ITALIAN LECTURE

LORENZO DE' MEDICI: THE FORMATION OF HIS STATECRAFT

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WHEN I was asked to choose the topic of this lecture, I was hoping that my lecture would coincide with the publication of the first three volumes of the edition of Lorenzo's letters. I make use in it of some of the letters and the commentary included in these volumes, which cover, roughly, the first ten years of Lorenzo's ascendancy in Florence. This has obviously much facilitated my task, but new evidence, of which there is a great deal, also poses a fresh challenge; and I must admit that Lorenzo's opening words in his *Comento* strike a chord: 'Assai sono stato dubbioso e sospeso se dovevo fare la presente interpretazione'—'I have been in great doubt whether I should undertake the present interpretation.'

Lorenzo's father, Piero di Cosimo de' Medici, died on 2 December 1469, a month before Lorenzo's twenty-first birthday. On the following day, a delegation from a large meeting of leading citizens, which had decided to preserve Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in 'reputazione e grandezza', 'in prestige and greatness', came to the Medici palace and asked Lorenzo to assume the authority his father and grandfather had exercised in Florence.[1] The vagueness of these terms reflects the indeterminate nature of the Medici regime. Since the days of Cosimo, the political power of the Medici had been exercised, within the framework of the republican constitution, by a variety of controls, primarily of the elections to the Signoria and other high magistracies; and their ascendancy depended

[The following abbreviations will be used: ASF = Florence, Archivio di Stato; ASM, SPE = Milan, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Sforzesco, Potenze Estere; MAP = Florence, Archivio di Stato, Archivio Mediceo avanti il Principato; *Lettere* = Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, vols. i and ii, ed. R. Fubini (Florence, 1977), vol. iii, ed. N. Rubinstein (Florence, 1977).]

[1] See N. Rubinstein, *The Government of Florence under the Medici, 1434 to 1494* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 174–5.

upon the support of a substantial section of the patriciate. Like the regime itself, succession to its leadership was therefore a matter of political, not of constitutional, arrangement; and like the survival of the regime, it depended on the loyal collaboration of its supporters. The improvised and unofficial character of the meeting of 2 December, which decided the succession of Lorenzo, was entirely in keeping with a situation in which his succession was clearly not felt to be a foregone conclusion. Conditions differed, in fact, from those after the death of Cosimo five years earlier. In 1466 the Medici regime had been seriously threatened by citizens who had hitherto backed it; its electoral controls had been temporarily abolished and statutory elections by lot of the Signoria restored; Piero's death could be the signal for another republican attempt to curb, or even destroy, Medici power. While the apparent unanimity of the decision, to preserve Lorenzo's and Giuliano's 'grandezza', shows their father's success in consolidating and unifying the Medici regime, during the last three years of his life, the question remained of what meaning was to be attached to that 'grandezza'; more precisely, what role the elder of the two sons of Piero was to play within the regime.

The answer depended, above all, on the willingness of Piero's principal supporters to accept the authority of Lorenzo on the same terms as they had accepted that of his father. A Medici could not take their collaboration for granted in the same way as could an Italian prince that of his counsellors, and differences in age and experience could count for a great deal: at the time of Piero's death, his most influential follower, Tommaso Soderini, was 66, while Lorenzo was only twenty. Lorenzo's youth was, moreover, liable to sharpen rivalries within the Medici regime. In fifteenth-century Florence such rivalries were liable to be compounded by conflicting loyalties to foreign states. At the end of 1469, the Duke of Milan and the King of Naples were pursuing different policies in the war Pope Paul II was waging against Roberto Malatesta of Rimini, and both were trying to win over Florence to their side by enlisting the support of leading citizens.[1] Unlike the King of Naples, Galeazzo Maria Sforza was also trying to strengthen Lorenzo's position in Florence.

After the death of Filippo Maria Visconti in 1447, Cosimo de' Medici had persuaded the Florentine government to back

[1] G. Soranzo, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico alla morte del padre e il suo primo balzo verso la Signoria', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, cxi (1953), pp. 50–1.

Francesco Sforza in his bid for the duchy of Milan, and had himself provided the financial means which enabled Francesco to achieve success. Ever since, friendship with the Sforza had been a cornerstone of the foreign policy of the Medici. It had also provided them with an invaluable external insurance of their ascendancy, and indeed security, at home. When Piero had been threatened by his opponents in 1466, Galeazzo Maria Sforza had sent troops to the Florentine frontier; four days after Piero's death, he writes to the Florentine Signoria recommending to them 'Lorenzo and Giuliano . . . whom, owing to the love we have always nourished for that house, we hold . . . dear as if they were our own sons'. And he adds that although he was confident that they would not be required, he had ordered his troops in the territories of Bologna and Parma to obey, if necessary, the orders of the Signoria: 'and we are ready, in such a case, to come in person with the rest of our troops'.[1] But if the close relationship between the Medici and the Sforza benefited the Medici, it was also useful to the Sforza, and not only for reasons of foreign policy. The Sforza court relied heavily on the Milan branch of the Medici Bank; as Raymond de Roover has shown, between 1460 to 1467, the debt of the Sforza to the bank had increased from about 53,000 to no less than 179,000 ducats.[2] Both for political and financial reasons, it was in the interest of Galeazzo Maria Sforza to secure Lorenzo's position in Florence; for political reasons, it was also in his interest to strengthen it. To an autocratic ruler, such as the Duke of Milan, and to his ambassadors, the slowness and complexity of decision-making in a state whose government and administration were still basically republican could be a source of irritation and frustration: it could also affect the reliability of Florence as an ally. Just as the elder statesmen of the Medici regime, whose role had been decisive in securing Lorenzo's succession, could hope to profit from it, so the Duke of Milan might hope to find the inexperienced youth more amenable to his influence and persuasion. What was at stake at the end of 1469 was not only Lorenzo's freedom of action, but also the manner in which the ascendancy of the Medici, which had been gradually and painstakingly established over more than three decades, was to be upheld after his father's death.

[1] R. Magnani, *Relazioni private fra la Corte Sforzesca di Milano e Casa Medici, 1450–1500* (Milan, 1910), doc. 61, pp. xxxviii–xxxix.

[2] *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 272–3.

Lorenzo was singularly unprepared for the tasks which awaited him. One of the foundations of Medici ascendancy had been, and still remained, the wealth of Giovanni di Bicci's branch of the family; it had helped Cosimo to build up the complex network of personal relationships and loyalties which provided the basis for his rise to power. Lorenzo had received a careful humanist education, but no business training; he also had, in 1469, little practical experience of politics. In 1466 he had been a member of the *Balìa* as a substitute for his father,[1] and Piero had sent him abroad on a few occasions; but his journeys had only incidentally assumed some modest political significance. In 1465 he went to Milan to represent Piero at the ceremony for the marriage between Alfonso of Calabria, the heir to the Neapolitan throne, and Francesco Sforza's daughter Ippolita Maria. In the following year he went to Rome and Naples; in the summer of 1469 he went again to Milan, to act, on Piero's behalf, as godfather at the baptism of Galeazzo Maria Sforza's son. The main purpose of these visits appears to have been to introduce Lorenzo into Italian court society; but Piero may have also wished in this way to acquaint his eldest son, gently, with the organization of the Medici Bank; when Lorenzo went to Rome, in 1466, he was meant to get information about the state of its Roman branch from his uncle Giovanni Tornabuoni, and to agree in Piero's name to a new alum contract.[2] But Piero seems to have been distinctly reluctant to entrust Lorenzo with diplomatic business. When he sent him to Milan for the baptism of Gian Galeazzo Sforza, he explicitly forbade him to get involved in any other matters, 'in cosa alcuna', as he was not going as an ambassador: 'I don't think it is proper', he adds, in his letter to Lucrezia on the eve of their son's departure, 'that the ducklings should teach old ducks to swim'.[3] And when, during the same journey,

[1] In December 1466 the *Balìa* admitted him in the same capacity to the Council of One Hundred, 'non obstante minori etate'. See Rubinstein, *The Government*, p. 221. On Lorenzo's education, see A. Rochon, *La Jeunesse de Laurent de Médicis (1449–1478)* (Paris, 1963), pp. 31–46.

[2] See his letter to Lorenzo of 15 March 1466, in A. Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis Magnifici vita* (Pisa, 1784), vol. ii, p. 49.

[3] Piero de' Medici to Lucrezia Tornabuoni in Florence, Careggi, 13 July 1469 (ASF, MAP, I, 267): 'Tu sai che malvolentieri decti licentia a Lorenzo, per molti rispecti . . . et pertanto da' modo allo spaccio, et dì a Lorenzo che non esca dello ordine in cosa alcuna, et non faccia tante melarancie, non essendo imbasciadore, ch'io non determino ch'e paperi menino a bere l'oche . . .'

Lorenzo could not help getting involved in a matter concerning the war between Paul II and Roberto Malatesta of Rimini, he humbly apologized to his father: he would not have written to him about it had not the Duke expressly ordered him to do so; but he would keep his letter short, since the resident Florentine ambassador was writing to Piero at length.[1] Lorenzo's letter is dated 29 July 1469, four months before he was asked to succeed his father as head of the Medici regime.

It is not surprising that Lorenzo should write, three years later, in his family memoirs, that he had accepted this invitation reluctantly, 'as it was contrary to my age, and on account of the great responsibility and peril it involved'. He did so, he says, 'per conservazione degli amici', 'for the safety of our supporters', and of our properties: 'perché a Firenze si può mal viver ricco senza lo stato', 'because the rich live badly in Florence outside the political establishment'.[2] (No such hesitations were, incidentally, reported by the foreign ambassadors; and whatever went through Lorenzo's mind during those hours, he appears to have been remarkably in control of himself; so that the Milanese resident could write, hopefully, 'he behaves like an old man'.)[3] Lorenzo's justification of his acceptance is somewhat disingenuous: for the eldest son of Piero de' Medici it was not just a matter of participating in the ruling regime, as it was, for instance, for his sister's father-in-law, Giovanni Rucellai, who writes a year later that he 'had not been accepted by, but suspect to, the regime for twenty-seven years'.[4] What the leading citizens asked Lorenzo to accept was, in his own words, 'la cura della città e dello stato', 'the care of the regime and of the city'. The formulation, certainly not incidental, enshrines the two major aspects of Medici ascendancy.

For 'città' and 'stato' were by no means synonymous; and 'stato' should not be translated by 'state'. It signifies, in this context, as it normally does in the political vocabulary of fifteenth-century Florence, the dominant political regime—in other words, the power structure which, at a given time, formed the foundation of its government. 'Città' and 'stato'

[1] *Lettere*, vol. i, 21, pp. 45–6: 'perché io so m. Luigi ve ne scrive lungamente, non dirò altro, refferendomi a lui. Non harei anche fatto questo, se non per comandamento del Signore . . .'

[2] Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis vita*, vol. ii, p. 42.

[3] Sacramoro da Rimini to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Florence, 2 December 1469 (ASM, SPE, Firenze, 277): 'se deporta da vecchio'.

[4] A. Perosa (ed.), *Giovanni Rucellai ed il suo Zibaldone*, vol. i (London, 1960), p. 122: 'sono stato non accetto ma sospetto allo stato anni 27'.

are seen as distinct, yet closely allied: as the Florentine chancellor, Bartolomeo Scala, put it during Lorenzo's peace negotiations in Naples in 1480: 'la città che [è] congiunta collo stato', 'the city and the regime which are joined to one another'.[1] During the war of the Pazzi Conspiracy, Lorenzo once observed: 'la libertà nostra [ne va] con lo stato', 'our liberty goes together with the regime'.[2] The term I have chosen for the title of this lecture, Lorenzo's 'statecraft', is a literal translation of Machiavelli's 'arte dello stato'. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines statecraft as 'the art of conducting state affairs', but this definition does not quite render the complex meaning of 'stato' in fifteenth-century Florence. The task which Lorenzo faced in December 1469 was to take charge of the Medici regime, and at the same time to conduct the foreign policy of the republic. In both respects, his actions were subject to considerable restraints. After initial setbacks, he succeeded in consolidating the regime, and his position in it, during the second year of his ascendancy, more precisely between January and July 1471. As far as his domestic policy was concerned, this concludes the first period in the formation of his statecraft. The development of his statesmanship in the conduct of foreign affairs was a lengthier and more gradual process, and there is much to be said for considering its formative period not to be completed until the end of the war of the Pazzi Conspiracy, in March 1480.

Lorenzo proposes 'to follow the methods of his grandfather', writes the Milanese ambassador at the time of Lorenzo's first attempt at internal reform in July 1470, 'which was to do such things as much as possible by constitutional methods', 'di far tal cose cum più civilità si potesse'.[3] These words reflect the constraints under which Lorenzo had to operate if he wanted to preserve the edifice of Medici supremacy, as erected by Cosimo. The cornerstone of that edifice was the office of the *Accoppiatori*, who were in charge of electing the two-monthly Signoria: as the Milanese ambassador put it, on it depended

[1] Bartolomeo Scala to Lorenzo in Naples, 5 January 1480 (ASF, MAP, XXXIV, 412): '. . . a voi et allo stato che è congiunto con voi, et alla città che [è] congiunta collo stato, habbi a venire la sua sicurtà'; cf. Rubinstein, 'Notes on the word *stato* in Florence before Machiavelli', in *Florilegium Historiale. Essays presented to Wallace K. Ferguson*, ed. J. G. Rowe and W. H. Stockdale (Toronto, 1971), pp. 313–26 (319).

[2] Lorenzo to Girolamo Morelli, 24 September 1478, *Lettere*, vol. iii, 332, p. 223.

[3] Quoted in Rubinstein, *The Government*, p. 178, n. 5 (3 July).

Lorenzo's power.[1] At the time of his succession, the *Accoppiatori* were elected annually by the Council of One Hundred; but although that council had been created under Cosimo to serve as a reliable instrument of the regime, its decisions did not always come up to expectation; its members were quite capable of voting against proposals that originated with the head of the regime, and of not toeing the line in the election to offices. The Council of One Hundred, writes the Milanese ambassador in the same letter of 31 July 1470, are in the process of electing the new *Accoppiatori*, and some of its members are known to want to appoint 'men who are not Lorenzo's', 'homini che non fossero de Lorenzo'; but he hopes that they will not succeed: 'one will see to it that those who are elected are Lorenzo's men'. This outcome was clearly not a foregone conclusion; to make it so, was the purpose of Lorenzo's first attempt at constitutional reform. Although this attempt failed, as a result of the opposition of the Council of One Hundred, it is of considerable interest to us, since it shows Lorenzo's earliest reaction, after his succession, to a major problem of Medici rule. According to his design, the *Accoppiatori* were to be chosen from among the 40-odd citizens who had served in this capacity from October 1434 onwards, or at least from among their families. This group would thus have included some of the prominent Medicean families of the time of Cosimo, such as the Guicciardini and Martelli, the Pitti and Ridolfi, as well as elder statesmen such as Tommaso Soderini; in the words of the Milanese ambassador, it would have consisted of 'tutti quisti cavalleri principali', of 'all the leading citizens'; and it was not surprising that Lorenzo's scheme was welcomed by them. Had it been successful, it would have both strengthened the oligarchical strand in Medici government, and provided Lorenzo with a permanent élite group.[2] His proposal pointed to the past as well as to the future. During the years before 1434, preceding the establishment of Medici ascendancy, about sixty-five citizens had formed the core, the inner circle, of the oligarchical regime;[3] in 1480, the Council of Seventy became, for all practical purposes, a permanent senate with life membership. Only a few months after his succession, Lorenzo thus felt the need to

[1] Sacramoro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Florence, 31 July, ASM, SPE, Firenze, 279; see Rubinstein, *The Government*, p. 178.

[2] See ibid., pp. 177–9.

[3] See Dale Kent, 'The Florentine *reggimento* in the fifteenth century', *Renaissance Quarterly*, xxviii (1975), pp. 604–10.

establish, at the top of the regime, a group of men on whom he could rely to secure the vital controls of election to the Signoria. His design reflects a hierarchical concept of the structure of the Medici regime, which is neatly spelled out, two years later, by Benedetto Dei in his account of contemporary Florentine society.[1] According to Dei, the innermost circle of the regime was divided into three sections: the top section consisted of twelve citizens, 'principali dello stato', headed by Lorenzo and Tommaso Soderini; below them was a group of eleven citizens, and at the bottom, a 'rearguard' of twenty: in all, the 'uomini del governo' amounted to forty-three citizens.

It was a measure of the limitations of Lorenzo's influence at the beginning of his ascendancy that neither this proposal, nor the alternative one of recruiting the *Accoppiatori* exclusively from those citizens who had previously held that office, was accepted; in the end, in January 1471, the council of One Hundred could be persuaded, though only just, to pass a law by which, during the next five years, the *Accoppiatori* were to be virtually appointed, annually, by their predecessors.[2] The next reform, of July that year, shows that Lorenzo had not given up the substance of his original design. The reform was carried out by one of those short-term commissions with extraordinary powers, *Balìe*, which the Medici and their followers had used from time to time to obtain legislation that the statutory councils could not be expected to pass; the main difficulty consisted in getting these councils to establish such *Balìe*; the alternative of summoning a popular assembly, a *Parlamento*, for this purpose, was too extreme and risky, too contrary to the orderly process of government, to be chosen except on rare occasions. That Lorenzo succeeded in obtaining from the councils the creation of such a *Balìa*—the first for five years—was a remarkable feat and showed consummate timing (he had been advised as early as the summer of 1470 to try this method). The *Balìa* of July 1471 consisted of a first group of forty citizens, who were elected by the Signoria and the *Accoppiatori* and in their turn elected the remaining 200 members of the commission. In order to enhance the reliability of the Council of One Hundred, whose legislative powers were substantially increased, these forty were to remain in office after the *Balìa* had been disbanded as permanent members of that council while the rest of its personnel changed twice a

[1] *Cronaca*, ASF, Manoscritti, 119, fol. 35^{v}.

[2] For this and the following, see Rubinstein, *The Government*, pp. 180–5.

year. Lorenzo had clearly not given up his original design to insert a small élite group of leading citizens as a permanent fixture into the machinery of government. His domestic policy was beginning to show that combination of consistency of design with flexibility of execution which was to mark it in the coming years.

The *Balìa* of July 1471 was also a personal triumph over his rivals and opponents in Florence, and thus reflects the definitive assertion of his authority within the regime, as well as its unification. 'While before, other citizens were honoured and flattered just like him', writes the Milanese ambassador on 5 July, 'now everyone goes to him to recommend himself for election' to the *Balìa*.[1] Rivalries among leading citizens of the regime, and between such citizens and Lorenzo, had overshadowed Lorenzo's political apprenticeship, and had been sharpened by conflicting loyalties to foreign powers. Tommaso Soderini stands out, during this period, both as Lorenzo's principal rival and as the leading figure of the pro-Neapolitan faction in Florence. 'Messer Tommaso seems to believe', writes the Milanese ambassador in November 1470, 'that everyone ought to submit to him, so that he can become great and head' of the regime, 'et cum questo farsi grande e capo': he accordingly wants to diminish Lorenzo's status, 'in order to manage him the way he wants'; in short, he wants to be 'el timone vero de questa barcha', 'the real rudder of this ship'.[2] Two months later, Soderini promised the ambassador, in great secrecy, that he would henceforth back Lorenzo.[3] It was significant of the change in the political climate of Florence after the *Balìa* of July 1471 that in the following month Tommaso Soderini himself should have been sent to Milan, to inform the Duke of the 'consolidation and strengthening of our regime'.[4]

Galeazzo Maria Sforza had previously advised Lorenzo

[1] Sacramoro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Florence, 5 July 1471 (ASM, SPE, Firenze, 282): 'hora zaschuno concorre ad ello a recomandarsi per essere de li ellecti'.

[2] Sacramoro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Florence, 19 November 1470, quoted in *Lettere*, vol. i, 65, n. 1, p. 209.

[3] Sacramoro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 9 January 1471 (ASM, SPE, Firenze, 281): 'io prometto al ducha de Milano . . . che tucto quel ch'esso [i.e. Lorenzo] me accennerà essere el suo bisogno et la voglia de quel Illustrissimo Signore, el consiliarò et favorirò'.

[4] *Lettere*, vol. 1, 90, n. intr., p. 320: 'stabilimento et corroboramento dello stato nostro'.

to achieve this result through a *Balìa*, that is by adopting the kind of measure Lorenzo did in the end adopt in July 1471; Lorenzo could now see, writes his ambassador in that month, 'how good the advice of Your Excellency has been'.[1] The Duke had also sent Tommaso Soderini a gift of 500 ducats to reward him for his change of attitude towards Lorenzo.[2] I have pointed to the advantages the strengthening of Medici power offered to the Duke of Milan. His relations with Lorenzo show his preference for dealing, secretly, with him and, possibly, a small number of his friends, rather than publicly with the Florentine government: this was in keeping with the personal style of diplomacy to which an autocratic Italian ruler was used. Thus, during particularly secret negotiations with the French King, Galeazzo Maria declared that he would confide everything to Lorenzo; matters of lesser importance could be discussed with his principal followers; all that was left to official contacts with the Signoria were 'ordinary and general matters', 'cose vulgare et generale', 'which were anyway public knowledge'.[3] Lorenzo did his best to conform: 'I shall follow the advice of Your Magnificence', he writes to the Sforza ambassador in Florence during the difficult negotiations in 1471 concerning the renewal of the Italian league, 'in keeping everything secret there, for these are matters in which consultation can be of little help', and he expresses the hope that the Florentine ambassador in Milan was writing about the matter 'in private rather than in public; in this way it will be easy to keep it secret'.[4] But there were limits to such secrecy: Florence was not Milan. 'Your Lordship wishes these matters to be very secret', writes Lorenzo, jointly with Tommaso Soderini and Luigi Guicciardini, to the Duke in March 1470, 'but this is difficult to achieve, in view of our methods of government', 'atteso il modo de' governi nostri'.[5] However great Lorenzo's authority in Florence, his diplomacy, like his domestic policy, was subject to manifold restraints, due to the continued functioning of republican

[1] Sacramoro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Florence, 5 July 1471 (loc. cit.): 'Possi mo Lorenzo accorgere quanto è stato bono el consiglio de Vostra Excellentia'. Cfr. Soranzo, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico . . .', p. 73.

[2] See *Lettere*, vol. i, 65, n. 1, cit., and Soranzo, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico . . .', p. 71.

[3] Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Filippo Sacramoro, 16 March 1476, quoted in *Lettere*, vol. ii, 219, n. intr., p. 170.

[4] Lorenzo to Sacramoro da Rimini, Bolsena, 28 September 1471, *Lettere*, vol. i, 94, pp. 336–7.

[5] *Lettere*, vol. i, 38, p. 106 (12 March 1470).

institutions. These restraints were, if anything, greater in the field of foreign, than in that of domestic, policy. It must have been difficult for an Italian despot such as the Duke of Milan fully to appreciate this. In monarchical states such as Milan and Ferrara and, for that matter, Naples the ruler alone possessed the ultimate authority to negotiate, conclude treaties, declare war; ambassadors had powers delegated by him alone, as had secret councils, whose function it was to advise the prince and which could take decisions only if authorized to do so by him.[1] In Florence, diplomatic affairs were the competence of the Signoria, which changed every two months, or, in time of war, of the *Dieci di Balìa*, elected for six months at a time. A measure of continuity was provided by advisory committees (*Pratiche*) of the Signoria, in which leading citizens could express their views, and whose advice, though not binding, carried a great deal of weight. But treaties had to be ratified by the councils; and while in a despotic state such as Milan or Ferrara taxes were imposed or regulated by the prince, in Florence it was the councils which had to vote the money that was required to fulfil treaty obligations or to hire troops. As we shall see, this system was modified, to the advantage of Lorenzo, in 1480; at the time of his succession, Florentine foreign policy, like that of Venice, was still essentially based on collective decision-making. Historians of the Medici, following Guicciardini who, writing about sixteen years after Lorenzo's death, telescoped things in retrospect,[2] tend to identify the foreign policy of Florence with that of Lorenzo, but in so doing they oversimplify one of the most intriguing aspects of his ascendancy. What was his role in the making, and in the execution, of decisions, and hence the extent to which he was able, and willing, to take over the conduct of foreign affairs from the official organs of government?

At the time of Piero's death, Florence was in the midst of intense diplomatic activity. Negotiations for the renewal of the Triple Alliance between Florence, Milan, and Naples had been going on for some months; they were meeting with

[1] See *Storia di Milano*, vol. vii (Milan, Fondazione Treccani, 1956), pp. 521–4; F. Valenti, 'I consigli di governo presso gli Estensi dalle origini alla devoluzione di Ferrara', in *Studi in onore di R. Filangieri* (Naples, 1959), vol. ii, pp. 19–33.

[2] F. Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine*, ed. R. Palmarocchi (Bari, 1931), pp. 72: one of the benefits Florence owed Lorenzo was to have become 'quasi una bilancia di tutta Italia'.

difficulties, largely owing to conflicting policies pursued by the Duke of Milan and the King of Naples in the war between the Pope and Roberto Malatesta of Rimini.[1] After the defeat of the papal army in August 1469 the allies were trying to induce Paul II to conclude peace, but Galeazzo Maria Sforza, apprehensive of a French intervention in his duchy, proved more accommodating than Ferrante of Naples. To settle these differences, a meeting between representatives of the members of the Triple Alliance was arranged to take place in Florence in December; before the ambassadors arrived, Piero had died; and, as a result, it was the young and inexperienced Lorenzo who took his place in the committee of five which was appointed by the Signoria to represent the government of Florence. The meetings, which lasted until March, did not settle the differences between the allies; but they did provide Lorenzo with his apprenticeship in diplomacy. They also provided him with invaluable experience of the way in which in Florence diplomacy could become entangled with domestic politics: the committee of five included partisans of the King of Naples as well as of the Duke of Milan, Tommaso Soderini as well as Lorenzo. Lorenzo, while supporting the Sforza, saw the role of Florence as one of mediation; and Florence badly needed peace and the renewal of the League. These matters, he writes in January 1470 to the Florentine ambassador in Rome, 'seem to me to be among the most troublesome and difficult the city has ever had to face'; but, he adds, this is 'perhaps because, as I have never had to deal with such matters, they are new and therefore more daunting to me';[2] nevertheless, 'as far as I can judge, there is no other way, for our salvation lies entirely in the cohesion and unity of the League'.[3] And when the Triple Alliance was finally renewed, in July 1470, he was jubilant: 'at this moment,' he writes to the Florentine ambassador at the Sforza court, 'we have received letters from Naples . . . They inform us that our league has been renewed, which pleases everyone greatly . . . As to my own personal interests ('spetialità'), I consider it the best news I have ever received.'[4] Later in the same year, during the tortuous negotiations for the renewal of the wider

[1] See Soranzo, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico . . .', pp. 50–9; G. Nebbia, 'La Lega italica . . .', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, N.S., iv (1939), pp. 125–7.

[2] Lorenzo to Otto Niccolini, 27 January 1470 (*Lettere*, vol. i, 33, p. 88): 'non havendo io mai praticato simili cose, come cose nuove mi dànno magiore admiratione'.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Lorenzo to Angelo della Stufa, 12 July 1470, *Lettere*, vol. i, 58, pp. 172.

Italian League of 1454, Florence appeared once more in the role of mediator between Milan and Naples, and could even be described as 'examen della bilancia', 'the tongue of the balance'.[1] If, after his death, Lorenzo could be praised as the architect of Italian balance of power politics, he owed this to no small extent to his experience of Florentine diplomacy during the formative period of his statecraft.

One of the major problems of that period had been the interaction of domestic and foreign policies; and it was this interaction which was at the root of the gravest crisis his statecraft had to face, the Pazzi conspiracy. On 26 April 1478 Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano were attacked in the Florentine cathedral during High Mass; Giuliano was assassinated, but Lorenzo escaped. The assassination had been planned and organized by the Pope's nephew, Girolamo Riario, and members of the Pazzi family; the Archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, had participated in the conspiracy. Before he was summarily executed, Francesco Salviati confessed that it had been planned by Francesco Pazzi as long as three years earlier: relations between Lorenzo and the Pazzi had in fact become increasingly strained after 1473.[2] The origins and motives of the conspiracy were complex, and this is not the place to discuss them in detail.[3] I should, however, like to make two points. The events which led to the conspiracy show once more the interaction of Lorenzo's diplomacy and his private interests, his 'spetialità'; they also show how difficult it is to distinguish, in every single case, between his personal diplomacy and that of the republic. Pope Sixtus IV held Lorenzo personally responsible for the unsuccessful attempt by Florence to purchase the Romagna town of Imola from the Duke of Milan in 1473; but Florence had previously exercised a sort of protectorate over this strategically important place beyond her northern frontiers, and it was only natural that she should use the opportunity of its cession to the Duke of Milan by its lord, Taddeo Manfredi, to try to acquire a firm hold over it. In the circumstances, it was not

[1] Gentile Becchi to Lorenzo, Rome, 24 November 1470 (ASF, MAP, LXI, 30): 'Sta molto bene hora Firenze vaghegiata da tutta dua, et fia spesso examen della bilancia nel migliore partito se fiano uniti'. Cfr. *Lettere*, vol. i, 70, n. intr., pp. 232–3.

[2] Filippo Sacramoro to Bona and Gian Galeazzo Sforza, Florence, 27 April 1478 (ASM, SPE, Firenze, 294): 'erano tri anni che messer Jacobo di Pazzi l'haveva sempre importunato a questo tracto'.

[3] On the origins of the conspiracy, see now *Lettere*, vol. ii, docs. xi–xiii, nn. intr., pp. 411–12, 414; 417–18; 430–2, and 270, n. 8, pp. 467–9.

surprising that when the purchase fell through owing to the opposition of the Pope, the Medici Bank decided not to provide the loan to enable his nephew Girolamo Riario to acquire the place; but the refusal to do so led to a further worsening of relations between Sixtus IV and Lorenzo, while the fact that the rival bank of the Pazzi made the loan, in its turn affected relations between that family and Lorenzo.[1] In the following year, the Pope's campaign against Niccolò Vitelli, the lord of Città di Castello, was believed in Florence to pose a threat to the neighbouring Borgo San Sepolcro. Lorenzo was at first in favour of a military demonstration, but he was not alone in this, and later changed his view in favour of a peaceful settlement.[2] Yet it was Lorenzo who was made to suffer through punitive measures against the Medici Bank in Rome. Later in that year, Sixtus IV created Francesco Salviati Archbishop of Pisa, against the express wish of the Signoria, which accepted the advice of a meeting of leading citizens that he should be prevented from taking possession of the see: as one of them declared, they were opposed to his appointment 'not because he is an unworthy person, but because the city wants things to be done differently'.[3] Again, it is difficult to isolate the responsibility of Lorenzo, who had certainly personal reasons for disliking Francesco Salviati; as Lorenzo writes on 7 September 1475 to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Salviati was 'linked to the Pazzi by family ties as well as obligations of friendship', and was 'molto cosa di costoro', 'very much their man'.[4] '. . . I believe', he writes on 14 December 1474 to Galeazzo Maria, 'that I have been greatly wronged; . . . the offence, if it is one [of having forbidden Francesco Salviati to take possession of the archbishopric of Pisa], . . . has been committed by the whole city, and [the Pope] wants to take revenge for it on me alone'; and on 23 December he sums up, in another letter to the Duke, the events that in his view had led to the present crisis in his relations with Sixtus IV: it is not the affair of Città di Castello,

[1] See *Lettere*, vol. ii, 182, n. intr., pp. 52–3.

[2] Ibid., 171, n. intr., pp. 5–7.

[3] ASF, Consulte e Pratiche, 60, fols. 148r–149v (18 October 1474): Giovannozzo Pitti: 'quod preter dignitatem civitatis et petitionem Magistratus archiepiscopus pisanus creatus est molestum esse debere omnibus civibus. Non quod archiepiscopi persona indigna sit, maxime propter familiam, sed quod aliter ac civitas voluerit factum sit . . . Itaque censuit retinendum archiepiscopatum in sua potestate Magistratum, donec archiepiscopus talis sit qualem Magistratus velit . . .' Cfr. also *Lettere*, vol. ii, 182, n. intr., p. 57.

[4] *Lettere*, vol. ii, 201, p. 124.

but that of the archbishopric of Pisa; 'this is the root of everything', 'è quello onde procede tutto questo'. If it is true what the Pope says, Lorenzo continues, that many citizens have written to him in favour of Salviati, this is precisely the reason why he should not be allowed to take possession of his diocese, 'for since the Signoria and the members of the regime', the 'huomini dello stato', do not want him, those who do want him, and have written to this effect, must be men who do not get on with the ruling group, 'con quelli che governano'; and it would be dangerous to leave an unreliable ('sospectosa') city like Pisa in the hands of a man who was acceptable to the former and not to the latter.[1] Lorenzo could have hardly spelled out more forcefully the way in which the policies of the state and of the regime were entwined with one another and with his own personal interests. He certainly had a case for arguing that the Pope did him an injustice in holding him alone responsible for Florence's action.

His case was compounded by the bull of excommunication and interdict, which Sixtus IV issued a little over a month after the attack in the Duomo. Before 1478, the Pope had still observed formal diplomatic procedure by addressing his complaints about Florentine interventions in the Papal State to the Signoria;[2] his bull of 1 June 1478[3] is squarely directed against Lorenzo, the Signoria and other magistrates being implicated solely as his helpers and accomplices. Was Sixtus IV trying to tear down the public façade from the complex structure of Florentine government under the Medici, by placing the full responsibility for its actions on Lorenzo? It may not have been mere coincidence that one of his predecessors, Pius II, had described Lorenzo's grandfather as Signore of Florence in all but name.[4] If the republic handed over Lorenzo and his so-called accomplices for ecclesiastical punishment, Florence would be absolved from guilt by association, for the actions which, according to the bull, deserved punishment—from the interventions in the affairs of Imola and Città di Castello to the hanging of the Archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, and the detention of the Pope's great-nephew, Cardinal Raffaele

[1] Ibid., 182, pp. 58–9; 184, pp. 69–70.

[2] See the copies of briefs addressed to the Signoria in 1474 and 1475 in ASF, Signori, Carteggi, Responsive, Copiari, 2, fols. 63^{v}–64^{r} (28 June 1474), 64^{v}–65^{r} (5 July 1474), 92^{v}–93^{r} (21 October 1475).

[3] Fabroni, *Laurentii Medicis vita*, vol. ii, pp. 121–9.

[4] *Commentarii* (Rome, 1584), p. 89.

Riario-Sansoni, after the failure of the conspiracy. The point was driven home by the accusation, consistently used from now to the end of the war, that Lorenzo was a tyrant, and by the argument that the Pope was only trying to help the Florentines to free themselves from his tyranny.

For Lorenzo, the aftermath of the conspiracy was the moment of truth in more than one respect; it was also the supreme test of his statecraft, and of the cohesion of the regime. On 26 April the Pazzi had failed to rouse the people of Florence by the ancient republican slogan of 'popolo e libertà', and Sixtus IV's attempt to drive a wedge between Lorenzo and the Florentines proved to be equally counterproductive. That the 'uomini dello stato' would support the head of the regime was a foregone conclusion. Yet the question remained how the complex relationship between Lorenzo and the regime would stand up to the strain of interdict and war. The meeting on 12 June, in which leading citizens discussed, a few days after the publication of the bull, the threat of military action against Florence, provided Lorenzo with an opportunity to test the measure of their support. In a moving speech, he offered to face exile and even death if this could avert war. 'All citizens must place the common before the private good, but I more than anyone else, as one who has received from you and the fatherland more and greater benefits."[1] The reaction of the meeting could have been foreseen; its formulation is not without interest. 'Lorenzo and the house of Medici must be defended in the same way as the fatherland', says one of the speakers, 'Laurentium . . . et Medicam domum non aliter defendendam quam patrie salutem'; while another declares that Lorenzo's safety cannot be distinguished from that of the state, 'ne separari posse eius salutem a salute publica'.[2] And when, a month later, Sixtus IV wrote to the Florentines that he had no quarrel with the Florentine people itself, that, on the contrary, his only aim was to liberate it from the tyranny of Lorenzo, and that once Lorenzo was expelled, the troops he, the Pope, and the King of Naples were moving against Florence, would be used to protect her liberty, the Signoria replied that the man whom the Pope called a tyrant, the Florentines unanimously called 'the defender of our liberty', and that they were prepared, 'what-

[1] ASF, Consulte e Pratiche, 60, fol. 159^{r-v}: 'Cives enim omnes publicam salutem debent suae anteponere; ego vero multo etiam magis quam caeteri omnes, quippe qui a vobis, a patria plura et maiora acceperim beneficia'.

[2] Ibid., fol. 160^{r} (Piero Minerbetti, for the *Otto di Balìa*; Niccolò Berardi).

ever should happen, to stake everything on the safety of Lorenzo de' Medici'.[1]

After the meeting of 12 June Lorenzo must have felt confident that the leading citizens of the regime would stand firmly behind him; on the following day their declaration, that the defence of Florence and that of the Medici were one and the same thing, received an almost symbolic confirmation in Lorenzo's election to the newly appointed *Dieci di Balìa*. The Ten were an office created, with wide powers, in times of war; while it functioned, it took the place of the Signoria in the conduct of the war and of foreign policy. It was the first time that Lorenzo held an office in the government of Florence. From now onwards he was to participate almost continuously in the official conduct of government business in the public world of Palazzo Vecchio, as against the private, or semi-private one of Palazzo Medici. It might be argued that, as far as his actual influence on government was concerned, this would add only little, if anything, to his power. Yet, in the complex and sophisticated system of Medici rule, a great deal depended on the form in which it was exercised. Lorenzo's election to the *Dieci* thus constitutes a landmark in the formation of his statecraft.[2] It may also serve us as an opportunity to examine once more what was, perhaps, its central problem.

Throughout the period of Medici ascendancy, Medicean control of the Signoria was certainly not confined to the election of its members. The Ferrarese ambassador shrewdly observed, when reporting on Lorenzo's succession in December 1469: 'it is understood that the secret business ("le cose secrete"), of the Signoria will now pass through the hands of Lorenzo, as they did through those of his father', because his followers were able to control the elections to that office.[3] Pius II had said of Cosimo that 'affairs of State were debated in his house';[4] the opposition to Piero had demanded that government business be confined to the Palace of the Signoria; and after Piero's

[1] Ed. in L. Pignotti, *Storia della Toscana* (Livorno, 1820), vol. iv, pp. 117–21: 'Eiicere vis nos e civitate Laurentium de Medicis . . . Laurentium de Medicis tyrannum clamitas, at nos populusque noster defensorem nostrae libertatis . . . una omnium voce appellamus' (21 July 1478).

[2] See Rubinstein, *The Government*, pp. 219–21.

[3] Niccolò de' Roberti to Borso d'Este, Florence, 4 December, A. Cappelli (ed.), 'Lettere di Lorenzo de' Medici . . . conservate nell'Archivio Palatino di Modena . . .', *Atti e memorie delle Deputazioni di storia patria per le provincie modenesi e parmensi*, vol. i (1863), p. 250.

[4] Loc. cit.

death there were people in Florence who believed that this was now actually going to happen, but they were wrong.[1] Yet, there were limits to Medici influence on the day-to-day work of the Signoria, due to restraints imposed by ancient political traditions. It was up to the Signoria to summon the citizens they chose for consultation, and they were not bound by their advice; jointly with their two Colleges, they had the last word in the making of decisions; they had their own administrative staff, including, in particular, the chancery. I do not know whether Lorenzo saw, as a rule, all the more important letters addressed to or written by the Signoria, but he would not have had much difficulty in doing so. He had his own sources of information, often more reliable than those of the Signoria, and the Florentine ambassadors would write to him as well as to their government, often at the same time. Alamanno Rinuccini states that during his embassy to the Pope in 1475/6, he had 'as an old friend of Lorenzo's written to him privately, together with his official dispatches, about the weightiest matters'; and he adds that Lorenzo was, on one occasion, annoyed with him because he had reported the Pope's complaints about Lorenzo to the Signoria, as well as to him.[2] Lorenzo expected personal letters from ambassadors to contain more confidential information, not necessarily identical with that included in their official dispatches. They would also serve as channels through which foreign governments could communicate with Lorenzo.[3] This was one of the advantages of Lorenzo's personal diplomacy. Another concerned his own correspondence.

[1] See Rubinstein, *The Government*, p. 173. Cf. the letter of Niccolò de' Roberti, cit.: 'che fra pochi dì si abbia a ridurre ogni cosa al Palazzo'.

[2] *Dialogus de libertate*, ed. F. Adorno, in *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Toscana . . . La Colombaria*, xxii (1957), pp. 300–1: 'Quid vero reprehendere in me iure potest, si veteris amicitiae rationem sequutus una cum publicis litteris privatim quoque ad eum de maximis rebus litteras dabam . . .? . . . cum, adstante summorum patrum concilio, Pontifex de ipso verba quaedam graviora contra republicae nostrae decus fecisset, et privatim ad eum et publice ad summum magistratum omnia perscripsi'.

[3] During the secret peace negotiations in June 1479 the Milanese government would even dictate to the Florentine ambassador what he was to write to Lorenzo in his own name: see A. R. Natale (ed.), *Acta in Consilio Secreto in Castello Portae Iovis Mediolani*, vol. iii (Milan, 1969), p. 268 (23 June): Cicco Simonetta 'fecit legere . . . minutam litterarum scribendarum per dictum Magnificum Hieronymum [Morelli], oratorem florentinum, prefato Laurentio . . .' The minute is in ASM, SPE, Firenze, 298, and a copy of it, in Morelli's secretary's hand, in ASF, Carte Strozziane, 2a ser., 96, no. 5.

Owing to his position in Florence, his communications to foreign princes and statesman, whether relayed through ambassadors, his agents, or directly through his letters, were likely to carry more weight than those of the Signoria. His letters had the additional advantage of being technically private. In this sense, what might be broadly called his double diplomacy was really complementary to that of the official organs of government. It rendered Florentine diplomacy more flexible and, if necessary, more secret; among other things, it made it possible for Lorenzo, as it had done earlier for Cosimo, to disclaim ultimate responsibility for government decisions, on the grounds that he was only a private citizen. Lorenzo certainly had also considerable influence on the official correspondence of the Signoria. In this, as in other respects, the head of the chancery, Bartolomeo Scala, provided him with an invaluable link with the Palazzo della Signoria: a Medici client and friend of Lorenzo's, he was, unlike other palace officials, a permanent fixture in Florentine administration, enjoying what in the end amounted to life tenure.[1] At the same time, there were limits to the extent to which Lorenzo could, or would, normally determine the contents of official letters; had this not been the case it would have been hardly necessary, in 1477, explicitly to entrust Lorenzo and a few leading citizens with the drafting of letters for the Signoria, as was the case on several occasions; they formed a small *ad hoc* committee which met in the room of the Gonfalonier of Justice in the Palace of the Signoria.[2] One result of this development was that Lorenzo was now becoming more directly, indeed physically, involved in the official business of government, as transacted in Palazzo Vecchio (apart from being summoned, like other leading citizens, by the Signoria to advisory meetings, in which, moreover, he only spoke rarely).[3] On 1 May 1478 he became a member of the magistracy in charge of public security, the Eight of Ward, having been elected to it, for four months, shortly before the attack in the Duomo; but he resigned from it shortly afterwards, no doubt in order not to be personally implicated in political prosecutions.[4] His election to the *Dieci* in June thus forms yet another step in the same direction: the contrast between Palazzo Vecchio and Palazzo Medici, seen by their opponents as

[1] See Alison Brown's forthcoming *Bartolomeo Scala* (Princeton U.P.).
[2] See *Lettere*, vol. ii, docs. i to xii (24 April to 29 September 1477).
[3] ASF, Consulte e Pratiche, 60, *passim*.
[4] See Rubinstein, *The Government*, p. 220.

symbolic of the system of government of the Medici, was beginning to lose some of its force. The *Dieci* were appointed for six months at a time, but the citizens elected on 13 June were re-elected twice, so that Lorenzo remained continuously in office until 12 December 1479,[1] by which time he had left for Naples to negotiate peace with King Ferrante.

In what ways did this shift of his political activities to Palazzo Vecchio affect the development of his statecraft? He now participated officially in the formulation and execution of the foreign and military policy of the republic, during a war which threatened its very independence. Yet at the same time, he kept up, and if anything intensified, his private diplomacy. It could hardly have been otherwise. Indeed, this diplomacy acquired additional importance during the war, as did his personal relations with foreign rulers, such as the Duchess of Milan and the King of France, and with their ministers—Cicco Simonetta and Philippe de Commynes. The correspondence of the *Dieci* and of Lorenzo shows in great detail how his double diplomacy worked during the war. Their relationship was based on a sort of division of labour, the *Dieci* being in charge of the day-to-day conduct of military operations and diplomatic affairs, Lorenzo more concerned with long-term issues, and, in particular, with secret negotiations. To quote one instance only: in Spring 1479, while official peace negotiations were going on in Rome, Lorenzo was involved in secret talks, conducted partly through his brother-in-law, Rinaldo Orsini, about a peace settlement with the King of Naples. On 11 May he sent the Florentine ambassador in Milan a copy of a letter concerning matters 'di grandissima importantia' which he had received from his colleague in Rome, and asked him to discuss it only with the ducal secretary, Cicco Simonetta, 'as it must be kept very secret': 'To you alone I want to tell my views [on it], according to my free and rough nature', 'secondo la mia natura libera et staglata'.[2] There is no reference to this matter in the dispatch which the Florentine ambassador in Rome sent simultaneously to the *Dieci*; nor in those of the Milanese ambassador in Florence. The incident also illustrates, once more, the role of personal relations in Lorenzo's diplomacy, in this case with the powerful secretary of the Dukes of Milan. It should be added that this type of diplomacy was not without

[1] ASF, Cento, 2, fols. 38^{v}–39^{r}, 43^{v}–44^{r}, 48^{v}–49^{r}.

[2] Lorenzo to Girolamo Morelli, 11 May 1479, ASF, MAP, CXXXVII, 430.

risks: Venice was incensed by the rumours of secret negotiations, and Simonetta's fall from power, after Ludovico Sforza's return to Milan in September 1479, was bound to be a source of embarrassment to Lorenzo. In fact, Ludovico il Moro proved to be much more lukewarm in his attitude to Lorenzo, and to Florence, than Cicco Simonetta had been; and this contributed, in the end, to Lorenzo's decision to follow the Duke of Calabria's advice 'to throw himself into the arms of the King of Naples', on the grounds that 'this is the only way in which I can save the city and myself'.[1] On 6 December, he left Florence for Naples.

Lorenzo's journey to Naples highlights some of the major characteristics and problems of his statecraft, as it had developed over the past ten years. If the aftermath of the Pazzi conspiracy was a moment of truth for his ascendancy in Florence, the setbacks and defeats of the war years provided a new challenge to it. While the leading members of the regime appear to have remained united behind him, there were rumblings of discontent; in Florence too, there were people such as Alamanno Rinuccini who called Lorenzo a tyrant who had deprived the city of her ancient liberty; and they were probably more likely to do so when the war was going badly.[2] Lorenzo's decision to assume personal responsibility for the conclusion of peace thus forms a logical sequel to his offer, in June 1478, to sacrifice himself for the sake of Florence. What was at stake, once more, was, in the widest sense, the relationship between Lorenzo and Florence, but the circumstances were different. In the summer of 1478, the offer might be considered rhetorical; in December 1479, it had a very real meaning. Against the background of defeat, his speech to the meeting which was hastily summoned on the eve of his departure, in order to inform, but not to consult, the leading citizens of his decision, while reminding us of his address to the meeting at the beginning of the war, had a different ring of urgency. As the *Dieci* wrote to the Florentine ambassador in Venice, Lorenzo expressed the belief that, since the Pope and the King of Naples were holding him alone responsible

[1] Lorenzo to Girolamo Morelli, 25 September 1479 (ASF, MAP, L, 11): 'di gittarmi nelle braccia del Re, mostrandone che questa via sola ho da salvare la città et me'.

[2] See his *Dialogus de libertate*, completed in April 1479 (ed. F. Adorno, pp. 270–303). On 14 December, Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga wrote to his brother, the Marquess of Mantua: 'Sonnosi in Firenza trovati scrittarini sparti per la terra che dicevano: L'è pur partito el tyranno' (quoted in G. B. Picotti, *Ricerche umanistiche* (Florence, 1955), p. 58, n. 2).

for the war, he would, by taking this decision, either help to bring about the peace which the city, and the whole of Italy, needed so badly, or find out whether it was really he who was the cause of the war or whether there was some other reason for it; and if it could be shown that 'the cause of the war did not concern him, but the republic, we ought to devote ourselves, unitedly and boldly, to our defence'.[1] By taking the initiative in seeking peace, Lorenzo thus reopened the question of the relationship between his own personal interests, his 'spetialità', and those of the republic—a question which seemed to have been settled and put aside at the beginning of the war. This is spelt out in his outburst after his arrival at Naples, as reported by the Milanese ambassadors there: his journey, he complained, had brought no advantage to his city; even were the King to give him full satisfaction as far as his private interests were concerned, this was not what he wanted if at the same time his fatherland remained dissatisfied; indeed, should this happen, he would, on his return, not be able to open his mouth in Florence.[2] The successful conclusion of the peace negotiations in Naples in March 1480 was therefore not only a diplomatic triumph for Lorenzo; it also decisively strengthened his position at home. The creation of the Council of Seventy, a few weeks after his triumphant return from Naples, must be seen as a further step in the domestic policy Lorenzo had been pursuing from the first year of his political career; but the unprecedented success of this policy, in concentrating power in this all but permanent council, would have hardly been possible without the challenge of peace Lorenzo had met single-handed.

For the journey to Naples was also a supreme test of the other aspect of his statecraft, his personal diplomacy. While the war years had enhanced the judicious blending of public and private diplomacy, they had also shown, once more, the

[1] The *Dieci* to Luigi Guicciardini, 6 December (ASF, Missive interne, 11, fols. 45^{v}–46^{v}): '. . . o veramente potere chiarire se questa cagione o veramente altra cagione è quella che fa questa guerra et perturbatione, a questo fine che, potendosi havere pace . . . , più facilmente si habbi, et non si potendo havere et inteso la cagione della guerra non essere per lui ma per il publico, si venga unitamente et animosamente alla difesa necessaria'.

[2] Pietro da Gallera and Giovanni Angelo Talenti to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, Naples, 22 December, ASMi, SPE, Roma, 86: 'se bene la Maestà del Signore Re nelle particularitate sue gli satisfacesse al tutto, che questo non saria el suo bisogno, restando mal contenta la sua patria, et . . . che'l non potesse parlare in Fiorenza, quando se trovasse che per la sua spetialità el ritornasse ben contento et nelle cose publice la città mal satisfacta'.

value of the latter, in terms of secrecy, initiative, and personal relationships. The journey to Naples epitomizes all this; prepared in well-kept secrecy, as a result of Lorenzo's own initiative, it was greatly facilitated, and incidentally rendered less dangerous than might appear, by his earlier contacts with members of the royal family of Naples. The Duke of Calabria, whom he had known since his visit to Naples in 1466, when informing Lorenzo on 4 December that two Neapolitan galleys were at his disposal, addresses him as 'My dearest and most beloved Lorenzo'[1]—somewhat surprising for a commander of the enemy army; his wife Ippolita Sforza, whose marriage ceremony Lorenzo had attended in Milan, proved a good friend and adviser during the negotiations at Naples—and apparently also good company: at one point, discussions were held up, because Lorenzo could not be found: it turned out that he was visiting her.[2] His refusal to act as official Florentine ambassador was in keeping with the personal style of his diplomacy;[3] his mandate to negotiate and conclude, which was sent to him by the *Dieci*, conferred on him great powers but also implied, by its very nature, that his actions were subject to restraints; and these were fully acknowledged by him, when, for instance, he announced in Naples that he wanted to return to Florence, because he could hope by his presence to persuade the Signoria to make concessions 'to which he did not dare agree on his own'.[4]

[1] ASF, MAP, XLV, 224: 'Lorenzo mio multo caro e multo amato . . .'

[2] The Milanese ambassadors in Naples report on 23 December (ASM, SPE, Napoli, 229) that they had been unable to find Lorenzo in order to deliver a message from the King until late that day, because he had gone to visit the Duchess: 'et non essendo el Magnifico Lorenzo nel suo logiamento, per essere andato a visitare la Illustrissima duchessa de Calabria, ne bisognò expectare insino alla nocte'. A month later, the *Dieci* wrote to her to thank her for having 'prestati grandissimi favori et adoperatovi per noi et durati ogni fatica', as they had been informed by Lorenzo (Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS. Palat. 1091, fol. 45^{r}, 22 January 1480).

[3] The Milanese ambassador in Florence, Filippo Sacramoro, reports on 30 December 1479 (ASM, SPE, Firenze, 298) that to his question whether Lorenzo 'tenga grado de ambassatore', the *Dieci* had given him to understand that this was not the case, 'né l'havea, perché ha monstro non lo volere'; and on 6 January 1480, Lorenzo himself, writing from Naples, pointed out to the *Dieci* (ASF, Dieci, Responsive, 25, fol. 439) that he had not 'tenuto qua grado o termine di ambasciadore, ché m'è paruto meglo a proposito stare chome privato'.

[4] The mandate (a copy is in ASF, Notarile antecosimiano, B 2320, fols. 126^{v}–127^{r}) gave him full powers to conclude peace and alliances with the

The successful conclusion of the negotiations, completed after he had left Naples, forms a landmark in his diplomacy, as well as in his position as head of the regime. His official participation in the conduct of foreign policy as member of a public office, interrupted after he had ceased to be a member of the *Dieci* in December 1478, was resumed, on a different level, and on a practically permanent basis, after the creation of the Seventy in April 1480. A new magistracy, the *Otto di Pratica*, which was elected every six months from its personnel, replaced the *Dieci*, in peace as well as in war; but the Seventy took the final decisions, and Lorenzo was a member of that council. The new structure of government brought with it a further decline in the authority of the Signoria, as well as of the old statutory councils. Supreme authority in the republic was now concentrated in a council which, while meeting in the Palace of the Signoria, represented the inner circle of the regime. The contrast between Palazzo Vecchio and Palazzo Medici had been settled, though not in the way which the opponents of the Medici had envisaged. It was the beginning of a new period in the development of Lorenzo's statecraft.

King of Naples and other powers, 'prout eidem Laurentio libere videbitur et placebit'. In fact, Lorenzo kept in close contact with the *Dieci* throughout the negotiations. The Milanese ambassadors in Naples report on 13 January (ASM, SPE, Napoli, 229) that Lorenzo had decided to tell the King 'che la voglia et parer suo saria de ritornare a Fiorenza, perché con la presentia sua poteria più facilmente indure quella Excelsa Signoria a questi effecti, alli quali lui non ardiria aconsentire da si stesso'.

[*Bibliographical Note*: Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, vol. i (18 November 1460 to 12 July 1474), vol. ii (3 August 1474 to 14 March 1478), vol. iii (26 April 1478 to 5 February 1479), vol. iv (17 February 1479 to 23 March 1480), Giunti–Barbèra, Florence. Vol. iv will be published in 1979.]

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