis. The legislation which was produced depended on Cosimo, sometimes being promulgated in his name alone, though generally decrees came from the Duke and his councillors together.⁴⁹ The 'ad hoc' committees also sometimes produced their own legislation; the officials in charge of the mint, for example, issued an order about the coinage in March, 1537,⁵⁰ while the Otto di Guardia issued laws against outlaws in an attempt to preserve peace.⁵¹ In minor matters these committees and the Senate itself could make decisions, but in matters of importance, especially in matters of policy and foreign relations, they had little say and probably little influence.

The ottimati were still the chief office-holders in Florence and the dominio, and this office holding must have absorbed a considerable amount of their time. Nerli, from the time of Cosimo's accession until his own death in 1556, held at least one internal office every year and in the majority of years he held more than one, over and above the posts which he held in the dominio.⁵² In 1545, for example, he was one of the five officials appointed to consider the affairs of the contado, a member of a

49) Cantini, Vol.2, p.9. March 26, 1548. A decree concerning the militia is issued by Cosimo alone.

50) " " 1, p.154. March 9, 1537,

51) " " " p.162. " 16, 1537.

52) See Appendix I for full list of Nerli's offices.

53

reform committee and one of the Duke's councillors. His is by no means the only name which appears thus frequently in the records and there seems no doubt that, as far as the administration was concerned, the *ottimati* were still of importance, though their actual power had declined. The three-monthly election of four councillors to advise the Duke and consult with him provided a fiction that the *ottimati* still wielded an influence which in fact had passed to the secretaries and to the foreign nobles at the court. Cosimo was no longer as dependent on them as his predecessors had been, though he did still rely on them to staff the administration for him.

Why did the *ottimati* not react more strongly to this loss of power? There are certain reasons which can be put forward to explain their passivity and though these may not provide a totally satisfactory answer they do give some idea of how the dispossessed nobles may have regarded their new position. One important reason for their lack of resistance is that soon after Cosimo had begun to reign those men among the *ottimati* who might have organized an opposition to him were dead, and no others of equal calibre came to take their places. Above all, the republican leader, Filippo Strozzi, was dead. Men like Francesco Vettori and Francesco Guicciardini, who indeed had felt alarmed at the way in which Cosimo's government was tending and who might have taken action, died before this was possible and they

53) *Magistrato Supremo* 9, f.186v. March 5, 1545; *Magistrato Supremo* 10, f.5v. March 23, 1545 and f.29. May 1, 1545.

were succeeded by men of less calibre and spirit, men who were prepared, like Nerli, to accept the new régime. Cosimo was indeed fortunate that death removed from his path such men, and others like Matteo Strozzi and Ruberto Acciaiuoli, and left him others whom he could incorporate without difficulty into his administration and thereby keep their loyalty. Men like Nerli and Ottaviano de' Medici could still be used and be made to feel useful. Ottaviano is singled out by Segni as being of some influence in Cosimo's government, able to stay

"..in grazia e favore, per esser sempre accomodato alle voglie del Duca, e di più doppiamente parente, per aver moglie una zia del Duca, sorella di Madonna Maria, e figliuola di Jacopo Salviati".

54

Nerli was himself in exactly the same position of relationship to Cosimo and had probably known him as a small boy when he was living in Jacopo's house in Rome. To men such as these two the new régime would seem to have much to offer in terms of security so that there would be little temptation to rebel.

Added to this was the fact that the ottimati had not been deprived of their rank over-night but were simply experiencing a continuation of the decline in their position which had begun to be threatened by the Medici even before the reign of Alessandro and for which Montemurlo had been fought. The battle had already been fought and lost and the majority of the Florentine nobles were now prepared to accept a fate which was no worse than that being suffered by the nobility throughout Europe, for the

sixteenth century was a period of autocracy and centralization. They were also prepared to accept almost any régime which was not republican, for the ottimati had lived for generations in fear of popular rule. It was this fear indeed which had facilitated Cosimo's election.⁵⁵ Nor were they in a good position to do anything else but accept their fate, for the strengthening of the bande and of the dominio in general, and Alessandro's move of disarming the population had left them with very little means of organizing any opposition.⁵⁶

As well as these elements in the situation it is important to remember that for a noble such as Nerli the kind of life offered under Cosimo was not an unpleasant one, even if it no longer brought with it the power which their class had formerly enjoyed. They still held, as we have seen, administrative positions, which brought financial rewards and above all prestige, even if they did not bring power. A man elected to the Quarantotto who was periodically selected as one of the Duke's councillors must have had at least a certain status in the community which would help him to forget his lack of power. Similarly the appointments of the ottimati in the dominio gave them added prestige and an opportunity to exercise some authority, even if it was of a very limited kind. They retained too their

55)Adriani, p.8. claims that some of the ottimati were prepared to accept anything so long as the people did not gain control.

56)Ferretti, op.cit. Alessandro, "...si aprì la via al potere assoluto, facendosi centro della costituzione, disarmò i cittadini di Firenze e favorì il contado, per trovare in esso un appoggio contro la città".

positions as courtiers to the Duke, whom he sent as ambassadors or as members of special missions to other rulers who would accord them due respect. There was a dignity about being a courtier which would be universally recognized, and which was to be won simply from being in the Duke's presence.⁵⁷ Above all Cosimo brought stability after a generation and more of conflict and uncertainty.

We have already seen the importance to Cosimo of his ambassadors and the prestige which they enjoyed. Nerli, whilst he was never himself an ambassador, perhaps due to lack of money or ability, was the leader of the mission of congratulation which Cosimo sent to Pope Julius III on his election in 1550, and in this way he gained further experience of the way in which life at the papal Curia was conducted and the amount of protocol and ceremony which was involved. There is in the Carteggio Mediceo some of the correspondence which passed between the Duke and his envoys in connection with this mission which shows the importance which they had and the extent to which Cosimo trusted them to carry out his wishes without necessarily giving them explicit and detailed instructions. Congratulating them on the way in which they have conducted themselves with due propriety in their dealings with the troublesome Sieneese 'en route' he asks them to pay his respects to Duke Ottavio Farnese when they reach Rome,

⁵⁷e.g. Segni, Book 10, p.277. writes "Il Duca Cosimo era ito in Genova con onorata compagnia di gentiluomini a far riverenza all' Imperadore,..".

asking that,

"..in ciò vi distenderete quanto alla prudentia
vostra parra che convenga..". 58

Since all the members of the embassy were ottimati Cosimo could be sure that they would be fully aware of the manner in which such missions should be carried out.⁵⁹ Not only did they pay the Duke's respects to Farnese but they also paid an extra visit to the Cardinal di Burgo who was ill at the time and who, they felt,⁶⁰ should be shown this mark of respect. Over certain more detailed problems the envoys were able to consult the resident ambassador in Rome, Averardo Serristori, who could advise them on such matters of etiquette as what clothes they should wear for their meeting with the Pope.⁶¹ The mission seems to have had a warm reception from the Pope and Cosimo writes that he is eager for their return so that he can hear of their visit from their own lips.⁶² Nerli in particular seems to have scored a success or

58)C.M. 15, f.80. Cosimo to the ambassadors. April 28, 1550.

59)The envoys were Nerli, Girolamo Guicciardini, Piero Vettori, Averardo Serristori, Lorenzo Strozzi and Pietro Salviati. Nerli was clearly in charge of the mission for Cosimo addresses his letter of May 3, 1550 (f.83) to "Filippo de'Nerli et suoi compagni".

60)C.M. 397, f.377. April 22, 1550. Nerli and Salviati to Cosimo. "Havendo noi hauto hieri notitia come lo Illustrissimo et Reverendissimo di Burgo faceva purgatione, ci pare nostro debito per la servitu teniamo con vostra Eccelentia di dover' privatamente visitare avanti la visita publica..". He was pleased and "..ne rendemo quello risposte che erano conveniente alle tanto grati et amorevoli parole di S.Illustrissima..".

61)C.M. 396, f.68. March 6, 1550. Serristori to Nerli. "quanto alla venuta delle S.V. poi che ci habbiamo a sevre di veste di velluto saria necessario che fusse subito doppo pasqua, perche a dire il vero s'entrerebbe troppo nel caldo, et i velluti non starieno bene

62)C.M. 15, f.83. May 3, 1550. From Cosimo, waiting for them "..per haver' piu minuto et largo raguaglio di bocca di tutto quello che harete passata in questa negotiatione".

this mission, for a report from Piero Vettori to Lelio Torelli mentions him making a joke about the privileges which the envoys were to receive. A comment which he made about the possibility of being charged customs duties on the gifts they were given

"..ci fece ridere, come fa spesso con le sue piacevolezze".⁶³

It seems that, because of his ability to see the humourous side of things, Nerli had a considerable degree of popularity amongst his fellow ambassadors.

The respect and status which the ottimati could still enjoy if they became ambassadors or members of such missions could, like membership of the Quarantotto, help to soften the blow of the gradual weakening of their power. So too could the fact that, as men who still retained a position near to the Duke, they could offer advice to him on the government of the city which, even if he did not act upon it, must have made them feel that they were useful to him and that they were still participating in state affairs to some effect. Nerli, who always showed a keen interest in the mechanics of administration, wrote to Cosimo on more than one occasion to give the Duke his opinion on the way in which elections should be carried out, and it is more than likely that he was not the only member of his class to make known his views either in writing or verbally in the hope that they would influence Cosimo's actions. Nerli wrote to the Duke in December,

63)C.M. 397, f.462v. Vettori to Torelli, May 2, 1550. "E ben vero che M.Philippo de Nerli, sendoli detto questo là uno de nostri rispose Io veggo che questa Catena anderà alla Grascia..".

1541, mentioning a previous discourse which he had sent for Cosimo's attention and saying that he had in fact decided after that not to bother the Duke on the matter of elections again. However, he feels that the bad way in which,

"..all'arte Mercantantia si e squittinato il Ricorso..", is such a scandal that he must write once more on the problem. He points out the danger to Cosimò and his state if the 'right', that is the politically acceptable, people are not elected to office, adding that there is always the possibility that there will be a revival of

"..il Desiderio del vivere popolare..".

The Duke should use

"..quelli remedii che sempre ha usati la vostra Casa Illustrissima..",

in order to make sure that he keeps those people

"..che lo meritino, ne luoghi loro,..".

He says that other people could also advise Cosimo on this matter and that in fact the Duke would find that they thought the same way as does Nerli. It seems that Cosimo did not always take kindly to being offered advice in this way for Nerli writes that,

"..se non fussi che nel'altro discorso mi parve troppo infastidirne la Exellentia Vostra, mi distenderei forse, a piu particolari,..".

He does in any case conclude his letter with a discussion of the danger which the kind of factions which he feels are liable to develop have always been to states,

"..come ne sono piene di exempli, tucte le vostre historie antiche et moderne, et anche il nostri

medesimi tempi,..".

There are always people who are ready to reach up and topple rulers from their seats and Cosimo must always be on his guard. That the ottimati should feel able to write in this way to the Duke shows that there were compensatory elements in their new position which could reconcile them to it, yet it also rather ironically underlines the weakness of their class. It shows clearly that over the matter of elections Cosimo, and not the Quarantotto, was the main source of power, for Nerli is advocating the personal intervention of the Duke to reform the mode of election in the Mercantie, and Cosimo's power is emphasised by Nerli's postscript in which he thanks him for his recent election to the Magistrato.⁶⁴

In legislation, in the organization of election and as members of secret councils to advise the Duke the ottimati had lost much of their former power. They had also lost it in the financial sphere, for it was officials like Riccio and Jacopo Polverini who now administered the finances of the state.⁶⁵ Yet

64)C.M. 355, f.284. December 20, 1541, Nerli to Cosimo.

65)Cantini, op.cit. Vol.1,p.233. November 20, 1543. Elections to fiscal offices include many men from the dominio. Polverini, (fiscale principale), Bastiano Guidi da Volterra, (first chancellor), Domenico Pardini da Lucca, (one of the two coaduttori Hieronimo Migliorati da Prato, (one of the two exactori fiscali). Referring to Polverini Segni writes, Book 11, p.336. "...e fra quei del Dominio Jacopo Polverini Pratese, e stato nelle Birrerie per Giudice, era venuto in gran conto, perchè essendo stato fatto in prima suo Auditore, e di poi Fiscale, era un nuovo Solone in Firenze, facendo ogni giorno qualche legge, onde si provacciava utile di denari al Principe, e danno e vergogna all' universale".

a quite large amount of prestige and status together with administrative work still remained to them, and it is not hard to see that to a not particularly ambitious noble, who saw Cosimo building a stable state not likely to be menaced by the popular government which held such terrors for the upper class, the new position of the ottimati would seem a reasonably congenial one. Lorenzo Segni can scarcely have been the only man who had found the heavy demands of the state which the ottimati had previously borne more than somewhat irksome and time-consuming.⁶⁶

Another compensation was, as has already been mentioned, the very active role which the ottimati continued to play in the dominio. Here they were indispensable to smooth administration and the maintenance of law and order, and the Tratte, the records which give the names of those elected to office in the dominio towns, have few references to any but long established families of the Florentine aristocracy. For example, amongst those who held office in Volterra between 1531 and 1555 were members of the Martelli, Acciaiuoli, Medici, Strozzi, Sassetti, Capponi, Gianfigliazi, Buondelmonti, Segni, Malegonnelli, Alberti and Tornabuoni families.⁶⁷ Nerli himself served in several of the major towns of the dominio, including three terms in Pistoia, perhaps the most difficult and troublesome of all the smaller towns under the control of Florence. He also held posts in Pisa,

66) Riccardiana, Cod. 1882. A. Segni - Memorie della Famiglia de' Segni. p. 103v. "Applicato Lorenzo agli atti di pietà, ed agli esercizi de' suoi studi.... sfuggiva a tutto potere lo strepito e le brighe de' Magistrati, e de' maneggi pubblici;..".

67) Tratte 72, f. 7, r & v.

Cortona, Volterra, Arezzo and Lari, and letters which he wrote to Cosimo and other officials in Florence whilst away on these missions are to be found scattered amongst the Medici correspondence. From these it is possible not only to build up a picture of Nerli's own attitude to his posts but also to find out something of the structure of government in the dominio and the function of the many ottimati who held office outside the city of Florence itself.

Nerli's missions to Pistoia, and in particular his first mission, on which he was associated with Girolamo degli Albizzi, are of most interest because of the very difficult problems Nerli had to deal with there. Any trouble in Florence was inevitably followed by violence and disorder in Pistoia, for the citizens never lost an opportunity to indulge in the faction fights of which they seemed so fond. The murder of Duke Alessandro had been the cue for the Panciatichi faction to murder as many of the prominent members of their rivals the Cancellieri as they could and cause the others to flee for their lives from the city.⁶⁸ The leading families of the Panciatichi faction, the Cellesi, Bracciolini and the Brunozzi, who were quite capable of warring amongst themselves, were pacified by Niccolai Bracciolini, a former rebel and ally of Filippo Strozzi who, after more bloodshed and attempts by the Florentine government at pacification,

68)Varchi, Book 15, p.282. "Udita la morte del duca non mancarono i Pistolesi (secondo il consueto costume) della lor solita sanguinosissima crudeltà,..".

became virtually the head of the city. Cosimo, who had sent a number of commissioners to Pistoia in an attempt to bring law and order to the city, eventually gave Bracciolini a pardon since the rebel claimed that,

"..tutto quello che aveva fatto, aveva fatto per necessità di mantenere la vita a se,..". 69

At the time when Nerli was elected to be Captain of Pistoia in May, 1538,⁷⁰ Bracciolini was still in the city and there was still the constant danger that there would be a sudden outbreak of violence. On May 6, for example, there was trouble when a group of the Panciatichi faction, including Bracciolini and Giovanni di Mariotto Cellesi, who were escorting the Podestà of Prato back to that city, caused an uproar there, and in the fighting two of the Cellesi were injured and a Captain Cheti was killed.⁷¹ Nerli immediately checked the defences of Pistoia, although on this occasion he was confident that no trouble would ensue in the city⁷² since both the Cellesi and the Cheti had sworn their allegiance to Cosimo and his state, promised that there would be no vendetta and tried to allay the fears of Maria Salviati who was in Prato at that time. Nerli seems to have been on good terms with Niccolai Bracciolini for he was anxious that no blame should be attached to him for this trouble, which seems to

69) Varchi, Book 15, p.289.

70) Tratte 72, f.5.

71) C.M. 334, f.95.

72) " " " Nerli to Cosimo, May 6, 1538. "..ne credo sia per seguire disordine alcuno in questa citta,..".

have been due mainly to the headstrong nature of Giovanni
 Cellesi.⁷³ Nerli writes several times to assure Cosimo of the
 loyalty of the city and that there will be no further trouble
 about this matter, while he tells the Duke that,

"..questo giorno hanno questi cittadini deputati
 electi due Ambasciadori per andare ad excusarsi con
 la Illustrissima Madama a Prato". 74

On this occasion the outbreak of violence was only slight and
 Nerli was able to prevent it from having any wider repercussions.

Yet even if violence did not break out each time on a large
 scale it did break out with alarming frequency and Nerli had to
 be on his guard the whole time. In this same month of May there
 was an incident between some priests and the guards at on of the
 gates,⁷⁵ trouble over the payment of citizens who had been
 ordered by Nerli to help with the clearing of ditches,⁷⁶ and a

73)C.M. 334,f.101. Nerli to Cosimo, May 7, 1538. "quanto a quella
 parte che dice la Ex.tia V. che sia bene tenere per suaso il
 Cap.no Nicholao che questo disordine sia stato a caso questa sara
 poca fatica per che tutti quelli che vi sono stati lo confesseno
 ingenuamente et lui piu che tutti e si dolgono piu della
 obstinatione di Giovanni Cellesi che dogni altra loro disgratia
 per che dicono non haver mai potuto rimuoverlo dalla Zuffa ne mai
 potuto persuaderlo di ritirarsi..".

74)C.M. 334,f.119. Nerli to Cosimo, May 9, 1538.

75) " " " " " " " " This incident
 occurred while Nerli was in conference with Bracciolini over his
 visit to Poggio.

76)C.M. 1169,f.34. May 23, 1538. Nerli to Riccio. "..hanno facto
 e partimenti de comuni et assignata a ciascuno comune la parte sua
 ma quando di poi se venuto al provedere di qualche subsidio per il
 vivere de lavorati sono nate intra loro le difficulta et la
 strecteza del denaio et impossibilita loro li ha facti quanto a
 questa opera di Lioni diventare agnelli questo e quanto sino ad
 hora sene po dire di quello seguira daro avviso".

lieutenant, who had been sent by the Bargello with a group of soldiers to clear up the problem of a broken treaty, against the express instructions of Nerli, was killed by bandits.⁷⁷ Finally on May 31 there was an incident between the soldiers of the Corsi and the Panciatichi, after which Nerli wrote to Cosimo that it was necessary to keep the city armed at all times, in order to deal with disturbances such as these,

"..che ad ogni hora posseno occorere..".

78

Added to this was the constant grievance of the citizens of Pistoia about the taxes which they had to pay, a matter about which they sent two ambassadors to Cosimo in June, 1538.⁷⁹ For a while the town would be peaceful and then violence would boil up again, often between the Cellesi, Brunozzi and Bracciolini families, who continued their quarrelling after Niccolai had left the city to serve Venice as a mercenary captain.⁸⁰

77)C.M. 1169,f.34, May 23, 1538. Nerli to Riccio. "..fece costui (i.e. the Bargello) questa mattina tutto il contrario che vi mando et birri senza andarvi lui equali atteseno alli sbanditi senza attendere a quello che ereno iti a fare in modo che la sua inobedientia gli e ritornata in capo per che e stato morto il suo luogotenente e se ne sono tornati senza fare opera buona et il Bargello come ne hebbe le nuove non aspetto la compagnia ma senza dirmi cosa alcuna senza che io potessi almeno parlarli e senza licentia se ne venne costa e qui ha lascato ogni cosa..".

78)C.M. 337, f.149.

79)C.M. 1169, f.46. June 30, 1538. The envoys were Filippo Ruspigliosi and Cosimo Fabbroni.

80)Cantini, Vol.1,p.180. Letter of Cosimo to the Vicar of Pescia. March 23, 1538, gives Bracciolini's patent to levy troops for Venice. Nerli, in his letter to Riccio on June 30, (C.M.1169,f.46) refers to Bracciolini having kept arms in his possession in Pistoia, "..quali lui dice essere sua et che pero non si misseno nella fortezza quando Luigi Guicciardini vi fece rimettere tutti li altri".

Nerli wrote to Cosimo about the situation in the city, pointing out that it was vital that first the quarrels between these families should be stopped, for only after that could there be an improvement in the general situation and the exiled Cancellieri could be assured that it was safe for them to return to Pistoia. In view of the position the Duke was obviously giving careful thought to the problem of Pistoia, for Nerli wrote,

"..so che queste cose saranno da sua Ex.tia et da quelli prudenti cittadini discorse et praticate meglio che io non so scrivere..",

adding that he felt he should give his opinion because he was on the spot. ⁸¹ The most important thing, Nerli wrote to the Duke,

"..e di ridurre la Cipta, et li suoi ciptadini a un modo di viver talmente Civile, che li altri che stanno fuori per paura non temino al ritornare..",

solving the disputes between the warring families and disarming the citizens so that

"..li Cancellieri si potranno assicurare di ritornare a casa loro piu sicuramente,..".

82

The truth of Nerli's view that the families must be pacified was amply demonstrated a few days later when another fight involving the Cellesi broke out and the situation became so bad that Nerli wrote to Cosimo that,

"..la Terra e tucto sollevata in Arme et ha bisogno de remidii et del braccio di V.Ex.tia con ogni Prestezza..".

83

The result of this outbreak was the suspension of all offices in the city of Pistoia, a drastic measure designed to bring a halt

81)C.M. 1169, f.50. Nerli to Riccio, July 3, 1538.

82)C.M. 335, f.329. August 1, 1538. Nerli to Cosimo.

83) " " f.338. " 5, " " " "

84

to the lawlessness of the citizens once and for all. A commission of four was set up in Florence to have special responsibility for the affairs of Pistoia and the men chosen were four prominent members of the ottimati; Francesco Guicciardini, Matteo Strozzi, Matteo Niccolini and Ottaviano de' Medici. The suspension was to last for three years, during which time official posts were to be filled by the commission with the aid of two citizens who were considered suitable to advise them. The commissioners wrote to Nerli, suggesting that he should interview about fifteen or twenty men from each faction,

"..che cognoscerete persone pacifiche, quiete,
et se possibile e, neutrale",

85

and from these chose the two men necessary. The new commissioners held regular meetings to discuss Pistoian affairs and they communicated their decisions to Nerli, who now wrote to them of the progress of affairs, rather than to the Duke. Thus it is true to say that Pistoia had been placed in the hands of the ottimati, though as a direct result of Cosimo's desire to put an end to the violence there. The commissioners were bound to rely heavily on Nerli over the implementing of their ideas. For example, when they wanted to interrogate

"..tutti li capi del contado et montagna di

84)C.S. P.S. 115, f.159. August 22, 1538. "..si dispone che tutti e magistrati et offitii di cotesta citta, contado, e Montagnia, siano sospesi per anni tre da cominciare a di primo di Settembre",
85)C.S. P.S. 115, f.173. August 3, 1538.

Pistoia: che conoscerete piu seditiosii et di maggior credito..",

Nerli had to lay hands on these men for them.⁸⁶ Clearly all through September the situation was very bad and the commissioners wrote that they were displeased with,

"..le Rapine, Insulti, extorsione, e homicidii che quasi giornalmente si fanno,..",

and told Nerli that in order to stop this he should enlist the help of the Capi della montagna, acting as though on his own authority, with no mention of them.⁸⁷ It seems that in fact Nerli did have a reasonable degree of independence in some matters of this type, for he was entrusted with the just restoration of property,⁸⁸ and in some cases he seems to have been willing to take more drastic and firm action than were the commissioners.⁸⁹ By this time, however, Nerli was not alone in Pistoia, and the letters of the commissioners were addressed jointly to him and Albizzi.

The setting up of the commission seems to have succeeded in bringing peace to Pistoia for Cosimo, in keeping with his attitude towards the rest of his state, sought to bring true justice to the city and achieve a genuine restoration of good order, rather than back one or other of the factions in the hope of gaining influence. To rid the area of trouble completely was a long

86)C.S. P.S. 115, f.169. September 2, 1538.

87) " " " f.143. September 13, 1538. The Capi were presumably local fighting leaders.

88)C.S. P.S. 115, f.135. September 21, 1538.

89) " " " f.140. October 12, 1538. The commissioners want more information "..accio possiamo risolvere tale ordine".

task, but when Nerli was again appointed Captain in June, 1548,⁹⁰ he found the city much more peaceful than it had been before.

That some trouble still remained in the region of the city can be seen from a letter which Nerli wrote to Cosimo about the theft of⁹¹ goats by bandits in the Fossato area, but this clearly was a minor affair compared with what Nerli had dealt with on his first mission. His last mission to Pistoia, which began in June, 1555, was equally uneventful, to judge from the lack of correspondence for that period, the only letter of any interest being one referring to a criminal who Nerli humiliated publicly by having⁹² him led into the market-place with a halter round his neck. No evidence exists to suggest that the city was still being plagued by the faction fights which had dominated Nerli's first mission.

The amount of trouble with which Nerli had to deal in Pistoia, whilst it was more than was usually to be expected in dominio towns, shows how important such external posts could be and how great a responsibility they could prove. Nerli seems to have coped well with the problems which he encountered in⁹³ Pistoia and his letters do not have the frequent desperate pleas for advice which we found in some of those which he wrote from Modena. His experience had clearly enabled him to sum up and cope with difficult situations in a way which made him a valuable servant to Cosimo. Nerli seems to have enjoyed his term in

90) Lack of correspondence suggests this.

91) C.M. 389, f.96. July 15, 1548.

92) " " f.133. June 1, 1555.

93) Spini - Cosimo I de' Medici. Fl. 1945. Chapter 3 praises Nerli's handling of the situation in Pistoia.

Pistoia, for in December, 1538, when his time of office was up, he wrote to Cosimo to ask if he could,

"..starci anche qualche poco di tempo,"

so that he could

"..mostrare alla Ex.tia V. quanto io sia desideroso di servirla in qualunque modo".

His reasons for asking for this extension are that he feels that in the first three months of his appointment he did very little except advise Cosimo,

"..di quello che ci facevono Niccolao Bracciolini et li altri della parte che havevano in quel tempo le forze et le arme in questa citta..",

which shows how powerful Bracciolini had become.⁹⁴ It would seem that Nerli did not remain much longer in Pistoia on this occasion but he did, as we have seen, return there on two other occasions.

Nerli's next appointment after Pistoia was not such a difficult one, but it too is of interest because through it he found himself in the midst of the quarrel between Cosimo and Pope Paul III over the land around Perugia. On September 1, 1540,⁹⁵ Nerli was elected Captain of Cortona for six months and had to deal with the disorder caused in the area by the rebellious Perugians. Relations between the Duke of Florence and the Pope⁹⁶ were never good, one of the reasons being that the Pope had

94)C.M. 335, f.496. Nerli to Cosimo, December 4, 1538.

95)Tratte 72, f.5.

96)e.g. Segni, Book 9,p.226. "Infra questo Pontefice ed il Duca Cosimo non era stato mai sincera amicizia,..". Ammirato, Book 32, pp.160-161 refers to the quarrel over Perugia in which the bad relations between Cosimo and the Pope were very obvious.

deprived Cosimo of the chance of marrying Alessandro's widow Margherita by winning her hand for his nephew, Ottaviano Farnese. The aggrandizement of his family was one of Pope Paul's major concerns and in order to finance his plans,

"..messe in su quello della Chiesa nuove ed inusitate gravezze in sul sale,..", 97

and it was this which caused the rebellion of the Perugians in the spring of 1540. The rebels turned for leadership to Ridolfo Baglione, a prominent citizen and one of Cosimo's military captains, and when Baglione went to Perugia the Pope angrily accused Cosimo of inciting the revolt and claimed that he could have prevented Baglione from going. The Duke's protestations of good faith and his attempts at negotiation were of no avail, and finally the Pope's troops succeeded in squashing the rising. This was not the end of the matter, however, for whilst Nerli was the Captain of Cortona there was again trouble in Perugia over twenty-five exiles from that city who caused trouble in the whole Val di Pierle area.

Nerli was aware of what was happening through the reports of his spies and those of Perugians who came to Cortona, and he sent all the information which he gained to Cosimo. His first report came at the end of October, 1540, when he wrote that the papal commissioner for the area was taking steps to see that it was adequately defended,⁹⁸ and early in November he reported the arrival

97) Segni, Book 9, p.225.

98) C.M. 347, f.284. October 30, 1540, Nerli to Cosimo.

of Alessandro Vitelli and his troops, Perugia being at this time as if in a state of "guerra manifesta",¹⁰⁰ It seems that in fact the Pope was using the presence in the area of these comparatively harmless exiles to bring his troops into action against the city, exaggerating the danger for his own purposes. Niccolini, Cosimo's ambassador in Rome, wrote of the fury which the Pope was showing about the situation and the way he was turning this against the Duke of Florence. Paul was claiming that Baglione was in Cortona,¹⁰¹ though Niccolini did not believe this and Nerli's letters make no mention of it, and spoke in such terms that to the ambassador he seemed to be making,

"..una protestatione di rottura di guerra".

Niccolini's impression, and that of the Marchese D'Aghilar,¹⁰² was that Paul was making more fuss than the situation demanded. Nerli, writing about the preparations which were being made, commented that,

"..in Publico vi si dice che questi provvedimenti vi si fanno, per suspecto de XXV, ma a questo Io non presto poca fede, per che li provvedimenti sono troppo gagliardi, respecto alla debolezza de XXV..",¹⁰³

a sign that he too doubted the Pope's motives. Paul seems to have wanted a trial of strength with Perugia and with Cosimo, who this time sprang to the defence of the city, but in the end the situation resolved itself amicably.

However, while things were still at crisis-point, Nerli had

99) C.M. 347, f.320. November 3, 1540. Nerli to Cosimo.

100) " " f.311. " 2, " " " " " " " " " " " "

101) In fact Baglione was not in Cortona at this time. See note

102) C.M.644, f.381-2. November 3, 1540. Niccolini to Cosimo.

103) " 347, f.325. " 5, " Nerli " " " " " " "

to ensure not only that he kept Cosimo informed of events but also that Cortona, which might easily have been attacked, was adequately protected. On November 9 Baglione wrote to Cosimo that he was concerned for his mother and sister who were in Cortona where,

"..si sta con granda Timore", 104

because of the massing of the papal forces. Nerli wrote that

"..non si mancherà di tucte le diligentie per non essere trovati a dormire..", 105

and in another letter on the same day he told Cosimo that he was getting ready to receive refugees from the Valley, where many people who had sympathized with the Perugians were fearful for their lives and property. ¹⁰⁶ The following day, when della Barba, the papal commissioner, and Alessandro Vitelli came out of the city,

"..con tucta la Massa de fanti, che in questi giorni hanno raunati in Perugia,.."

in order to go and purchase more troops, there was panic in the Valley,

"..per essere quelli luoghi ricepto di sbanditi,..". 107

So frightened were they that a Count Lodovico da Sorbello asked Nerli for armed defence, but this he said he could not give, because in Cortona,

104)C.M. 347,f.503. November 9, 1540. Baglione to Cosimo, written from Pisa, showing that by then at least he was not in Cortona as the Pope claimed.

105)C.M. 347,f.353. November 5, 1540. Nerli to Cosimo.

106) " " f.356. " " " " " "

107) " " f.361. " 6, " " " "

"..non e altri che gl'uomini della Terra, e quali faranno assai a guardare la Terra loro..", 108

and these could not be spared.

It would seem from this that, at least in the early days of Cosimo's reign, the military strength of each of the dominio towns was barely adequate, and in times of stress could even prove insufficient. It is also clear that a Captain in Nerli's position was not independent in military affairs but had to take advice and instruction from the central government, for whilst Nerli himself made a check on all those men in the city who were able to serve in the force,

"..che in vero riescono una bella banda", 109
 Cosimo decided to send one of his Captains to make a check on the military situation in the whole area. Such moves often caused friction since the superior powers of the Captains were resented
 110
 by the local officials, but Nerli does not seem to have objected to this interference, for he referred to the visit of Federigo da Mont'auto as,

"..molto a proposito per molti respecti,..". 111
 Federigo arrived in Cortona for discussions with Nerli on November 7, at a time when the massing of papal troops was extremely ominous, and Nerli's letters to Cosimo were full of details of

108)C.M. 347, f.361, November 6, 1540. Nerli to Cosimo.

109)Ibid.

110)Ferretti, op.cit.p.263. Says that it was difficult bringing in new organization for the militia, because, "..non ci si poteva fidare delle informazioni dei rettori, che odivano i soldati per natura;..".

111)C.M. 347, f.361. November 6, 1540. Nerli to Cosimo.

the number of troops and their locations.¹¹² However, Cortona was not attacked and in the end the Pope withdrew his troops from their supposed defence of Perugia against the re-entry of the exiles and granted Cosimo a pardon. The tension felt in Cortona for the period of Vitelli's activity in the region was intense and Nerli may have been reminded of his last unhappy days in Modena, although he seems on this occasion to have remained calm. After this period of tension things returned to a state of relative order and tranquillity and the only other correspondence for this term of office concerns legal disputes between the inhabitants of Cortona and a convent of nuns, written to inform¹¹³ Cosimo of the action which Nerli was taking. All too frequently the time of a dominio official, like that of an internal official, would be taken up with listening to and settling such legal disputes.

Property disputes were also one of the matters which absorbed a good deal, though not all, of Nerli's time on his next official mission, which was to the town of Volterra. He was elected to¹¹⁴ serve there for six months in September, 1543, but the extant correspondence continues until July, 1544, suggesting that he stayed for two terms of office in this town, where his son Benedetto was bishop. This period was for Cosimo one of consolidation; in 1542 the emperor had returned to him the

112) See C.M. 347, f.515, Nov.12; f.542, Nov.14; f.545, Nov.15; f.550, Nov.17.

113) C.M. 350, f.154. April 24, 1541. Nerli to Cosimo.

114) Tratte 72, f.5

fortresses of Florence and Leghorn, although his refusal to grant the Duke Piombino had angered Cosimo and made him more independent in his attitude towards the emperor.¹¹⁵ One of the things which Cosimo was very concerned about was the building and repairing of the fortresses of the dominio, and the threatened attack by the Turkish fleet off the Tyrenian coast in 1543 made the defence of the area a matter of vital importance. Even if it did cost a large amount of money the improvement of fortifications was a matter of priority and Cosimo wrote,

"Ma ~~la~~ certifichiamo che la spesa è infinita et troppo grande a Noi havendo massime à provvedere necessariamente à molti luoghi di questo stato, che ci consumano sino in su l'esso, perche di presente in un'tempo medesimo si fortifica Pistoia, Prato, Pisa e Arezzo, et è ancor necessario di metter mano alle cose di Volterra, per esser sito d'importantia,..".

116

It was doubtless because he knew of Cosimo's concern about the defences that Nerli wrote to his nephew in very detailed terms about the damage to the walls of Volterra caused by heavy rain in December, 1543, giving him the measurements of the gaps which had been formed and their exact location.¹¹⁷ It seems that the citizens were quick to set about repairing and improving the fort, for in January, 1544, Cosimo wrote to Nerli that,

"Havemo preso piacere non piccolo che quella Comunita habbi di gia Deputato Huomini per la fortificatione da farsi de cotesta nostra Città,..".

118

Relations with the citizens were not always so smooth,

115) See Spini, op.cit. Chapter 6.

116) C.M. 5, f.586-7. March 8, 1544. Cosimo to the Bishop of Cortona.

117) C.M.634, f.281. December 29, 1543. Nerli to Cosimo.

118) C.S. P.S. 37, f.27 January 26, 1544. Cosimo to Nerli.

however, for whilst Volterra did not present nearly as many problems as did Pistoia it was not entirely free from disputes.

In November, 1543, Cosimo wrote to Nerli that

"..certo ci dispiace che in cotesta terra, nella quale ci pareva fussero manco setti, ed odii, che in qualsivogli altra di questo dominio, insurghino quelle che voi accennate, et tanto maggiormente per la cagione, che qualcuno allega, di volere che si stimino, et si allibrino li beni di cotesti homini,..". 119

The Duke had hoped that property rights of this kind, which Nerli had already inquired into, ¹²⁰ would not cause trouble and he asked Nerli,

"..con la solita destrezza et prudentia vostra procurerete di sganare coloro che cercano che li beni siano stimati, et allebrati, et di mantenere costesti nostri sudditi nella loro solita pace, et unione, remostrandoli che à noi sara somamenti grato che vivono uniti insieme, et d'accordo, secondo il solito loro,..". 121

sentiments which give some idea of Cosimo's conception of his own importance and influence over the minds of his subjects which the rather megalomaniac Duke thought he wielded. This letter was written in reply to one of Nerli's in which he had told Cosimo of the trouble which was being caused by the approach of the new reform,

"..dove le dissensioni di costoro, et queste loro

119)C.S. P.S. 37, f.25. November 14, 1543. Cosimo to Nerli.

120)C.M. 363, f.134. October 21, 1543. Nerli to Cosimo. "..si dette ordine di havere quelle piu notitie che si potessi de confini scrittur' et cose appartenenti alle possession dello spedalotto,..".

121)C.S. P.S. 37, f.25. November 14, 1543, Cosimo to Nerli.

septe potranò causare piu cattivi effetti,..".

122

Considerable difficulty was being experienced in getting proposals passed by the citizen council, so that Nerli wrote in this letter that,

"..avanti se ne accordassino sene hebbe tre volte a raunare Il Consiglio pure alla terza sessione finalmente si vince,..",

continuing,

"..questo giorno hanno cimentato da quattro o cinque proposte tutte ordinarie che non sogliono havere difficulta, et solo una se ne vinse,..".

In particular there was trouble over the re-election of Francesco Vinta as Chancellor and Nerli comments,

"..tanto desiderio era in quel Consiglio di mutare Cancelliere o per odio o invidia contro a M.Franc.o o per voglia che havessino molti di entrare in luogo suo..",

showing that he was capable of analysing such a situation and that he had a reasonably good idea of the motives of the citizens, but the same letter also shows clearly the extent to which his power was limited by his need to consult the Duke on all matters, for he continued,

"..io non ardirei farne parola ne in publico ne in privato senza Comissione de vra. Ex.tia...".

A further demonstration of the limitation of the powers of the dominio officials is the number of letters in which Nerli is doing nothing more than supply Cosimo with information so that the Duke can take a decision. For example, in February, 1544,

122)C.M. 363, f.455. November 9, 1543, Nerli to Cosimo.

the Duke asked Nerli to look into a complaint for him so that,

"..noi ci possiamo risolvere à q'llo ci parra convenirsi..", 123

and in July of the same year, referring to another dispute, he asked Nerli to use

"..ogni diligentia di certificarvi come appunto passo il caso; et quanto vio ne ritrovate, non mancherete di scriverelo,..". 124

We have already seen the limitations of the Captains where military affairs were concerned and it seems that they were similarly limited in financial matters, for Cosimo wrote to Nerli that he was sending Gio-Battista Brandini to Volterra, to advise him

"..nelle cose vostre fiscale". 125

Clearly officials were given very little scope for independent action, and though this was mainly due to Cosimo's desire to centralize power in himself it may also be attributed to his reluctance to trust the ottimati too far by giving them control of finance and troops. Nerli, it must be remembered was in a somewhat favoured position as Cosimo's uncle, and even he was limited as to the amount of independent action he could take. That Cosimo was at this time on good terms with Nerli can be seen from a letter of condolence which the Duke wrote to him on the death of his mother, assuring him that,

"..semp' et voi, et i vostri figlioli, saranno da me uisti, et riconosciuti con quel buono animo che conviene, et che voi medesimi ne sperate". 126

-
- 123) C.S. P.S. 37, f.28. February 6, 1544. Cosimo to Nerli.
 124) " " " f.30. June 21, 1544. " " "
 125) " " " f.33. July 8, 1544. " " "
 126) " " " f.26. December 21, 1543. " " "

Nerli's last office was in Arezzo, of which he was elected
 127
 Captain in November, 1552, a position which was normally held
 for six months but which Nerli seems to have held for a year,
 since the next recorded election was not until November, 1553.
 Arezzo itself presented few problems but, due to its position, it
 was involved in the movement of Spanish troops dealing with the
 rebellion in Siena. Over this too the lack of power of the
 dominio officials is evident, for Nerli rarely does any
 organizing entirely independently. The defence of the city, for
 example, was not Nerli's concern alone, but was also dealt with
 by Captain Bartolomeo de Poggio Castellano and the Captain of
 128
 the Bande in Arezzo, whilst on December 26, 1552, the 'Guardi di
 Arezzo' wrote to Cosimo on matters of defence with no mention of
 129
 Nerli whatsoever. As over his relations with Bracciolini in
 Pistoia Nerli does not seem to have resented his position, for he
 wrote with no sign of rancour that the defence of the walls and
 gates of the city had been dealt with,

"..secondo che la Ex.tia V. ne scrisse al Cap.no
 Bartolomeo di Poggio..". 130

The arrival in Arezzo of Ridolfo Baglione to supervise the
 131
 provisioning of troops further underlined Nerli's dependence,
 and over the arrival of imperial troops in the city he had to

127) Tratte 72, f.3. See above, p.201 The appointment was at Nerli's request.

128) C.M. 197, f.102, December 16; f.101v, December 19, 1552.

129) " 412, f.526, " 26, 1552.

130) " 423, f.50, " 24, 1552.

131) " 413, f.75, January 5, 1553.

132

work in harmony with Filippo del Migliore. The situation was obviously unsettled and Nerli, by this time in his sixty-eighth year, seems to have been irritated by the lack of definite information and wrote testily to Cosimo,

"..credo bene, che sarebbe stato molto a proposito V.S. havessi mandato qui un'huomo, che fussi informato della somma, qual V.S. disegna valersi da questa città, et che mostrasse almeno come le vettovaglie si habbino a condurre, et con chi, et dove, l'havessino a esser pagate, per che questo scrivere generale, renderà molto difficile questi huomini, a far si grossa provisione, non sapendo, onde habbino à uscire e pagamente..". 133

Besides being involved in these arrangements Nerli's task at Arezzo was, as usual, to supply Cosimo with information and, as at Cortona, he had a group of spies who collected any news which might be of importance.¹³⁴ This final mission was not one of great importance and in fact Nerli never again faced problems like those which he had encountered in Pistoia in 1538. He died in January, 1556.

Whilst Nerli, because of his relationship to Cosimo, is not entirely typical of the ottimati as a whole, some facts about

132)C.M. 413, f.100. January 6, 1553. Nerli seems to have found his position very difficult and, after making what Migliore considered to be an error of judgement, the Captain wrote to Cosimo, "..quando piu, io fussi di tal'maniera ricerco, o da filippo (Migliore) o da altri com.ri come me ne debba governare, accioche se io havessi questa volta errato, non habbia piu cagione di potere errare per l'avvenire".

133)C.M. 423, f.173. January 23 or 24, 1552. Nerli to Cosimo.

134) " " f.253. March 8, 1553. Nerli to Cosimo. He writes that he has obtained letters dealing with the movements of Duke Annibale, "..dandoli advisi delle cose della guerra et ben che sieno cose notissime ho voluto ad ogni modo mandare alla Ex.tia Vra. la copia".

their position during these years have emerged from this study of his career. They retained their usefulness as dominio officials, providing Cosimo with information, keeping the peace and seeing to the orderly running of the towns, but the Duke was careful to see that they did not gain too much power through their position. In military and financial matters in particular they could take little independent action and indeed over many day to day affairs, even down to the settlement of minor disputes, they were forced to turn for guidance to Cosimo. Nerli could not even authorize the passage of troops through the Arezzo region,

"..sopra di quali non havendo io ordine alcuna da
V.Ex.tia."

135

In the dominio, as we have already seen was the case as far as the internal government of Florence was concerned, the position of the ottimati seemed on the surface to be one of unchanged status and position, but in actual fact the status alone remained and the real power had passed from them into the hands of Duke Cosimo and his officials. Nerli, born in the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent, who has captured the imaginations of historians to become regarded as the most striking of all the Medici, died at a stage in the reign of Cosimo I when the foundations had been laid for that prince to become, at the expense of the ottimati, the most powerful of all the Medici to date.

135)C.M. 412, f.601. December 27, 1552. Nerli to Cosimo.

Chapter 6 - The Commentari.

As well as the considerable volume of Nerli's correspondence which is available as a source for his life and personality there is also another source of information on him. This is the history of Florence which he wrote and from which we can gain further insight into the outlook of a member of the ottimati class. This work, the Commentari dei fatti civili occorso dentro la città di Firenze, covers mainly the period of Nerli's own life and in it he aims to show how the city, after many years of divisions and discord, has achieved unity and peace under the rule of one Prince. This theme represents Nerli's own political beliefs, for he was, as we have seen, in favour of princely rule and did not share Donato Giannotti's view that such governments brought fear and suspicion, inevitably resulting in the corruption of the ruler.¹

In this chapter we shall consider the Commentari as an example of sixteenth century historical writing. We shall try to establish the date at which it was written and we shall discuss the extant manuscripts of the work. We shall also consider the sources which Nerli used, the way in which he used them, and the debt which he owed to earlier writers. In the two concluding chapters we will examine Nerli's relationship with the other sixteenth century historians, the use which they made of his work and the general attitudes and prejudices of the historians

1) Giannotti - Opere. Ed. Polidori. Fl. 1850. Della Repubblica Fiorentina. Book 3, p.166. "...chi sarà eletto principe, se non fia in quel tempo della elezione malvagio, potrà nel principato diventare..."

at Duke Cosimo's court. First of all, however, we must try to establish the date at which Nerli wrote the Commentari and then consider the fate of the early manuscripts and the work of the first editor, Francesco Settimanni.

The Commentari were not written at one time only but in two stages with a gap of several years in between. Nerli started to write in 1534, probably inspired by the succession to the government of Florence of Duke Alessandro de' Medici, from whom he may have hoped to gain reward by writing a work which is at least to some extent biased in favour of the Medici family.² Initially Nerli intended to deal only with the period up to Alessandro's reign, which may be regarded as a water-shed in Florentine history since it marks the beginning of absolutist rule in the city. He himself says in Book 12 that he has now reached the point where he could,

"..riposare la penna e la memoria, e dar fine all' opera nostra, massimamente essendomi condotto collo scriver mio a quel termine che io mi proposi nell' animo quando da principio cominciai a scrivere questi ricordi;..".

3

In fact, however, Nerli continued his narrative until the defeat of the exiles by Cosimo at the battle of Montemurlo. How far he progressed with his work during this first period of composition it is difficult to say, but he clearly completed at least the first three books, for in Book 3 he refers to his mother-in-law,

2) See Chapter 4. The siege had made Nerli a poorer man and he would have been glad of financial gain. Under Alessandro his financial position seems to have improved at least to some extent.
3) Nerli, Book 12, pp.290-291.

Lucretia Salviati,

"..la quale ancora felicemente vive, cioè nel 1534,..". 4

Why Nerli did not complete the work at this time one can only conjecture. During the reigns of both Alessandro and Cosimo he was, as we have seen, very occupied with official positions both inside and outside Florence and may simply not have had sufficient leisure in which to continue his writing. He may also have felt that there were greater rewards to be found in such service than in the writing of history. Whatever his reasons for discontinuing the Commentari it can be seen from the letters in the Carteggio Mediceo that Nerli began the work again round about the year 1549. There was a very large amount of historical writing at Cosimo's court and much of it was commissioned by the Duke himself.⁵ It has been suggested that the Commentari were also commissioned by Cosimo,⁶ but whilst it is clear that the Duke encouraged and helped Nerli with his task there is no evidence that he actually commissioned his uncle to write. Cosimo did discuss the writing of history with Nerli during the time when Filippo himself was working, and Paolo Giovio, another historian, was also involved in these discussions, a point to

4) Nerli, Book 3, p.56.

5) See Chapter 7 for a description of the amount of historical writing which was carried on under Cosimo's patronage and of the way in which the historians must have come into personal contact with each other at his court.

6) Sanesi - Alcune Osservazioni e Notizie Intorno a tre storici minori del Cinquecento. A.S.I. Vol.23, 1899. See also Chapter 7, p.309

7
 which we will return in the following chapter. By 1550 Nerli had completed the seventh book of the Commentari, although it is not necessarily safe to assume that the work was complete as far as this since it need not have been written in order. On October 7, 1550, Cosimo wrote to Nerli,

"Con la vostra de 3 del pnte. habbiamo ricevuto il settimo libro delli vostri discorsi, et lettolo con quel piacere che gl'altri innanzi et molto piu fresche alla nostra memoria". 8

This book covers the period from 1519 to 1527 and it is clear that Cosimo was pleased with it, for two days earlier Jacopo Guidi reported to PierFrancesco Riccio,

"Il legato dell'hyst.rie di M.Philippo de Nerli 'ho hauto S.Ex.cc et per quanto ho visto con sua non picc.la satisfatione". 9

One wonders what Nerli's reaction to Cosimo's pleasure was, in view of the delight with which Giovio received Ducal interest. 10

It seems likely that Nerli had completed his work by 1552, that is before he left Florence for his last official post as Captain of

7)C.S. P.S. 37, f.39. Cosimo to Nerli, October 4, 1549. "Ci è stato di molto piacere l'haver'hauto per la vostra dell'ultimo del passato quel che vi paia delle hystorie di Francesco Vettori, et quel che nelle vostre seguitate, et assai ancora ce l'ha accresciuto il ragionamento che ne movesti con Mons. Jiovio, et l'opinione, che havete di lui in questo modo di scrivere, che certo al parere nostro non ve ingannate punto". Since Cosimo approves his view Nerli had probably flattered Giovio!

8)C.S. P.S. 37, f.46. See also f.41, Cosimo to Nerli, March 10, 1549. "Come habbate finito uno di quelli discorsi del tempo dell'Assedio di Fiorenza, ci sara molto grato che ce lo mandiate et suggellato".

9)C.M. 1176. Inserto 6, f.15. October 5, 1550. Guidi to Riccio.

10)Giovio, Lettere. Giovio to Lelio Torelli. July-August, 1550. He has been told that Cosimo is reading his history, "...il che è la total somma del desiderio mio".

Arezzo.

In spite of Cosimo's obvious approval of Nerli's work the Commentari were not, as one might have expected, presented to him by Filippo who in fact bequeathed them to his grandson, who bore his name. In 1574 this Filippo felt it appropriate to present his grandfather's work to Grand Duke Francesco, in order to honour him,¹¹ and a manuscript which appears to be this presentation copy is still to be seen in Florence.¹² It seems reasonable to suppose that this presentation copy was compiled from the manuscripts which Nerli had left to his grandson, but although there are two autograph manuscripts in Florence, neither of them is complete. It seems likely that these manuscripts would have remained with the Nerli, and there are in fact two eighteenth century references to their being in the possession of the family. Negri, writing in 1722, before the first edition of the work had been published, says,

"Trovansi ben.ms; presso la sua Famiglia, ed altre, custodita,..",

13

11)Nerli, Preface. Filippo de'Nerli, the younger, to Grand Duke Francesco, July 20, 1574. "...ed ora non per adempire a pieno quanto ho in animo, e desidero ma per cominciare almeno a dimostrare qualche segno, ho pensato meco medesimo di presentarle un dono, che alla morte sua mi fece Filippo avolo mio, e questo è i Commentari de'fatti della città, e Repubblica Fiorentina dal 1215 al 1537 da lui con diligenza, e fedeltà, e come uomo veramente libero, e spogliato d'ogni passione, ordinati, e scritti de'quali parte ne sentì egli in voce da'suoi antenati, e poi gli riscontrò con i pubblici scritti, ed a parte di essi egli stesso si trovò in fatto".

12)Magl. II,I,170-171. Two volumes tied with green ribbons, with a plate saying, "ex libris - Francisci Caesaris Augusti Munificentia". This tallys approximately with a description in a catalogue by Girolamo Sommaio, B.N.F. Magl. Cl.10, Cod.14.

13)Negri, op.cit.p.175

while the first editor, Settimanni, writes in his preface that he has made use of manuscripts in the possession of the family.¹⁴ An attempt has been made to trace this original ms. which, if it had contained Nerli's first drafts and corrections, could have been of considerable interest, but unfortunately this attempt has not been successful.

Since the work was left to Filippo de'Nerli it seemed most likely that it would have been left to the descendants of his branch of the Nerli family. There is no mention of the ms. in the inventory of the property of Filippo's wife, Cammilla, which was made soon after his death in 1590, but this does not necessarily mean that it was not in their possession, since mss. and books were often not described in detail in such inventories,¹⁵ and in fact were not on this occasion. Filippo's branch of the family eventually married into the Antinori family and hence any

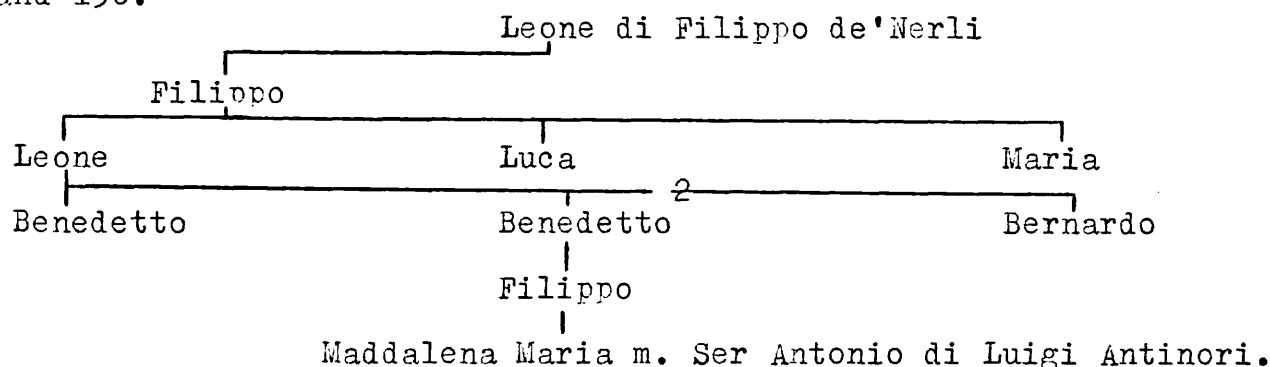
14) Settimanni, in his Introduction to the 1728 edition of the Commentari says that he used mss. "parte presso i suoi descendenti,..".

15) A.S.F. Notarili Moderno, 5342, 1590-1593. This is an inventory for the house in the Borgo San Jacopo in which Nerli himself had lived. It describes the contents of each room, including two pictures of Nerli :-
 f.39v. "Nella camera della loggia dell'orto;....in quadro su la tela dipintavi Filippo di Benedetto Nerli,..".
 and "Nello scrittorio in su la loggia....una Testo di ritratto di M. Filippo de'Nerli vecchio,..".
 Several rooms are noted as containing books, including an entry which reads, "Nello scrittorio in su la loggia" 15 quarto folio books in Latin and Italian and 44 octavo books of a similar kind. No greater detail is given about any of these works.

archive material would have passed to them.¹⁶ At a later date the Antinori archive was itself divided, the earliest part remaining in Florence and being presented to the Archivio di Stato in 1960. This part contains no material belonging to the family, which may, of course, have been kept separately from it.¹⁷ The other part of the Antinori archive passed into the hands of the Roman Aldobrandini family through marriage, but there is no trace of a 'fondo Nerli' in their extensive archive.¹⁸

In the recent survey of the archives of Tuscany published by the Archivio Storico Italiano, there does appear a reference to a Nerli family archive which passed, through the descendents of Nerli's other grandson, Jacopo (detto Leone) di Leone de'Nerli, into the hands of the Naldini-Riccio family. The archive, records the article, passed into the Naldini family in 1727 "per eredita", and is composed of 58 volumes of,

16) See Passerini - Collezione genealogica. B.N.F. Carte 8, 171² and 156.



17) A.S.I. 1960. Notizie degli Archivi Toscani.

18) I am indebted to Signora Camerani of the Archivio di Stato for allowing me to consult the archive copy of the inventory of the Aldobrandini archive and for arranging for me to visit the Naldini-Riccio archive.

"..amministrazione domestica, di processi, scritture patrimoniali del secolo XV al XVIII". 19

The archive is now housed in Florence at Via de'Servi 2, and the present owners kindly allowed me access to it. An inventory of the contents of the volumes of the Nerli papers was made in the mid-nineteenth century and it is clear from this that the majority of them are concerned almost exclusively with family administration and that most of them date from the period after Nerli's death. From these unfruitful researches one can only conclude that in all probability the original ms. or mss. have been lost or destroyed during the divisions and travels of the Nerli family papers, for there is no trace of them in any of the private archives where one might reasonably have hoped to find them. There is, of course, always a chance that they might be discovered in some other family archive.

The Commentari were not edited and published until 1728 but they were known in manuscript form before that and there is evidence that they were being read in the seventeenth century, although it is impossible to assess their popularity.²⁰ The seventeenth century was a time when there was a considerable

19)A.S.I. 1956 and 1960, Notizie degli Archivi Toscani.

20)B.N.F. Magl. VIII, 380, f.95. Antonio Magliabechi to Senator Pitti, June 28, 1676. "Umilissimamente scrissi a V.Illma. che per servizio del Padron Ser.mo, avevo bisogno di vedere quella Istoria del Nerli, che già le prestai. Questa mattina son venuto per essa da me medesimo ed ho doppo mandato anche altri, ma è stato risposto a tutti che il Ill.ma non aveva lasciata cosa alcuna,..".

amount of interest in the history of Florence and, under the auspices of Duke Cosimo III, men like Antonio da Sangallo collected together any manuscripts or documents which could be of use to historians and researchers. The libraries of Florence were thus greatly enriched and it was from such collections that editors such as Francesco Settimanni were able to profit.

Settimanni was born in 1681 into a prominent Florentine family and he studied in Pistoia and Pisa.²¹ In 1713, due to charges against him which seem to have been fabricated by his enemies, he was forced to leave Florence and his opponents successfully managed to prevent his return for many years. During this period of exile Settimanni wandered through Italy and the rest of Europe, trying all the while to gain reinstatement through the influence of numerous important figures of the day.²² It was during these years of wandering that he wrote his own history of Florence, which is now to be found in the Archivio di Stato in Florence,²³ and also worked on the lives and writings of various important authors of the sixteenth century, borrowing whatever ms. material he could obtain.

In 1716, having fled to Germany, he worked on the history of Benedetto Varchi and in 1722-23, while still in Germany, he edited the history of Bernardo Segni. Then, on his return to

21) For Settimanni's life see Giovanni Benedetti of Florence - Notizie e Documenti intorno la vita di Francesco Settimanni. Fl. 1875.

22) B.N.F. Magl. VIII, 867 contains Settimanni's correspondence.

23) A.S.F. Manoscritti 125. The work is in very brief note form and makes no reference to Nerli.

Venice in 1723, he arranged for

"..l'esito delle suddette Storie,..".

24

The edition of Segni, which his biographer says he was encouraged to produce because of the success of the edition of Varchi, was published by Herz and Mayer, and this was also the firm which published in 1728 Settimanni's edition of Nerli's Commentari. The second editors of the work claimed that this edition had been published not in Augsburg, as the title page says, but in Florence, but since at this time Settimanni was still in exile and not allowed to enter the city this seems unlikely. Settimanni may virtually be considered as the only editor of the Commentari, for the second editors clearly made no attempt to trace the manuscripts and admit their reliance on Settimanni in the introduction.²⁵ It seems that Settimanni's work was considered reliable in the nineteenth century for Lelio Arbib, in his edition of Varchi in 1838-41, writes that he has taken as his guide

"..quello mandato fuori la prima volta dal Cav. Francesco Settimanni nel 1721".

We can see the way in which Settimanni approached his task of editing from his introduction to his edition of the Commentari and from letters in the Settimanni family archive, which are

24) Benedetti, op.cit. p.25.

25) The Introduction to the 1859 edition of the work says; "Nel riprodurri i Commentari di Filippo de' Nerli ci siamo attentuti all'unica edizione esistente procurata dal cav. Settimanni e stampata nel 1728 in un vol. in fogl. in Firenze colla data d'Augusta appresso David Raimondo Hertz e Giov. Jacopo Mayer".

quoted by his biographer Benedetti. In his introduction he clearly states his desire to make the edition as complete and as accurate as possible, writing,

"Mi lusingo, che la presente edizione sia per riuscire al maggior segno compiuta, e perfetta, conciossiachè è fatta sopra di una copia per buona sorte trascritta, e poi accuratamente collazionata cogli originali dello stesso autore esistenti in vari frammenti in Firenze parte presso i suoi descendentì, parte nella celebre Libreria Stroziana".

In his earlier work on Varchi and Segni Settimanni had followed this same practice of consulting and comparing various different manuscripts and copies, and the letters which Benedetti published were written to the people from whom Settimanni borrowed these. On November 5, 1718, for example, he wrote to the Abate Ruberto Galli as follows;

"..supplicarla che mi voglia fate il favore di mandarmi l'Istorie manoscritte di Benedetto Varchi, ch'Ella tiene in due tomi, e che altra volta ebbi da V.S.Illma. in prestito".

He adds that in spite of the distance between Florence and Venice Galli need have no fear that the work will not be safely returned. The first letter concerning the edition of Nerli which Benedetti quotes is to Cav. Anton Francesco Marmi, on October 23, 1723, five years before the work appeared in print.

Marmi, who died in 1736, was in charge of the Palatina collection in Florence, now part of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze,²⁶ and was also the author of a number of lives

²⁶Domenico Fava - La Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze.
Milan. 1939. p.101.

of famous men of the city. It is obvious that this letter was not the first which Settimanni had written to Marmi on the subject of the manuscripts of Nerli's history for he writes,

"Staro ancora attendendo quelle di V.S.Illma. per l'Istoria del Nerli, la quale io prometto di rimettere con tutta puntualità, poichè io l'avrò copiata, essendo risoluto fermamente di renderla pubblica".

It is not clear from these letters whether or not the request was granted in this instance, but there is a further letter in August, 1727, which suggests that Marmi was rather reluctant to relinquish the manuscripts which Settimanni had obviously consulted on more than one occasion. In this letter Settimanni tries to reassure Marmi on this point, writing,

"Se V.S.Illma. potrà favorirmi la Storia del Nerli, io gliela potrò rimandare in otto giorni, perchè non mi resta da esaminare se non alcuni luoghi che credo mancanti in quella di S.E. il Cardinale Corsini, la quale per altro è di bellissimo carattere".

By this stage Settimanni was evidently nearing the end of his task in spite of the fact that, as well as pressing continually for reinstatement, he had also been working on a collection of lives of famous Florentines. This collection included the lives of Varchi and Segni but not that of Nerli and in gathering material for it Settimanni consulted Carlo Tommaso Strozzi, whose library was later to form an important addition to the Florentine national library. Marmi does not seem to have responded very promptly to this last plea of Settimanni's for he repeats it a few days later, writing on August 30,

".e la Storia del Nerli subito che l'avrò veduta

e riscontrati alcuni luoghi che mi paiono errati, gliela rimanderò, poichè io qui ne ho una buona copia in ordine, che penso fare imprimere con altre due Storiette di due Palleschi, che mi ritrovo, nelle quali sono di belle notizie".

This last intention was not realized for when the Commentari appeared they did so alone, with no other Medicean histories accompanying them.

The manuscript from the family archive which Settimanni saw was most probably the one which is no longer to be found, though it is not quite clear from his description in the introduction to his edition whether he in fact ever saw a complete autograph of the Commentari or only fragments. What he borrowed from the Cardinal Corsini, later Pope Clement XII, was clearly a copy which he considered to be fairly accurate.²⁷ The mss. which Settimanni borrowed from Marmi were from the Strozzi collection, which had been incorporated into the ducal collection as part of the Magliabechiana. They are now catalogued as Magliabechi II,II,135 and 136. Both these mss. are in Nerli's own hand but neither of them is complete and neither of them contains Nerli's preface, which was most probably written after the Commentari had been finished, as was usual at this time. Ms. 135 has a note by Carlo Strozzi at the beginning to the effect that the contents are in Nerli's hand, although it is a 'fair copy' and not a preliminary draft. Nerli himself noted at the beginning that,

27)Clement was very interested in books and greatly improved the Vatican library. See Angelo Fabroni - De vita et rebus gestis Clementis XII Pont. Max. Rome. 1760.

"In questo quaderno sono tre descorsi,..", and these are the first three books of the Commentari. It is possible that Nerli's original intention was to write three books only but without more early manuscripts it is impossible to tell. After some blank pages this ms. also contains Books 4 and 5, covering the years 1494 to 1512, again written in the author's hand. Ms.136 is marked in Nerli's hand "ultima descrittione" and again contains the first three books, together with Books 6 and 7 and part of Book 10. Since they are both 'fair copies' neither of these mss. contains many alterations of the type which could show the way in which Nerli's mind worked as he was composing and altering his work. The only alterations are minor, stylistic ones and give no indication of Nerli's approach to his work or of the sources which he used.

Settimanni's edition varies to a limited extent from both the mss. in the Biblioteca Nazionale, so that it is clear that he worked, as he himself said, from at least one other ms. as well, but none of these variations are particularly significant. Sometimes the variations seem to have been made by the editor himself in order to improve Nerli's style and make his narrative clearer. In Book 2, page 22, for example, Settimanni writes,

28) The relative unimportance of these changes can be seen from the following examples:-

Mag. II,II,135, Book 2, f.24. "la setta de Guelfi sopra detta rimanendo senza tale oppositione..".

Mag. II,II,136, Book 2, f.35v. "rimanendo la setta de guelfi sopradetta senza tale oppositione..".

Mag. II,II,135, Book 1, f.5. "quella honorata risposta"

Mag. II,II,136, " " f.9v. "quella honorata et si degna risposta"

"..fece creare una balià di cinquanta sei cittadini,..", while Nerli, in both the autograph mss., had written,

"Crea una Balia di 56 cittadini".

This could have been the result of Settimanni relying on another ms. but in any case it is hardly an important variant. In his description of the internal changes of 1378 Settimanni again varies slightly from both the autographs as may be seen below.

Mss. 135 & 136.

"Cosi furono restituiti gl' honori a tutti quelli, chi in tal tempo n'erano suti privati; furono anche rimesti tutti i fuorusciti; Rendessi ancora gl' honori, et l'autorità alla Parte Guelfa, et si risottomessero le Arti nuovi, che l'infima plebe haveva create ne casi del '78".

Settimanni. Book 2, p.29.

"Cosi furono restituiti gli onori, e l'autorità alla Parte Guelfa, e si risottomessero l'arti nuove, che l'infima plebe aveva create ne'casi del 1378,..".

Such variations need not necessarily be signs that Settimanni was using another ms. of course, for they may be the result of bad copying or of deliberate alteration by the editor.

There are, as we noted, similar minor variations between the two mss. themselves, where Nerli himself has checked and corrected his work in order to improve his presentation, and in general Settimanni tends to base his edition on the version given in ms. 136. In Book 2, page 39, for example, in the discussion of Cosimo il Vecchio, Settimanni gives the version from ms.136, where he is described as,

"..cittadino sospetto a quello stato, e però essendo citato,..",

words which do not appear in the 135 version. When editing Books 6,7 and 10, however, Settimanni did not rely exclusively upon

ms. 136 and here again we find differences between this ms. and the printed edition. Often these differences are nothing more than the inclusion in the edition of one or two words which do not appear in the ms., as in Book 6, page 114, where Settimanni refers to "quella nuova riforma", when the words "quella nuova" are not in the ms. Sometimes the edition includes longer additions, as in Book 7, page 134, where Settimanni writes,

"..Carlo di quel nome V che di poco per la morte
di Massimiliano era succeduto nell'Imperio,..",

while the ms. does not give any such description of the emperor. It is impossible to tell without another autograph ms. which of these variations are due to changes by Nerli himself and which of them are due to Settimanni improving the text for the sake of clarity, or even varying because he was working from a slightly inaccurate copy. However, none of these differences are of vital importance or significance and nothing of great interest about the way in which the Commentari were composed can be deduced from them.
29

As we have noted, the fact that there is no extant complete autograph of the Commentari means not only that we can have no guide as to the way in which they were composed but also that we have no indication of the sources of which Nerli made use. In the Biblioteca Nazionale there exist in manuscript form a series of selections made by Benedetto Varchi from various sources for

29) See Appendix 2 for a list of mss. of the Commentari.

30

use in the compilation of his history, and there are similar 'spoglie' for the work of Giovan-Battista Adriani in the Archivio di Stato,³¹ both of which groups of material are extremely useful for researches into the sources which the two historians used. Since no such body of material exists to aid a study of Nerli we must rely, in considering his sources, on pointers which he himself gives in the text of the Commentari, on a comparative analysis of his work with that of other historians, and on what we know of his life and circumstances. From these elements it is possible to build up a picture of the various types of sources upon which Nerli drew and to begin to gain some idea of him as an historian.

From the time when annals had begun to develop into chronicles it had been common practice, and an obvious necessity, for writers to draw on previous chronicles for that early part of their work which could not be supplied by their own knowledge.³² This procedure was also adopted by the historians of the sixteenth century though, as we shall discuss, a more critical outlook was beginning to develop,³³ and the works of Giovanni Villani, Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini and Lorenzo Valla

30) B.N.F. Magl. II, III, 103. See M. Lupo Gentile - Sulle fonti inedite della Storia Fiorentina di Benedetto Varchi. Studi Storici 14, Pisa. 1905.

31) A.S.F. C.S. P.S. 119-127.

32) See J.W. Thompson - A History of Historical Writing. New York. 1942. pp. 206-223 cover Italian Historiography from 900-1200. See especially pp. 208 and 211, though this work should be treated with caution.

33) See below, Chapter 8.

were all used by the historians to supply the early parts of their works. Nerli was no exception to this rule and he states openly in his Preface that for the history of Florence before 1494 he has taken his information,

"..dal'Villani, dall'Istorie Fiorentine e da molte altre memorie scritte da vari scrittori delle cose di Firenze".

His first three books contain a number of rather vague references to these "vari scrittori"³⁴ which serve to create the impression that he was well read in Florentine history, but in the main his quotations are drawn from Villani, Dante and Machiavelli, and it is to these three, and in particular to Dante and Machiavelli, that the early part of the Commentari owes the largest debt.

Before continuing to a discussion of Nerli's sources there is one point which must be made clear. In comparing the texts of the sixteenth century historians in order to determine the extent to which they made use of each other it is inevitable that certain similarities will be found between their work, simply by virtue of the fact that they are dealing with the same events in the history of Florence. Passages in which events are described in very similar terms may suggest that the texts are interdependent but it is difficult to prove this beyond reasonable doubt. Hence, both in this chapter and the one which follows, there may be

34) Nerli, Book 1, p.18. "..come da tutti gli Scrittori di quei tempi molto particolarmente n'è scritto, a'quali mi riferisco". Book 2, p.32. "..come non solo nelle nostre storie Fiorentine, ma ancora in quelle d'altre infinite Repubbliche, così antiche come moderne, si legge".

doubts as to the validity of the examples given to prove the relationship between the texts but in each case the general presentation and tone of the writing suggests strongly that this relationship does exist.

Nerli's admiration for Dante can, according to Niccolai, be seen in his letters,³⁵ and it is also abundantly clear in the Commentari where he sometimes sets the poet's account of events above all others, quoting from Dante's Divina Comedia on a number of occasions. Both Dante and Villani are mentioned at the very beginning of Book 1 of the Commentari³⁶ and shortly afterwards Nerli writes that for part of his narrative,

"..coll'autorità di Dante e d'infinito altri scrittori delle cose Fiorentine si può provare; ma voglio in questo luogo mi basti solamente quella di Dante,..".

37

He also turns mainly to Dante for his account of the Buondelmonti quarrel, the first major division in the city, enforcing his narrative,

"..con questa autorità di Dante adunque e di molt'altri antichi Scrittori,..".

38

Whatever other sources Nerli made use of, and he also mentions by

35) Alberto Niccolai - Un altro studioso di Dante fra gli storici del 500. In A. Vittorio Cian, i suoi scolari dell'università di Pisa. 1900-1908. Pisa. 1909. See pp.119-20, but Niccolai gives no proof of his statement.

36) Nerli, Book 1, p.1. "...come si può vedere in Dante, e nella Cronica del Villano e in altri antichi Scrittori,..".

37) Nerli, Book 1, p.5. This passage concerns the true merits of Messer Farinata degli Uberti. Dante says that he was in Hell but a conversation between the poet and Uberti reveals that the latter was an extremely honourable man.

38) Nerli, Book 1, p.3. See also his quotation on Pistoia (Book 1, p.9) and from the Purgatorio, (Book 3, p.60).

name the *Istorie dell'Aretino*, the word of Dante had considerable sway with him.

We have seen from Nerli's own testimony that Villani's chronicle was one of the sources of the Commentari but there is perhaps a closer link between the first three books of Nerli's history and the Istorie Fiorentine of his friend Machiavelli, a work which had in its turn drawn from Villani's chronicle. Machiavelli's history had been commissioned by the directors of the Florentine Studio in 1520 and was presented to Pope Clement VII in 1525, a period during which Nerli and Machiavelli were on friendly terms, meeting in the Orti Oricellari and corresponding during the period when Nerli was papal governor in Modena. A letter from Nerli to Machiavelli on November 1, 1526 makes it clear that history was a topic which they discussed together,⁴⁰ and a comparison of the texts shows that Nerli's work owed a considerable debt to his friend. Although Nerli begins his narrative in 1215, a point which Machiavelli does not reach until Book 11, 3, having begun his account with the origins of Florence, the works run parallel from that point until Machiavelli concludes his history in 1492 with the death of Lorenzo dei Medici. Nerli's history is conceived on a different scale and is therefore less

39) Nerli, Book 1, p.18. "...la quale tanto particolarmente è scritta nella Cronica del Villano, e nell'Istorie dell'Aretino, e del Machiavello,..". 'Aretino' refers to Leonardo Bruni.

40) A.S.F. Acquisti e Doni. 59, No.2. "...però ricordatevi di mandarci e dua più mi libri di quella historia et vi si rimanderanno in termine di XV giorni et potete poi rimandare li altri..". History was of course also one of the topics discussed in the Orti. See above, Chapter 2.

detailed in certain cases than is Machiavelli's, especially where
 41
 foreign affairs are concerned, although in some places, where
 his interests are aroused, he gives more detail than his friend.
 In Book 3, for example, he gives a more detailed description of
 the divisions of the 1460s, mainly due to the fact that he
 enlarges his text by making use of Dante. In spite of variations
 like this, however, there is a marked similarity between the two
 works and in the examples given below it may be seen how Nerli on
 some occasions even uses similar words and phrases.

Machiavelli, Book III, 3.

"Uguccione de' Ricci pertanto,
 capo di quella famiglia, operò
 che si rinnovasse la legge
 contro a' ghibellini; intra i
 quali era opinione di molti
 fussero gli Albizzi, i quali
 molti anni a dietro nati in
 Arezzo, ad abitare a Firenze
 erano venuti,..".

Book III, 3.

"Avendo adunque Piero favorita
 la legge, quello che dai suoi
 nimici era stato trovato per suo
 impedimento gli fu via alla sua
 grandezza;..".

Nerli, Book 2, p.21.

"E però Uguccione de'
 Ricci restringendosi, come
 capo di quella famiglia,
 con gli suoi consorti, e
 con i primi capi della
 loro setta, pensarono di
 poter privar del governo
 gli Albizzi, come discesi
 anticamente d'Arezzo, e
 però tegnenti del
 Ghibellino,..".

Book 2, p.21.

"Pertanto Pietro degli
 Albizzi osservo la legge,
 e così venne a resistere
 a' disegni de' suoi
 avversari..".

41) Machiavelli - Istorie Fiorentine. Book VIII, 1-36, covers
 Lorenzo's reign from the time of the Pazzi conspiracy to his
 death and gives details of all the external events and of Lorenzo's
 place in Italian politics, whereas Nerli's account is much
 briefer, since he says that much has already been dealt with by
 other writers.

Machiavelli, Book III, 12.
 "Mentre che queste cose così
 procedevano, nacque un altro
 tumulto il quale assai più che
 il primo offese la repubblica..".

Nerli, Book 2, p.25.
 "E mentre che per
 Gonfaloniere e per la
 Signoria si praticavano
 con molta diligentia
 queste cose, nacque un
 altro disordine e tumulto
 popolare molto maggiore e
 più scandaloso degli
 altri primi..".

Book III, 29.
 "Solo nel 1412, per avere gli
 Alberti rotti i confini, si
 creò contro di loro nuova
 balià, la quale con nuovi
 provvedimenti rafforzò lo
 stato, e gli Alberti con
 taglie perseguitò".

Book 2, p.33.
 "Solamente nel 1412
 occorre loro fare una
 balià contro certi degli
 Alberti per l'inosservanza
 de' loro confini".

The Florentine history was not the only one of Machiavelli's works of which Nerli made use. He also made use of the Discorsi, a product of the discussions in the Orti Oricellari, in particular when he is discussing in Book 12 the murder of Alessandro de' Medici by his cousin and confidant, Lorenzino. It is clear from his description of Lorenzino's actions immediately prior to the murder that he is writing with Machiavelli's advice to conspirators in Book 3 of the Discorsi in mind. Nerli writes,

"..e per non portare i pericoli che portano quelli che cons^urarano contro al Principe nell'ordire le loro congiure, non volle conferire con uomo del mondo il suo disegno, e per non essere scoperto si fidò solamente d'un amico suo di bassa condizione detto lo Scoronconcolo,..",

42

expressing Machiavelli's opinion that if one man decides to kill a Prince,

".innanzi alla esecuzione non porta alcuno pericolo,

42) Nerli, Book 12, p.287.

non avendo altri il suo secreto, ne'portando
pericolo che torni il disegno suo all'orecchio
del principe".

43

Both accounts refer to Brutus, who was often taken as an example during the Renaissance, and Nerli's discussion of Lorenzino's motives owes a debt to Machiavelli's analysis of the reasons for the occurrence of conspiracies. In Books 4 and 5 of the Commentari Nerli makes use of another of Machiavelli's works, his verse history, the Decennale, which Nerli quotes on several occasions in order to make his own account more lively. In Book 4, for example, Nerli quotes Machiavelli on the action of Piero Capponi,

"Disse il Machiavello in uno de'suoi Decennali a proposito
di questo animoso atto di Piero;

Lo strepito dell'armi, e de'cavalli
Non potè far, che non fosse sentita
La voce d'un Cappon fra cento Galli".

44

Not only did Machiavelli provide Nerli with an important source for the first three books of his history but he also provided him with material which he could make use of in order to enliven his narrative.

Since Nerli also came into close contact with the other main Florentine historian of the sixteenth century one would expect to find that the writing of Guicciardini had influenced his work, especially since they were writing at the same time, for the Storia d'Italia, Guicciardini's major work, was started in 1534.

45

43)Machiavelli - I Discorsi. Milan. 1960. Book 3, 6, p.393.

44)Other references to the Decennale are to be found in Nerli, Book 4,p.66; Book 5, pp.94, 94-5, 97 and 98.

45)See R.Ridolfi - Genesi della Storia d'Italia Guicciardiniana. Fl. 1939.

Without a doubt Nerli did read the Storia for he makes two references to it in the Commentari. The first comes in Book 4, pages 64 to 65 where, discussing the constitutional reforms of 1495, Nerli writes,

"..e s'oppose vivamente a'disegni di coloro, che volevano ristrignere lo stato, e il governo, come nella Storia di Messer Francesco Guicciardini si può vedere, dove con molta eleganza dimostra, che...". 46

The second reference is in Nerli's description of Piero Soderini's defence before the Great Council, when he writes,

"..essendo io allora in quel consiglio, udii quando la fece, ed è anco molto elegantemente scritta da Messer Francesco Guicciardini nella sua storia". 47

The Storia, however, which deals with Italian history generally and not simply with Florentine history, is of such different scope to the Commentari that there are few signs that Nerli made much use of it as a source, and indeed on some points he differs in opinion from Guicciardini.⁴⁸ Nor does it seem that Nerli made use of the incomplete Cose Fiorentine as a source for the early history of the city and there are no references to the writing of history in the correspondence between the two men. However, a comparison of the two texts suggests that Nerli did make use of Guicciardini's earlier history, the Storie Fiorentine, which

46)Guicciardini - Storia d'Italia. Book 2, pp.99-106. He gives the speeches made at this time by Pagolantonio Soderini and Guidanton Vespucci, but while Nerli refers to these briefly he does not seem to have relied much on this account. See Ridolfi - Fortuna della Storia d'Italia Guicciardiniana prima della stampa. La Rinascita. Vols.8-9. 1939.

47)Nerli, Book 5,p.108.

48)They differ over Piero de'Medici, Guicciardini stressing his foreign policy and its repercussions, Nerli his home policy.

covers the period from 1378 to 1509. Here again Nerli is making use of a work which differs in scope from his own, for Guicciardini's history is more complete, giving far more information on external affairs as well as a closer analysis of internal events. Guicciardini never saw Florentine history in isolation and his ability to see and analyse all the elements in a situation makes his work of great value. Yet even though the link between the Commentari and the Storia d'Italia is not so close as that between Nerli's work and Machiavelli's Florentine history, there is evidence that Nerli did make some use at least of Guicciardini's historical writing. The following examples serve to illustrate this, though they are open to the kind of criticism referred to at the outset that their similarity could be due to their describing the same things, rather than to any use of Guicciardini by Nerli.

Storie Fiorentine. Book 10, p.109-10.

"..ed essendo la maggior parte della Signoria vòlta contro a Piero, Jacopo de'Nerli con alcuni altri Collegi che lo seguitavano armato era ito in Palagio, e fattolo serrare, si stava a guardia della porta;..".

Book 10, p.125.

"Facessi detto Consiglio Grande uno Consiglio di ottanta uomini, di età di anni 40, scambiandosi di sei mesi in sei mesi,..".

Nerli. Book 4, p.62.

"Piero dall'altra banda per fermare la Signoria alli 9 di Novembre 1494 con molti de'suoi più confidenti volle entrare in palazzo e gli fu proibito da Jacopo de'Nerli e da altri colleghi, che avevan già preso la guardia di quello"

Book 4, p.67.

"..s'eleggevano gli uomini del primo consiglio di sei in sei mesi nel consiglio maggiore, e non potevano gli eletti esser di minor età che d'anni quaranta,..".

Book 10, p.171.
 "..e vòltasi da un altro
 canto la furia e la
 moltitudine a casa Francesco
 Valori,..".

Book 4, p.79.
 "..e fu la furia popolare
 prima alle case de'Valori.."

49

It would seem that Paolo Giovio, Bishop of Nocera, made use of Nerli's work, rather than vice versa, but we shall discuss their relationship in the following chapter. There does not appear to be any link between the Commentari and the unedited history of Piero Parenti,⁵⁰ or between Nerli's history and the Sommario della Storia d'Italia, 1511 al 1527 of Francesco Vettori.⁵¹ There does, however, seem to be some link between Nerli's work and that of Biagio Buonaccorsi, probably as a result of their common friendship with Machiavelli. Buonaccorsi's Diario de' successi piu importanti seguiti in Italia, e particolarmente in Fiorenza dall'anno 1498 in sino all'anno 1512 was not published in Florence until 1568 but must have circulated in manuscript form before that date, as did most of the literary works of this period. The Diario contains very little on the internal affairs of the city which could be of use of interest to Nerli, but since Buonaccorsi was an official of the secretariat of the Dieci della Guerra he was in a good position to be well-informed about external events and his work is mainly concerned with this sphere of Florentine

49) See also below, p.272

50) Parenti's history is to be found in the B.N.F. Magl. II, II, 132, 133 and 134 and another version of it, the Diario, is to be found, in an autograph manuscript, in Magl. II, IV, 171.

51) Vettori's history was published in the A.S.I. Appendix to Vol.6, 1848.

politics. Though there is in general little connection between the two works the similarity of Nerli's account of the escape of Vitellozzo Vitelli to that of Buonaccorsi seems to suggest that the former was based on the latter and that Nerli was conversant with Biagio's work.

Buonaccorsi.

"..et mandato in un medesimo tempo a pigliare Vitellozo allo alloggiamento suo, il quale sendo in letto malato, et havendo inteso da quelli, che lo andorono a pigliare, come era prigionie, disse di volersi vestire, per differire tanto che comparissi qualcuno de sua, in chi haveva piu fede, come segui, perche cominciato a giugnere alcune sue lance spezate, sendosi di gia messo la coraza, saltò del letto, et fattosi fare la via per forza se ne fuggi alla volta di Pisa, tanta fu la dappocaggine, e stultitia di chi andò per lui".

Nerli. Book 4, p.84. Vitelli escaped "perchè chi l'aveva a pigliare, trovandolo non ben sano nel letto, scioccamente gli dette agio, che si potesse rivestire, ed egli in quel mentre, come si vidde avere de' suoi più fidati intorno, si fece francamente coll'arme far la via, e in tal maniera salvo si condusse in Pisa".

In spite of his occasional reliance on other works Nerli's main source from amongst the existing written material was the Florentine history of Machiavelli, whose writings as a whole clearly had an important influence on the Commentari. In the earlier books Machiavelli is supplemented by Dante, Villani and Nerli's general knowledge of the earlier historians of the city, but he makes little use of the historians of the sixteenth century other than his small use of Guicciardini and Buonaccorsi. This may perhaps be explained by the fact that there were other sources available to Nerli which meant that he had little need of a large volume of secondary material. These other sources were his

memory and the archives of the Florentine state, which were made available to him by his nephew Cosimo, in the same way as the Duke made them available to the other historians at his court.⁵² Nerli makes an indirect reference to this in his Preface where he writes that the last nine books of the Commentari will record events from 1494 onwards,

"..di quella maniera che io l'ho potute intendere e sapere giornalmente e a tempo, secondo ch'elle sono seguite,..",

saying that he will pay special regard to the truth. In Book 10 of his history, when he refers to the correspondence of Malatesta Baglione and Stefano Colonna with the Signoria he writes,

"..(e ne viddi già io molte copie degli scritti loro)..",

53

and it is clear from the details of constitutional changes and administrative personnel that Nerli is able to give and which proved of value to Segni⁵⁴ that he had access to the official records while he was working on his history. The idea that Nerli gained this information during the time of the siege when he was imprisoned in the Palazzo Vecchio seems unlikely, for it is scarcely usual for political prisoners to be kept in touch with official discussions, though in view of Varchi's testimony the possibility cannot be dismissed.⁵⁵ However, the letters between

52) See Chapter 7, p.313

53) Nerli, Book 10, p.235.

54) See Chapter 7, p.290

55) Varchi, Book 11, p.357. The prisoners, "..secondochè mi raccontò poi Filippo de' Nerli, sapevano tutto quello che si faceva di giorno in giorno, cavandolo di bocca, senzachè essi se n'accorgessero a' frati di San Marco, mentrechè a questo effetto ora uno, e ora un altro si confessavano da loro".

Nerli and Duke Cosimo in 1549 and 1550 show that the Duke was encouraging Nerli and that he supplied him with the information which he needed, making the archives available to him. It is interesting that he should have done so at this time, for only a few years earlier, in 1546/7, the Duke had commissioned Benedetto Varchi to write an official history of Florence.⁵⁶

These, so far as it is possible to tell, were the main written sources upon which Nerli based the Commentari. They were to a large extent similar to those used by Benedetto Varchi, but there was one further source which Nerli could make use of which Varchi could not. Varchi had played no active part in the events which he was describing, whereas both Nerli himself and his close relatives had been at the heart of Florentine politics for a large percentage of the period which he covered in the Commentari. He was in a position to refer to the work as,

"..questi miei ricordi..", 57

and to write of resting both his pen and his memory when he was considering drawing his narrative to a close.⁵⁸ As a member of a politically active family he must from early childhood have heard discussions of the events of the time by the men actually involved in them;⁵⁹ as a child of nine, for example, he must have heard of

56) See M. Lupo Gentile - La Storia Fiorentina di Benedetto Varchi. Annali della R. Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Vol. 19. 1906. This contains a discussion of the date of Varchi's commission.

57) Nerli, Book 6, p. 119.

58) " " 12, p. 246.

59) See Chapter 1, p. 22

his grandfather's part in the expulsion of Piero de' Medici from the city, and throughout his youth he must have listened to the discussion of his father, Benedetto, who held many official posts for the Florentine state. Nerli's father-in-law was also, as we have seen, a leading political figure and both he and Benedetto de' Nerli were involved in the arrangements for the trial of Savonarola.⁶⁰ Nerli must have found their reports of events such as these most useful when he came to compile his history. Whereas Varchi had to write for information to friends and acquaintances all over Italy Nerli was able to glean a large amount from the members of his own family.

Salviati in particular must have proved a very valuable source of information for Nerli when his own personal knowledge of events needed supplementing. Amongst other things he must, for example, have been able to add to what Nerli already knew of the plotting against Piero Soderini, since he was one of the leaders of the opposition to the Gonfaloniere. Jacopo would also have been able to supply information on Niccolò Capponi's secret negotiations with Pope Clement, even if Nerli himself may have⁶¹ been involved in these together with Salviati and his servant. Nerli once mentions that he has heard Salviati repeatedly speak⁶² of the way in which elections had been organized. He could

60) See Nerli, Book 4, p.77 and below, Chapter 1, p.24

61) See Chapter 4, p.135

62) Nerli, Book 6, p.122. "Ed io mi ricordo aver già più volte udito dire da Jacopo..". Both Salviati and Cardinal Giovanni Salviati were more closely involved in politics than was Nerli.

also turn to his mother-in-law, Lucretia Salviati, daughter of 'il magnifico' for information, for she had a keen interest in political affairs and was on good terms with Nerli, with whom she corresponded. He refers to her specifically in Book 5, when he discusses a plot against Piero Soderini in which she was implicated and in which she was able to warn one of the other conspirators, Prinzivalle della Stufa, who was thus able to escape capture.⁶³ It is also possible that Lucretia provided Nerli with a source for his graphic description of the murder of Duke Alessandro by Lorenzino, which he compares to the murder of the king Holofernes by Judith. There is in the National Library of Florence a small book which belonged to Lucretia, and which was indeed compiled especially for her, in which is contained,

"..la storia dei giudei composta in
 stance per madonna Lucretia de Medici".

64

Since we know that Nerli was in the habit of discussing books with

63) Nerli, Book 5, pp. 103-4. "Tornò in que'tempi da Bologna, dove era Legato il Cardinale de' Medici, Prinzivalle della Stufa, e si ristinse con Filippo Strozzi, tentandolo che dovesse concorrer seco a dovere amazzare il Gonfaloniere per servizio de' Medici. Vedutosi Filippo tentare d'una impresa tanto pericolosa, non volle acconsentire, ma negandolo assolutamente confortò Prinzivalle a salvarsi, ed egli consigliatosi con Lionardo Strozzi, ch'era de' Dieci, e con Matteo suo cugino, rivelò il tutto al Gonfaloniere; ma prima Matteo n'avvisò la donna di Jacopo Salviati, sorella de' Medici, acciocch'ella potesse provvedersi essendo in colpa alcuna, ed ella potette anche avvertire Prinzivalle, perchè e'si salvasse".

64) B.N.F. Magl. VII, 1159. The poem is very religious in tone. It describes how Judith showed the head of Holofernes to his subjects and Nerli argues that if Lorenzino had been a true liberator he would have acted in a similar manner.

Lucretia it is more than possible that he had seen this one in her possession and that he made use of it in comparing the murder of Alessandro with the liberation of the Jews by the young Judith, which is described in very dramatic terms in this poem.

Another of Nerli's relatives, his cousin Giannozzo, may also have provided him with information as he too was politically active. For example, Nerli writes in the Commentari that his cousin was present when the Signoria sent envoys to Malatesta Baglione and it is possible that he told Filippo exactly what had happened on this occasion.⁶⁵ The fact that many of his relatives were closely involved in the events which he describes in the Commentari must have made Nerli's task easier and it also adds to the value of his work. His personal involvement was also of value for, as we have seen in our study of his life, he played an active part in Florentine politics and was never far from the centre of affairs. In the Commentari he refers to his presence in the Great Council when Soderini made his speech of defence there,⁶⁶ to his friendship with the group who met in the Rucellai gardens,⁶⁷ and to his part in the constitutional changes of 1531.⁶⁸ He was also present in Rome when Clement VII was discussing the future government of Florence and was entrusted with a message for the Florentines from the Pope.⁶⁹ All these things he refers

65) Nerli, Book 10, p.238.

66) " " 5, p.108.

67) " " 7, p.138.

68) " " 11, p.256.

69) See Chapter 4, p.144

to in the Commentari, though he says nothing of his governorship in Modena, perhaps preferring to forget this not very successful period of his life, and he says very little of the role which he seems to have played in the election of Duke Cosimo. There are other minor points where Nerli does not make use of his personal knowledge as one might have expected him to do, in particular over the Orti conspiracy against Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, on which occasion Nerli's reticence may have been due to his desire to protect those involved, including possibly himself. Whilst Nerli had a more intimate and first hand knowledge of the events he was describing than did Varchi or Segni, and this was a very valuable source of information to him, it was a somewhat mixed blessing for it could make objectivity more difficult.⁷⁰

We have now examined all the sources of which Nerli made use in the Commentari, but there are certain other works which he consulted which deserve attention, although they cannot strictly speaking be referred to as sources. These are the literary works from which Nerli quotes and which help to make his narrative more interesting. We have already noted Nerli's admiration for Dante and there are other references in the Commentari which show that he also had some knowledge of the other two writers who were most favoured by the sixteenth century, Boccaccio and Petrarch. The Decamerone is quoted only once and, naturally enough, this is when Nerli is referring to the famous fourteenth century plague which

70) See below, p. 276

formed the background for Boccaccio's stories.⁷¹ In Book 10 he quotes briefly from Petrarch on the subject of the Tarquins,⁷² and in his analogy between the murder of Alessandro and that of King Holofernes already mentioned he quotes from Petrarch's triumph of love.⁷³ The references are only brief and it cannot be claimed that they show that Nerli was well-versed in the writings of these two authors, but they do at least show that he was in step with the literary climate of his time. The letterati of the sixteenth century were enthusiastic in their studies of the work of Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch and the academicians in Florence spent a large proportion of their time discussing critically their verse and prose and above all their handling of Tuscan.⁷⁴

More unusual, though by no means uncommon, is the interest which Nerli displays in the works of the poet Burchiello, from whom he quotes on several occasions. Burchiello was born in 1404 and had a barber's shop which,

"..presto divenne il circolo letterario della Firenze del primo quattrocento".

75

He was a colourful figure whose life was constantly dogged by the troubles which he brought on himself because of the turbulent nature of his personality. He wrote topical and satirical sonnets, usually for some specific occasion, and his style became

71) Nerli, Book 2, p.20.

72) " " 10, p.229.

73) " " 12, p.289-90.

74) See Chapter 7, p.319

75) See Domenico di Giovanni detto il Burchiello. Sonetti inediti - ed. Michele Messina. Fl.1952. p.5. and G.Papini - Lezione sopra il Burchiello. Fl.1733.

so well known that it could be instantly recognised, even when he published poems anonymously. Lorenzo de' Medici admired his style and adopted it in some of his own work and Burchiello became well known in Italy and in France where his style was also copied. His work enjoyed a period of great popularity in the late fifteenth century and again in the middle and late sixteenth century, for the Giunti brothers produced critical editions of his work in 1552 and 1558. His sonnets, which were frequently political in content, were often difficult to understand since they were full of topical allusions and double meanings, the significance of which was soon lost. This type of word play was also used by Nerli in some of his letters to Machiavelli⁷⁶ and it may have been this aspect of Burchiello's work which especially appealed to him. We have already seen that Nerli was by no means devoid of a sense of humour.⁷⁷ The way in which the poet manipulated words in order to fit a particular situation can be seen very clearly in the quotation from one of his sonnets which Nerli gives in Book 3 of the Commentari. In discussing the division between the Medicean and the Pitti factions Nerli writes,

"..e si chiamò la parte de' Medici quella del Piano,
e l'altra di Messer Luca si chiamo del Poggio.
Onde volendo il Burchiello dire in uno de' suoi
sonetti d'uno de' Martelli, che stava sospeso e dubbio

76) Machiavelli - Lettere. Nerli to Machiavelli. September 6, 1525. "Ho bene havuto caro d'intendere d'onde tanto favore sia proceduto et poichè dipende di Barberia, et da qualche altra vostra gentilezza, come voi medesimo attestate per la vostra,..". Nerli is making a sly dig at his friend in this letter.

77) See Chapter 5, p. 210

da quale delle due parti dovesse tenere, sotto il nome del Grifone, che quella casa de' Martelli porta per arme, disse di quell'animale:

'E non sa, s'e's'è 'n poggio, o s'e's'è 'n piano'". 78

These quotations from poems and from other literary works serve to make the narrative of the Commentari more interesting and lively and so too do the references which Nerli makes to the sermons of Savonarola and his references to contemporary sayings and rhymes. He quotes briefly from the friar on two occasions, both in Book 4 and both in connection with the setting up of the Consiglio Grande, which Savonarola maintained was ordained by God. The room for the meetings of the Council was prepared so quickly that Nerli writes,

"..che pareva certamente che fusse vero quello che ne diceva il Savonarola; 'che gli angioli in quell'opera s'essercitassero in luogo de'muratori ed operai, perchè più presto fusse finita'".

79

78) Nerli, Book 3, p.50. See also Book 3, p.45. On the importance of Pucci Nerli writes,

"..che da lui e non da' Medici fu denominata questa parte detta Puccina, e così fu chiamata volgarmente non solo in Firenze, ma anche molto più fuori dagli avversari e da' fuorusciti, come si dimostra chiaramente in uno de' Sonetti del Burchiello, che dice, volendo spiegar quella parte:

Bench'io mangi a Gaeta pan di Puccio,
Diventato però non son Puccino".

79) Nerli, Book 4, p.66. See also Book 4, p.65, where there is another quotation from Savonarola. This refers to the friar's contention that the Council was willed by God. "...e venne in tanta opinione di santità ch'egli ardì predicando di dire: 'che Dio voleva così, e che per Divina volontà si doveva fondare e creare il consiglio grande, affermando d'essere stato in cielo ambasciadore de' Fiorentini, e che Cristo s'era fatto Re particolare del popolo Fiorentino'; come leggendo le sue prediche si puo facilmente vedere".

In quoting Savonarola's words in this way Nerli is conforming with a standard convention of the time, for it was very common to go so far as to report in histories complete speeches which were supposed to have been delivered at the time, although in fact they were frequently inventions of the author.⁸⁰ Nerli himself seldom uses this technique, although he does quote such things as a sonnet which earned exile for its author, Francesco Cei. This sonnet was written, as were many such sonnets, during the time when Florence was bitterly divided between supporters and opponents of Savonarola, and expressed forcibly Cei's opinion on the matter. He wrote,

"O Dio per qual peccato
 Consenti tu, che Firenze rovini
 A petizioni di quattro cittadini
 Ambiziosi, e fini,
 Ch'han fatto sottilmente un idolatri
 Solo per usurparsi questa patria?"

81

Such illustrations are a valuable way of showing the climate of public opinion at the time, and Nerli gives another when he is writing in Book 4 of the hatred of the Dieci della guerra which developed in the city. He says that the people, because they were convinced,

"..che il magistrato de'Dieci della guerra fusse
 la cagione delle guerre e però fussero anche
 cagione delle gravezze, che sì gravi in que'tempi
 imponevano, non volevano anche vincere che s'
 eleggessino i Dieci, e avevan messo certo motto a

80) See Chapter 8, p.348

81) Nerli, Book 5, p.74.

modo di proverbio in rima, che diceva:
 Nè Dieci, nè danari
 Non fan pe'nostri pari".

82

The fact that Nerli includes such quotations in his narrative to interest his reader and in order to add 'body' to his work shows the care with which he must have compiled his history. The care which he took over criticizing his sources is more difficult to judge and it is a problem to which we will return,⁸³ but it might be mentioned that Nerli differs in this matter from other historians, such as Varchi and Segni, because of the large extent to which he relied on his own knowledge of affairs coupled with that of his relatives. It is true that he must have had to exercise his critical faculties on the material which he found in the archives, but in the main it was not upon such written sources that he relied. If an earlier autograph manuscript of his work were to be discovered one would expect it to contain jottings of events which he himself remembered, rather than extracts from the work of other writers.

It now remains to make certain more general comments on Nerli's theme and his approach to it, although this point will also be touched upon in the two following chapters. The Commentari were written in twelve books, together with a preface

82) Nerli, Book 4, p.82. It is possible that Nerli is here making use of Guicciardini, who quotes this proverb in Storie Fiorentine, Chapter 18, p.178.

83) See Chapter 8, p.354

which outlines the contents of each book and indicates the aim which Nerli had in mind in writing. Of all the histories which were produced in the sixteenth century Nerli's is the one which has the most coherence and form, for he keeps his theme constantly in mind and seldom deviates from his chosen path. He is concerned with the establishment in the city of the Medicean principate and wants to demonstrate to his readers why it was necessary,

"..riformare una tanta Repubblica sotto il governo d'un solo Principe..".

84

He is concerned almost exclusively with the internal events in Florence, a fact which also helps to give his work coherence, and he tries to demonstrate that, after the many divisions and faction quarrels which have marred the city's history, she had achieved peace and stability with the establishment of a Medicean prince. When Nerli started to write in 1534 this prince was Alessandro de'Medici, but by the time he had completed his work Duke Cosimo was ruling in Florence, and it is his reign which Nerli portrays as having achieved peace for the city at last.

Nerli's theme that the government of one man is the best is, of course, not by any means an original one. The idea that the rule of one just and able man is to be preferred above any other form of government is derived from the political thought of Plato and Aristotle. The latter, whilst he had little hope that a man of the necessary high standard could be found, envisaged the rule

84) Nerli, Preface.

85

of such a prince as being preferable to the rule of a democracy. Savonarola, during the days of Nerli's youth, had taken the opposite position ~~reverse of the picture~~ and argued against the rule of one man because it was open to the abuse of tyranny and the rule of a tyrant was the most abhorrent form of government possible. In his attack on Lorenzo de' Medici, whom he considered had been a tyrant, Savonarola also claimed that Florence was not suited to the government of a monarch because popular institutions were rooted in the customs of the city and he laid stress on the importance of popular consent to a ruler. He made use of the Aristotelian concept that people and states differed according to their geographical position to claim that, whatever form of government was best in itself, the best form for Florence was popular rule.⁸⁶ Machiavelli, on the other hand, had seen in the rule of one strong man a solution to the chaos around him and, making use of his experience of the ways of Cesare Borgia, had constructed his famous 'blue-print' for an absolute ruler, Il Principe. For Machiavelli, however, the rule of a prince had been a temporary measure, necessary if Italy in general and Florence in particular were to recover, but to be dispensed with when this recovery was complete. It was with this sort of aim in mind that the Florentines had earlier appointed Walter of Brienne Duke of Athens to rule over them for one year in a period of

85) Aristotle - The Politics. Penguin. 1962. Especially Book 3, Chapters 16, 17 and 18.

86) Savonarola - Trattato. Book 1. "...nella città di Firenze il governo civile è ottimo, benchè in sè non sia ottimo".

acute stress, hoping that in this way they would be able to solve their problems.

Equally common was Nerli's stress on the divisions in the city, which he saw as being at the root of all her problems, for historians from Villani onwards had shown how both popular and aristocratic rule had been ineffective because of the internal dissention, jealousy and friction between the classes. That the rule of one man, who could provide a focus for government and aid harmony in the city, was the only solution to Florence's problems had not only been frequently suggested by historians and political theorists, but had even been attempted by the republicans in the opening years of the sixteenth century. The appointment of Piero Soderini as Gonfaloniere of Justice for life had been an attempt to find the necessary coherence and stability, but Soderini had found it impossible to control or satisfy the diverse bodies of opinion in the city and had proved inadequate to the demands made upon him. Hence the city had turned once more to the Medici and with their reinstatement had come a nostalgic longing for the 'Golden Age' of Lorenzo il Magnifico, which was idealized to symbolize what was felt to be lacking in contemporary life. Nerli, who had been a child when Lorenzo had died, must have shared this feeling to a certain extent, especially in view of the attachment of Jacopo Salviati to the days of his father-in-law, and this, together with his own adherence to the Medici cause, must have led to the conception of the Commentari in this form of wholehearted support for

principates. It is also possible that Nerli initially intended to present the work to Alessandro as a means of ingratiating himself and gaining employment for himself and his family.

Since the Commentari could be considered as a virtual 'apologia' for princely rule and since he was a known supporter of the Medici, Nerli has been accused of writing with excessive bias towards the Medicean party.⁸⁷ We shall consider Nerli's attitude in the following chapter and also compare it with those of other historians, but it is worth considering his bias towards the Medici at this point. It would be foolish to expect to find complete objectivity in Nerli's work, or indeed in that of any of the sixteenth century historians. The modern historiographical approach was beginning to develop but as yet it had a long way to go. Nerli is, naturally enough, flattering in his remarks about the various members of the Medici family with whom he is concerned. He praises Cosimo il Vecchio for earning the love and respect of the people and for ruling without recourse to arms, pointing out how Cosimo laid firm foundations for the Medicean state. Il Magnifico too earns Nerli's praise, though his account of his reign is surprisingly brief, whilst he is equally brief in his account of how Piero de'Medici lost power. He praises the rule in the city of Cardinal Giulio de'Medici, who he says ruled,

87)e.g. Busini - Lettere. To Varchi. May 12, 1549. Referring to the works of Nerli and other writers he says, "Queste cose così dette sono adulazioni troppo evidenti; non che il duca non sia tale come e 'dicono, o maggiore; ma gli uomini savi non adulano così apertamente;...". Clearly the republican Busini felt that Nerli was excessively biased in his approach to the Medici.

"..con molta universale soddisfazione dei cittadini", 88
 but he is critical of government under Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, though he attaches a proportion of the blame for this to the Duke's secretary, Goro Gheri. He does not, as do some of the republican historians, present Duke Alessandro as an unjust tyrant, but nor does he give him excessive praise, treatment which is in fact reserved only for Duke Cosimo, Nerli's nephew and patron. That Nerli is pro-Medicean is obvious, but he is not so to an unreasonable degree. It may be true that he is not sufficiently critical of Piero, mainly due to his omission of the foreign policy which he pursued and which was a vital factor in his downfall, but it is also true that this same sin of omission means that he loses an opportunity to bestow more fulsome praise on Lorenzo. Machiavelli writes in more glowing terms of il Magnifico than does Nerli. Nor is Nerli afraid to criticize the Medici when he feels this to be necessary, and he does not spare Clement VII, writing that at his death he left,

"..i nipoti suoi nimicissimi l'uno dell'altro, e lo stato e il governo di Firenze con molti nemici fuori ribelli o confinati e con molti de'primi cittadini malcontenti dentro".

89

It is possible that Nerli's censure of Clement was a result of the way in which, while governor in Modena, he had suffered because of the Pope's mismanagement of the League of Cognac.

It is perhaps more obvious that Nerli is biased in his

88) Nerli, Preface.

89) " Book 11, p.273.

treatment of the republican governments of Florence than in his attitude towards the Medici, and his is to a large extent the kind of bias against popular government which is typical of the ottimati class as a whole, rather than of the Medicean ottimati in particular. As far as Nerli was concerned popular government was invariably bad and chaotic, bringing out in the populace the worst elements of greed and inefficiency. In Book I Nerli emphasises the way in which people unused to power can be corrupted by it, writing of them that

"..talmente piacque loro quella grandezza, la quale alla nobiltà sollevano con tant'aspre e forti leggi proibire, che diventarono così insolenti, e non meno odiosi agli minori artefici e alla plebe, che si fussero già stati i grandi a loro,..".

90

Rarely, in Nerli's opinion, is republican government efficient and he is very scornful of the chaotic and unsuccessful way in which the Pisan war was conducted, for

"..essendo ritornati i cittadini in su'disordini passati, e non volendo eleggere il magistrato de' Dieci, nè ordinare anche l'altre provvisioni necessarie, con difficoltà si potevano spedire le faccende pubbliche, e le cose della guerra".

91

He exhibits equal scorn about the circumstances of chaos in which Capponi took over the government of the city. ⁹² Yet, although his criticism is harsh, it is not altogether unjustified, for the

90) Nerli, Book 1, p.18.

91) " " 5, p.89.

92) " " 8, p.165. He comments disapprovingly, "..e di tal maniera in pochi giorni si travagliarono tante cose e si fecero tante mutazioni e deliberaronsi tante varie provvisioni e tante leggi tutte contrarie l'una all'altra, per insinochè si fermò in tutto il governo popolare nel modo, e nella forma sopra discorsa".

republicans themselves saw the danger inherent in this form of government and were prepared to take steps to avoid it. Donato Giannotti, for example, whilst he wants as many people as possible to take part in government, realizes that it is vital that certain matters should be discussed by a few worthy men⁹³ only.

None of the ardent desire for 'Libertà', which is to be found in the pages of Varchi, Nardi, Giannotti and Pitti is to be found in Nerli, for to him 'Libertà' is inseparable from the inevitable chaos of republican rule. He is not, however, completely unreasonable in his treatment of the republican regimes of either Soderini or Capponi, although he could not be said to be in favour of them. He allows that Soderini did in fact have certain praise-worthy characteristics and that these justified his election as Gonfaloniere,⁹⁴ but when he comes to discuss the way in which Soderini actually governed he is less flattering. He does praise the Gonfaloniere for his "buono governo" and his "buone opere", but he says that he did not have a true appreciation of his situation and that he

"..credette troppo colla pazienza, godendo,
come si dice, il beneficio del tempo..",

95

93)Giannotti - Opere. Discorso Sopra il Fermare il Governo di Firenze. 1527. "...i pochi sariano quelli che consigliassino, e i molti che determinassino".

94)Nerli, Book 5, pp.92-3. "Favorirano ancora Piero, che rimase l'eletto, molte sue degne qualità,..l'aver dato sempre buon conto di se nel ben consigliare la città, e nel bene eseguire le pubbliche faccende che gli erano commesse..".

95)Nerli, Book 5,p.110. Guicciardini - Storie Fiorentine. Book 30, p.332. is also critical of Soderini's government.

a policy which Nerli did not feel was an effective one for governing. As one might expect Nerli is more favourable in his attitude towards Niccolò Capponi, for he had ottimati rather than republican sympathies and had an appreciation of the need for a firm and peaceful basis for the city. Nerli criticizes him for displaying a tendency to play for time as Soderini had done, but says that he,

"..aveva in tutto il tempo della vita sua dato sempre saggio in ogni sua azione così pubblica, come privata, d'essere buono e netto cittadino, e d'animo molto libero ed aveva la riputazione del padre, e degli altri suoi passati, che molto l'illustravano..".

96

In neither case did Nerli seek only to condemn the republic^{an}s and he was not unwilling to give them a certain amount of praise, even if this was not as much as they were given by historians of different political sympathies. It is true to say that he is biased in favour of Medicean rule, but no more so than other historians are biased in favour of republican government, and it is not such an unreasonable bias as to detract to any great extent from the value of his work.

One aspect of the Commentari which is worth discussing is the result, which can be seen in the work, of Nerli's concentration on internal events in the history of Florence, which he emphasises at the expense of external events. Machiavelli, in

96) Nerli, Book 8, p.164. The republican historian Nardi says of Capponi, Book 8, p.154, that he was "..uomo quieto e pacifico di sua natura,..".

writing his history, had felt that foreign affairs should form an integral part of his narrative and that without their inclusion,

"..la nostra istoria sarebbe meno intesa e meno grata". 97 Nerli clearly did not agree with his friend on this point and, whilst he usually includes a few details on foreign affairs these are only brief, with the result that he does not achieve the full and all-inclusive analysis of events which is so impressive in Guicciardini's Storia d'Italia. He says little about the war between the Pope and Lorenzo de'Medici and little about the Pisan war, the result in this case being that he is somewhat unfair to Soderini by omitting to discuss fully the difficulties which the Gonfaloniere had to face. Equally, by omitting to say very much about the foreign policy of Piero de'Medici, which aroused the fears of Lodovico il Moro and thus jeopardized Piero's state, he succeeds in giving Piero a better press than he deserves. It is very difficult to decide in such cases as these whether the omissions are the result of Nerli taking a biased viewpoint or whether they are simply the result of his policy of giving coherence to his work by dealing almost entirely with internal developments. It is quite possible that the omissions were made for the latter reason, for when Nerli is dealing with Cesare Borgia, whilst he gives enough information to show the repercussions which Borgia's actions had on Florence, he does not

97)Machiavelli - Istorie Fiorentine. Book 7, I, p.451.

go into great detail, saying of the Duke's downfall only that

"..lo stato del suo Duca di Valenza disparve non
altrimenti che si faccia il fumo in aria, o in acqua
la schiuma".

98

It is perhaps fair to say that the advantages of Nerli's concentration on internal events outweigh the disadvantages, for he does in the main give sufficient information to provide a true picture of affairs whilst he does not, as do some of his fellow-historians, digress into long descriptions of negotiations and campaigns not directly relevant to his theme.

Nerli writes in a style which, although it lacks the control and balance of Guicciardini's prose, is easy to read and is in the main concise. The one criticism which could be levelled against it is that it is rather dry and unexciting, but we have seen the use which Nerli made of his sources in an attempt to add interest to the narrative and he himself sometimes writes in a more literary style. His description of Alessandro's visit to Naples, for example, shows his appreciation of the importance of the occasion, and his description of the Duke's murder is one of the best written passages in the whole work. We shall see the value of Nerli's history to his contemporaries and successors when we examine in the following chapter the extent to which the Commentari were used by other historians; suffice it to say at this point that, whatever faults it may have, it succeeds in adhering more closely to its theme than do many of the other

98) Nerli, Book 5, p.94.

histories of the sixteenth century. Nerli's attitude to religion and fortuna and his interest in the characters of the men whom he is describing are amongst the matters which we will consider in the final chapter, in order to reach a true assesment of Nerli as an historian and the place which he merits among the writers of the sixteenth century.

Chapter 7 - Nerli and his fellow historians.

Having discussed the sources upon which Nerli drew for the Commentari and the debt which he owed to earlier and contemporary historians it is time to consider the extent to which other historians made use of his work and the relationship which existed between Nerli and his fellow historians. An examination of the lives of these various historians, of their various political outlooks and of the way in which these outlooks are reflected in their histories will help to give a general picture of historiography at this time as well as enabling us to see Nerli himself in clearer perspective.¹ We shall be able to see the considerable extent to which later historians made use of Nerli's work and the degree to which he formed part of the group of historians writing under Duke Cosimo and, with this end in view, we shall examine the social and cultural organisation of the ducal court and the function of the Florentine Academy and its members.² We shall consider first how much Nerli's life had in common with the lives of some of his fellow historians.

In our discussion of Nerli's sources we have seen that he owed a debt to both the major historians of the sixteenth century, Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Nerli's life bore little resemblance to that of Machiavelli, though their paths did cross in the Rucellai gardens. Machiavelli's social position was

1) For details of the lives of the historians see B.N.F. the Poligrafo Gargano.

2) The most recent study of the sixteenth century historians as a group is Von Albertini. See below, Chapter 1, p.14 for a discussion of works on this subject.

inferior to Nerli's but it is possible to draw some parallels ^{between} Filippo and Guicciardini. Both were born into wealthy ottimati families in the Santo Spirito quarter of Florence and both served the Medici in official capacities in the city and outside. To some extent Nerli might be considered as a 'lesser' Guicciardini, for he possessed neither Guicciardini's talents nor his ambition and, although Nerli always retained his position in public life, he never achieved really high office. Never did he play the dominating role in politics that Guicciardini did, for Francesco's life amply illustrated his constantly expressed contention that the ottimati were the class most fitted to rule. One of the most striking characteristics of Guicciardini's writing is his belief in the effectiveness of ottimati rule, and although he was far from unaware of the dangers of oligarchy he could with some justice be described as an ottimato ⁴ 'par excellence'. Nerli, although he had a certain natural affinity for the class into which he was born, also had a certain reserve towards it, a reserve which was the result of his belief that the quarrels and

3) Guicciardini was in fact related to Nerli, as well as connected by marriage. Guglielmetta de' Nerli, sister of Nerli's grandfather Tanai, married Guicciardini's grandfather, Jacopo Guicciardini. See Gamurrini, op.cit. Vol.1, p.12. and below, Chapter 2, p.33

4) Guicciardini, Dialogo. Book 1, p.19. Capponi expresses the ottimati position in his comment on the changes of 1494. "La intenzione nostra fu cavare la città dalla potenza di uno e riducerla in libertà, come si è fatto. Vero è che desideravamo non mettere el governo assolutamente nel popolo, ma in mano di cittadini principali e di più qualità in modo che fussi più tosto uno stato di uomini da bene che tutto popolare;..". This form of government was very attractive to Guicciardini though without blinding him to the dangers of the ottimati factions.

factions of the ottimati had caused much misery in Florence in the past. Nerli's life and career do to a certain extent 'mirror' those of Guicciardini, but whereas Guicciardini is committed in favour of ottimati government Nerli, a more 'average' member of the class, is rather more reserved in his attitude. Of all the historians of the sixteenth century the one who perhaps resembles Nerli most closely from the point of view of class and life, though not, as we shall see, from the point of view of political outlook, is Bernardo Segni.

Segni came, like Nerli, from an established ottimati family, a family which claimed that it originated from one of the families of the

"..nobilissima ed antica citta di Fiesole..".

5

Bernardo's early political upbringing was as a republican, for his father, Lorenzo, was married to Camilla di Piero Capponi, sister of the famous Niccolò Capponi. If Nerli gained his early political training from his grandfather, uncle and father, Segni most probably gained his from his uncle, and the ottimati tradition of the family, for his father had little interest in politics and said that all he wanted was to

"..starmi nella pace mia, e non aver cagione di travagliarmi mai in cose di stato".

6

Like Benedetto de'Nerli, Lorenzo Segni was also a man of learning

5)Alessandro Segni - Memorie della Famiglia de'Segni. Riccard. Cod. 1882,f.4v. Segni, an eighteenth century descendant of the family, compiled a family history from documents in his possession. He says that, though this was a common claim, that of the Segnis was more justifiable than many.

6)Op.cit.f.104.Quoted from Lorenzo's Libro di Ricordanze.

and he clearly preferred his books to civic affairs. In spite of the fact that the Segni family was republican in sympathy this did not mean that it was in any way removed from the ottimati circle to which the Nerli and the Salviati belonged. We have seen, for example, that it was through Jacopo Salviati that Bernardo's uncle, Niccolò Capponi, organized his negotiations with Pope Clement VII.⁷ Lorenzo Segni, who in spite of his reluctance did play a political role under Capponi's rule, was nevertheless respected by the Medici Pope Clement,

"..che parlò sempre onorevolmente di lui,..", 8

and Bernardo claims that he was told by another uncle, Francesco Vettori, that his father had been put forward for a place in the senate which was set up under Alessandro, but that his name had been removed when the number of the proposed senate had been cut from eighty to forty-eight. The position and relationships of the Segni family illustrate the fact that it is always dangerous to view one family, or even one man, as belonging exclusively to one political group. The distinction between Republicans and Mediceans was not nearly as 'cut and dried' as the terms might suggest, for Florentine society was closely knit and the ottimati class in particular was subject to radical changes of view, according to the circumstances of the moment.

Bernardo Segni studied, as did Benedetto Varchi, at Padua,⁹

⁷) See above, Chapter 4, p. 135

⁸) A. Segni, op.cit. f. 112v. quoted from Bernardo's Ricordanze.

⁹) Also like Varchi Segni had close links with the Strozzi family and some of his correspondence with them is to be seen in A.S.F. C.S. T.S. 164.

adding this training to the advantage which he enjoyed in common with Nerli, of a talented and cultured family. During the last ten years of his life Lorenzo Segni lost much of his wealth, being hard hit, as Nerli seems to have been, at the time of the siege,

"..quando per far danari si vendevan dal Pubblico i beni de luoghi che convenne poi renderli, senza riavere ne il prezzo pagato, di cui buona parte aveva Lorenzo presa a cambio..".

10

Thus when Bernardo married Gostanza Ridolfi in 1531 it was partly in order to improve the financial position of his family. Clearly he was successful for his biographer tells us that he was able to leave his children a substantial amount of property and assets.¹¹ Under Duke Cosimo Segni was employed, as was Nerli, in official capacities, another sign that the republican sympathies of the family were not such as to make good relations with the Medici impossible. Unlike Nerli Segni does not seem to have held internal offices in Florence, but he was appointed to posts in the dominio, serving in Volterra in 1543 and in Cortona in 1547.¹² Cavalcanti also claims that in 1541 Cosimo sent Segni on an important mission

10)A.Segni, op.cit. f.110v. quoted from Bernardo's Ricordanze.

11)Cavalcanti, in his life of Segni in the 1778 edition of the Storie Fiorentine, writes, "Lasciò Bernardo al suo figliuolo molti beni di fortuna, e fra gli altri una Casa Lungarno allato a' Ricasoli, una Villa a Mariguolle posseduta al presente da'figliuoli di Orazio Corsi, e rilevanti somme di contanti, che si trafficavano in vari negozi..".(This section is not paginated).

12)On Volterra see Tratte 72, f.7 and C.M. 385, 403 and 1174. On Cortona see Tratte 72, f.8 and C.S. P.S. 15, f.142-143 which, for August 27, 1547, has "Informatione et commissione data a Bernardo Segni, nuovo capitano di Cortona".

13

to Ferdinand, king of the Romans, but Alessandro Segni questions the truth of this statement and there is no evidence to support it in the Carteggio Mediceo.¹⁴ It would seem that, in spite of the considerable interest in external affairs which Segni exhibits in his history, his political and administrative experience was, like Nerli's, limited to Italy. Segni was somewhat younger than Nerli and had more pronounced intellectual interests, as we shall see when we come to discuss the Academy and its members, but he belonged to the same class, mixed with the same people and, like Nerli, had a political and official career of minor importance. Both men fall into the category of able men of average talent, neither of them being an extremist in his political views or a genius.

We have definite proof that Nerli and Segni were on reasonably friendly terms with each other in a letter which Nerli wrote to Bernardo on the death of Paolo Giovio, Bishop of Nocera, another of the historians who wrote under the auspices of Duke Cosimo.¹⁵ That Segni had read the Commentari is clear from

13)Cavalcanti,op.cit. says Segni returned from the mission "con gran riputazione".

14)There is no reference to the mission in the volumes of the C.M. which cover 1541, i.e. Vols. 1,3,4,350,351,352,354,355,356,638,639 and 1170, nor in Vol.652, which contains the reports of the Imperial ambassadors at this time.

15)C.S. P.S. 139,f.33. Nerli, from Arezzo, to Segni. December 15, 1552. "Havendo commodità, venendo costà il Bargello, di scrivere, non voglio manchare di avisarvi come per lettere di Firenze ho inteso la morte del Jovio, il quale, secondo mi scrive il Guardi, passò a l'altra vita la notte delli XI del presente; et hebbe breve male di dolori cholici et di fiancho, et cosi anderà a scrivere le storie dell'altro mondo".

references to the work which he makes in the Storie Fiorentine. In Segni's preface, which covers briefly the previous history of Florence, he talks of the troubled state of the city and of her divisions,

"Delle quali tutte mutazioni di Stati, seguite in Firenze nel tempo detto di sopra infino a'tempi nostri, ne ha Filippo Nerli in certa sua Opera trattato molto particolarmente, e con gran diligenza". 16

It is a tribute to the quality of Nerli's work that Segni, a man of differing views, can make this comment on it. Segni also refers to Nerli when he deals with Clement VII's plans for the government of Florence in 1531-32.¹⁷ Segni was working on his history between 1553 and 1558, by which time the Commentari had been completed and would have been available for him to consult. His was a work of different scope from Nerli's for Segni, who also wrote a biography of his uncle,¹⁸ began his history at the time when Niccolò Capponi was Gonfaloniere in Florence, and continued his work until his death, at which time his narrative had reached the time of the capture of Siena by Duke Cosimo. The work is also wider in scope than Nerli's for Segni had a greater

16) Bernardo Segni - Storie Fiorentine. Milan. 1805. Preface.

17) Segni, Book 5, p.343. "...e che il Papa ci concorresse da sè è certo, perchè Filippo de' Nerli, che era a Roma in quel tempo, pigliando licenza dal Papa, gli disse Sua Santità: 'dì a quei Cittadini, che io voglio, che lo Stato s'assetti in modo, che e' non abbiano a venir più colla Casa mia fuori, quando perderemo lo Stato'". Nerli probably told Segni of this incident. See also Chapter 4, p.144

18) Sanesi - La Vita di Niccolò Capponi. Pistoia. 1896. argues that this life was written by Donato Giannotti, though Alessandro Segni attributes it to Bernardo, as does Varchi.

interest in external affairs and often deals with these in
 19
 considerable detail.

Evidently, while Segni was working on his history, he was in touch with Nerli and was aided by him. In Book 4, discussing the disagreement between the Signoria and Malatesta Baglione Segni writes,

"Alle quale parole tacette Malatesta, dubitando di non esser fatto prigione in quel giorno, e di poi non più volle andare in Palazzo, ma 'in scriptis' mandava il suo parere, sottoscritto dal Signore Stefano Colonna, i quali scritti ho veduti io per mezzo di Filippo Nerli, che avvutigli da Ser Vecchia Perugino, me ne fece parte;..".

20

Clearly Nerli was on sufficiently good terms with Segni not to object to sharing his source of information with him. Naturally, since the period with which he is dealing is more compact than Nerli's, Segni is able to give more detail in his narrative and for this reason it is sometimes difficult to see the links which exist between the two histories. There are, however, certain minor similarities of text, illustrated below, which suggest that Segni was influenced by the Commentari, but it is necessary to reiterate here the warning given in the previous chapter that some similarities are inevitable when two writers are dealing with the same events.

Nerli, Book 7, p.151
 "..e Roma fu tanto crudelmente sacchegiata..".

Segni, Book 1, p.6.
 "..e Roma fu miserabilmente sacchegiate..".

19) Segni, Books 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 gives a great deal of information on the Turkish conquests.

20) Segni, Book 4, p.273.

Nerli, Book 10, p.226.
 "..lasciò la guardia d'Empoli
 troppo debole e si fidò molto
 più che non bisognava d'Andrea
 Giugni,..".

Segni, Book 4, p.255.
 "Il Ferruccio adunque,
 consegnata ad Andrea la
 guardi d'Empoli, se n'
 uscì con mille fanti e
 cento Cavalli..".
 (Segni gives much more
 detail than Nerli).

There is also a link between the accounts which the two historians give of the murder of Duke Alessandro, in spite of the fact that Nerli makes his account a comparison between Lorenzino and Judith, killer of Holofernes, whilst Segni includes in his account the conversation which he claims took place between the assassin and his accomplice. The examples below show the way in which Segni was influenced by Nerli's account.

Nerli, Book 12, p.287.
 "Di tal maniera lasciò Lorenzo
 il Duca serrato a chiave in
 quella camera,..".

Segni, Book 7, p.124.
 "Entro il primo Lorenzo
 in camera, dove aveva il
 Duca serrato a chiave,..!"

Book 12, p.288
 "..si rizzò per difendersi,
 e co'denti, non avendo altre
 armi, prese Lorenzo per un
 dito della mano di manierachè
 forse l'avvrebbe fermo;..".

Book 7, p.124.
 "Ma rizzatosi, e gridando
 'ah traditore', prese un
 dito a Lorenzo colla
 bocca,..".

Whilst the accounts are not identical there is sufficient link between them to suggest that Segni was making use of the Commentari in composing his own history, and similarly when Segni describes the constitution which was set up under Duke Alessandro it would appear that he is basing his account of Nerli's much more detailed description of the new form of government.

21) See Chapter 4, p.155

22) See Nerli, Book 11, pp.262-68, Segni, Book 5, pp.344-45.

If Nerli's Commentari proved of value to Segni they were of equal use to another ottimati historian of the period, Jacopo Pitti. Less is known of Pitti's life than of the lives of other sixteenth century historians and he does not emerge as a strong personality, although as we shall see he played an active role in the Florentine Academy. Like Segni and Nerli he belonged to the ottimati class but he was a good deal younger than Nerli, being born in 1519 and dying in 1589. Like the other two historians Pitti too served Duke Cosimo in an official capacity. He became a senator in 1560 and in 1572 he was one of the ambassadors sent to express the loyalty of Florence to Pope Gregory XIII.²³ Unlike Nerli and Segni Pitti held Republican sentiments which he expressed strongly in his various works and which seem to have been more passionate and heartfelt than the Republican views of Segni. His views are most clearly expressed in his Apologia dei Cappucci in which he delivers a violent attack on the doctrines expressed by Guicciardini in his Storia d'Italia.²⁴ The Apologia is in the form of a dialogue between Bernardo de' Medici, Piero Capponi and Agnolo Guicciardini, all of whom are given classical names, previously associated with certain classical figures.²⁵

23) A.S.F. Priorista Mariani. Vol.1, f.55.

24) The Apologia was published in A.S.I. Vol.4, Part 2, 1853. His Istoria Fiorentina was published in A.S.I. Vol.1, 1842, with his Vita di Antonio Giacomini Tebalducci. He also wrote Annali dell' Accademia, Del ritorno di Gaio Ciaverer Pontefice Massimo dalli antipodi in Piano, Libro Primo, and Lezioni Accademiche, Poesie.

25) A note to the published version of the Apologia says that the speakers are Bernardo de' Medici (referred to as Marchetto), Massimo Piero Capponi, (Publio, Juvenal), and Agnolo Guicciardini, (Tito, Graverotto). It is not clear who is meant by Massimo.

During the course of the dialogue Nerli's name is mentioned several times and it is evident that Pitti was conversant with the Commentari amongst other histories. For example, in discussing the conspiracy against Cardinal Giulio de' Medici in 1522 he writes,

"Ma, come ne scrive Filippo de' Nerli, le andarono tanto innanzi, che egli non sa come il cardinale arebbe poi possuto tenerla,..". 26

Clearly Pitti is prepared to make use of Nerli in order to bolster his case against Guicciardini, although later on he is less than flattering to Nerli, questioning the validity of his narrative in a most bitter tone. In discussing the role ascribed by various historians to Roberto Pucci in the re-instatement of Petrucci in Siena he writes,

"..se i Liberini avessero fatta sì bella impresa, la saria stata narrata per tante trombe, ch'averieno intronata la Italia: ma l'essere il Pucci suocero della figliuola del Guicciardino, glie lo fece stiacciare. Il Jovio e il Nerli le guazzarono, per rispetto di Clemente e della fazione loro amica: sì che, vedete che fede si può prestare agli scrittori moderni". 27

In spite of the bitterness of this complaint, however, Pitti did not think so little of the Commentari as to scorn to make use of it as a source for his own history of Florence, as can be deduced from a comparison of the two texts. Like Segni Pitti did not finish his work and the last two books are merely fragments. Also Pitti's preoccupation with contemporary events is such that his description of the earlier history of Florence is briefer than those given by either Segni or Nerli. The links between the

26) Apologia, Publio, p.328.

27) " " p.337.

Commentari and Pitti's Istoria Fiorentina are only evident in certain sections, but the texts are sufficiently alike to show that Pitti did make use of what Nerli had written, as well as of a number of other sources.²⁸ In the passages below, for example, the same kind of similarity of expression as we found between Nerli and Segni suggests that Pitti was making use of the Commentari.

Nerli, Book 7, p.139

"..e così ebbe Zanobi agio colla fuga a salvarsi, e Luigi Alamanni, che si trovava alle possessioni di Figghine di Giovanni Serristori suo cognato, essendo avvisato del caso del Ghiacceto, si potette medesimamente salvare,..".

Pitti, Book 2, p.128.

"Scappò dalla città Zanobi, dagli amici avvertito: e l'Alamanno, avvisatone, alla villa di Giovanni Serristori suo cognato sicuramente si dileguò;..".

Book 8, p.178.

"..ed amendue avrebbero voluto rinunciare tali ambascerie. Ma perchè secondo gli ordini della città non era lecito a'cittadini rinunciare le legazioni, senza allegare giusti impedimenti da essere approvati da'Signori, e Collegi,..".

Book 2, p.166.

"Non era permesso ai cittadini rinunciare tali gradi senza lecito impedimento, da essere però da'Signori e dal Collegio approvato:..".

In spite of the fact that Pitti and Nerli differed considerably in their political view-points there are occasions upon which they are in agreement, a proof that, in spite of his criticism, Pitti found, as did Segni, that Nerli's narrative was reasonably accurate and objective. In discussing the change of government in 1512, for example, they both agree that there were men in Florence who had supported the return of the Medici simply through their dislike of Soderini, and who did not in fact support

²⁸) See below, Chapter 8, p.358 for Pitti's use of his sources.

the Medicean form of government but merely wanted what they felt to be their fair share of government and power. The two historians show remarkably similar views on this point.²⁹

In some sections of his work however, Pitti seems to make use of other sources in preference to Nerli, as over his description of the 1494 constitution and the changes which followed the burning of Savonarola, where there is no sign of any connection between the texts. Like Segni Pitti gives more detail of external events than does Nerli; for example, he gives more on the effect which the activities of Cesare Borgia produced in Florence. Pitti is one of the more critical of the sixteenth century historians in his approach towards the sources at his disposal as we shall see in the following chapter. He may have used Nerli only for certain parts of his narrative but the textual similarities of the two works, together with the references which he makes to Nerli in the Apologia, make it evident that the Commentari was an important source for him.

The three histories of Nerli, Segni and Pitti are especially interesting because they demonstrate the differing viewpoints on Florentine affairs which it was possible for three members of the ottimati class in the sixteenth century to hold. Nerli, as we have already discussed, represents the Medicean view and argues that the only way in which a true and lasting solution to the problems and divisions which have troubled the history of the city

29) See Nerli, Book 6, p.111, and Pitti, Book 1, p.103.

is to be found is in the government of a Medicean prince. He does not altogether share Guicciardini's faith in the powers and abilities of the *ottimati*, seeing the threat which their faction quarrels have been in the city, and although he is not entirely uncritical of the Medici he does see a hope of stability in their rule. Pitti, on the other hand, is convinced of the merits of Republican government, even though he himself had been a mere child at the time of the fall of the last Florentine Republic.³⁰ He seems to have a poor opinion of the citizens in general³¹ and of the *ottimati* in particular. He sees the members of his own class as greedy and power-seeking, with no real thought for the good of the city,³² a diagnosis in which he was at least to some extent correct. He writes bitterly against the *ottimati* and is equally scornful of the Medici, detracting from the rule of Lorenzo il Magnifico by saying that often, as on his much-praised trip to Naples, Lorenzo did what he did simply from necessity. Above all Pitti cared, in an idealistic fashion, for liberty, a liberty which was valued by the people and which,

"..e dalla troppa autorità della casa de' Medici,
e dalla ambizioni et avarizia de' potenti, si
vedevano sempre occupare".

33

30) Fueter, op.cit. p.80 accuses Pitti of naive optimism in his attitude to Republics.

31) e.g. Pitti, Book 1, p.25. says the death of Piero di Cosimo caused little trouble because the Florentines were "..una cittadinanza più curiosa dei traffichi privati che dei pubblici affari".

32) Ibid. p.74. He writes bitterly, "..rimirando sempre, con immensa avidità, nella potenza che esercitarono quei cittadini sotto Lorenzo de' Medici, mentrechè egli si serviva di loro per fabbricare la torre del principato in Firenze".

33) Pitti - Vita di Antonio Giacomini Tebalducci. p.142.

It might be argued that Bernardo Segni represents the 'middle way' between the Medicean outlook of Nerli and the extreme and somewhat emotional republicanism of Pitti. He is basically republican in approach, naturally praising the government of Niccolò Capponi and favourable towards Savonarola because of the good republican laws which he introduced. Yet Segni's republican feelings were not so strong as to prevent him coming to terms with the new Medicean government under Cosimo I and thus, since he is writing with the Duke in mind,³⁴ he is not outspoken in his devotion to the republic, preferring, diplomatically, to focus his attention on events outside Florence. Like both Pitti and Nerli Segni is able to see the danger which the ottimati can prove to the peace of the city, saying that men in official posts often try to use these to their own advantage and that

"Nascono di qui le contese, le sette, e le calunnie fra gli uomini grandi, onde a poco a poco ne nasce la morte di quei governi".

35

A reasonably objective view of the members of their class, somewhat tinged with cynicism, is one of the things which these

34) Segni was not entirely uncritical of Duke Cosimo. Book 9, p.184 he writes of Cosimo that "... benchè dotato di gran virtù, e di qualità degne e rare in un Principe giovane, nondimeno nel maneggiar l'imperio abbia in gran parte distrutto l'onore e le facultà della patria e di tutta Toscana;..".

On p.185 Segni recalls showing Cosimo a letter which he had written in his praise and says that the Duke replied, "Desiderei, che fussino tutte vero le cose scritte da voi in mia laude, ma conosco, che una parte di esse non sono in fatto, ma ho ben animo che le sieno, se Dio mi darà grazia da poterle condurre a quel fine".

35) Segni, Book 2, p.73.

three historians seem to have in common, in spite of the differences between their political outlooks. The fact that these differences in outlook do exist points out once again the danger of seeing Florentine politics in over-simplified terms. The city contained a number of different shades of opinion, each held with varying degrees of devotion and sincerity.

The extent to which devotion to a political cause could be tempered by expediency can be seen in the life of one of the most important historians of this period, Benedetto Varchi. Unlike the other three historians with whom we have been dealing Varchi did not come from the *ottimati* class and his life was not one of public service. He was essentially a man of letters, who lived on the patronage of those willing to support him, and lacked the stability and automatic status which Nerli enjoyed through his birth, marriage and financial standing. Varchi's family originated from Monte Varchi in the Florentine dominion, though he was in fact brought up in Florence itself. He thwarted his father's desire that he should enter the family business and spent many years studying in Pisa, Padua and Bologna. His life as an itinerant scholar came to an end at the time of the siege of Florence, and the return of the Medici saw Varchi living in the house of his patron Lorenzo Strozzi, whom he later followed to Venice and Bologna. The Strozzi proved good patrons to the penurious Varchi, as they did to another Republican historian,

36

Jacopo Nardi, and he partly repaid them by acting as tutor to the sons of Filippo Strozzi. His close association with the leaders of the republican opposition to the rule of Duke Cosimo must have been influential in forming and strengthening Varchi's republican sympathies. He later returned to Padua and won a considerable reputation at the Academy there, until lack of money forced him to give up this way of life. By this time, however, he had gained considerable fame and Duke Cosimo was advised to recall him to Florence. Benedetto, in spite of his republican views, accepted the Duke's invitation to return³⁷ and became a leading figure in the Florentine Academy, receiving visitors from all over Italy. He never held political office and, apart from his inevitable links with the plots which centered on the Strozzi household, he played no part in the political life of the time. Varchi was very much an 'arm-chair historian', especially in contrast to Nerli, whose personal involvement in events we have already described.³⁸

Varchi's Storia Fiorentina was written during the last years of the author's life, at the commission of and with the co-operation of Duke Cosimo. The commission was given to Varchi in

36) See Filippo Strozzi, da nuovi Documenti. A.S.I. Vol.14, 1894. p.75. Strozzi to Vettori in 1535 writes that he has given Nardi money, "...et questo ho fatto non solo per la buona amicitia ho sempre seco hauta, come a ciaschuna è noto, ma anchora parendomi essere tenuto a conservarlo in parte di quegli danni quali esso per mia causa, più che suoi patissi".

37) Nardi, on the other hand, remained true to his principles, and refused the Ducal invitation, staying in exile in Venice.

38) On Varchi see the studies of Gentile and the general works of Fueter and Albertini. See also above, Chapter 1, p.17

1546-47 and the Duke provided him with sufficient means to live on during the time that he was writing. He also made available to him the official documents which he needed in order to compile an accurate history and it was over this matter that Varchi came into not very amicable contact with Nerli, who was himself making use of this same material at the same time. The republican group to which Varchi belonged did not think very highly of Nerli, nor of his ability as an historian. Busini writes scornfully of Nerli's opinion that Florence needed the government of a Prince, saying,

"Onde coloro che fanno questa conclusione (come è Filippo de'Nerli, il quale s'intende più d'annestare peschi in su i meli che d'altro), che e' sia in Firenze necessario un principe, lo fanno per accomodarsi ai tempi, e dar di sè oppenione che e' vuole un principe, avendo molte volte detto di no, e governatosi secondo la fantasia del cardinale suo cognato;..".

39

Nor do Donato Giannotti's relations with Nerli always seem to have been very friendly.

40

Varchi himself refers to Nerli as being
 "...d'animo molle ed effeminato..".

41

The fact that the two historians were both trying to use the same material at the same time caused friction between them and this can be seen in a letter which Varchi wrote to Cosimo's secretary, Guido da Volterra. Varchi explains the difficulties which have confronted Alessandro Davanzati, who has been looking

39) Busini - Lettere. No.24. Undated.

40) Prose Fiorentine. Vol.14. Giannotti to Varchi. March 3, 1536. He is annoyed with Nerli for keeping information about Giovio's work from him. "Maravigliomi bene di Filippo de'Nerli, col quale io conversai domesticamente in Roma, dove mi lesse la sua Istoria, e di tal cosa non mi disse mai cosa alcuna;..".

41) Varchi, Book 5, p.313.

for material in the archives on his behalf and in his letter to Guido he quotes from a letter which he has had from Davanzati. It is worth quoting from this letter of Varchi's at some length because of the light which it throws on the way in which sources were made available to the historians. Davanzati has written, says Varchi, in the following terms;

"Trovai Messer Jacopo Polverini, e gli narraì quanto mi diceste, ed egli mezzo in collora mi mandò al suo Cancelliere Messer Bastiano, acciò mi facessi dare la nota de'libre che voleva, e Messer Bastiano cercando di detta nota, e non la trovando, mi mandò in Palagio al Cancelliere delle Riformagioni a sapere che libri erano quelli; e così detto Cancelliere me ne dette la nota, dicendomi mezza villania, come se io fussi propriamente in causa: bella cosa tenere i libri tre anni; io ho lettere da S.E. di farmegli dare a ogni modo, però digli, che gli mandi, perchè c'è degli altri, che scrivono, e per ordine di S.E. gli abbiamo a dare tali libri, però, se non gli manda, si farà, e dirà. E quello, che scrive è Filippo de' Nerli, che tu non pensasi, ch' e' fusse qualche pedante;..".

42

This letter shows clearly the somewhat undignified 'scramble' for documents which was going on at this time. It also appears from the letter that the official archives were being kept in reasonably good order at this period, probably due at least in part to the interest of Duke Cosimo in such matters.

Not only did Varchi make use of the archives but he also used the manuscript histories of his contemporaries in the compilation of his own history. In 1551, for example, he asked his friend Busini to obtain for him a copy of Guicciardini's Storia d'Italia. One would have perhaps gained the impression

42) Prose Fiorentine, Vol.1, part 4. Varchi to Guido da Volterra, January 9, 1549.

from the evidence given above that Varchi felt so scornful towards Nerli and the two were on such bad terms that Varchi would have made no use at all of the Commentari as a source for his history, but this was not in fact the case. Not only did Varchi make use of the text of the work but he also gained information from Nerli personally, for he writes of facts concerning the loss of Empoli during the time of the siege,

"..secondochè mi raccontò poi Filippo de'Nerli..". 43

Work has already been done on the sources of Varchi's history which makes it unnecessary to deal in detail with the inter-relationship between it and the Commentari, but it is necessary to give some illustration of the extent to which Nerli provided Varchi with a useful source of information if we are to gain a true picture of the size of the debt which later historians owed to Nerli. 44

Of the several collections of notes for his history which Varchi made there is one, in the Biblioteca Nazionale, where his use of Nerli can clearly be seen. 45 Here Varchi has written,

"In questo libro ho notato di mia mano io Bened:
Varchi tutte quelle cose che ho parte trovate
scritte, e parte udite de' altri, e parte vedute o
sapete si appartenente alle cose di Fiorenza....et
massimanerla scritti di F. di N. molto appassionati".

Then follow the various snippets of information and extracts from

43)Varchi, Book 11, p.357.

44)See M.Lupo Gentile - Sulle fonti inedite della Storia Fiorentina di Benedetto Varchi. Sarzana. 1906. Studi Storici 14. In this he examines all the sources which Varchi used and attaches considerable importance to his use of Nerli. See especially p.25-27.

45)B.N.F. Magl. Cl.25, Cod.97.

the writings of others. Gentile points out the close connection which exists between Book 7 of the Commentari and Book 5 of Varchi's history, and this can be seen from the example below;

Nerli, Book 8, p.170.

"..fece Niccolò nel Consiglio maggiore un' orazione a proposito di quei tempi, nella quale quasi di parola in parola recitò una delle prediche di fra Girolamo quasi delle più spaventose, che predicavano tanti flagelli all'Italia e a Firenze, e doppo quelle rovine tante felicità al popolo Fiorentino, mostrando quasi che fossero venuti quei tempi predetti dal Frate, e venne in tanto fervore in quel suo orare, che finì quel suo dire ginocchioni e gridando ad alta voce a Dio misericordia..".

Varchi, Book 5, p.329.

"..e trall'altre cose che egli fece, avendo il nono giorno di febbraio nel maggior consiglio poco meno che di parola a parola una di quelle prediche del frate recitata, nella quale egli prima tanti mali, e poi tanti beni predice e promette alla città di Firenze, nell'ultimo si gettò ginocchioni in terra, e gridando ad alta voce 'misericordia' fece sì, che tutto il consiglio 'misericordia' gridò".

Since Nerli had actually been present on this occasion his account was bound to be of value to Varchi.⁴⁶ Similarly there is a link between the descriptions which the two historians give of the setting up of the Quarantotto which may be seen from the following example;

Nerli, Book 11, p.265.

"Nel qual sopraddetto Senato de' Quarantotto vollero, che s'intendesse essere, e che in effetto fusse tutta la somma potestà e balia dello stato, e di quel nuovo governo, e tutta quella e quanta autorità aveva la balia;..".

Varchi, Book 12, p.584.

"Ne' quarantotto era ristretta tutta l'autorità della balia, e nessuno per lo tempo avvenire poteva esser eletto quarantotto, il quale non fusse de'dugento, e avesse trentasei anni forniti;..".

46) Nerli, Book 8, p.170. "...infra'quali mi trovai ancora io,..".

Since Varchi, like Segni, is primarily concerned with the time from the siege onwards his narrative is in the main more detailed than Nerli's and he gives more information on external affairs. Nevertheless there are other passages where it is clear that Varchi is relying to a large extent on Nerli's work, both because of notable similarities of expression and because there are signs that Varchi has taken Nerli's account as a basis for his own more detailed one. The following examples should help to illustrate this.

Nerli, Book 7, p.142

"..e Ottaviano de' Medici ebbe la cura delle cose famigliari, e del governo della casa, e' famigli del Magnifico Ipolito,..".

Varchi, Book 2, p.71.

"A costoro erano nel tempo che governava Cortona succeduti Ottaviano de' Medici, il quale aveva la cura delle cose familiari del Magnifico,..".

Book 7, p.145.

"..ed era messo loro animo, perchè seguitassero, come avevano cominciato, di chiedere alla Signoria, e allo stato l'arme,..".

Book 2, p.104.

"..persuasero agevolmente a certi giovani nobili nel ragionare e discorrere le cose presenti, che dovessero alla signoria andare e a quella umanamente chiedere, che loro concedesse in difensione di lor medesimi e della loro patria l'arme portare,..".

Clearly, in spite of his scornful remarks about Nerli and his work, Varchi found the Commentari a useful source for his own history.

In 1565 Varchi died, leaving his history unfinished, and the Duke commissioned GiovanBattista Adriani to continue the work

47

which Varchi had begun. Born in 1511, the son of Marcello Adriani, well known as a man of great learning, GiovanBattista proved a good student of the classics. With the siege of Florence the troubled times, rather than any natural inclination on his part, made him take up arms and he became,

"..molto amato dal Sig. Stefano Colonna, e di esser veduto volentieri fra i primi soldati della militia come Dante da Castiglione, e'l Borgia del Bene, e simili".

48

Between 1530 and 1534 Adriani studied philosophy at Padua, where he met Bembo, Varchi, Ugolino Martelli and the sons of Filippo Strozzi, and formed part of a literary group which met as an academy for discussions on literature. He later became one of the most outstanding members of the Florentine Academy under Duke Cosimo and was greatly loved and respected in the city.

Since Adriani's work follows on that of Varchi there is very little of his narrative which covers events with which Nerli deals in the Commentari. His work has been compared with that of Guicciardini since he too shows an ability to see Florentine history in its relationship to the history of Europe, writing in Book I that he is including Italian and European affairs,

"Nè a giudizio mio si doveva fare altrimenti, essendosi divisa quasi tutta la Christianità in due fazioni, l'una

47) See M. Lupo Gentile - Adriani. He writes, "...è indubitato che l'Adriani fu nominato storico ufficiale della corte medicea nel periodo di tempo che va dal 1564 al 1566, perche del 22 ottobre di quest'anno esiste un inventario di alcune scritture consegnate da Cosimo a Tommaso dei Medici per darle a G.B. Adriani 'per fare la storia'". This inventory is in B.N.F. Magl. 25, Cod. 553. f. 122.

48) See Marucelliana, B. III. 65. f. 244 for a life of Adriani by his son from which this information has been taken.

49) See Fueter, op.cit. Book 1, pp. 124-5.

della quali teneva con Carlo Quinto Imperadore, e l'altra
con la Corona di Francia,..". 50

Manuscripts which survive in the Archivio di Stato show how
Adriani carefully studied the reports of the ambassadors of the
time and made extracts from them in order to give a full and
accurate narrative.⁵¹ These selections give no indication that
Adriani made any use of the Commentari nor does he mention Nerli's
work in the opening pages of his history, where he refers in
general to the sources which he used. No correspondence exists
to show any link between the two historians and there are no
striking similarities between the texts of their two works.
Adriani was chiefly concerned with a later period than Nerli and
would have had little need to make use of his work for the earlier
history since he had that of Varchi to guide him. However, since
both men were, as we shall see, members of the Florentine Academy,
and therefore must have been acquainted it is unlikely that
Adriani had not at least read the Commentari, even though he did
not make any apparent use of it.

The last of the sixteenth century historians with whom we
are concerned was not a Florentine by birth but was aided in the
composition of his history by Duke Cosimo and lived at the
Florentine court for some years. This was Paolo Giovio, Bishop of

50) Adriani - Istoria de'suoi tempi. 1583. Book 1, p.2.

51) These extracts are in C.S. P.S. 111, 119 and 191. In the
last volume there are extracts on German affairs taken from "M.
Lodovico Antinori imbasciadore a Cesare".

52

Nocera. Giovio was very nearly an exact contemporary of Nerli's, being born two years before him, in 1483, and dying four years earlier in 1552. Giovio was perhaps above all else a humanist, in the sense that he was devoted to things classical and had a great desire to emulate the ancients.⁵³ He was also an ecclesiastic and a diplomat, often sending Duke Cosimo long and informative letters on the state of European and Italian affairs,⁵⁴ and his knowledge of politics was built up especially during the years 1512 to 1549 which he spent at the papal curia. In 1549 he left Rome to devote more time to the organization of his famous private museum at Como, and to accept the hospitality of Duke Cosimo in Florence. The writing of his Istoria dei suoi tempi was a task which occupied the major part of his life, and for which he sought the patronage of most of the rulers of Italy as well as that of many European princes.⁵⁵ The work was published during his life-time, but it was not until after his death that considerable criticism of it on the grounds of its inaccuracy began to appear, criticism which revealed how unpopular

52) On Giovio see Gentile, Sanesi, Albertini etc. Also Chabod - Paolo Giovio, in Periodico della Societa Storica Comense. 38, 1954, in which Chabod defends Giovio from the many accusations made against him.

53) Thompson, op.cit. says that Giovio deliberately suppressed his 'lost' books so that he would have the same fate as Livy.

54) Giovio - Lettere. e.g. on October 14, 1550 he writes to tell Cosimo what he has heard of Margherita of Austria in Rome.

55) Many of the patrons, notably Cosimo, were by no means unwilling to help Giovio. e.g. C.M. 16, f.87. November 18, 1550. Cosimo writes, "Ho data la commodita al Jovio di far stampare le historie sua in Fiorenza, per fare questo bene universale a i vivi et a posterì,..."

56
 Giovio had been. It was a work of monumental proportions, covering Italian and European affairs, and even those further afield, such as the discoveries in the New World, in considerable detail. In order to imitate the ancients and to attain eternal fame Giovio wrote his history in Latin, though it was translated into Tuscan by Lodovico Domenichi⁵⁷ even before it had been entirely finished.

We have already referred to Sanesi's article on the historians of this period in which he used the evidence available to suggest that there was a close link between Giovio and Nerli⁵⁸ in the writing of their histories. Sanesi cites the letter already quoted in which Nerli told Segni of Giovio's death, a reference to Giovio in the Commentari, and the letter from Cosimo to Nerli, also already quoted, in which Giovio is referred to, in order to prove his theory that the two men collaborated fairly closely over the writing of history. It is probably true, as Sanesi says, that Nerli was led into an association with Giovio because of the favourable attitude of Cosimo towards the bishop, but it would seem that this was at best an unwilling association, judging by the tone of Nerli's comments. His remark to Segni that Giovio had gone to write history in the other world is edged

56) See Varchi - Errori di Paolo Giovio nelle Storie. Follini. 1821. and Alberti - Difese de Fiorentini contra la false Calunnie del Giovio. Lyons. 1566. Also, Busini - Lettere. Busini to Varchi, August 11, 1548. "Iovio, il quale vi ama, secondo suonano le sue parole; e non è mal uomo, sebbene un poco lascivetto ed avaruzzo".
 57) Domenichi himself was made an official Medici historian in 1555
 58) See above, Chapter 6, p. 237

with sarcasm and the reference which he makes in the Commentari is by no means flattering. He writes that Giovio has shown him,

"..una bella orazione..",

which the bishop intends to include in his narrative as though it had actually been delivered by Niccolò Capponi himself, and Nerli comments caustically that,

"..se negli altri fatti di Firenze...avesse scritto così fedelmente, non si sarebbe tanto discostato dal vero, quanto ha fatto nello scrivere le cose de' Fiorentini".

59

Since in all probability Nerli wrote these words before Giovio's death he was clearly not so impressed with the bishop's ability as an historian as was Cosimo.

To deny any link whatsoever between the two writers would obviously be absurd, even if it was probably not as close as Sanesi claims. The letter from Duke Cosimo, speaking of

"..il ragionamento che ne movesti con Mons.r Giovio..", 60 shows that the two men had discussed history, even if the talks were probably rather strained, and we also know that Nerli did provide Giovio with information for his work. On March 7, 1552, Giovio wrote to Bernardo Segni to thank him for sending him information on one of Stefano Colonna's campaigns and goes on to say that,

"Circa al caso di Polverosa, messer Filippo de' Nerli, ser Anton Maria Buonanni e il capitano Marco d'Empoli,

59) Nerli, Book 8, p.182.

60) C.S. P.S. 37, f.39. Cosimo to Nerli, October 5, 1549.

o qualcuno altro della Città, ve ne potranno dare
chiarezza:..",

61

having most probably been in contact with these people on the matter himself. As well as this evidence that Giovio owed a debt to Nerli in the writing of his history there are certain signs of inter-relationship between the two texts which are especially striking in view of the fact that Giovio's work was translated from Latin into Tuscan and one would therefore not expect to find such close similarities. Since the scope of Giovio's work is so wide the parts relating to Florence tend to become obscured and often his treatment is very brief, especially in comparison with Nerli's. However, the following passages should serve to show the relationship which does exist between the two.

Nerli, Book 5, p.95.
"..e rotto l'esercito dell'
Alviano, e la sua persona
fuggendo con gran fatica si
salvò".

Giovio, Book 9, p.184.
"..col quale impeto senz'
alcuna difficoltà gli
ruppe, et messe in fuga,
salvandosi l'Alviano non
senza fatica con
pochissimi cavalli
corridori..".

Book 10, p.225.
"Era allora Commissario in
Empoli Francesco Ferrucci,..
ed era naturalmente anche
uomo molto arrischiato, ed
ancora di fresca età, e assai
animoso, ma molto più audace,
che prudente, ed era
desiderosissimo di gloria;..".

Book 28, p.82.
"Era alla guardia d'Empoli
Francesco Ferrucci
Fiorentino, desideroso
d'acquistarsi lode della
sua nuova militia;..".

The following somewhat longer example shows how Giovio most probably on some occasions re-worked Nerli's narrative in order to

construct his own, in much the same way as was evident with Varchi.

Nerli, Book 8, p.179.

"Occorse dipoi (come volle la fortuna) che il Gonfaloniere l'Aprile seguente del 1529 passeggiando tra le camere de' Signori, si lasciasse poco cautamente cadere di seno una lettera, che gli scriveva Giachinotto Serragli sopra la pratica sopradetta, e fu tal lettera a sorte ritrovata da Jacopo Gherardi uno de' Signori che era de' più scoperti nimici, ed avversari del Gonfaloniere,."

Giovio, Book 17, p.48v.

"Questo era Jacopo Gherardi huomo di testa dura, il quale mosso da invidia et odio, perseguitava non pure i Medici, ma tutti i gentil huomini anchora, divenuto allhora assai piu inquieto, et piu arrogante, che fosse mai stato; perche in quel tempo egli era de i priori i quali fanno di continuo compagnia in palazzo al Gonfaloniere per consigliarsi insieme. Costui haveva malignamente raccolto certe lettere, cadute di seno a Niccolò Capponi, le quali gli erano scritte da un Gioacchin Serragli agente di Jacopo Salviati, il quale maneggiava tutta la somma de' consigli del Papa;..".

In some places Giovio says more than Nerli about Florentine affairs, notably about the Pisan war and its campaigns, about which Nerli is very brief.⁶² Giovio also tends to be more flattering to the Medici family than is Nerli, a surprising fact when we consider Nerli's reputation as a Medicean but perhaps not so surprising in view of Giovio's policy of giving a good press to those who patronized him. In spite of these differences, however, there is a large degree of similarity between the two works and we must clearly add Giovio to the list of those historians who made use of the Commentari.

62) See Nerli, Book 5, p.89 and Giovio, Book 2, for their accounts of the Pisan war.

It is by now evident that this list includes virtually all the historians writing under Cosimo's direction, even though Adriani, though probably acquainted with the work, does not draw on it. That this should be the case is not really surprising since the historians were, as we shall see, nearly all acquainted with each other even if they were not all actually friends, and would automatically have discussed and read each other's work. Pitti had read Adriani, as well as Guicciardini and Nerli,⁶³ and Adriani owed a large debt to Guicciardini.⁶⁴ All were indebted to Duke Cosimo for making available to them the official records. What is perhaps more surprising is the extent to which the historians made use of the Commentari in view of the fact that Nerli's reputation is now that simply of a minor historian. It is no surprise to find that Machiavelli and Guicciardini were used considerably by their contemporaries but it is somewhat unexpected to find that in fact Nerli's work formed, if not a basis, at least a source of considerable importance for his fellow historians. Gentile, in his very critical examination of the sources of Varchi, who has been considered as one of the more important of the sixteenth century historians, goes so far as to say that,

"I giudizi sugli umori e sui partiti politici della

63)Pitti, Final Book, p.202. "Queste azioni del Duca Cosimo essendo scritte dall'ingegnoso e dotto messer Giovambatista Adriani, saranno in quell'amplissima istoria dai lettori considerate:..".

64)Fueter, op.cit.p.124-5, Guicciardini was very highly thought of in his own time. Giannotti records how his work showed up that of Giovio. Prose Fiorentine, Vol.14. Giannotti to Vettori, March 3, 1536. "Delle Istorie del Giovio mi pare,..come di cosa scritta per buffoneria, e per dire il vero, la Istoria del Guicciardino gli ha dato una gran bastonata".

cittadinanza fiorentina, sulle varie istituzioni e
riforme dello Stato sono del Nerli". 65

If this is true of Varchi's work it is also true that the works of Segni, Pitti and Giovio rely to a considerable extent on the works of Nerli. It may be true to describe Nerli as a minor historian in the sense that he displays little of the political acuteness of a Machiavelli or a Guicciardini and he is not very original in his approach or presentation, but he was of more than minor importance as a source for other writers, and this should be borne in mind when his final worth is being considered. The historiography of the sixteenth century would have been much less rich without the Commentari.

Having demonstrated the extent to which the Commentari were used as a source for much of the historical writing during the reign of Duke Cosimo it is now time to examine the personal relationships which existed between the various historians, with particular reference to the position which Nerli himself occupied in the intellectual life of the time. This intellectual life centred on the ducal court and on the Florentine Academy, but it was also kept alive by the correspondence of the literary men, and much useful information is to be gleaned from this correspondence. We will deal first, however, with the court and the Academy, the two focuses of intellectual activity in Florence herself.

During Cosimo's reign the intellectual life of Florence flourished in a way which had not been seen since the days of

65)Gentile, op.cit. p.25-27.

Lorenzo the Magnificent and this was to a large extent due to the Duke himself. Not only did the young ruler strengthen his position politically by his organization of the city and the dominio and by his acquisition of the title of Grand Duke, but he also sought, through his patronage of the historians and of other men of letters, to make Florence a flourishing centre of the arts. In both these ways he hoped to ensure that he would not be forgotten by posterity. His court lived in great splendour and Bernardo Davanzati, in his funeral oration on Cosimo, wrote that although Florence had been important before,

"..ella non aveva veduto mai più le corone, gli scettri, e gli ornamenti Reali, che v'ha il Granduca Cosimo portati entro". 66

Cosimo was anxious that men of suitable talent should be given a place at his court and in 1542 he sent Filippo del Migliore to

"..scorrere le Città della Lombardia per reclutare gli uomini più accreditati in quelle Provincia;..". 67

Clearly Cosimo was successful in building up the reputation of his court, for Pietro Aretino sent the Duke his comedies to be acted there.
68

How much time Nerli actually spent at the court is difficult

66) Prose Fiorentine, Vol.1. Oration "In morte del Gran Duca di Toscana Cosimo Primo, recitata nell'Accademia degli Alterati da Bernardo Davanzati.

67) R. Galluzzi - Istoria del Granducato di Toscana. Florence. 1781.

68) Others also felt that Cosimo should see their works. e.g. C.M. 400, f.531. December 10, 1550, Brucioli sends Cosimo, "..cinque libri dello Amore Divino christiano..", which he has written, "Ne ho voluto usare altri mezi che mi raccomandino a quella perche se essa virtu et l'essere io stato il primo servitore che havessi nel principio del suo Ducato in tempi pericolosi..".

to judge. His official duties must have often kept him in the dominio or in the city of Florence, whilst the itinerant court spent a large part of its time at Pisa. The Duke's letter referring to the discussion between Nerli and Giovio shows that Filippo must have visited the court at least on some occasions, and his close relationship to the Duke makes it probable that he was there quite frequently. We know that Leone de' Nerli was on friendly terms with his cousin the Duke and spent much time at court,⁶⁹ and it is quite likely that Filippo was also often to be found in the circle surrounding Cosimo. There he would have come into contact with Benedetto Varchi, whose comments on Nerli suggest that they were personally acquainted. Since Varchi wrote his history under Cosimo's patronage he

"..usava ancora di andare ogni anno una o due volte a Pisa, dove il Duca Cosimo si stava almeno i due terzi dell'anno, a leggerli della sua storia". 70

Cosimo took a considerable interest in the progress of the historians under his patronage, as can be seen from a letter which Giovio wrote to Varchi. In this the bishop tells Varchi that he has completed part of his work concerning Florence and says that

"..spero che vi doverà piacere, e servirà ancora voi in qualche cosa, perchè il tutto ho di bocca del Duca; il quale vi comanda che mi vogliate servire d'una informazione in scritto dell'impresa di Sestino, della quale dice Sua Ecc.za niuno può essere meglio informato di voi, perchè vi gli trovaste in persona". 71

69) See above, Chapter 2, p.38

70) Razzi's life of Varchi in the 1888 edition of the Storia Fiorentina.

71) Giovio - Lettere. To Varchi, April 16, 1551.

Varchi, as well as Nerli, may have been annoyed by the Duke's insistence that he co-operate with Giovio. The bishop was Cosimo's most honoured and favoured guests during the time that he was at court, in spite of the fact that Giovio does not seem to have been a particularly pleasant or popular person.⁷²

It is difficult to tell how often the other historians were at the court. We have already said that little is known of the life of Jacopo Pitti, but since he was of *ottimati* rank, a senator and a ducal servant it is likely that he paid at least occasional visits to the court. GiovanBattista Adriani, as a prominent member of the Academy and holder of the chair of rhetoric at the Florentine studio, almost certainly paid visits to the court and must have talked there with his fellow historians. Bernardo Segni, in a somewhat similar position to Pitti, must also have sometimes attended court and in his dedication of his translation of Aristotle's Rhetoric he praises the way in which Cosimo holds his position, saying that it is of moral advantage to the citizens,

"..vedere in voi da una parte l'abbondantia di tutte quelle virtù heroiche, che stanno d'intorno a uno

72)Giannotti - Lettere. Giannotti to Vettori. May 26, 1542. He obviously did not enjoy his contact with Giovio. "Col Jovio non parlo io se non in cento anni una volta, quando io lo trovo a caso del libraro, e però non vi posso dire quel che egli dica della epistola vostra". In view of this it is likely that we can read between the lines of the following letter a dislike of the bishop. C.M. 1172, Insert 2, f.50. Marco Bracci to Riccio, May 22, 1546, "Sta mattina andando a visitare il vescovo Jovio dove quasi ogni mattina vi si raguna quanti cortigiani et galanti homini sono in questa corte..".

ottimo Principe".

73

Although it is difficult to establish exactly how much contact with each other the historians would have had at the court they obviously did enjoy some inter-change, which centred on Cosimo and his entourage. It is worth remarking at this point on the extraordinary volume of historical writing which was going on at this time. The significance which the events of the sixteenth century were felt to have for Florence and the way in which Cosimo patronized the historians do give some explanation for this interest in history, but it would be very hard to find a parallel situation. Florence in the sixteenth century suffered from what might almost be termed a surfeit of historians, who were all writing about the same events and who often got in each others' way in the scramble for information.

Whilst it is difficult to establish the exact circumstances in which the historians may have met each other at court it is more simple to determine the contact which they had with each other at the Academy, where many of them played important roles. The Academy provided a place where those of similar intellectual interests could meet together for discussion, just as earlier such a place had been provided by Ficino's Platonic Academy and by the Orti Oricellari.⁷⁴ The original re-creation of the Academy

73) Segni's translation of Aristotle's Rhetoric, his dedication to Cosimo, December 2, 1545. Marucelliana, Cod. C.333.

74) Humanists felt such conversations were of great value. See Ady-Lorenzo de' Medici. London. 1955. p. 114, quoting an anonymous humanist, "...conversation is the full perfection of learning...it more availeth a student to discourse one hour with his like than to study a whole day by himself".

was due to the desire for such a body among the young intellectuals of the city. It developed from a meeting of these 'giovani studiosi' held at the house of Giovanni Mazzuoli, at which the Tuscan language was discussed and at which it was decided to form an Academy, the name of Umedi being adopted. The group soon began to attract more famous men of letters, including GiovanBatista Gelli and Filippo del Migliore, and soon too it came to the attention of the Duke, who changed its name to the Accademia Fiorentina and brought it under his patronage. The Duke came to be considered as the true founder of the Academy, in which he took a keen interest, and the leading members of the ducal secretariat were also closely linked with the group. Meetings were often held in the house of Francesco Campana, PierFrancesco Riccio took part in discussions and Lelio Torelli was also extremely active in the affairs of the Academy.⁷⁵

The Academies which were being formed throughout Italy in the later part of the sixteenth century were more formal in character than those of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries had been. Whereas before the Academies had been informal meetings of friends with mutual interests, whose discussions might range over a number of diverse topics, they had now become highly organized groups, electing officers from among themselves and often being formed with the express intention of

75) See the Atti of the Academy, Marucelliana, B.III.I. and the Notizie Letterarie ed Istoriche intorno agli uomini illustri dell' Accademia Fiorentina. Fl.1700. The latter, in the introduction, says that Cosimo "...fu il vero, ed unico Fondatore".

discussing and lecturing on one particular problem.⁷⁶ The Florentine Academy was no exception to this and elected officers, had its own code of rules and gave its members symbolic names by which they were known in the Academy.⁷⁷ Baldini, praising Duke Cosimo for his patronage of the Academy, stresses this organization with obvious pride, writing that the Duke

"..volle che in essa fussero Magistrati di più maniere, i quali havessero i loro ministri e esequitori, e che in certi tempi dell'anno gli si raguanassero tutti gl'huomini scienziati, cosi dello stato suo come forestieri ancora i quali fussero dell'Accademia di sopradetta, nella quale gli piacque ancora che fussero leggi e ordini i quali si dovessero inviolabilmente osservare".⁷⁸

In spite of this formalism, however, the discussions which took place in the Academy were not so limited as some of those which took place elsewhere. The interests of the Academicians were, it is true, predominantly in the development of the Tuscan language and in the writings of the three great Tuscan authors, Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, but they also considered a wide range of other subjects.⁷⁹

The kind of subjects which were discussed can be seen from the Atti of the Academy and from the printed lectures which the

76) See Pevsner and Yates, op.cit. above Chapter 2 ,p.56

77) See B.N.F. Magl. Cl.9, Cod.18. Segni was known as Spignesi and Pitti as Ciaverero. This name seems to have been of some special significance to Pitti, see above, note 24

78) Baccio Baldini - Vita di Cosimo Medici. Fl. 1578. p.32.

79) Miss Yates, op.cit. writes that the Academy "..follows the philological and rhetorical bent of the century, but not in so extreme a manner".

members delivered. Often they involved detailed textual criticism of the works of the Tuscan writers⁸⁰ or a reading from one of these authors followed by a discussion.⁸¹ In November, 1551, the Atti record that meetings were held to discuss the reform of the Tuscan language and these discussions led eventually to the formation of the Academy of the Crusca, who^{members} still devote their energies to the compilation of a dictionary of Tuscan. The Academicians wanted, in the main, to study and perfect Tuscan so that it could at least be a worthy competitor if not a conqueror of Latin, which until this time had held the field as the language in which all works with pretensions to eternal fame and glory should be written. Some prejudice against this movement still remained and can be seen in Giovio, who preferred to write his history in Latin, even though it was translated immediately, and in Donato Giannotti, who wrote that he was reluctant to write his first major work in any other language.⁸² Of the topics which occupied the time of the Academicians, other than these language studies, we find metaphysics, examples often being drawn from the works of the Tuscan authors, and abstract themes, such as Charity.⁸³

80)e.g. PierFrancesco Giambullari gave a lecture to the Academy on the "Sito del Purgatorio di Dante".

81)e.g. Atti, Vol.1,f.14. "...sabato adi 9 del medesimo lesse in Accademia privata il sonetto dal Petrarca 'Apollo s'ancor vive? il bel desio'"(Dec. 1542) Meetings seem to have been sometimes private, attended only by members of the Academy proper, and sometimes open to the general public. e.g. Atti,ibid. "Domenica adi 10 di detto lesse in pubblico à la stanza solita..".

82)Giannotti, Lettere. Giannotti to Piero Vettori, August 13, 1540. "...non me pareva honorevole che la prima cosa che io dessi fuori fusse in lingua toscana".

83)See Lezione di Giambullari, No.2.

None of these lectures would be considered worthy unless they displayed in full the lecturer's deep knowledge of the works of Petrarch, Dante and Boccaccio. The Academicians undoubtedly had a wide interest in literary matters and were genuine in their desire to improve the status of Tuscan,⁸⁴ but they must also have enjoyed the scope offered to them by the Academy to parade their own erudition. It seems that meetings of the Academy were occasions of formality and importance at which members would naturally wish to shine.⁸⁵

Alongside such men as Gelli, Francesco Guidetti, the turbulent Benvenuto Cellini and Giovanni della Casa, the sixteenth century historians played important parts in the life of the Academy. Benedetto Varchi was linked with the Academy from its early days until the time of his death in 1565 and his name dominates the pages of the Atti. In February, 1545, he was elected as the ninth consul of the group and in this capacity he delivered a series of lectures on Dante to the Academicians. His name appears frequently in the election lists of those proposed for or elected to office and he delivered lectures to the Academy on a number of occasions.⁸⁶ Bernardo Segni was also a very active

84) See the introduction to G.B. Gelli - I Capricci del Bottai, in Opere, ed. A. Gelli. Fl. 1855.

85) C.M. 1172, f.4. Lorenzo Pagni to Riccio, January 5, 1546.

"Giovedì mattina il S.or Don Luigi leggerà una lettione publica in questo studio, per quanto intendo di legge, et a questo effetto è chiamato di costa il Ves.co di Arezzo, acchioche insieme con li altri si trovi a honorare questa lectione".

86) Atti, Vol.1, f.15, December 2, 1543, Varchi delivered a public lecture in S.Maria Novella. In the election lists for 1547 he is named and he gave another lecture on March 15, 1548 - "M. Benedetto Varchi lese pubblicamente una lettione sopra la natura".

member of the Academy, being elected as the fourth consul in August, 1542, and taking over the position from Filippo del Migliore in September of the same year. Segni was frequently proposed for election to offices and was a counsellor in 1544 and again in 1549.⁸⁷ On April 28, 1547 he read one of Petrarch's sonnets to the members as a prelude to a discussion. Jacopo Pitti too was a member of the Academy and held office in it. He became a member on May 18, 1544 and four years later held office together with Agnolo Borghini, Gelli and Francesco d'Ambra.⁸⁸ He is again mentioned in the election lists of 1572 and 1577 and in March, 1574, he was elected a counsellor at the same time as Adriani. Adriani, a prominent and respected member of the studio, was also one of the more important figures in the Academy. He held office in 1541 and in 1574 and was clearly important in the taking of decisions, judging by the praise which Francesco Bonciani lavished upon him in his oration delivered to the Academy on Adriani's death.⁸⁹ His son, in his life of Adriani, says that he was very closely connected with Francesco Campana and Lelio Torelli, possibly over the affairs of the Academy. Giovio is quite likely to have attended the meetings of the Academy when he was in Florence and thus we can say that, in all probability, all the sixteenth century historians must have met there and discussed their work.

When we turn to Nerli, however, we find that the evidence

87) See the Atti for these and other offices.

88) This was on January 29, 1548.

89) See Prose Fiorentine, Vol.3, p.60.

does not at first glance suggest that he had any connection with the Academy. We have seen how Gentile refers to him as being "non letterato" and this judgement would seem to be borne out by the fact that there is no mention of Nerli in the Notizie of the Academy, which refers to nearly all the important members of the body. Yet Nerli was in fact a member of the Academy at this time and therefore did come into contact with the other historians already mentioned. He was admitted to the Academy in 1546, somewhat later than the prominent historians Varchi and Segni and even later than Jacopo Pitti. However, Nerli's name soon appears on the election lists and in September, 1546, he was elected a councillor, together with Orsino Lanfredini.⁹⁰ Though not always so successful in elections⁹¹ Nerli was again a counsellor in March, 1547, and February, 1551. In November, 1549, when Lelio Torelli was choosing members to help him to consider the reform of the Academy, which Cosimo wanted undertaken, Nerli was one of the six men selected,⁹² which would seem to indicate that he was regarded as one of the more responsible members of the group, even though there is no evidence that he ever lectured to the other

90) See Atti, Vol.1, f.38. There were four candidates in this election; Nerli received 25 votes, Lanfredini 23 and the other two candidates 4 and 3 votes.

91) In one election Nerli received the lowest number of votes.

92) See Atti, Vol.1, f.40. "Il sr. Consolo mostro detta lista a M. Lelio Torello segretario di S. Ex.tia et lui segno sei quali voleva fussino la balia per uno anno secondo gli ordini". These six were PierFrancesco Ginori, Nerli, Lionardo da Filicaia, Alexandro de Caccia, Antonio degli Alberti, and PierFrancesco Giambullari. It is of course possible that it was Nerli's relationship to the Duke which led to his choice, rather than his popularity.

members. This may be, of course, because of Nerli's lack of a formal education, a benefit which most of the other Academicians must have enjoyed, and which meant that he was not equal to the task of lecturing. On the other hand, Nerli's frequent absence from Florence to hold official posts in the dominio must have cut down the amount of time which he had to devote to the affairs of the Academy, and this is probably another reason why his role there was not so important as those of other historians. Nerli's official duties made a far greater demand upon him than did those of Segni, Pitti or Varchi and thus his relationship with the members of the Academy was bound to be limited. He did nevertheless form part of this group of men of letters and it is more than likely that he had discussions with the other historians about their work.

Our source of information about the relationships between the historians is their correspondence, for the letters of such men as Giovio, Giannotti and Piero Vettori provide more valuable information about the lives of the sixteenth century historians. They show above all the large degree of interrelationship between men of letters in the sixteenth century and the extent to which they kept in contact with each other when in different parts of Italy. Their intellectual and literary interests gave them a common bond and it was rare for men of similar interests to be outside this group. One of the most important figures in it was a man who was not an historian but a scholar in the humanist

tradition, Piero Vettori.⁹³ Vettori might also be considered to have provided a 'focal point' for many of the intellectuals of the day, for the majority of them kept in touch with him by letter, informing him of the progress of their work, on which they often asked his opinion, and telling him of the activities of the other letterati of his acquaintance. There is a large body of correspondence between Vettori and Donato Giannotti⁹⁴ and between him and Benedetto Varchi, in which many famous figures in the literary field are referred to. It is not surprising to find that Varchi and Giannotti were on good terms with each other, since they had the same outlook on politics. They also had a mutual interest in the writing of history,⁹⁵ an interest which they shared⁹⁶ with Jacopo Nardi, another historian who was one of this group. Giannotti kept Vettori informed of events in Rome, where he sometimes came into involuntary contact with Giovio,⁹⁷ and Varchi and Vettori discussed their literary work and sent it to each other for correction.⁹⁸

93) There is a large amount of Vettori's correspondence in the British Museum. See Additional Manuscripts 10263 - 10282.

94) From the above volumes an edition of Giannotti's letters to Vettori has been made; Giannotti - Lettere a Piero Vettori, Ed. Ridolfi and Roth. Fl. 1932.

95) Giannotti to Varchi, March 3, 1536. He writes to Varchi that he would like to write a history but that this is impossible as long as he is in Rome, removed from the necessary source material.

96) Prose Fiorentine, Vol. 15. Nardi to Varchi, October 31, 1548. "...le scritture, cioè quel libretto, vi manderò fra pochi dì..".

97) See above, note 72.

98) Prose Fiorentine, Vol. 14. Vettori to Varchi, August 11, 1541. "Io vi manderò presto le mie annotazioni; leggeretele, e faretele leggere a chi vi parrà con questo pure, che m'avvisiate il vero di quel, che ve n'è pare, e dove vediate, ch'elle n'abbiano bisogno, me le correggiate".

Vettori was particularly occupied with the translation and editing of Greek texts and it was over this that he came to have a disagreement with another member of the circle, Bernardo Segni. Segni, who admitted that his knowledge of Greek was not very good ⁹⁹ made, as did Vettori, a translation of Aristotle's Rhetoric, and letters from Francesco Spini to Vettori show that in fact Segni, in compiling his work, made considerable use of Vettori's. Spini writes in very aggrieved terms about this to Vettori, saying that Francesco Campana has told him how Segni

"..s'era portato fraudolentemente, et iniquamente verso di voi, et sotto che coverte, et con quali inganni egli v'haveva rubato le vostre fatiche,..". 100

He goes on to say that representations have been made to Duke Cosimo to stop Segni bringing out this work with the Duke's name associated with it, but that Cosimo has taken the view that ultimately Segni will be ridiculed for what he has done. Segni seems to have felt that Spini was exaggerating and misrepresenting the matter, for he wrote to him to say that he had had no intention

"..di farne dispiacere, à Piero perche egli, et Jacopo l'hanno sempre saputo, et Jacopo di gia si trovò à Scandicci quando io richiesi Horatio me la volessi transcrivere di poi l'ho voluta mostrare à l'un et l'altro". 101

99)Add.Ms. 10272. November 14, 1545. Segni to Spini. "..intende à M.Piero che io non intendo punto la lingua Graeca...perche a me sarebbe una cosa quasi impossibile à scrivere in Graeco sappiendo à pena leggere".

100)Add.Ms. 10272. January 9, 1545.

101) " " " November 14, 1545. Segni to Spini.

From this we can see the extent to which the men of letters made use of each others' work and libraries, and the problems which this could cause. The problem over the translation did not break up the relationship between Segni and Vettori, for in 1549 Segni writes to tell him that he has been to see Giovio who has¹⁰² enquired after him.

Nerli does not seem to have been a central figure in this group of letterati. His political interests, for one thing, were different from theirs and he does not seem to have shared their interest in the texts of Latin and Greek authors, scarcely a surprising fact in view of his lack of formal education and therefore, presumably, his ignorance of Greek. He was, however, on the fringe of the circle. Busini and Giannotti knew him in Rome and he was, as we have already discussed, an Academician and member of the court. His main link with the group around Vettori seems to have been his cousin Giannozzo de' Nerli, and he also came into contact with it through his leadership of the mission to Pope Julius III of which Vettori was a member.¹⁰³ Nerli seems to have been on good terms with his cousin¹⁰⁴ and Cardinal Salviati, writing in 1542, asked him to settle a dispute between Giannozzo¹⁰⁵ and his brother Giovan Battista. Giannozzo was a member of the

¹⁰²)Add.Ms. 10281. September 19, 1549. Segni to Vettori.

"Stamattina essendo ito a visitare il vescovo Giovio, alle suoi paroli mi domando di voi..".

¹⁰³)See Chapter 5, p.210 Add.Ms. 10269 has letters referring to the payments which the members of the embassy received.

¹⁰⁴)See Chapter 1, p.25

¹⁰⁵)C.S. P.S. 37, f.23. July 3, 1542. Cardinal Salviati to Nerli.

"Sara portatore di questa il vostro et anche mio Giannozzo de Nerli, quale come bono che è, desidereria per iustitia o per qual altro honesto modo uscire di lite con Gio.Battista suo fratello".

group around Vettori, who referred to him as

"..il nostro Giannozzo de'Nerli",

106

and he helped Vettori to find lodgings in Rome when he was on the embassy to the Pope. At this time Filippo de'Nerli was perhaps short of money, for Giannozzo tells Vettori that although he has managed to find good rooms for him those which have been found for Filippo are very poor, and he suggests that since Vettori's rooms are very large, it might be possible to accomodate Nerli in them as well. ¹⁰⁷ This suggests that Nerli was on reasonably good terms with Vettori, even if he was not as close to him as were Varchi and Segni. Nerli was by no means an outcast from this group, even if he was not at the heart of it.

The large extent to which the other historians made use of the Commentari forms somewhat of a contrast to the small extent to which Nerli formed a part of the literary circle of his time. He was in touch with the other historians and played a not inconsequential part in the life of the Academy, but he does not

106) Prose Fiorentine, Vol.14. June 11, 1537. Vettori to Niccolò Ardinghelli.

107) Add. Ms. 10269. f.330. April 12, 1550. Giannozzo de'Nerli to Vettori. "Io sono stato buon forier per voi, ma il forier di Filippo de Nerli l'ha bene alleggiato un'po stretto, et in vero essendo il guasto potene forse mal far'altrimente, potrete quando vi paia esser'agiato di stanze accomodarlo in qualche parte delle vostre, che voi et Girolamo Guicciardini voi havete in piu magnifici et i piu copiosi alloggiamenti..".

Nerli could also have been linked to the group through Cardinal Salviati who was a friend of Vettori's. cf. B.N.F. Magl. Cl.8. Cod.57. October 21, 1540. Vettori to Varchi. "Con M. Antonio Fiordibello tengo io buona amicitia, et gli parlai in Firenze, quando venne con Mons.r R.mo Salviati più volte,..".

seem to have ever been very friendly with the other writers. This may have been due to lack of time, to lack of interest in the same topics, or even to the difference of his political views. Whatever the reason, however, it is true to say that, although Nerli's history was of great value to his contemporaries, he he himself was never more than on the fringe of the intellectual activities which absorbed such a large amount of their time.

Chapter 8 - Historiography in Sixteenth Century Florence.

"..ho deliberato entrare per una via, la quale, non essendo suta ancora da alcuno trita, se la mi arrecherà fastidio e difficoltà, mi potrebbe ancora arrecare premio, mediante quelli che umanamente di questi mie fatiche il fine considerassino". 1

These much-quoted words from Machiavelli's Discorsi have often been used as evidence by those who wished to prove that the sixteenth century saw a marked development in historical writing, and stress the period as one which saw a complete break with previous historiography.² This approach follows Burckhardt in his view of the Renaissance as a time when things medieval were swept aside, but here we come at once into contact with the central problem of any study of any aspect of the Renaissance. How far is the Burckhardtian picture of the Renaissance as the beginning of modern times acceptable, and to what extent should we prefer the alternative view of the period which stresses that

"..the Middle Ages set a binding authority and authoritative norms for everything intellectual"? 3

To hope, after so much research has already been done, to add something that is new to this discussion of the relationship of the Renaissance to the developments both before and after is perhaps somewhat foolish, but it is possible to attempt to give a

1)Machiavelli - Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio. Milan. 1960. Proemio, p.123.

2)See M.P.Gilmore - Humanists and Jurists, 6 studies in the Renaissance. Harvard.1963. which includes The Renaissance conception of the lessons of History and Individualism in Renaissance Historians. See also H.Weisinger - Ideas of History during the Renaissance, in Journal of the History of Ideas. 6.1945. pp.415-35.

3)J.Huizinga - The problem of the Renaissance in Men and Ideas. translated London, 1960. p.271.

somewhat clearer picture of sixteenth century historiography which may help to determine exactly how 'modern' in character it was. All too often there has been an excessive concentration on the two 'giants' amongst the sixteenth century historians, Machiavelli and Guicciardini, and this has not helped in the formation of a composite picture of the state of historical writing as a whole at this period. If we examine the motives which led men like Nerli, Segni and Pitti to write and ^{investigate} investigate their attitudes to the writing of history, to their sources and to the problem of human causation and 'fortuna', we shall come to see what they had in common with the historians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries⁴ and in what respects they differed from them in their outlooks and approach. The aim of this enquiry is not to fit the historians neatly into a category labelled either 'medieval' or 'modern', but to show as clearly as possible the way in which the transition was taking place and the extent to which it had been accomplished. The problem of defining any aspect of the Renaissance is one of finding the norm, of making clear the middle way between the two extremes with which we are at first presented.

One of the problems with which we shall have to deal is the way in which the historians regarded their task. What purpose did they feel they could accomplish by writing history? What 'philosophy' of history did they have? Yet before we turn to this

4) For purposes of convenience in this chapter the writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries will sometimes be referred to as humanist writers, in order to distinguish them from the sixteenth century historians.

it is worth while examining another aspect of the problem of motivation amongst this group of historians. Men like Giovio and Varchi, whilst they undoubtedly had conceptions of the value of history, were prompted to write from more mundane motives as well and it is useful to remember the existence of these other motives in order to balance them against the more philosophic aspects of the historians' approach. A remark made by Vincenzo Borghini, one of the leading men of letters of the late sixteenth century, is worth considering in this connection. Writing to an unknown correspondent in 1577 he says,

"..e trovandosi bene spesso fra gli Scrittori di queste Istorie particolari alcuni, che non pare, che abbiano per fine tanto scrivere la verità, ed il puro successo delle cose, quanto far piacere, o guadagnarsi la grazia d'un particolare, e forse conseguirne premi, o favori,..".

5

Borghini clearly realized the error of considering somewhat idealistically that historians wrote only with the purest of motives and could see how frequently they wrote as a means of gaining or supplementing their livelihood. Nerli came from a reasonably wealthy background, though even he encountered difficulties of a financial nature on occasion, but other historians, notably Giovio and Varchi, looked on their work as a principal means of support. The simple desire, or indeed the need for money, advancement, praise, or for all three lay behind the writing of nearly all these historians and could, as Borghini pointed out, have an adverse effect on the merit of their work. Hence the patronage of Duke Cosimo was of the utmost value to

5) See Prose Fiorentine, Vol.17, p.309.

them and it is small wonder that they were often most flattering in their attitude towards him in their histories.

Even Machiavelli, often regarded as one of the great theorists on the uses of writing history, is an example of this more mundane, economically based, motivation, for Il Principe itself was written in order to gain employment from the Medici and it has been said that Machiavelli,

"..undertook the 'Florentine History' not because he especially wanted to write a history, but rather because it had been commissioned by Cardinal Giulio Medici, the head of the Florentine Studio". 6

One wonders how far Machiavelli's interest in history would have developed if he had not been in need of a patron to put him in the financial position necessary to indulge his love of high living and female society of which Nerli expressed his disapproval. 7
The shrewd and ambitious Guicciardini was sufficiently wealthy from the proceeds of his business and official life to have no need of a patron but Giovio received financial assistance from many of the rulers of Italy and Europe as well as from Duke Cosimo. His letters are full of requests for money to these patrons, on whom he was clearly extremely dependent during the forty or more years which it took him to write his history of his

6) Felix Gilbert - Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Princeton. 1965. p.237.

7) Nerli to Francesco del Nero. March 1, 1525. "Essendo il Machia a voi parente et amico, et ad me amicissimo non posso fate che con questa occasione che voi mi havete data di scrivervi non mi condolga con voi di quello che ogni dì mi viene di lui agli orecchi,..". This letter is quoted in Niccolai's monograph on Nerli, p.16.

times. In a letter in 1535, for example, we can see his anxiety that he may not receive his due payment from the king of France, a notoriously unreliable patron.⁸ Varchi too was extremely dependent on the patronage of Duke Cosimo and had earlier been greatly indebted to the Strozzi family for the support which they had given him.⁹

Need for financial support was one reason why the historians wrote and desire for praise was another. Giovio, in particular, wanted to earn the recognition not only of his contemporaries but also of posterity and in his opinion such praise and recognition were to be gained through literature, rather than through any other art form. He wrote to his friend Vasari that the Lives which the latter had just completed would earn him more acclaim than

"..se avessi dipinto la capella di Michelangelo",

"Scrivete, fratel mio, scrivete;" he urges Vasari, "perchè da la laude viene il guadagno e dal guadagno non viene la laude".

10

To earn one's living was not sufficient; one had also to stake a claim to immortality. It was not only amongst the writers themselves that this desire for praise and immortality was to be seen, for it extended to their benefactors and Giovio was able to use it as 'bait' to his patrons, urging them to support him by

8) Giovio - Lettere. Vol.1, May 31, 1535. Giovio to Rodolfo Pio di Carpi. Such payments were of special importance in these pre-copyright times.

9) See above, Chapter 7, p.306

10) Giovio - Lettere. Vol.2, May 7, 1547. Giovio to Vasari.

promising that he would refer to them favourably in his work.¹¹
 Grand Duke Cosimo was extremely anxious that the knowledge of what he had achieved should not die with him and he wanted to create a more durable monument to his name than the kind of¹² statues which Duke Alessandro had erected to his own honour, for statues could all too easily be removed. It was in order to ensure that he should not be forgotten that Cosimo fostered Giovio and Nerli and commissioned Varchi, Adriani and Ammirato to write histories. He was clearly most anxious to achieve his end for, even after Giovio, Segni, Nerli, Varchi and Adriani had all finished their histories, he still found it necessary in 1570 to commission Ammirato to write a complete history of Italy. This desire of Cosimo's not to be forgotten by later generations is one of the reasons for the large number of historians writing in¹³ the sixteenth century. The same desire can also be seen in the way in which the Duke ordered that medals, bearing his picture, were to be buried in the foundations of the new walls which he

11) Giovio - Lettere. Vol. 1. October 14, 1544. Giovio to an unknown correspondent. "Siate adunque gentiluomo di fede con mandarmi una vera istruzione delle belle cose di Monsignor d'Orliens fate...come promettete di far per assettare quello vedeste in scritto, acciò ch'io possi acquistarlo per buono signore, facendolo immortale col mio inchiostro". See also C.M. 337, f.26. January 6, 1539. Giovio to Cosimo. "Quella si degna ricomandarmi alla S.ra Maria et al mio M. Pietrofra.o, ricordare il caso di sua promessa altramente io non vorro trovare loco per lui nelle Immortali historia".
 12) See L.A.Ferrai - Lorenzino de' Medici e la società cortigiana del Cinquecento. Milan. 1891.
 13) See above, Chapter 7, p.315

had built at Arezzo, Cortona and Elba. There is almost an air of desperation in Cosimo's many attempts to ensure that he was not forgotten by later generations.

The fact that many of the historians were dependent upon patrons meant that there was a danger that, in their desire to please, they would become uncritical. Nerli was aware that his Medicean connections might make him prejudiced in favour of the family, but in spite of this awareness he does tend to be rather uncritical of his nephew Cosimo.¹⁵ Segni and Varchi, who had found it to their advantage to accept the Duke's support rather than live in impoverished exile, as Nardi chose to do, were both affected by their reliance on Cosimo. Varchi's great pride in the republic is clear in his account, but he is careful to present Cosimo in a favourable light as an able and just prince. Even Segni, who was on the whole more critical of Cosimo than was Varchi, presents him as a ruler,

"..il quale dando esempio di sè di religione, di giustizia e di temperanza,..".

16

14)C.M. 1170a. Insetto 2, f.559. Cristoforo Pagni to Riccio. May 18, 1548. "Sua Ecc.a mi ha comandato che scriva a V.S. che la dia ordine di mandare al Proveditore delle fortezze d'Arezzo et Cortona, delle medaglie di sua Ecc.a cio e di quelle co'l suo ritratto, de quali vuol si mettino ne fondamenti dela muraglia che si ha à principare a Cortona et se ne puo mandare, et di bronzo et d'argento et che delle medesime medaglie mandi anco a noi a Pisa per mandarle, nel Elba dove vuol si mettino nelli fondamenti della muraglia che ben presto vi si ha a principare".

15)e.g. Nerli, Book 12, p.291. "..allora non arrivava al diciottesimo anno della sua età, e pure in tale e tanto fresca gioventù seppe con molto senile prudenza superare tutte le difficoltà che si opposero alla sua grandezza,..".

16)Segni, Book 9, p.225.

It is in the writing of Giovio, however, that the harmful effects of patronage are most apparent, and this is not really surprising for we have seen how he managed to secure a good deal of patronage by luring his supporters with promises of a 'good press'. Criticisms of Giovio's work began to appear very soon after his death and foremost amongst these was Varchi's Errori di Paolo Giovio nelle Storie, written sometime between 1552 and 1565.¹⁷

In his introduction Varchi accuses Giovio of often writing falsehoods, either because he did not know the truth or because he did not want to write it, and he adds that Giovio frequently wrote as,

"..appassionato e affezionato della casa de'Medici,..".

Giovio, claims Varchi,

"..stimava più i presenti che la verita".

The element of personal dislike of Giovio, which we have already noted, must have played a part in this criticism, but in spite of Chabod's attempt to exonerate Giovio, it would seem to have had an element of truth in it.¹⁸

By now sufficient has been said to demonstrate that the sixteenth century historians were motivated by a desire for money and advancement and for praise, and that this fact could, and often did, affect the quality of their work. To expect to find any thing akin to modern standards of objectivity in the work of

¹⁷)Published Follini, 1821. See also Alberti - Difese de Fiorentini contra le false Calunnie del Giovio. Lyons. 1566.

¹⁸)See above, Chapter 7, p.308 and note 56

an historian like Giovio, who wrote always with an eye on one patron or another, is to be too optimistic about the extent of the development in critical approach which had been achieved by the sixteenth century. It was a step in this direction that Varchi wrote such a work of criticism, though we must not discount here his feelings of animosity towards Giovio, but when we turn to his own work we find that he does not live up to the standards which he tried to impose on the Bishop of Nocera. We will see when we come to examine the attitude of the historians towards their sources the extent to which a critical approach had developed.

We must now turn to the other motives which led the historians to write, and try to discover something of their philosophy of history. For this we can turn to information which they themselves give us, in their correspondence, in the texts of their histories, and above all in the Prefaces with which many of them began their work. There is a considerable body of evidence available, for the historians shared the general selfconsciousness of the age, and their prefaces form 'apologia' for their work. Foremost amongst the motives for writing which emerge is a general conviction of the interest and importance of the times together with a desire to describe and explain them as accurately as possible. Whilst the events which took place in sixteenth century Florence may seem of minor importance to us, viewed in relation to the general European scene, to the Florentine historians they were of overwhelming importance and the need to describe and analyse

them was paramount. This motive was present in Nerli who, as we have seen, was writing in order to demonstrate that with the principate of Cosimo the city had found the form of government to which she was most suited.¹⁹ Nerli reaches his 'happy ending' with Book 12, by which time he feels the situation in Florence is such that

"..pare che abbiamo posto termine e dato fine alle tante discordie antiche e moderne de'nostri cittadini". 20

Varchi, in his preface, is at pains to assure his readers that, although he has been commissioned to write his history, he himself considers that the events which he is describing are especially

"..degne di memoria".

Originally Varchi had intended to cover only the five years of Florentine history between 1527 and 1532,²¹ which included the period of the siege and the last Florentine Republic and which thus gave him a chance to extol the republican rège which he so much admired, just as Nardi and Pitti cannot avoid their republican sympathies showing in their narratives. Perhaps even more compelling than this sense of the importance of developments in Florence, however, was the overwhelming consciousness in the sixteenth century of the effect of the invasion of Italy by the 'barbari' from the other side of the Alps.

Giovio, in the first book of his history, refers to the way

19) See above, Chapter 6, p.273

20) Nerli, Book 12, p.301.

21) Varchi lived longer than he had anticipated and he was thus able to extend the original scope of his history.

in which the country has been torn by wars,

"Tal che in questi cinquanta anni, ne'quali si conferisce tutta l'Istoria, Marte e la Fortuna pare, che non abbiano lasciata libera parte alcuna del mondo, afflitto da tante ruine".

22

Francesco Vettori, whose long correspondence with Machiavelli had often touched on the problem of foreign invasion, expressed similar thoughts on the importance of the period and the striking nature of events in the letter to Francesco Scarfi which prefaces his history.²³ Above all Machiavelli and Guicciardini were

affected by the seemingly cataclysmic events taking place around them and it was this sense of living in times of great importance which led them to seek to analyse and explain the significance of what was happening. Considerable pride in Florence and in her achievements,²⁴ a pride which was a direct inheritance from the civic humanism of the fifteenth century, mingled with this desire to explain and analyse what was taking place in the early sixteenth century. This feeling may be regarded as another reason why so many histories were written at this time.

Also present was a strong desire to provide a truly accurate record of events which had either not been dealt with at all

22)Giovio, Book 1, p.1.

23)Vettori to Scarfi, introductory letter to Sommario della Storia d'Italia 1511 al 1527. A.S.I. Appendix to Vol.6. 1848. "E certo, in questi quindici anni si sono trattati negozii importantissimi e da considerare in essi la varietà della fortuna".

24)Guicciardini, Ricordi, Opere Inedite, Vol.10,p.4 "...io li ho scritti solamente a quello fine, come quello che desidero due cose al mondo più che alcuna altra: l'un l'esaltazione perpetua di questa Città e della libertà sua, l'altra la gloria di casa nostra, non solo vivendo io ma in perpetuo".

previously or which had been dealt with inadequately. Nearly all the historians preserve the convention of protesting that they are themselves unequal to their task, yet they are nevertheless writing with an eye on posterity in the hope that their work may provide the necessary record.²⁵ Guicciardini, who in his unfinished Le Cose Fiorentine wrote with the aim of criticizing earlier writers in order to uncover the truth, wrote in his other history of Florence that he intended to deal with events after the peace of Lodi,

"..perchè da quello tempo in qua non ci è ancora chi abbi scritto istorie".²⁶

Segni pointed out that earlier writers had been biased and that he hoped to improve on what they had done.²⁷ Ammirato, in his preface, gives a criticism of the work of Malespini, Villani, Bruni, Machiavelli, Guicciardini and Giovio, pointing out the failings of each one in turn in order to demonstrate that in spite of all this earlier writing there is still a need for his own history, even though the

"..bassezza e sterilità degli scritti miei",
cannot hope to compete with their many talents.

25)e.g. Vettori, loc.cit. "Nè ancora sono sì arrogante, che quando volessi pigliare tale provincia, mi persuadessi di poterla perfettamente assolvere".

26)Guicciardini, Storia Fiorentina. Chapter 1,p.11. In his Ricordi, published in English as Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman. New York. 1965. He wrote, "..in time cities perish and the memory of things is lost, and..the sole purpose for writing history is to preserve the memories forever". p.77.

27)Segni, Book 1,p.3. Refers to the Florentines, "..che hanno scritto queste medesime cose, i quali per essere stati sempre appassionati, e divisi nelle cose del governo di questa Patria.. non tanto raccomandate alla verità,..".

The historians of the sixteenth century, therefore, wrote in order to gain a living, because they had a sense of the importance of the times in which they were living, and because they wanted to provide as accurate a record as possible for posterity. Did they in these respects differ very much from the earlier historians? The answer to this is no, they did not, for we find that men wrote history in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries for very similar reasons and in fact have similar motives in the present day. In 1443 Flavio Biondo was, so he says, inspired to write by the inadequacy and lack of earlier work.²⁸ Both Leonardo Bruni and Lorenzo Valla were concerned with the extent to which forgery and legend had become mingled with history and felt the need for an accurate record to be left for posterity. The humanist writers too were inspired by the events which they described, although these were often not contemporary. Tied as they may have been in some ways to the conception which they had evolved of classical historiography they could not always follow the advice which they had formulated and they did not adhere to Caesar's idea that an historian should have always experienced the events which he describes.²⁹ Love of state or city was one of the dominating characteristics of humanist historical writings³⁰ and there was a constant desire to extol the virtues of one's own city, just as

28) See B. Reynolds - Latin Historiography: a Survey, 1400-1600.

29) F. Gilbert, op.cit. p.206-7.

30) For the early development of ideas of this type in Machiavelli see Hans Baron - Das Erwachen des Historischen Denken in Humanismus des Quattrocento. in Historische Zeitschrift, Vol.147, 1932.

Sanuto later sought to extol Venice through his diaries. Salutati and Bruni, both chancellors of Florence, did important service to their city in this direction.³¹ The humanist writers may have lagged behind the sixteenth century historians in some respects for their work could often degenerate into panegyric,³² but as far as motives were concerned the sixteenth century historians had much in common with their humanist predecessors and the link is evident in other respects as well.

We have already mentioned the importance to the humanists of the example of the classical historians, or rather, of their own ideas of what constituted a classical history, and this feature of historiography was by no means dead in the sixteenth century. In the fifteenth century there was a conscious effort on the part of the historians to imitate the works of such writers as Sallust, Caesar and Livy, Petrarch's 'matchless historian'.³³ They carefully studied the methods and the styles of the classical authors and sought to incorporate these into their own work. This approach is described in Pontano's Actius, and in a letter in which Bernardo Rucellai, who himself put these ideas into practice,

31) On Salutati see B.L.Ullman - The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati. Padua. 1963. On Bruni see especially E.Santini - Leonardo Aretino e i suoi 'Historiarium Florentini Populi Libri XII' in Annali della R.Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. Vol.22. 1910. In this can be seen Bruni's very critical approach to his sources. His motives are given as being love of his city and a desire to praise it for posterity and a desire to win personal glory.

32) See A.M.Brown - The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici. J.W.C.I. Vol.24, 1961. There is often, of course, a difference between panegyric and history and the humanists should not be judged too harshly in this respect.

33) Gilmore, op.cit. p.6 quotes this comment of Petrarch's.

describes a discussion on the way in which history should be written which took place at Pontano's academy in Naples in 1495.³⁴ In order to achieve the desired effect it was necessary to study the works of several, not just one, classical historian, so that a synthesis based on all their work could be constructed. Thus historians should, like Livy and Sallust, divide their work up into a number of books, each beginning with general reflections on the content, and they should be guided by the classical writers in their choice of a subject, be it the history of a country or city or of one particular war. All the necessary elements and details should be included in order to give their work the desired classical form, and it was naturally very important to substantiate any general statement which might be made by reference to classical history. The writing of history thus became a rigid exercise with set rules and formulae by which the historian must abide, and the extent of the rhetorical element involved meant that the freedom of the historian was considerably limited. It is ironical that, in spite of their most earnest attempts, the humanists did not in fact produce histories which could truly be called 'classical'.

A man like Bernardo Rucellai tended to be the exception rather than the rule by the sixteenth century when, in the sphere of history as in other artistic spheres, the somewhat slavish

34) Gilbert, op.cit. p.203 onwards. Also G.Pellegrini - L'umanista Bernardo Rucellai e le sue opere storiche. Livorno. 1920. Guicciardini-Storia Fiorentina. Chapter 29, p.283-4. said Rucellai was "...uomo di grande ingenio, di ottime lettere e molto eloquente ma secondo il parere de'savii, di non molto giudicio;..".

attempts at imitation of the ancients practised by the earlier historians was on the decline. Yet the classical element in history, and indeed in life itself, remained very strong. The men with whom Nerli conversed in the Orti Oricellari never dreamt for one moment of the disappearance of classics as the basis of education, and the extent to which classical history was rooted in mens' minds can be seen from the fact that the conspiracy against the government of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, which was nurtured in the Orti, owed much to the idea of Brutus as the liberator of Rome from tyranny.³⁵ Machiavelli who, as we remarked at the outset, saw himself as opening up new paths in the study of history, wrote that his guides in his task were not only his long personal experience but also,

"..una continua lezione delle antiche".

He adopted, in his Florentine history, the classical convention of dividing his work into separate books, each with prefatory remarks of a general nature,³⁶ and he also had frequent recourse to classical example.³⁷ Nerli follows his friend in this matter, giving an analysis of the books into which he divides the Commentari in his preface and reiterating his central theme at

35) See above, Chapter 2, p.73 Also the Apologia of Lorenzino de' Medici, who also claimed Brutus as his guide in the murder of Duke Alessandro.

36) e.g. Machiavelli - Istorie Fiorentine. Milan.1962. Book 3, p.212. "Le gravi e naturali nimicizie che sono intra gli uomini popolari e i nobili,..sono cagione di tutti i male che nascono nelle città;..".

37) e.g. Machiavelli, ibid. Book 2, p.209. where he compares the attack on the Ponte Vecchio with the crossing of the Rubicon.

38

numerous points throughout the book. He makes little use of another classical device, that of including in the narrative speeches said to have been delivered by men at the time but in fact invented by the historian as a means of explaining the attitudes of two opposing sides. If Nerli had had more formal education he might have betrayed more signs of classicism in his writing.³⁹ Both Segni and Varchi made full use of this convention derived from the principles of rhetoric.⁴⁰ Varchi, when he puts forward in his preface the reasons why he is fitted for his task, includes among them the fact that he has read the works of Tacitus and Polibius, while Giovio is, perhaps more than any of the other historians, conscious of being in direct line of descent from the historians of classical antiquity. Writing in Latin in the belief that only works in that tongue would have permanence, an idea which owed its most important early expression to Petrarch, Giovio displays the modesty expected of a writer in his comparison of his own work with that of classical authors.⁴¹

38) Nerli, Book 10, p.243. "...e dipoi anderemo seguitando di scrivere...i modi della riforma del nuovo governo e dello stato, e come dipoi la nostra città...si riformasse da Repubblica a Principato".

39) The composition of such speeches formed an integral part of the humanist system of education. See bibliography for works by Woodward and Garin on this subject.

40) e.g. Segni, Book 2, pp.140-51 gives the speeches of Jacopo Gherardi and Niccolò Capponi at Capponi's trial.

41) Giovio, Preface. To Cosimo. "Nè io son però si sfacciato, che con presuntuosa emulazione io ardisca d'aspirare all'honore di Cesare, di Sallustio, et di Livio", but he continues less humbly, "Ma io, non m'aguglio già, nè vorrei essere aguagliato a gli scrittori di questo secolo; conciosia cosa, che molti di loro non hanno arrecato allo scrivere, come ho fatto io, tanta cognitione di luoghi, di cose, et d'huomini, ne più ricco tesoro di viva memoria,..".

Even Ammirato, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, says that he intends to list all the Gonfalonieri of Florence in conscious imitation of the Roman consular lists.

These evidences of the influence which the work of the classical historians had on the sixteenth century, together with the large number of classical references which are to be found in their work, show how alike they were in many ways to the humanist writers a century earlier. That this was so was not remarkable for the whole basis of Renaissance culture was classical and this was still true in the sixteenth century, even if there had been a change of emphasis since the fifteenth. What is important is to establish this continuity between the two groups of historians before turning to the differences in approach which did exist between them. It is all too easy to forget these strong links with past historiography when we turn to the more modern aspects of the work of the sixteenth century historians.

There was beginning, for example, a difference in the attitude towards the classics. Machiavelli's Discorsi may have been based on a framework of Livy and extolled the 'virtù' of the Romans, but he was criticized for writing in this vein by Guicciardini, for whom the label 'Roman' was by no means
⁴²synonymous with perfection. Guicciardini felt that it was impossible, and therefore futile, to try to imitate the Romans,

42) Guicciardini attacked Machiavelli on this matter in his Considerazioni intorno ai discorsi del Machiavelli sopra la prima di Tito Livio. Opere Inedite, Vol.1, pp.3-79.

for what they had done had been right only for them at that time and could not be taken as a guide for Florentine politics. He himself, in his last unfinished history of Florence, regards the claims of the Roman historians on the origins of the city with a considerable amount of scepticism.⁴³ Nerli, whilst he adheres to the classical plan in his history, probably does so more in imitation of his friend Machiavelli than of the classical writers themselves and his work contains only a small number of classical allusions. Jacopo Pitti's history is also surprisingly free of classical allusions and references. We do not find in Nerli the enormous, and often wearisome, amount of 'background' information with which Varchi, in the 'classical' manner, assails his reader, for Nerli prefers to restrict his narrative to the political scene of the period. The humanist/classical obsession with the form which history must take is beginning to disappear. Not even those writers who pay most attention to the classical precepts for the writing of history do so with the same devotion which Bernardo Rucellai had shown in his De Bello Italico Commentarius, the result of what Rucellai had learnt on his visit to Pontano at Naples. History had been viewed at least partly by the humanists in its medieval place as a branch of rhetorics, inferior to poetry, and as a result they had tried to fit it into a literary classical form which became less important to the more politically

43) Guicciardini - Le Cose Fiorentine. Florence. 1945. Book 1, p.5. he examines the accounts of Pliny and Tacitus of the origins of Florence.

orientated writers of the sixteenth century. Faced with the momentous events of their times the historians became more interested in the causes and effects of history and consequently less interested in constructing their works on classical lines. They did not cast off the classical inheritance which they had received from the humanists but the nature of the times in which they lived forced their attention away from history principally as literature and made them view it increasingly as politics, to be analysed and dissected.

That in the sixteenth century historians became concerned with politics and sought to construct their 'philosophies' of history by an analysis of what they saw going on around them is the truism re-iterated by nearly all students of the period. It is a judgement which it is all the harder to get into accurate perspective because it does undoubtedly contain a large degree of truth. By stressing this aspect of sixteenth century historiography and pointing to the way in which the historians made increasingly better use of their sources it is possible to see the period as one which initiated the study of history in the form which we know it today. Giovio and Varchi thus become the forerunners of modern scientifically-orientated historians, divorced from the uncritical and imitative writing of the fifteenth and earlier centuries. We have returned to the Burckardtian picture of the Renaissance, with its automatic assumption that the middle ages was a time of more or less total sterility. To deny the development of historiography in

the sixteenth century would be impossible and absurd, but before turning to the positive side of the picture it is worth while pointing out once again the extent of the links of Nerli and the group of historians at Cosimo's court with their humanist predecessors.

One of the aspects of sixteenth century historiography which is often brought forward in support of the modernity of approach which can be distinguished at this time is the attitude of the historians towards their source material. Yet did a critical sense begin to develop only at this time? The fact that an historian laments previous inaccuracies does not necessarily mean that he will improve on previous achievements and we cannot take complaints about Biondo, Bruni and Valla as automatically meaning that the work of those complaining reached new heights of accuracy and use of sources. However, an examination of the way in which they did approach their work shows that we do not have to wait until the sixteenth century before we find an increasingly critical attitude towards the writing of history. One of the primary concerns of the humanists was the establishment of accurate texts of the classical authors and Petrarch, who did much to establish the texts of Livy, served as an example to a number of scholars who embarked on the work of establishing other texts and sources, work which demanded the exercise of considerable critical faculty. Outstanding in this work was Lorenzo Valla, who finally exposed the famous donation of Constantine as a forgery, and Valla's criticism, based to a large

extent on linguistic arguments, has an extremely scientific air about it which earns him a place as one of the founders of the new school of historians who made critical use of their sources.⁴⁴ Nor was Valla the very first in this field, for much of his work was almost certainly based on the earlier criticism of the donation by Nicholas of Cusa. Without a doubt a critical approach to history was to be found in the fifteenth century, even if as yet they had not developed to any great extent, and the beginnings of this approach stretch back even earlier. The continued adherence to classical form could lead the historians into inaccuracies which do not seem to have offended their critical sense and they do not as yet seem to have placed much emphasis on the use of documentary evidence, except when it was the only type available.⁴⁵ Even so, beginnings had been made in this direction and the sixteenth century had far more than a barren waste of inaccurate and imitative writing on which to base its own work.

When we turn to the sixteenth century we find the ever self-conscious historians loudly asserting their devotion to the presentation of a true and accurate narrative. Machiavelli, writing to tell Guicciardini of his commission to write a history

44) See C.B. Coleman - Constantine the Great and Christianity, in Columbia University, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law. Vol.60, 1914. Also Franco Gaeta - Lorenzo Valla, Filologia e Storia nell'Umanesimo Italiano, Naples 1955. pp.125-166 in particular deal with Valla's critical method.

45) Gilbert, op.cit. p.221 and Santini, op.cit. on Bruni.

says,

"..ingegnerommi di fare in modo che, dicendo il vero, nessuno si possa dolere". 46

Giovio claims in a letter to Luigi d'Avila that he wants to write,

"..con certe lume di verità..", 47

and even Nerli, surprisingly silent on his attitude to his work, shows an awareness that objectivity is essential if the historian

is to be valued.⁴⁸ Bernardo Rucellai, in his De bello italico, says that history,

"..deve fuggir la menzogna e nulla tacere della verità,..",

and Vettori claims in his introduction,

"..ho scritto con verità".

The ever self-conscious Varchi makes a similar claim and adds that,

"..la legge della Storia mi sforza a dire quello ch'io volentieri taciutoarei". 49

We have already seen how one of the prime motives of the historians was to improve on what had already been written and leave an accurate record for posterity. Even so the need to flatter patrons could lead to inaccuracies and the criticisms made of Giovio after his death show that the actual history which was written did not always live up to the high standards which the

46)Machiavelli - Lettere. To Guicciardini. August 30, 1524.

47)Giovio - Lettere. Vol.2. To Luigi d'Avila. November 27, 1550.

48)Nerli, Book 7, p.140. Nerli says that he must moderate his praise of his relative Giovanni delle Bande Nere or else no one will have faith in his judgement.

49)Varchi, Book 2,p.235, referring to a matter involving a quarrel over a woman.

historians claimed to be setting for themselves. The claims were not simply lip-service to an ideal which was never practised, however, and we can see that in fact the historians were beginning to make a fuller and more critical use of the sources available to them, following the example set by Valla in the fifteenth century.

We have already discussed the sources of Nerli's Commentari and seen how he used both earlier histories and the records made available to him by Duke Cosimo in order to construct a full and accurate narrative. Guicciardini's Le Cose Fiorentine, though it may be an attempt,

"..to write the history of a city state in the traditional classical pattern..",

50

also provides a good example of the increasingly critical way in which the writing of history was being approached. Guicciardini's two main authorities for the early history of the city are Leonardo Bruni and Poggio Bracciolini, and the picture which he constructs is based on a careful analysis of their two accounts. He is always careful to note their opinions on points where they differ and gives frequent quotations from them and from his other source, Buoninsegni.⁵¹ On matters where he feels his evidence to be insufficient he refrains from making a judgement.⁵² Other

50) Gilbert, op.cit. p.245.

51) Guicciardini, op.cit. Book 2, p.53. Re Ambassadors sent to the Pope in 1376; "..dice Leonardo messer Alexandro dell'Antella et messer Donato Barbadori; dice Poggio, messer Donato Barbadori et ser Domenico Salvestri".

52) Ibid. Book 1, p.12. "Io, in tanta obscurità di cose, non ardisco affermare niente..".

sixteenth century historians show a similar concern that their narratives should be as accurate as possible. Ammirato, in spite of his rather medieval devotion to the narration of events supernatural and portentous, does display signs of a more modern approach in his Istorie Fiorentine as far as his sources are concerned. It was Ammirato who we noted as criticizing earlier writers in his preface and, in the first books of his history, he subjects Machiavelli, one of his main sources, to a good deal of such criticism.⁵³ Ammirato made use of a number of different histories, checking one against another, and he must have examined these with considerable care. In Book 15, for example, in describing an instrument of war used by the Florentines in their struggle against the Visconti he writes,

"Quest'è la prima volta che appresso gli antichi scrittori io trovo fatta menzione di questa macchina militare".

He frequently refers to the "antiche cronache"⁵⁴ and "certe memorie"⁵⁵ on which his account is based and like Guicciardini he admits when he is not sure on a point.

Paolo Giovio, in the preface to his history, refers to the richness of his sources,

"..il quale io confeso d'haver havuto dal cielo",
and says that much of his information he has gleaned from famous

53) Ammirato, Book 5, p.43. Of Machiavelli's account of 1315 he writes, "..parte delle quali cose essendo manifestamente false, rendono sospetto ancor quelle che potrebbono esser vere".

54) Ammirato, Book 16, p.252.

55) " " 18, p.60.

men of his acquaintance. During the many years in which he was involved in composing his history Giovio wrote to many people to ask for information and we can see from this correspondence that he did make efforts to be accurate, even if his desire to please his patrons sometimes worked against this. So anxious was Giovio to be accurate in his account of the Schmalkaldic league that he sent a questionnaire to the combatants.⁵⁶ Further illustration of the extent to which the investigation of sources was developing at this time can be seen in the work of Vincenzo Borghini in connection with the origins of Florence, which that scholar

"..da fortissime tenebre di cotanta antichità
andare investigando..".

57

Borghini was one of the leading scholars of the day and much of his correspondence has been preserved in the pages of the Prose Fiorentine, Volume 17 of which contains a series of letters on this matter of the origins of the city between him and Girolamo Mei. The letters are very long and detailed and show the care with which the two men have analysed Greek and Roman texts in order to discover the truth. There is no lack of appreciation of the value and necessity of careful scholarship in the work of these two.⁵⁸

To return to the historians themselves, however, the work of Pitti and Varchi provides us with more evidence of the

56) See G.G. Ferrero - Politica e vita morale del'500 nelle lettere di Paolo Giovio. Memorie della R. Accademia delle scienze di Torino Serie 2, Vol.70, part 2, 1939-40. p.46.

57) Ammirato, Book 1, p.86.

58) Prose Fiorentine, Vol.17, p.309.

development of a critical approach to historical writing. Pitti's Apologia de' Cappucci in particular shows his knowledge not only of other contemporary works of history, but also of the official Florentine records. In his attempt to discredit the work of Guicciardini Pitti makes use of all the sources available to him, quoting from the histories of Varchi, Nardi and Biagio Buonaccorsi, and referring to the work of Giovio and Nerli. He quotes too from the public records, which Duke Cosimo may have made available to him as he made them available to other historians.⁵⁹ It would also seem that he had a wide knowledge of lesser known historical writing, for in Book 3 he comments,

"Nè solamente hanno eglino lodato le istorie, ma gli annali e li diarii ancora; come campi, quantunque meno coltivati, ripieni però di molti nobili frutti".

Varchi also made use of a wide range of sources, partly because he had no personal recollection on which to base his work, and we have already referred to the 'spoglie' which he made for his history and which show his use of Nerli's Commentari. Like Giovio Varchi also wrote to friends and to people who had been involved in the events which he was describing for information,

59)e.g. Pitti, op.cit. on p.289 he makes a reference to the records of the Otto.

60

often asking for very minute details about a particular matter. The large number of sources on which he drew is especially evident in his description of the topography of Florence before the siege.⁶¹ He himself is at pains to point out the trouble he has taken to verify his facts, and in Book 3 of his history, dealing with an election, he writes,

"Per S. Maria Novella, chi fusse il primo, per diligenza che da me usata si sia, mai rinvenire potuto non ho".

62

He also wants to make sure that his readers do not get the impression that he is using his sources in order to prove what he wants to prove, writing,

"..è ragionevole che io accomodi non la materia a me, ma me alla materia, qualunque ella si sia".

63

60)e.g. Magl. II, IV, 404, f.43. A letter to Varchi from Belisano Vinta in Volterra, September 1, 1564, telling him about events in Volterra during the siege of Florence. He has asked people in the town for information and reports that his uncle and "..tutti gl' altri vecchi, che vi si trovonno, et hoggi vivono.." have been asked and "cosi tutti affermano che questa città abbandonata, et da suoi principal cittadini, et de buona parte de soldati della guardia, et stracca dal combattere si desse salvo l'havere, et le persone al Ferruccio à buona fede mazzano Taddeo Guiducci suo capitano ne di capitoli, o d'altro n'apparisce in scriptis monumento, ò memoria alcuna, et se il popolo non si andava con Dio, ne fosser rimasti si poche à resistere all'impeto del nimico, bisognava, che al fin egli vinto et dalla mortalità de suoi, et della stancheza, fame, et mancamento di vettovaglia, se ne ritornasse à Empoli, ò altrove. Altro non so..". Such long and detailed replies must have been of great assistance to Varchi in his work, especially when they came from people who had been closely involved in the events with which he was concerned.

61)Varchi, Book 9. In this description he quotes from the works of Villani, Bruni, Machiavelli, Tacitus, Poliziano, Livy, Dante, Fazio degli Uberti, Paolo Emilio da Verona, Benedetto Dei and Cristofano Landini.

62)Varchi, Book 3, p.147. He says that Cambi gives the man elected as Baldassare Carducci.

63)Varchi, Book 12, p.415

All these examples show that it is undoubtedly true that in the sixteenth century historians were paying greater attention to sources and becoming more critical in their approach than their humanist predecessors had been. They were making use of other written history, of the official archives which Cosimo placed at their disposal, and of any further information which they could glean from men who had been concerned with the events which they were describing. We have already seen the extent to which they worked together, reading each others' manuscripts and making use of the same material.⁶⁴ Nerli's attitude to these developments would seem to have been in harmony with that of the majority of the historians, for, though he says little of his approach in the Commentari, we have seen the careful way in which he combined his personal knowledge with his sources. This stress on the need for accuracy, though it did not always produce works of such infallibility as the comments of the historians might lead one to hope for, did form the basis for modern historiography, and in this sense the Burckhardtian view is correct. Yet this is only one half of the picture, and we should always bear in mind that very little which happened during the Renaissance did not owe a debt, however small, to the middle ages, and that in developing a critical attitude towards the writing of history the historians

64) See above, Chapter 7. Also C.S. P.S. 95, f.103. August 1, 1551. Nardi to Varchi. He sends information, "Le quali cose per la diversità degli humori, che vi apparirano, sarebbe meglio dimenticare, et occultare, che mantenere vive nelle memoria de' Futuri tempi..". Nardi was not without reservations about providing a record for posterity.

of the sixteenth century were able to build on the work of such men as Bruni, Biondo and Valla, who had by no means been lacking something of the same critical sense.

We have now seen that, new as it was in some ways, sixteenth century historiography was based on that of the humanists, retaining the humanist interest in the classics and developing the earlier critical outlook to a greater extent. If we now turn to the reason why the historians wrote, to their 'philosophy' of the purpose of writing works of history, we shall find that here too, in spite of all that has been written on the originality of the approach of Machiavelli and his contemporaries, the debt to earlier writings is considerable. It is inevitable that any development will have roots in earlier movements and the 'philosophy' of history to be found in the sixteenth century, although it developed in a more 'modern' way, had many fifteenth century characteristics about it.

The humanist outlook on history was voiced in a letter by Salutati in which he wrote

"..the historians whose duty it is to hand down to posterity the memory of things done so that the examples of kings, nations, and illustrious men can be either equalled or exceeded by imitating them.. History teaches us the doctrines of philosophy". 65

The historian, by recounting the deeds of successful men of the past, could instruct contemporaries as to how they too could achieve success and fame. Above all the achievements of Athens

65) Gilmore, op.cit. p.19.

and those of Rome, should be studied, for these 'golden ages' had much to offer in the way of examples for future generations. By reading history and the biographies of famous men, contemporary rulers could find a guide for their own conduct which could lead them on to success. Throughout the middle ages it had been common for writers to offer to Princes works of instruction in the art of ruling, full of historical examples, most of them drawn from classical antiquity, and it is possible to view Machiavelli's Il Principe as being in direct line of descent from such works. 66

There was a deep-seated belief that from history and its example men could learn what their own experience had perhaps been too narrow to teach them, and historians felt that they could, through the writing of history, instruct their contemporaries in the 'philosophy' of life. 67

We find this concept of history as a way of instruction present also in the sixteenth century, and indeed it is an idea which still survives today. Jacopo Pitti writes that

"Gli huomini prudenti hanno sempremai giudicato che la lezione delle istorie apportti gran giovamento a tutti coloro i quali ne'maneggi degli stati specialmente si compiacciono". 68

66) See A.H. Gilbert - Machiavelli's "Prince" and its Forerunners, "The Prince" as a typical book "de Regimine Principium". Duke Univ Press. 1938. For the opposing view see F. Gilbert - The Humanist Concept of the Prince and "The Prince" of Machiavelli. J.M.H. Vol. 11, 1939.

67) Comynes - Memoires, quoted by A. Gilbert, op.cit. "Est grant avantaige aux princes d'avoir veu des hystories en leur jeunesse, esquelles voyent largement de telle assemblées et de grans frauds et tromperies. Il n'est pas dit que tous en ayent usé, mais l'exemple d'ung est assez pour en faire songes plusieurs et leur donner vouloir de se garder".

68) Pitti, Book 3, p.193.

Giovio wrote,

"..l'Istoria ha una parte, la quale è lo scrivere
le vite degli eccellenti uomini,..", 69

clearly in the belief that there was much to be learned from such biographies, while Jacopo Nardi gives a fuller expression to the concept in his history.

"E se vero è", he writes, "che gli esempi delle cose passate sien maestre, e insegnino lo avvenimento delle future, pare che ei non sia cosa punto soverchia il raccontare i gravi incomodi e disagi del duro assedio che sostenne più di dieci mesi il popolo fiorentino per difensione della sua libertà". 70

Segni too held this view that history could instruct, writing in Book 5 of his history that

"..nel vero non fa altro la Storia, che insegnare agli uomini civilmente vivere". 71

Nerli, though he does not say anything specifically on this matter must have held the same opinion, for his work seems to have been didactic in purpose, hoping to show the value of a Principate.

Yet this concept that through the writing of history men could be instructed in the right way in which to govern their affairs is one which brought with it considerable complications. It involved the historians in an analysis of the reasons which lay behind the events they were describing and it led Guicciardini to appreciate that rules of conduct worked out on the basis of

69)Giovio - Lettere. Vol.1 To Girolamo Scannapeco, 1534-35.

70)Nardi, Book 9, p.226.

71)Segni, Book 5, p.291.

past experience in Rome just were not adequate to meet the problems which faced sixteenth century Italy. Constantly, in the work of Guicciardini and Machiavelli, we meet their awareness of the catastrophic nature of the times which led them to turn from the humanist conception of history towards a more modern one, in which events were analysed with a more immediately practical aim in view. Politics became the historians' primary concern. An historian like Guicciardini could seek to show through his analysis of events exactly why they had taken the turn which they had, and he could show that in order for any given situation to be fully appreciated it must be viewed from all sides. But what Guicciardini could not do was to free historical writing from the tyranny of the figure of the goddess 'fortuna'. Even Guicciardini, with his ability to view events with a cool and analytical mind and to estimate the extent to which a man's character had been instrumental in forming his destiny, could not write without frequent reference to the powerful goddess. The constant stress on both Machiavelli and Guicciardini as historians of modern outlook has led to the extent to which they, and other writers of this period, were still dominated by 'fortuna' being overlooked, but this is just one more example of the earlier roots of sixteenth century historiography.

The goddess Fortuna was of pagan origin, but had been adopted by the middle ages, in spite of the opposition of the church, in whose eyes she represented a rival to the determining power of God. In a time in which life seemed to have no fixed plan or

pattern the fickle goddess was bound to make a strong appeal, for upon her could be blamed the sudden reverses and irrationalities of life for which men could find no other explanation. In spite of the efforts of Dante to 'christianize' her she remained predominantly a pagan figure, an alternative to God rather than His servant. She was essentially capricious by nature and this was emphasised in many illustrations of her by picturing her balanced on a ball. Seldom was she portrayed without her wheel, which she was usually considered to turn with no regard to the merits or desires of the men clinging to it. One moment she would exalt them to great wealth and power and the next she would cast them down into the depths of poverty and misery. Hence she was not to be trusted, for while she might at first smile on a man and bestow her favours on him she might easily turn completely against him, suddenly and for no reason. It was in her fickle hands that mens' lives lay and they could do little on their own to affect their own destinies.⁷² In view of the political vicissitudes which faced men in the sixteenth century, making them feel helpless to alter the tide of events, it is small wonder that we find in the Renaissance a renewed interest in the goddess 'fortuna' and her influence over human affairs.

'Fortuna' was often depicted in the allegorical paintings so beloved of the Renaissance and can appear in the guise of a

72) See H.R. Patch - The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature. Harvard. 1927. which gives a full description of the goddess and the role which she was held to play.

well-known ruler of the time. In the notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, for example, an inventory includes a painting in which Lodovico il Moro is depicted as Fortuna.⁷³ Consciousness of the power of the goddess is to be found not only in the histories of the sixteenth century but also in private correspondence, and clearly was an important factor in life at this period. Filippo Strozzi complains of

"..la mia trista sorte", 74

and in a letter to Varchi Piero Vettori writes,

"..come piu volte vi ragionai bene essere della mia casa tentare la fortuna, et vedere s'io havessi fuori miglio fortuna che qui". 75

In the histories 'fortuna' comes into the narrative time after time. She is used to explain the successes of countries, of cities, of families and of individual men and equally is used as an explanation of failure. In Nerli's work it is to the members of the Medici family above all that 'fortuna' is seen as being kind, for in his opinion she has decided that

"..la casa de' Medici s'inalzasse quanto ella s'inalzò fino alle stelle". 76

Again he refers to

"..la fortuna della loro felicissima casa", 77

meaning the Medici, and in his discussion of Duke Cosimo he writes

73) The notebooks of Leonardo - Ed. Pamela Taylor. New York. 1960. p. 191

74) A.S.I. Vol. 14, 1894. Filippo Strozzi da nuovi documenti. p. 78.

75) C.S. P.S. 132. July 6, 1537.

76) Nerli, Book 11, p. 270.

77) " " 2, p. 43.

of the heights to which

"..la sua buona fortuna l'aveva condotto". 78

'Fortuna' is made in this case to agree with Nerli's own view that the rule of a Medicean prince was the best form of government for Florence. Francesco Vettori claims that Soderini's failure was due to bad fortune,

"..(non voglio dir sua, ma della misera città)",

which

"..non permesse che egli o che altri vedesse il modi di ovviare alli insulti de'collegati". 79

Jacopo Pitti refers to the murder of Duke Alessandro as being the result of the

"..fatal fortuna della nimicizia ne'due rami di Giovanni di Bicci invecchiata", 80

and Ammirato comments,

"Fu la fortuna favorevole al desiderio del pontefice e de'Fiorentini". 81

When describing wars in particular the historians bring in the goddess, for she was traditionally linked with the variations of war, her power being

"..maggiore nelle cose militari che in qualunque altra". 82

Behind these frequent references to 'fortuna' lay the consciousness of the historians of her enormous power and influence in human affairs which invalidated all their attempts to

78)Nerli, Book 2, p.293.

79)Vettori, Sommario, p.288.

80)Pitti, p.202.

81)Ammirato, Book 21, p.257.

82)Guicciardini - Storia d'Italia. Book 2, p.135.

rationalize the events they were describing.

"..è grandissima (come ognuno sa) in tutte l'azioni
umane la potestà della fortuna,.."83

wrote Guicciardini, and his belief in the power of 'fortuna'
detracts from the 'modernity' of his writing.⁸⁴ A fatalistic
attitude is prevalent amongst the historians in regard to the
role which 'fortuna' played. Vettori writes of the

"..mutazione di fortuna, alla quale sono tutte le
azioni umane sottoposte",85

and Ammirato, in his discussion of Soderini, writes,

"..ma sono acconcie e aperte le vie alla rovina,
nè pare che l'umana provvidenza possa opporsi a
quello che una volta è stata previsto nel cielo".86

Donato Giannotti describes 'fortuna' as

"..arbitra delle faccende umane..",87

and Varchi refers to events,

"..i quali in podestà sono e nell'arbitrio della
fortuna..".88

Nerli's attitude on this matter, as on most others, seems to
have been typical of that of the historians in general.

The historians felt that man was to a large extent at the
mercy of 'fortuna', but the situation was by no means as clear-
cut as might at first appear. For one thing the interference of

83) Guicciardini - Storia d'Italia. Book 2, p.135.

84) See Roberto Palmarocchi - Il concetto di fortuna nel
Guicciardini. A.S.I. Vol.2, 1941. p.3-26.

85) Vettori, introductory letter to Scarfi.

86) Ammirato, Book 28, p.261.

87) Giannotti - Della Repubblica Fiorentina. p.5.

88) Varchi, Book 2, p.202. The matter is further complicated by
the fact that there was a strong belief that the future, if not
actually determined by the stars, could be read in them. See J.
Seznec - The Survival of the Pagan Gods. Eng, trans. 1953.

'fortuna' in human affairs was often confused and mingled with the part played by God, and for another the historians found it difficult to decide how much of what happened to men depended on 'fortuna' and how much on their own characters. Turning first to the confusion which existed on the respective roles of the pagan goddess and God Himself, we find the historians using the two names almost interchangeably, with no sign that they were drawing a clear distinction between them. We have seen how Ammirato referred to events as being

"..previsto nel cielo..",

and numerous examples of this type can easily be found. Pitti, writing of Lorenzo il Magnifico, says,

"Ma i cieli, che avevano cotal dignità ad altro soggetto riservata, lo privarono innanzi tempo della vita".

89

Machiavelli seems to be making a distinction between the two forces when he writes that Lorenzo

"Fu dalla fortuna e da Dio sommamente amato..",

90

but this is rather to stress his point than to draw a clearly conceived difference between the two. Nardi, in a similar manner, talks of both 'fortuna' and

"..la divina giustizia.."

91

in his description of the murders ordered by Cesare Borgia at Sinigaglia. Much has been written on the Renaissance as an irreligious age, but whilst in this case we find an inability to

89)Pitti, Book 1, p.26.

90)Machiavelli - Istorie Fiorentine. Book 8, 36.

91)Nardi, Book 4, p.289.

distinguish clearly between a pagan goddess and the true God this would seem to spring not from any positively pagan outlook but from the genuine confusion in the minds of the historians as to the cause of events. We find little that is anti-religious in their work and indeed their anti-clerical comments spring in the main from a desire to see an improvement in the standards of the church.⁹² Their sin in this respect seems to be one of omission and confusion rather than of paganism. Nerli himself exhibits signs that he was by no means irreligious. His parallel between the murder of Duke Alessandro and that of King Holofernes is a biblical one and he writes of Cosimo and his large family,

"..par certamente, che Dio nel concedergli tal successione di figliuoli, gliel' abbia anche promesso per grazia speciale, come si legge nel Genesi delle promesse fatte a quel gran Patriarca Abraam, quando gli fu detto, che il seme suo moltiplicherrebbe come le stelle del cielo, e come la rena del mare, e che possederebbono quelli del seme suo le porte de' nimici loro, e che nel nome loro tutte le genti sarebbero benedette".

93

If we cannot claim Nerli as an outstandingly religious man he was not without a degree of knowledge of the Bible which he saw fit to make use of in his work.

Burkhardt claimed that the Renaissance was the time of the

92)e.g. Varchi, Book 2, p.64. Referring to the Bishop of Turitano who was asked for his opinion of the government of Florence by Pope Clement, "(o perchè fusse uno degl'informati dal papa, come si tenne per certo o pure perchè così seguisse la natura sua propria, come la comune degli odierni prelati, i quali poco di repubbliche o non repubbliche curando e non conoscendo universalmente altro bene, non che maggiore, che l'utilità propia, e le grandezze particolari, come comandano imperiosamente a'minori di loro, così a i maggiori servilmente ubbidiscono) favello con tanta umiltà e adulazione, quanta a pene immaginare si potrebbe.." 93)Nerli, Book 12, p.298.

discovery of the world and of man, yet this emphasis on the power of 'fortuna' detracts from the dignity of man, since he is frequently seen as being powerless against her. Giovio, describing Charles VIII's entry into Naples, writes,

"Nel qual caso manifestamente si vide, come negli occhi de'Re, in ogni Fortuna è una certa forza più che humana...", 94

and also comments that

"..la fortuna è maggiore d'ogni prudenza". 95

Often people's successes or failures are attributed to their lack of good fortune, rather than to their characters. Thus Segni writes of Pope Clement VII that his affairs went wrong,

"..or per colpa sua, ed or per colpa della fortuna..", 96 showing that he did not regard the Pope's character alone as being responsible for his failures. Vettori, as we have seen, blamed the bad fortune of Florence for the failure of Piero Soderini, and Ammirato claims that it is 'fortuna' who gives

"..animo e risoluzione eziandio a'timidi". 97

Varchi, trying to explain the failure of Ferruccio writes,

"..a me pare, che al Ferruccio non mancasse nè prudenza nè ardire, ma la fortuna,..". 98

It is easy to gain the impression that in the sixteenth century men felt that they could achieve little without the aid of 'fortuna' and were prepared to blame the goddess for all the set-

94)Giovio, Book 2, p.36v.

95) " " " p.41.

96)Segni, Book 1, p.6

97)Ammirato, Book 28, p.237.

98)Varchi, Book 2, p.351.

backs which they suffered. Yet there was also another side to this picture.

One of the most important features of the work of Machiavelli is the way in which he opposes the power of 'fortuna' to that of the virtù which men themselves possess, and this is a theme to be found in other sixteenth century historians. Man is not completely powerless against the goddess. Guicciardini, for example, often refers to the power of virtù and in writing of the defeats suffered by the French he comments that it is not possible

"..attribuire alla malignità della fortuna quello che era stato opera propria della virtù". 99

The fact that men in the sixteenth century did not feel entirely at the mercy of 'fortuna' can be seen clearly in the Discorso della Vertu, et della Fortuna del Sig. Cosimo, written by Baccio Baldini in 1577. In this work, which aims primarily at praising the Duke, Baldini argues that he owed his success purely to his own character and ability, for in fact 'fortuna' did not help him at all. Cosimo lost his father at an early age, and he was absent from Florence when Duke Alessandro was killed and was thus not in an advantageous position to assume the government, and in fact received no help from 'fortuna' throughout the whole of his life. All that he achieved, writes Baldini, he achieved through his

"..beni d'animo sopra i quali Fortuna non ha alcuna possanza,..",

and he goes further by saying that

99)Guicciardini - Storia d'Italia, Book 5, p.57.

"..se quegli i quali dicono che il Gran Duca hebbe dalla sua buona Fortuna la felicità, gl'honori, le grandezze e la gloria sua significano per questo nome Fortuna la grazia di Dio e il suo libero e assoluto volere,..".

The relative position of 'fortuna', God and man's free will was obviously still far from clear. In a dialogue between Lodovico Domenichi and Fortuna, which was published in 1562,¹⁰⁰ this problem comes up again. In the work of Domenichi the powers of the goddess are not so strongly portrayed as they are in others and she is seen as the servant of Jove, unable to act without his aid. She also, during her conversation with Domenichi, reminds him in no uncertain terms of man's own responsibility for the things which happen to him, saying,

"..non sai tu bene, che quel poeta antico disse; che ciascuno è maestro e artefice della sua propria sorte".

The fact that 'fortuna' figured so large^{ly} in the minds of the sixteenth century historians did not mean that they had no conception of any human causation behind events. This concern with 'fortuna', like the signs of lingering superstition which they sometimes manifest,¹⁰¹ is simply an indication that, in spite of the claims which have sometimes been made for them, the historians had not become 'modern' overnight.

As we have seen, the historians exhibited a tendency to

100) Domenichi - Dialoghi..cioe. d'amore. de rimedi d'amore. dell' amor fraterno. della fortuna. della vera nobilta. dell'impresse, della corte. et della stampa. Venice. 1562.

101) The Chronicle of Fra Ughi, the most medieval of the writings of this time, is prone to superstition, though of a quasi-religious nature, and other historians, recounting belief in portentous events, show a tendency to believe these themselves.

explain events in terms of 'fortuna' but they did, nevertheless, have a certain interest in character, even though Burckhardt's claim that the age witnessed the discovery of man is somewhat exaggerated. This interest in character was as yet not fully developed and was obscured both by the frequent recourse to 'fortuna' and by a tendency to describe people in rather stereotyped terms, rather as in the art of the middle ages figures had been drawn with the aid of pattern books. Nerli, for example, often gives only very brief descriptions of people, saying that they were men

"..di grande riputazione..", 102

or that they had

"..buone qualità..", 103

mere formulae which do little to suggest the true character of the people concerned. Such a method is excusable when the writer is dealing with minor figures, but it is used even when such important men as Giovanni de'Bicci and Cosimo de'Medici are being described. They are described simply in terms of their wealth and status, with no attempt being made to analyse the characters of the two founders of the Medici house. Jacopo Pitti also gives brief and inadequate descriptions of this type, which show that he had little real interest in the characters of the

102)e.g. Nerli, Book 2, p.27. "Messer Giovanni Aguto Inghilese uomo in que'tempi di grande riputazione nell'armi,..".

103)e.g. Nerli, Book 2, p.28. "..e massimamente con Messer Benedetto degli Alberti, a cui per le sue buone qualità molto innanzi erano cominciati a dispiacere i modi di costoro, e di quelli della sua parte, e setta medesima,..".

men whom he was describing.

It would be unfair to suggest, however, that the historians never rose above this level in their descriptions. Giovio, for example, shows a considerable, if not a flattering, interest in the character of the Florentines as a whole,¹⁰⁵ and Nerli too can exhibit a similar appreciation. His description of how Niccolò Capponi reacted to the second tribunal before which he appeared shows an appreciation of what was a psychological reaction,¹⁰⁶ and he also gives a reasonably full explanation of how Baglione came to lose his faith in the Signori and the Dieci,¹⁰⁷ rather than

104) Pitti, Book 1, p.16. describes Cosimo simply as being "...d' animo più elevato che il padre,..".

105) Giovio, Book 8, p.4v. "Perchioche la natura del popolo Fiorentino è questa; che chiaramente si vede, com'eglino non si possono nè pacificare per nessun beneficio ancor che grande; nè obligarsi altrui per alcun servizio, benchè di singolar cortesia. Perchè eglino non sanno acordarsi l'antica potentia, la quale nella città libera era a guisa di signoria distribuita in tutti i cittadini: et non possono patire la grandezza di nessun segnalato ancorche moderatissimo cittadino. Perchioche essi son pieni di tanti ambitione, e di superba invidia, che disiderando ciascuno d'essi sedere al maneggio, et governo della Repubblica et in qual si voglia modo godere l'Imperio della patria commune, et a privato comodo abbracciare le ricchezze del publico;..".

106) Nerli, Book 8, p.182. "Riprese Niccolò animo grandissimo, quando si vidde condotto innanzi a quei magistrati, che secondo la disposizione delle leggi era ordinato, che lo dovessero giudicare, però parlò d'altra maniera, e con altro animo, e non s'avvilì, nè confesso quasi d'aver errato, come aveva fatto la prima volta, che 'gli occorre parlare sopra i casi suoi;..".

107) Nerli, Book 10, p.235. Malatesta complained to the Signori and the Dieci about the conditions in which his troops were living but they were not very sympathetic towards his complaints, "Per la qual cosa sopra il parlare del Signor Malatesta, e del Gonfaloniere e del Carduccio occorsero molte sinistre, e mal parole, e furono tali, che per fermarle sul licenziata la pratica, e da quel giorno in là mai più si volle fidare il Signor Malatesta della Signoria, e de' Dieci, e non più si volle indurre in pratica, ne in alcun'altro luogo nelle forze magistrati,..".

merely stating the fact alone. Guicciardini's comments on Clement VII, a Pope under whom the historian had served and whom he had reason to know well, show both an interest in character and a desire to use 'fortuna' as a convenient means of explaining failure. Guicciardini writes that, at the time of his election, Clement was considered,

"..una persona di somma autorità e valore..",

and there was not a single man,

"..che non aspettasse da lui fatti straordinarii e grandissimi,..",

108

but he is later very critical of Clement for the vacillating way in which he managed his affairs. It is deference to a man who had been his friend which makes Guicciardini fall back on 'fortuna' as an explanation of his failure. Nerli goes so far as to blame 'fortuna' for the kind of character which Clement had, a line of argument which completely negates any idea of man's character affecting his own destiny.

The impression with which one is inevitably left is that the problems which confronted the sixteenth century historians had by no means been worked out satisfactorily and to talk of them in terms of a new approach to history which formed the basis for modern historiography can be misleading, however much truth there may be in it. Working on the foundations which had been laid in the fifteenth century an advance had been made towards the writing of accurate history based on a careful and critical examination of

108)Guicciardini - Storia d'Italia. Book 15, p.335.

the sources, but as yet the desire to give pleasure to a patron could still get in the way of principles which were nevertheless expressed in very high-minded terms. The old idea of history as a means of instruction on a formal rather than a practical level was no longer satisfactory in an age when the alarming nature of events made it evident that what was needed was a careful analysis of politics rather than generalizations which bore little resemblance to reality. Yet at this time the historians had not established clearly what they considered to be the relationship between 'fortuna', God and mens' characters and were still seeking vainly for a solution to the problems with which the position in sixteenth century Europe faced them. The disillusion of Guicciardini, who came to see that plans of action could be made only for very limited periods,¹⁰⁹ is more typical of the historians of the sixteenth century than the optimism of Machiavelli with which this chapter began. The period is more remarkable for its recognition of the existence of certain problems, rather than for the success of its attempts to solve them.

109) Guicciardini-Ricordi. Eng. trans. cit. Series C.6. "It is a great error to speak of things of this world absolutely and indiscriminately and to deal with them, as it were, by the book. In nearly all things one must make distinctions and exceptions because of differences in their circumstances. These circumstances are not covered by one and the same rule. Nor can these distinctions and exceptions be found written in books. They must be taught by discretion".

Conclusion.

This study has been an attempt to indicate certain features of society and historiography in the sixteenth century from an analysis of the life and work of Filippo de'Nerli. An attempt such as this can be helpful in making clearer certain aspects of a period, but it can also be misleading since generalizations based solely on what we know of one man may often be erroneous. It would be true, for example, to say that Nerli was not an ambitious man, but it would most definitely not be true to say that the ottimati as a class were unambitious throughout the whole of this period. Yet through a study of Nerli's life we have been able at least to add to our picture of sixteenth century Florence, even if what has been added simply reinforces existing opinion rather than modifying it in any outstanding way. Often during the course of the narrative we have almost lost sight of Nerli himself and concentrated more on the society in which he lived, but this can to a certain extent be excused since the value of such a study lies rather in what it reveals of society in general than in what it reveals of the individual whose life is being examined.

It now remains to summarize what seems to be indicated of conditions in general from what we know of Nerli's life. We have seen how for many generations Florence had been the prey of the ottimati class, constantly torn by their feuds and quarrels as they supported first one side and then another according to the dictates of their interests. We have seen too how the

historians from Villani onwards had appreciated this fact and drawn attention to it. The Nerli family was no exception to this rule and Nerli's father, Benedetto, was not only discontented under the rule of Piero de'Medici since it did not serve his interests but, for similar reasons, was equally restless under the Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini. Governmental changes in Florence were more often than not brought about by such selfish discontent, rather than by any genuine desire to see an improvement in the management of affairs.¹ Nerli himself manifested similar characteristics, writing bitterly to Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino when he felt that his father had not been rewarded as he deserved.² Consistency was not one of the characteristics of the ottimati and we find them backing different view-points on different occasions, always acutely aware of their own interests. Even Nerli, who seems to have been basically a loyal supporter of the Medici, was implicated in the conspiracy against Cardinal Giulio de'Medici.³ Throughout the fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries the ottimati formed a troublesome and divisive factor in Florentine society.

With the sixteenth century, however, this pattern changed. Throughout the fifteenth century the Medici family had tried to establish their power in the city, independently of the ottimati,

1) See N. Rubinstein - Politics and Constitution in Florence at the end of the Fifteenth Century. In Italian Renaissance Studies. Ed. Jacob. In this he points out that the revolution of 1494 was primarily an ottimati movement.

2) See Chapter 2, p. 41

3) " " " p. 73

but their economic dependence on that group meant that their task was an extremely difficult one. Any move by the family to assert their power was inevitably countered by strong *ottimati* opposition and on two occasions this resulted in the overthrow of Medici rule. The methods employed by the family in their attempt to establish an autocracy did not vary. They sought to concentrate government in their own hands and to rely not on the *ottimati* but on paid officials, whose loyalty was to the Medici alone. By the early sixteenth century, when Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, made vigorous attempts to establish himself as an absolute prince, there were certain pro-Medici members of the *ottimati*, like Nerli, who were prepared to countenance his actions, always provided that they personally benefitted, but there still remained a core of determined opposition. However, with the re-instatement of the Medici after the sieges of Rome and Florence this opposition was forced out of the city itself.

Duke Alessandro, backed by the angry and ambitious Clement VII, was able to take advantage of the defeated republicans and of the support of the emperor to set up an autocratic and essentially bureaucratic régime. Men like Nerli and Guicciardini inside Florence felt their interest lay in supporting Alessandro, whilst those who opposed him were forced to plot outside the city. With the murder of Alessandro came the opportunity which the exiles had been waiting for, but they were too divided amongst themselves to take true advantage of it and the young Cosimo was able to defeat them at Montemurlo. This defeat marked the end of

any hope that the ottimati would be able to re-establish their position against the Medici, though some resistance did continue.

In Florence Cosimo was able to build on the foundations of Alessandro's work and firmly establish his position, so that he now became the focus of society and the ottimati were reduced to the status of 'civil servants', still active in administration but with virtually no true power. For many, however, the new position was not distasteful. Cosimo had brought stable rule after generations of discord and for Nerli and those like him the new role of the ottimati in society was sufficient to satisfy their limited ambition. A man like Nerli had no desire to fight and die for a cause when he could lead a perfectly congenial life under Cosimo and there is every reason to suppose that, after so many years of fighting and turmoil, other members of the ottimati had similar feelings. Such feelings are very understandable even if not very inspiring. Florentine society had, by the mid-sixteenth century, achieved a stability which the ottimati must have welcomed, even if it had been achieved to some extent at their expense.

Nerli emerges as one who, due to his allegiance to the Medici, was quite content to see these developments take place. Nerli had no wish to oppose his nephew for he had no ambition for great office and was content as long as he could lead a peaceful, honoured and comfortable existence. He can be considered as a very average member of his class. A man of certain talents, limited ambition, whose interests were served by his adherence to

the Medici cause. Not the kind of man who played a dominating part in Florentine politics but one who remained in the background. It is the Guicciardinis of history who fire one's imagination but it is men like Nerli who are more typical of their class. Nerli lived through a social revolution and adapted easily to it not because of any strongly held beliefs but because it suited his own interest and provided him with a stable and comfortable existence.

As far as historiography is concerned we need add little to what has been said in the three final chapters. What emerges from a study of Nerli as an historian is again that he is typical of his fellow historians in a way which more important and significant writers like Machiavelli and Guicciardini are not. Certain advances towards modern standards of historical writing are to be found in the work of the minor historians of the sixteenth century like Nerli, Varchi and Segni. Similar signs are also to be found in the writings of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and should not, because of the undoubted talents of men like Guicciardini, be regarded as belonging exclusively to the sixteenth. Our desire to point out the developments which were being made should not blind us to the developments which still lay ahead.

It remains finally to add that, if Nerli has not emerged very clearly as an individual from this study this can be explained not only by the lack of evidence and deficiencies in the way in which that available has been handled but also by the

fact that he was a very 'average' man and by their nature such men are unlikely to emerge as very dominating personalities. We can see Nerli as a reasonably competent official, once the ordeal of Modena had been overcome, who was sufficiently able and diplomatic to be used on a number of delicate missions. He was a family man with a certain rather quiet and ironic sense of humour who could on occasion react in a rather prudish way. As an historian he was reliable enough to prove of considerable value to his contemporaries as a source but not sufficiently original to merit consideration as other than a minor historian. He was a typical, able and cultured member of the sixteenth century Florentine *ottimati* and it is thus scarcely surprising that he does not stand out in the way that a man of Guicciardini's ability and personality does. His interest to the historian is representative rather than individual.

Appendix I - Nerli's Offices.

Otto di Pratica - September 25, 1537. Tratte 85, f.68v. 1
 Copulatore - November 1, 1537. " " f.203v.
 Reipublica Procuratore - June 1, 1539. " " f.204v.
 Councillor - August 1, 1539. Magistrato Supremo 4, f.1.
 Sei di Mercantia - August 12, 1539. Magistrato Supremo 5, f.2v.
 Copulatore - November 1, 1539. Tratte 85, f.205.

On reform commission - April 12, 1540. Magistrato Supremo 5, f.84v
 Otto di Pratica - September 25, 1541. Tratte 85, f.69v.
 Councillor - November 1, 1541. Magistrato Supremo 6, f.165v.
 Copulatore - " " " Tratte 85, f.206v.
 Conservatore - May 1, 1542. " " f.15v.
 Otto di Custodie - January 1, 1543. Tratte 85, f.77.
 Councillor - May 1, 1543. Magistrato Supremo 8, f.50.
 On reform commission - July 17, 1543. Magistrato Supremo 8, f.81.
 Otto di Pratica - September 25, 1544. Tratte 85, f.43.
 Copulatore - February 1, 1545. " " f.145.
 Cinque di contado - March 5, 1545. Magistrato Supremo 9, f.186v.
 On reform commission - March 23, 1545. Magistrato Supremo 10, f.5v
 Councillor - May 1, 1545. " " " f.29
 Copulatore - February 1, 1546. Tratte 85, f.145.
 Reipublica Procuratore - June 1, 1546. Tratte 85, f.234.
 Commissioner for salt and wine - September 1, 1546. Tratte 85,
 f.35.

Copulatore - February 1, 1547. Tratte 85, f.146.
 Militia commission - March 1, 1547. Tratte 85, f.138.
 Copulatore - August 1, 1547. " " f.146.
 Otto di Pratica - September 15, 1547. " " f.44.
 Councillor - February 1, 1548. Magistrato Supremo 12, f.1.
 One of Sindichi, Consilii et Justitie - May 16, 1548. Tratte 85,
 f.166v.

Councillor - November 1, 1549. Magistrato Supremo 13, f.24.

Copulatore - February 1, 1550. Tratte 85, f.147v.
 Otto di Pratica - September 1, 1550. Tratte 85, f.86v.
 Sei di Mercantie - January 1, 1551. " " f.143.
 Otto di Custodie - " " " " " f.86.
 " " " - May 1, 1551. " " f.18.
 Otto di Pratica - September 25, 1551. " " f.44v.
 Councillor - November 1, 1551. Magistrato Supremo 14, f.73.

1) A Copulatore was most probably an official charged with seeing that the laws promulgated were properly executed.

Copulatore - February 1, 1552. Tratte 85, f.148.
Councillor - November 1, 1553. Magistrato Supremo 15, f.130.
Lieutenant - February 1, 1554. " " " f.160v.
Captain of Parte - July 24, 1554. " " 16, f.28v.
Councillor - May 1, 1555. " " " f.159v.

Appendix 2 - Manuscripts of the Commentari.

The following mss. of the Commentari have been examined.

Autograph Mss.

B.N.F. Magl. II,II,135 - contains Books 1,2 and 3.

B.N.F. Magl. II,II,136 - contains Books 1,2,3,6,7 and part of Book 10.

These two mss. and the relationship between them are discussed in Chapter 6.

The complete work can be compiled from the above autographs and the following Mss. copies.

B.N.F. Magl. II,IV,22 - this is a seventeenth century collection which contains Books 8,9,10, and 11.

B.N.F. Magl. II,II,140 - also a seventeenth century collection which contains Book 12.

The above mss. are both written in the same hand.

B.N.F. Magl. II,IV,10 - a seventeenth century collection which contains Books 4 and 5 though it does not say in the ms. that these two books are in fact by Nerli.

The following complete Mss. copies exist in Florence.

B.N.F. Magl. II,I,170-171 - this is a sixteenth century copy with an ex-libris plate with the words "Francisci Caesaris Augusti Munificentia". The whole work, including the Preface, is contained in these two volumes and this is probably the dedication copy. There are minor variations between Book 1 of this ms. and Book 1 of the 1728 edition.

B.N.F. Magl. II,III,126 - a seventeenth century copy which does not contain the Preface and which has marginal notes by Sommaio giving a guide to other works on the same subject, for example, Nardi, Villani and Dante.

B.N.F. Magl. II,III,127 - a seventeenth century copy which contains both the Preface and the dedicatory letter. This originally formed part of Marmi's collection but then passed into that of the Grand Dukes.

Both the above copies are mentioned by Moreni.

B.N.F. Magl. II,V,142 - a seventeenth century copy containing the Preface and the dedicatory letter and with an index of all the families mentioned in the work.

B.N.F. Magl. II,III,125 - a seventeenth century copy containing the first eight Books with notes by Sommaio.

B.N.F. Magl.II,II,156 - a seventeenth century copy which contains the first nine books and a tenth which, though it claims to be by Nerli is in fact from a different work, as a comparison with the 1728 edition shows.

B.N.F. Panciatichi 94 - probably a seventeenth century copy which contains the Preface and dedicatory letter and has marginal notes.

Riccardiana 3272 (3187) - probably an eighteenth century copy without the Preface and the dedicatory letter.

Dr. A.T.Hankey has examined a copy of the Commentari in Rome. Vatican, Ottaviano 2609 - an eighteenth century copy containing both the Preface and the dedicatory letter.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.Manuscript Sources.

The following list shows the main manuscript collections of which use has been made.

Florence - a) Archivio di Stato. (A.S.F.)

Acquisti e Doni

Archivio Mediceo avanti il Principato

Carte Dei

Carteggio Mediceo (C.M.)

Carteggi di Goro Gheri

Carte Stroziane (C.S.)

Consulte e Pratiche

Decime Granducali

Magistrato Supremo (M.S.)

Notarili Moderno

Tratte

b) Biblioteca Nazionale (B.N.F.)

Fondo Gonelli

Magliabechiana (Magl.)

Poligrafo Gargano

Material in the Marucelliana, Riccardiana and the family archives of the Nerli and the Guicciardini was also consulted.

London - British Museum.

Additional Manuscripts (Add.Mss.)

Modena - Archivio di Stato (A.S.M.)

Nerli's 'copia lettere'.

Primary Sources.

Ruberto Acciaiuoli - Due pareri (1531-32) intorno alla riforma dello stato di Firenze. Ed. G.Capponi. A.S.I. Vol.1. 1842. pp.446-452.

Vincenzo Acciaiuoli - Vita di Piero di Gino Capponi illustrata con note e documenti. Ed. G.Aiazzi. A.S.I. Vol.4, Part 2. 1853. pp.13-40.

GiovanBatista Adriani - Istoria de'suoi tempi. Florence. 1583.
- Orazione...all'essequie del Sereniss.
Cosimo de'Medici. Florence. 1574.

Antonio degli Alberti - Sonetti et canzone...per la prima volta publicati. Florence. 1863.

Federigo di Scipione Alberti - Le Difese de Fiorentini contra le false Calunnie del Giovio. Lyons. 1566.

Scipione Ammirato - Delle Famiglie Nobili Fiorentine. Florence. 1615.
- Gli Opuscoli di Scipione Ammirato. Florence. 1583.
- Istorie Fiorentine. Ed. L.Scarabelli. Turin. 1853.

Baccio Baldini - Vita di Cosimo Medici, primo Gran Duca di Toscano. Ed. B.Sermartelli. Florence. 1578.

Francesco Baldovinetti - Annunti di Un Fautore dei Medici durante l'assedio di Firenze del 1529-30. Ed. Londi. Florence. 1911.

Tommasino de'Bianchi, detto de'Lancellotti - Cronaca Modenese. (Vols.1-8 ed. C.Borghi, Vols.9-11 by L.Lodi, Vol.12 by G.Moreni). Parma. 1862-84. Monumenti di storie patria delle provincie modenesi. Serie delle cronache. Vols. 2-13.

Antonio Brucioli - Dialogi della cuorale philosophia. Venice. First edition 1526, others in 1537,38; 1544; 1538-45.

Biagio Buonaccorsi - Delle cose fatte da Luca di Antonio degli Albizzi e dell'assalto dato a Pisa dai Fiorentini con le genti francesi nel 1500. A.S.I. Vol.4, Part 2, 1853. pp.385-421.
- Diario de'successi più importanti seguiti in Italia, e particolarmente in Fiorenza dall'anno 1498 in sino all'anno 1512. Florence. 1568.

Benedetto Buondelmonti - Lettera a Giovan Francesco da Mantova (12 Aprile 1531) (intorno alla riforma dello Stato di Firenze). A.S.I. Vol.1. 1842. pp.468-477.

Burchiello - Sonetti inediti di Domenico di Giovanni detto il Burchiello. Ed. M.Messina. Florence. 1952. (Biblioteca dell' "Archivum Romanicum". Ser. 1. Vol.33).

Giovanbattista Busini - Lettere a Benedetto Varchi sopra l'assedio di Firenze. Ed. G.Milanesi. Florence. 1860.

Lorenzo Cantini, ed. - Legislazione Toscana. Florence. 1806.

Eugenio Casanova, ed. - Un esemplare delle lettere che si scrissero Carlo V e Clemente VII per la convocazione di un concilio (1530); con correzioni autografe di F.Guicciardini. A.S.I. Vol.8. 1891. pp.126-138.

Baldesar Castiglione - The Book of the Courtier. New York. 1959.

Giovanni Cavalcanti - Istorie Fiorentine. Ed. G.di Pino. Milan. 1944.

Bartolomeo Cerretani - Storie, fino all'anno 1513. B.N.F. Magl. II, III, 75.

Clemente VII - Alcuni brevi sulle ferite e la morte di Giovanni de' Medici. Ed. A.Guasti. A.S.I. Vol.2, 1888. pp.193-203.

Philippe de Comines - Mémoires. Ed. Paris. 1924-25.

Sigismondo dei Conti da Foligno - Le Storie de'suoi tempi dal 1475 al 1510. Rome. 1883.

Antonio Cosci, ed. - Girolamo Savonarola e i nuovi documenti intorno al medesimo. A.S.I. Vol.4, 1879. pp.282-306; 429-468.

Dante - Le Opere di Dante Alighieri. Ed. Nazionale a cura della Società Dantesca Italiana. 1966-67.

Documenti riguardanti Giuliano de' Medici e il pontefice Leone X. A.S.I. Appendix Vol.1. 1843-44. pp.291-324; 359.

Documenti di Storia Italiana dall'anno 1522 al 1530. A.S.I. Appendix Vol.1. 1843-44. pp.391-485.

Carlo Errara, ed. - Le 'Commentationes florentinae de exilio' di Francesco Filelfo. A.S.I. Vol.5. 1890. pp.193-227.

Agenore Gelli, ed. - Lorenzo de' Medici : discorso. A.S.I. Vol.17 1873. pp.416-433.

Giovanbattista Gelli - Opere. Ed. A.Gelli. Florence. 1855.

Goro Gheri - Lettere a Giuliano, Giulio e Lorenzo de' Medici, ed altri, scelte dal cod. Capponi 284. Ed. B. Pollastrelli, con note di L. Scarabelli. A.S.I. Appendix Vol.6. 1848. pp.7-135.

Pierfrancesco Giambullari - Lezioni di M. Pierfrancesco Giambullari, lette nella Accademia Fiorentina. Florence. 1551.

Donato Giannotti - Discorso di armare la città di Firenze fatto dinanzi alli Mag. Signori e Gonfaloniere di giustizia l'anno 1529. (correggi 1528). Ed. G. Sanesi. A.S.I. Vol.8. 1891. pp.13-27.

- Lettere a Piero Vettori. Ed. Roth and Ridolfi. Florence. 1932.

- Opere Politiche e Letterarie. Ed. L. Polidori. Florence. 1850.

Paulo Giovio - Istorie del suo tempo. Venice. 1581.

- Lettere. Ed. G.G. Ferrero. Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea. Rome. 1956-58.

- Vita di Alfonso da Este Duca di Ferrara. Trans. Giovanbattista Gelli. Florence. 1553.

Cesare Guasti, ed. - Documenti della congiura fatta contro il cardinale Giulio de' Medici. Giornale Storico degli Archivi Toscani. Vol.3. 1859. pp.121-150; 185-232; 239-267.

Francesco Guicciardini - Carteggi di Francesco Guicciardini. Ed. P.G. Ricci. Fonti per la Storia d'Italia. Rome. 1962.

- Dialogo del Reggimento di Firenze. Bari. 1932.

- Discorso di Francesco Guicciardini, a dì 30 Gennaio, 1531-32. A.S.I. Vol.1. 1842. pp.453-458.

- La Storia d'Italia. Ed. A. Gherardi. Florence. 1919.

- Le Cose Fiorentine. Ed. R. Ridolfi. Florence. 1945.

- Maxims and Reflections of a Renaissance Statesman. New York. 1965.

- Opere Inedite. Florence. 1863.

- Scritti Inediti sopra la Politica di Clemente VII dopo la Battaglia di Pavia. Florence. 1940.

Luigi Guicciardini - Discorso di Luigi Guicciardini al Duca Alessandro, 1531-32. A.S.I. Vol.1. 1842. pp.459-467.

Italian funeral orations. Florence. 1574-1643.

Luca Landucci - Diario, 1450-1516 continuato da un anonimo fino al 1542. Florence. 1883.

Agosto Lapini - Diario Fiorentino dal 252 al 1596. Florence. 1900.

Augusto Mancini, ed. - 'De Libertate', dialogo sconosciuto d' Alamanno Rinuccini contro il governo di Lorenzo il Magnifico. A.S.I. Vol.18. 1886. pp.85-97.

Giovanni de' Medici - Lettere inedite di Giovanni de' Medici. A.S.I. Vol.7, Part 2. 1858. pp.3-48; Vol.8, Part 1. 1858. pp.3-40; Vol.9, Parts 1 and 2. 1859. pp.3-29, 109-147.

Lorenzino de' Medici - L'Apologia. Milan. 1935.

Paolo Mini - Discorso della nobiltà di Firenze, e de Fiorentini. Florence. 1593.

Bernardo Machiavelli - Libro di Ricordi. Florence. 1954.

Niccolò Machiavelli - Arte della Guerra e scritti politici minori. Milan. 1961.

- Il Principe e i Discorsi sopra la prima deca di Tito Livio. Milan. 1960.

- Il Teatro e tutti gli scritti letterari. Milan. 1965.

- Istorie Fiorentine. Milan 1962.

- Lettere. Milan. 1961.

Jacopo Nardi - Istorie della Città di Firenze. Florence. 1842.

Benedetto de' Nerli - Horatius Flaccus - Opera. (ed. Benedictus Philologus). Florence. 1514.

Filippo de' Nerli - Commentari de' Fatti Civili occorsi dentro la città di Firenze. Augsburg. 1728. Second edition, Trieste. 1859.

Alessandro Pazzi - Discorso di Alessandro de' Pazzi, al Cardinale Giulio de' Medici. Anno 1522. A.S.I. Vol.1. 1842.

Jacopo Pitti - Istoria Fiorentina. A.S.I. Vol.1. 1842. pp.XVIII-208.

- L'Apologia dei Cappucci. A.S.I. Vol.4, Part 2. 1853. pp.270-384.

- Vita di Gianjacopo Tebalducci. A.S.I. Vol.4. 1853. pp.103-270.

Michele Poccianti - Catalogus Scriptorum Florentinorum. Florence. 1589.

Prose Fiorentine raccolte dallo Smarito. (i.ei Carlo Dati). Florence. 1661. Another edition, 1716.

Giuseppe Sanesi - Un discorso sconosciuto di Donato Giannotti intorno alla milizia. A.S.I. Vol.8. 1891. pp.3-27.

Marino Sanuto - I Diarii di Marino Sanuto. Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria. Vol.56. 1879-1903.

Girolamo Savonarola - Trattato del reggimento e governo della città di Firenze. Turin. 1954.

Bernardo Segni - Storie Fiorentine. Milan. 1805.

- Vita di Niccolò Capponi. See above edition of the Storie Fiorentine.

Filippo Strozzi - Da nuovi Documenti. A.S.I. Vol.14. 1894.pp.3-78.

Alessandro Tassoni - Chronaca. Monumenti Storici. 15. 1888.

Giuliano Ughi - Cronica di Firenze o Compendio storico delle cose di Firenze dall'anno 1501 al 1546. Ed. F.Frediani. A.S.I. Appendix 7. 1849. pp.97-274.

Benedetto Varchi - Errori di Paolo Giovio nelle Storie. Florence. 1821.

- Lezioni di M.Benedetto Varchi. Florence. 1590.

- Storia Fiorentina. Florence. 1888.

- Vita di M.Francesco Cattani da Diacceto, in

Diacceto's I tre libri d'Amore. Venice. 1561.

Giorgio Vasari - Il libro delle Ricordanze di Giorgio Vasari. Ed. A.del Vita. Arezzo. 1927.

- I Ragionamenti del Signor Giorgio Vasari sopra le inventioni da lui dipinte in Firenze nel Palazzo di loro Altezze Serenissime... Florence. 1588.

Francesco Vettori - Sommario della storia d'Italia dal 1511 al 1527. Ed. A.v.Reumont. A.S.I. Appendix. Vol.6.1848. pp.261-387.

Giovanni Villani - Historie Universali de suoi tempi. Florence. 1570.

Leonardo da Vinci - The notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci. Ed. P.Taylor. New York. 1960.

Antonio Virgili, ed. - Un lodò di Lorenzo il Magnifico (21 ottobre 1478). A.S.I. Vol.48. 1911. pp.100-116.

Secondary Sources.

Cecilia Ady - Lorenzo de' Medici and Renaissance Italy. London. 1955.

Rudolf von Albertini - Das Florentinische Staatsbewusstsein im Übergang von der Republik zum Prinzipat. Bern. 1955.

Hortense Allart - Histoire de la République de Florence. Paris. 1837.

Antonio Anzilotti - La costituzione interna dello Stato fiorentino sotto il duca Cosimo I de' Medici. Florence. 1910.

- La Crisi Costituzionale della Repubblica Fiorentina. Florence. 1912.

Aristotle - The Politics. Penguin Books. 1952.

Roland Bainton - Changing ideas and ideals in the sixteenth century. Journal of Modern History. Vol.8. 1936. pp.417-443.

Hans Baron - Das Erwachen des historischen Denkens in Humanismus das Quattrocento. Historische Zeitschrift. 147. 1932. pp.5-20.

- The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance. Princeton. 1955.

Gherardo Salimbeni Bartolini - Del Magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici. Florence. 1786.

Armand Baschet - Les princes de l'Europe au XVI^e siècle, d'après les rapports des ambassadeurs vénitiens. Paris. 1862.

Pierre Bayle - Dictionnaire Historique e Critique. New Edition, Paris. 1820-24.

Giovanni Benedetti of Florence - Notizie e Documenti intorno la vita di Francesco Settignano. Florence. 1875.

Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae. Codices Vaticani Latini. X
Rome. 1902.

Biblioteca Laurenziana Firenze. Catalogue A. Bandini. Florence. X
1774-78.

Biblioteca della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria dell'Emilia e della Romagna. Sezione di Modena.

Angiola Borghesi - La Restaurazione Medicea in Firenze dal 1512 al 1527. Siena. 1937.

Vincenzo Borghini - Carteggio Artistico. Ed. A. Lorenzoni. Florence. 1912.

Tommaso Bozza - Scrittori Politici Italiani dal 1550 al 1650.
Rome. 1949.

Karl Brandi - The Emperor Charles V. The growth and destiny of a man and of a world empire. Trans. C.V. Wedgwood. London. 1939.

Alison Brown - The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici. Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes. Vol.24. 1961. pp.186-221.

H.F. Brown - Inghilterra. Pubblicazioni concernenti la storia d'Italia. (1890-1895). A.S.I. Vol.17. 1896. pp.387-400.

Gene Brucker - Florentine Politics and Society, 1343-1378.
Princeton. 1962.

Raffaello del Bruno - Ristretto delle cose più notabili della città di Firenze. Florence. 1698.

Jacob Burckhardt - Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien. Ein Versuch. Basel. 1860.

Delio Cantimori - Rhetoric and Politics in Italian Humanism.
J.W.C.I. Vol.1. 1937. pp.83-102.

- Per la storia degli eretici italiani del secolo XVI in Europe. Rome. 1937.

- Eretici italiani del Cinquecento. Basle. 1949,

Lorenzo Cantini - Vita di Cosimo de' Medici, Primo Gran-Duca di Toscana. Florence. 1805.

Carlo Capasso - Firenze, Filippo Strozzi, i Fuorusciti e la corte pontificia. Nota Storica. Camerino. 1901.

Gino Capponi - Storia della Repubblica di Firenze. Florence. 1930.

Luigi Carcereri - Cosimo Primo Granduca. Verona. 1926.

Catalogue of the Medici Archives of Cosimo and Averardo de' Medici sold by Christies in 1918. London.

Andrea Cavalcanti - Notizie intorno alla vita di B. Segni. In 1778 edition of Segni's Storie Fiorentine. Augusta e Palermo.

Cesare Cesari - Modena. (Storie Municipali d'Italia). Rome. 1929.

Federico Chabod - Paolo Giovio. Periodico della Società Storica Comense. Vol.38. 1954.

- Machiavelli and the Renaissance. London. 1958.

Luigi Chiappelli - L'amministrazione della giustizia in Firenze durante gli ultimi secoli del medioevo e il periodo del

Risorgimento secondo le testimonianze degli antichi scrittori.
A.S.I. Vol.15. 1885. pp.35-54; 180-200.

Vittorio Cian - see below, Alberto Niccolai.

Roslyn Cooper - Piero Soderini, Gonfaloniere a Vita of Florence, 1502-1512. London Ph.D thesis. 1965.

Mario Cosenza - Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary of the Italian Humanists and of the world of Classical Scholarship in Italy. 1300-1800. New York. 1952.

Benedetto Croce - Filosofia come scienza dello spirito. Vol. 4. Teoria e storia della Storiografia. Bari. 1908-17.

- Scritti di Storia Letteraria e Politica. This contains a section on Poeti e Scrittori del Pieno e del tardo rinascimento. Bari. 1945.

V.De Caprariis - Francesco Guicciardini. Dalla politica alla storia. Bari. 1950.

Francesco Dini - Francesco Campana e Suoi. A.S.I. Vol.23. 1899. pp.289-323.

Dizionario Biografico. Ed. D.Passigli. Florence. 1846.

Umberto Dorini - Il culto delle memorie patrie nella Repubblica fiorentina. Estr. dalla Rassegna Nazionale. 1911.

Enciclopedia Italiana di scienze, lettere ed arti. Rome. 1934.*

Angelo Fabroni - De vita et rebus gesti Clementis XII. Pont. Max. Commentarius. Rome. 1760.

- Historiae Academiae Pisanae. Pisa. 1791-95.

Domenico Fava - La Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze e le sue insigni raccolte. Milan. 1939.

Wallace Fergusson - The Renaissance in historical thought. Cam. Mass. 1948.

Luigi Ferrai - Cosimo de'Medici. Bologna, Modena. 1882.

- Lorenzino de'Medici e la societa cortigiana del Cinquecento. Milan. 1891.

Guiseppe Ferrari - Gli Scrittori Politici Italiani. Milan. 1929.

P.Ferrato - Alcune lettere di scrittori italiani del Secolo XVI. Padua. 1871.

Giuseppe Ferrero - Politica e vita morale del '500 nelle lettere di Paolo Giovio. Memorie della R. Accademia delle scienze di Torino. Series 2. Vol. 70. Part 2. 1939-40.

Jolanda Ferretti - L'Organizzazione Militare in Toscana durante il governo di Alessandro e Cosimo I de' Medici. Rivista Storica degli Archivi Toscani. 1929. pp. 248-75; 1930. pp. 58-80; 133-51; 211-19.

Jacopo Fioravanti - Memorie Storiche della Città di Pistoia. Lucca. 1758.

Eduard Fueter - Geschichte der neueren Historiographie. Munich - Berlin. 1911.

Franco Gaeta - Lorenzo Valla, Filologia e Storia nell'Umanesimo Italiano. (Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Storici. Vol. 8). Naples. 1955.

Jacopo Galluzzi - Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il governo della casa Medici. Florence. 1781.

Francesco Galvani - Sommario Storico delle Famiglie Celebri Toscane. Florence. 1862.

Eugenio Gamurrini - Istoria Genealogica delle Famiglie nobili Toscane et Umbre. Florence. 1668-85.

Eugenio Garin - L'Educazione in Europa (1400-1600). Problemi e Programmi. Bari. 1957.
 - L'Umanesimo Italiano. Bari. 1965.
 - Scienza e Vita Civile nel Rinascimento Italiano. Bari. 1965.
 - Educazione umanistica in Italia. Bari. 1966.

M. Lupo Gentile - La Storia Fiorentina di Benedetto Varchi and Adriani in Annali della R. Scuola Superiore di Pisa. Filosofia e filologia. Vol. 19. 1871.
 - Una lettera inedita di Bernardo Segni. Giornale Storico e Letterario della Liguria. 1903. pp. 161-165.
 - Studi sulla Storiographia Fiorentina alla corte di Cosimo I De' Medici. Pisa. 1905.
 - Sulle fonti inedite della Storia Fiorentina di Benedetto Varchi. Sarzana. 1906.

Alessandro Gherardi - Alcune notizie intorno a Leonardo Aretino e alle sue Storie fiorentine. A.S.I. Vol. 15. 1885. pp. 416-21.

Allan H. Gilbert - Machiavelli's 'Prince' and its Forerunners. The 'Prince' as a Typical Book 'De Regimine Principum'. Duke University Press. 1938.

- Felix Gilbert - Alcuni discorsi di uomini politici fiorentini (R.Acciaiuoli, F.Guicciardini, F.Vettori) e la politica di Clemente VII per la restaurazione medicea. A.S.I. Vol.2. 1935. pp.3-24.
- Machiavelli in an unknown contemporary dialogue.
J.W.C.I. Vol.1. 1937. pp.163-66.
- Machiavelli and Guicciardini. J.W.C.I. Vol.2. 1939. pp.263-66.
- Political Thought of the Renaissance and Reformation. Huntingdon Library quarterly. Vol.4. 1941. pp.443-68
- The Humanist Concept of the Prince and 'The Prince' of Machiavelli. Journal of Modern History. Vol.11. pp.449-83. 1939.
- The Orti Oricellari. J.W.C.I. Vol.12. 1949. pp.101-31.
- The composition and structure of Machiavelli's 'Discorsi'. Journal of the History of Ideas. Vol.14. 1953. pp.136-56.
- Florentine political assumptions in the period of Savonarola and Soderini. J.W.C.I. Vol.20. 1957. pp.187-214.
- Machiavelli and Guicciardini, Politics and History in Sixteenth Century Florence. Princeton. 1965.
- Myron Gilmore - The World of Humanism. New York. 1952.
- Humanists and Jurists, Six studies in the Renaissance. Camb. Mass. 1963.
- E.H.Gombrich - The Early Medici as Patrons of Art. In Italian Renaissance Studies. Ed. E.F.Jacob. London. 1960.
- Paolo Guicciardini - Il ritratto vasariano di Luigi Guicciardini. Contributo per la iconografia fiorentine all'avvento di Cosimo I. Rinascita. No.25. 1942. pp.247-72.
- John Hale - England and the Italian Renaissance. London. 1954.
- War and Public opinion in Renaissance Italy. In Italian Renaissance Studies. Ed. E.F.Jacob. London. 1960.
- Henri Hauvette - Un Exilé florentin à la cour de France au XVI^e siècle. Luigi Alamanni, 1495-1556, sa vie et son oeuvre. Paris. 1903.
- Denys Hay - Europe, the Emergence of an Idea. Edinburgh. 1957.
- The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background. Cambridge. 1961.
- Jack Hexter - The Education of the Aristocracy in the Renaissance. J.M.H. Vol.22. 1950. pp.1-20.
- Johan Huizinga - The Waning of the Middle Ages. New York. 1954.
- Men and Ideas. London. 1960.

Rosemary Hughes - Francesco Vettori 1474-1539: His Place in Florentine Diplomacy and Politics. London Ph.D thesis. 1958.

Ernest Jacob - Italian Renaissance Studies. A tribute to the late Cecilia M. Ady. Ed. by E.F.Jacob. London. 1960.

H.Jedin - La politica conciliare di Cosimo I. Rivista Storica Italiana. Fascicolo 4. 1950. pp.345-74; 477-94.

Giuseppe Kirner - Della Laudatio Urbis Florentinae di Leonardo Bruni. Livorno. 1889.

Helmut Koenigsberger - Decadence or Shift? Changes in the Civilization of Italy and Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Transactions of the Royal Historical Society. Vol.10. 1960. pp.1-18.

Paul Kristeller - Francesco da Diacceto and Florentine platonism in the sixteenth century. Citta del Vaticano. 1946.

- The Classics and Renaissance Thought. Camb. Mass 1955.

- The Platonic Academy of Florence. New York. 1961

- Iter Italicum. Vol.1 Citta del Vaticano. 1963.

Clive Lewis - English Literature in the sixteenth century, excluding drama.... Oxford History of English Literature. Vol.3. Oxford. 1954.

Vincenzo Luciani - Guicciardini and his European reputation. New York. 1936.

Luigi Malagoli - La Personalità del Guicciardini nei 'Ricordi'. Rinascita. No.6. 1939. pp.205-25.

Domenico Manni - Metodo per istudiare con brevità e Profittevolmente le Storie di Firenze. 2nd. Edition. Livorno. 1755.

- Vita del celebre senatore Lelio Torelli. Florence 1770.

- Il Senato Fiorentino, o sia notizia de'Senatori Fiorentini dal suo principio fino al presente. 2nd. Edition. Florence. 1771.

Giuseppe Manni - Serie de'Senatori Fiorentini. Florence. 1722.

Danilo Marrara - Studi Giuridici sulla Toscana Medicea. In Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Giurisprudenza della Università di Pisa. 1965.

Michele Maylender - Storia delle Accademie d'Italia. Bologna. 1926-30.

Giuseppe Mecatti - Storia genealogica della Nobiltà e cittadinanza di Firenze. Naples. 1754.

Friedrich Meinecke - Der Idee der Staatsraison in der neueren Geschichte. 1924. Trans. D.Scott. Machiavellism. London. 1957.

Domenico Mellini - Ricordi intorno ai costumi, azioni e governo del sereniss. Gran Duca Cosimo I. Florence. 1820.

Domenico Moreni - Notizie storiche dei Contorni di Firenze. Florence. 1791-95.

- Bibliografia storico - ragionata della Toscana o sia catalogo degli scrittori che hanno illustrata la storia delle città, luoghi, e persone della medesima. Florence. 1805.

Bernardo Morsolin - Giangiorgio Trissino. Monografia di un letterato nel secolo XVI. Vicenza. 1878.

Carlo Nardi - Vita di Jacopo Nardi. In 1842 Edition of Istorie della Città di Firenze. Jacopo Nardi.

P.Giulio Negri - Storia degli Scrittori Fiorentine. Ferrara. 1722.

Alberto Niccolai - Filippo de'Nerli (1485-1556). Pisa. 1906.

- Un altro studioso di Dante fra gli storici del 500 (Filippo de'Nerli). In A Vittorio Cian, i suoi scolari dell' Università di Pisa (1900-08). Pisa. 1909.

Giovanni Niccolini - Filippo Strozzi, tragedia di G.-B. Niccolini. Corredata d'una vita di Filippo e di documenti inediti. Florence. 1847.

Notizie degli Archivi Toscani. A.S.I. 1956 and 1960.

Notizie Letterarie ed Istoriche intorno agli uomini illustri dell' Accademia Fiorentina. Florence. 1700.

André Otetea - François Guichardin, sa vie publique et sa penseé politique. Paris. 1926.

Roberto Palmarocchi - L'ambasceria del Guicciardini in Spagna. A.S.I. Vol.1. 1939. pp.145-169.

- Il concetto di fortuna nel Guicciardini. A.S.I. Vol.2. 1941. pp.3-26.

- Studi Guicciardiniani. Florence. 1947.

Cesare Paoli and Eugenio Casanova - Cosimo I de'Medici e i fuorusciti del 1537. (Da lettere di due Oratori Senesi). A.S.I. Vol.11. 1893.

- La Vita Italiana nel Cinquecento. Part 2. Letteratura. Gli scrittori politici del Cinquecento. Milan. 1894.

Giovanantonio Papini - Lezioni sopra il Burchiello. Florence. 1733

Louis Passy - Un ami de Machiavel, François Vettori, sa vie et ses oeuvres. (1474-1539). Paris. 1913.

Howard Patch - The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature. Harvard. 1927.

Guglielmo Pellegrini - L'Umanista Bernardo Rucellai e le sue opere storiche. Livorno. 1920.

François Perrens - Historie de Florence, depuis la domination des Médicis jusqu'à la chute de la République. 1434-1531. Paris. 1888.

Nikolaus Pevsner - Academies of Art past and present. Cambridge. 1940.

Alfredo Pieralli - La Vita e le Opere di Jacopo Nardi. Florence. 1901.

Giovanni Prezziner - Storia del Pubblico Studio e delle società scientifiche e letterarie di Firenze. Florence. 1810.

Giuliano Procacci - La 'fortuna' nella realtà politica e sociale del primo cinquecento. Belfagor. Vol.6. 1951. pp.407-420.

F.Ranalli - Studio Storico-Politico sulla vita e sulle opere di Francesco Guicciardini. A.S.I. Vol.15. Part 1. 1862. pp.3-70.

Leopold von Ranke - Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtschreiber. Leipzig and Berlin. 1874.

Modesto Rastrelli - Storia d'Alessandro de'Medici. Florence. 1781.

Ugo Redano - Il pensiero storiografico dal Rinascimento all' Illuminismo. Questioni di Storia moderno. Milan. 1951.

Alfred von Reumont - La politica medicea da Cosimo il Vecchio a Leone X. A.S.I. Vol.3. 1879. pp.456-474.

Beatrice Reynolds - Latin Historiography: a Survey, 1400-1600. Studies in the Renaissance. 2. New York. 1955.

Pier Giorgio Ricci - Alcuni manoscritti non catalogati della Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze. Rinascimento. 2 Serie. Vol.3. 1963. pp.115-144.

Eugene Rice - The Renaissance Idea of Wisdom. Harvard Historical Monographs. Vol.37. Camb. Mass. 1958.

Roberto Ridolfi - Gli Archivi delle Famiglie Fiorentine. Florence. 1934.

- Genesi della Storia d'Italia Guicciardiniana. Florence. 1939.

Roberto Ridolfi - Fortune della 'Storia d'Italia' Guicciardiniana prima della stampa. La Rinascita. Vol.2. 1939. pp.825-37.

- Vita di Girolamo Savonarola. Rome. 1952.

- Documenti sulle prime stampe della 'Storia d'Italia' Guicciardiniana. La Bibliofilia. Vol.61. 1959. pp.39-51.

- Vita di Francesco Guicciardini. Rome. 1960.

- Novità sulle 'Istorie' del Segni. Belfagor.

Vol.15. 1960. pp.663-76.

William Roscoe - The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent. Liverpool. 1795.

Agostino Rossi - La Elezione di Cosimo I Medici. Atti del Reale Istituto Veneto di Scienze, lettere ed Arti. Series 7, Vol.1. 1889-90. pp.369-435.

Cecil Roth - The Last Florentine Republic. London. 1925.

Luigi Rovelli - L'onera storica ed artistica di Paolo Giovio. Como. 1928.

Niccolai Rubinstein - The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence. J.W.C.I. Vol.5. 1942. pp.198-227.

- The 'Storie Fiorentine' and the 'Memorie di famiglie' by Francesco Guicciardini. Rinascimento. Vol.4. 1953. pp.171-225.

- I Primi Anni del Consiglio Maggiore di Firenze. (1494-99). A.S.I. Vol.112. 1954. pp.151-94; 321-47.

- Politics and Constitution in Florence at the end of the fifteenth century. In Italian Renaissance Studies. Ed. Jacob. London. 1960.

- The Government of Florence under the Medici 1434-94. Oxford. 1966.

Salvino Salvini - Fasti Consolari. Florence. 1717.

Giuseppe Salvioli - Nuovi Studi sulla Politica e le vicende dell'Esercito Imperiale in Italia nel 1526-27 e sul sacco di Roma. (Da documenti inediti dell'Archivio di Stato di Modena). Archivio Veneto. Vol.16. Part 2. 1878. pp.272-98.

Tommaso Sandonnini - Modena sotto il Governo dei Papi. Modena. 1879.

Giuseppe Sanesi - La Vita di Niccolò Capponi attribuita a Bernardo Segni. Pistoia. 1896.

- Alcune osservazioni e notizie intorno a tre storici minori del Cinquecento. (Giovio, Nerli and Segni). A.S.I. Vol.23. 1899. pp.260-88.

E.Santini - Leonardo Aretino e i suoi 'Historiarium Florentini Populi Libri XII'. Annali della R.Scuola Superiore di Pisa. Vol. 22. 1910.

- Leader Scott - The Orti Oricellari. Florence. 1893.
- Jean Seznec - The Survival of the Pagan Gods. Eng. Trans. 1953.
- Simonde de Sismondi - Histoire des Républiques italiennes du moyen âge. Paris. 1809-18.
- Guglielmo della Sommaia - The Libri Collection of Books and Mss... sold by Messers. Sotheby and wilkinson. 1859-1866. London. 1868.
- Giorgio Spini - Tra Rinascimento e Riforma. Antonio Brucioli. Florence. 1940.
 - Cosimo I De'Medici - Lettere. Florence. 1940.
 - Cosimo I De'Medici e la indipendenza del Principato Mediceo. Florence. 1945.
- James Thompson - A History of Historical Writing. New York. 1942.
- Girolamo Tiraboschi - Storia della letteratura italiana. Florence. 1805-13.
- Giuseppe Toffanin - Machiavelli e il 'Tacitismo'. (la 'Politica storica' al tempo della controriforma). 1921.
 - Storia Letteraria d'Italia - Il Cinquecento. Milan. 1929.
- Niccolò Tommaseo - Pensieri sulla storia di Firenze. A.S.I. Vol.13. Part 2. 1861. pp.3-30.
- Oreste Tommasini - La Vita e gli scritti di Niccolò Machiavelli. Rome.Turin.Florence. 1883.
- B.L.Ullman - The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati. Padua. 1963.
- Herbert Vaughan - The Medici Popes, Leo X and Clement VII. London. 1908.
- Adolfo Verdi - Gli Ultimi anni di Lorenzo de'Medici, Duca d' Urbino. 1515-1519. Este. 1905.
- Pasquale Villari - The Life and Times of Niccolò Machiavelli. London. 1909.
- Herbert Weisinger - Ideas of History during the Renaissance. Journal of the History of Ideas. Vol.6. 1945. pp.415-35.
- Roberto Weiss - Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century. Oxford. 1941.
- W.Woodward - Vittorino da Feltre and other Humanist Educators. Cambridge. 1897.

Frances Yates - The French Academies of the Sixteenth Century.
London. 1947.

Apostolo Zeno - Biblioteca dell'Eloquenza Italiana di Monsignore
Guisto Fontanini, Archivescovo d'Ancira, con le annotazioni del
signor Apostolo Zeno. Venice. 1753.