

JOHN EASTON LAW

A NEW FRONTIER:  
VENICE AND THE TRENTINO  
IN THE EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY

According to some historians, the Middle Ages had little concept of the «frontier» in the sense of an acknowledged line across which two distinct states confronted one another <sup>(1)</sup>. In terms of modern theories of international relations and ideas of territorial sovereignty this generalisation may have some validity, but in the Middle Ages the concept of the frontier did exist, and the word itself - or analogous expressions - can be found applied with considerable care and precision, most often where geographical features were present to aid - or to demand - a process of political, ecclesiastical or legal demarcation <sup>(2)</sup>.

This was the case in relations between the Veronese and the Trentino in the late Middle Ages, if the ecclesiastical boundary between the bishoprics of Verona and Trent did not entirely correspond with the

---

<sup>(1)</sup> J. R. HALE, *International relations in the West*, in *The Cambridge Modern History*, I, ed. D. Hay, Cambridge, 1957, pp. 261-2; IDEM, *Renaissance Europe*, London, 1971, pp. 55-6. For the frontiers of the Veronese in the fourteenth century, G. PERBELLINI, *Il Serraglio della campagna veronese*, in *Gli Scaligeri*, ed. G. M. VARANINI, Verona, 1988, pp. 267-74. For some comparison, G. FRANCESCHINI, *Il confine fra Bergamasco e Valsassina dalla pace di Ferrara alla pace di Lodi*, in «Atti e Memorie del II Congresso Storico Lombardo», Milan, 1938, pp. 95-106; G. BARROW, *The Anglo-Scottish Border*, in «Northern History», I (1966), pp. 22-3 and A. GOODMAN, *The Anglo-Scottish Marches in the fifteenth century: a frontier society?* in *Scotland and England*, ed. R. A. Mason, Edinburgh, 1987, pp. 18-33.

<sup>(2)</sup> *Dizionario Etimologico Italiano*, Florence, 1952; *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana*, Turin, 1970; C. CIPOLLA, *Antichi possedi del monastero veronese di S. Maria in Organo in Trentino*, in «Archivio Storico per Trieste, Istria e il Trentino», I (1881-2), pp. 10-11; B. Malfatti, *I confini del Principato di Trento*, «A.S.T.I.T.», II (1883), pp. 1-32.

political frontier, and if the exact line of the latter was a matter of dispute in some areas. Dante knew the region and remarked on its frontier character in both geographical and jurisdictional terms <sup>(3)</sup>. In 1401, Rupert of Bavaria described the city of Trent as situated «in metis seu in limitibus Lombardiae et aliarum convicinarum terrarum» <sup>(4)</sup>. In 1409 the Venetian Senate used similar words: the city of Trent «est ad frontieras et confinem nostri districtus Verone, et est etiam clavis omnium illarum vallium et locorum circumstantium et passus terrarum et locorum ducis Austriae» <sup>(5)</sup>.

However, as these words imply, the recognition of a frontier did not necessarily mean the creation of a barrier, unless in particular military circumstances. In April and May 1411 the Venetian Senate ordered the *rettori* to Verona to guard against invasion from the north by improving the defensive system at Chiusa on the Adige, across the «passus della Seraza» <sup>(6)</sup>. But in the case of the Veronese and the Trentino, the frontier was not normally closed. On the contrary, historically it represented both a challenge and an opportunity, largely because it was transversed by two routes of major commercial and strategic importance: above all the Adige, but also the Lago di Garda, creating a fundamental interdependence between the two regions. For example, the commercial traffic on the Adige and the timber resources of the Trentino assured an important place for the *nocchieri* and *radaroli* in the history of the

<sup>(3)</sup> *Inferno*, XX; A. SCOLARI, *Verona e gli Scaligeri nella vita di Dante*, in AA.VV., *Dante e Verona*, 1965, XIII-XIV; M. CARRARA, *Dante e la corte scaligera*, in *Gli Scaligeri*, cit., p. 499.

<sup>(4)</sup> F. UGHELLI, *Italia Sacra*, V, Venice, 1720, coll. 631-2.

<sup>(5)</sup> Archivio di Stato di Venezia (= A.S. Ven.), *Senato Secreta*, reg. 4, c. 36r, 7 July 1409, cited by C. RAVANELLI, *Contributi alla storia del dominio veneto nel Trentino*, in «Archivio Trentino» XI (1893), pp. 249-50.

<sup>(6)</sup> The Senate ordered the construction of a stone wall with towers and a ditch, A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, c. 14r and c. 25v, «pro fortificatione et clausura» of the pass. It is not clear how much progress was made. Archaeological excavations carried out by the University of Lancaster at Rivoli - which dominates La Chiusa - suggest a re-occupation of the ancient castle, around 1400, P. HUDSON, *Rocca di Rivoli*, in «Lancaster in Italy» (Lancaster, 1982), pp. 5-11 and (1984), pp. 18-21. The fortifications were not on the precise frontier but at the most defensible point, P. BRUGNOLI, *Il paesaggio atesino dalla Chiusa a Castagnaro*, in *Una Città e il suo Fiume*, ed. G. BORELLI, II, Verona, 1977, pp. 743-8; the same was true on the Trentino side, G. M. TABARELLI and F. CONTI, *Castelli del Trentino*, Paderò Dugano, 1974, pp. 165-66. For a relevant comparison, A. VINCENTI, *Castelli Viscontei e Sforzeschi*, Milan, 1981, pp. 159-166.

guilds of Verona <sup>(7)</sup>. Prominent families from the Trentino acquired property in Verona and its contado, notably the Castelbarco and the Bevilacqua; the latter were timber merchants from Ala who entered the political and economic elite of Verona in the fourteenth century <sup>(8)</sup>. And the reverse also applied. In 1390 and 1391, members of the Veronese da Quinto family are revealed as merchants and fief-holders in Rovereto and the Val di Fiemme <sup>(9)</sup>.

Economic and strategic considerations also ensured that the frontier was no barrier to political relations. With the decline of the effective temporal authority of the prince-bishops of Trent, the della Scala of Verona had to assess the counts of the Tyrol as potential enemies or allies, as well as seeing tempting territorial prizes across the frontier: in 1349 Mastino II della Scala received Riva and other places in pawn from the prince-bishop of Trent <sup>(10)</sup>. Moreover, the signoria established by the della Scala and their successors in Verona could act as a magnet

<sup>(7)</sup> L. SIMEONI, *Il commercio del legname fra Trento e Verona nel secolo XIII*, Rovereto, 1907; C. ZAMBONI, *La navigazione sull'Adige in rapporto al commercio veronese*, Venice, 1925; L. CASTELLAZZI, *Uomini e attività urbane in rapporto all'Adige*, in *Una Città e il suo Fiume*, cit., I, pp. 209-242.

<sup>(8)</sup> For the Castelbarco, C. BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Idea della Storia e delle consuetudini antiche della Valle Lagarina*, (= *Idea*), Trent, 1776, pp. 100-1; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 87; G. GEROLA, *Nuovi documenti veronesi sui Castelbarco*, in «Atti dell'Accademia degli Agiati in Rovereto», ser. III, XVI (1910), pp. 3-11; IDEM, *Le parentele dei Castelbarco cogli Scaligeri*, in «Rivista Tridentina» X (1910), p. 107; G. M. VARANINI, *I Castelbarco e Verona*, in *Gli Scaligeri*, cit., p. 197; A. CONFORTI CALCAGNI, *Giardini scaligeri ed altro verde urbano del Trecento*, op. cit., pp. 263-4. For the Bevilacqua, G. M. VARANINI, *La Valpolicella dal Duecento al Quattrocento*, Verona, 1985, pp. 197-8. G. MAROSO, *I Bevilacqua radaroli e milites, Gli Scaligeri*, cit., pp. 204-6. Another inhabitant of the Trentino with interests in Verona in the early fifteenth century was Giovanni, or Giancesello, da Folgaria, Archivio di Stato di Verona (= A. S. Ver.), *Antico Archivio di Comune* (= A.A.C.), reg. 56, c. 39v and c. 41r; GEROLA, *Nuovi documenti*, cit., p. 7 and p. 11.

<sup>(9)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Cancellaria Inferiore*, «Notai», busta 92, document of 20 August 1390; Archivio di Stato di Trento (= A.S.T.), *Archivio Vescovile* (= *Arch. Vesc.*), «Sezione Latina» (= «Sez. Lat.»), capsula XXII, n. 3, c. 50r-v. Marriage alliances also linked the Castelbarco and some prominent Veronese families: Agneta Malaspina and Giacomo Castelbarco in 1377 (GEROLA, *Nuovi documenti*, cit., pp. 7-8); Anna Nogarola and Guglielmo Castelbarco in 1407 (A.S.T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.»), capsula XXXVII, n. 50); Giovanna dal Verme and Aldrighetto Castelbarco (C. AUSSERER, *I signori del castello e della giurisdizione di Castelforno in Vallagarina*, Rovereto, 1911, pp. 37-40).

<sup>(10)</sup> A. CASTAGNETTI, *Le comunità della regione gardense*, in *Il Garda*, ed. G. BORELLI, I, Verona, 1983, p. 98; J. RIEDMANN, *Gli Scaligeri e il mondo germanico*, in *Gli Scaligeri*, cit., pp. 25-11).

to the prince-bishop's restless and ambitious vassals; as well as being extensive property-holders in Verona, the Castelbarco were closely allied to the della Scala <sup>(11)</sup>.

Finally, the commercially and militarily strategic position of the castles, estates and tolls held by the prince-bishop's vassals in the Val Sugana, the Val Lagarina and on the north shore of Lago di Garda - compensated for their dynastic fragmentation and their shortage of funds, and made them well worth cultivating as allies or clients by successive signori of Verona. On 31 May 1401 many of the castellans of the southern Trentino became the *recommendati* of Giangaleazzo Visconti as part of a strategy to block the descent into Italy of Rupert of Bavaria <sup>(12)</sup>.

Finally, for rather similar geo-political reasons, the Trentino was identified as a valuable haven by political exiles from the south. Federico della Scala, after the failure of his rebellion against Cangrande I in 1325, took up residence in Trent and his daughters married into Tyrolean families <sup>(13)</sup>.

This is not the occasion to attempt a detailed narrative of the tortuous sequence of events which led to the Republic of Venice extending its authority over the Val Lagarina and Rovereto; in any case the subject has been well documented and explored, particularly by Ravanelli <sup>(14)</sup>.

---

<sup>(11)</sup> G. GEROLA, *Contributo alla storia delle relazioni fra i Castelbarco e gli Scaligeri*, in «Tridentum», VI (1903) and *supra*, note 8. Some members of the clan lavished patronage on Veronese churches and chose the city as their place of burial, e.g. G. GEROLA, *Il testamento di Azzone Castelbarco*, in «Rivista Tridentina», VIII (1909), p. 7 and *passim*; *Il ritratto di Guglielmo Castelbarco*, in «Madonna Verona», I (1907), pp. 86-93. The dependance of some of the Castelbarco on their wealthier neighbours is suggested by a letter of 23 November 1369 in which Guglielmo Castelbarco laments at being casheered by Cansignorio della Scala and asks Lodovico Gonzaga to be placed «ad provisionem vestram vel ad stipendium vel aliud vestrorum servitium», G. GEROLA, *Il carteggio dei Castelbarco coi Gonzaga*, in «Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia... di Verona», LXXXIV (1909), p. 11.

<sup>(12)</sup> C. SANTORO, *Un registro di imbreviature di un cancelliere di Giovanni Maria Visconti*, in «Atti e Memorie del I Congresso Storico Lombardo», Milan, 1937, pp. 177-9. Giacomo Castelbarco, lord of Beseno, who acted for the others, was hired by the Visconti as a condottiere, GEROLA, *Nuovi documenti*, cit., p. 11.

<sup>(13)</sup> GEROLA, *Le Parentele*, cit., p. 107; REIDMANN, *Gli Scaligeri*, cit., p. 31.

<sup>(14)</sup> Also of value, though much older, is BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Idea*, cit. I would like to return to the question of Venice's relations with the castellans of the southern Trentino at a later date.

However some appreciation of the political situation is relevant when considering the Republic's «new frontier» within the Trentino, and for that reason some general observations are also in order.

Because of the nature of the surviving evidence and the historiography of the area there is a temptation to exaggerate the initiative of the Republic in events and the consistency of its policies. The archival sources are probably fuller, more concentrated and more accessible for Venice than for the other powers and signori involved, almost irresistibly creating an impression of greater planning and coherence to the Republic's policies. Moreover, the early fifteenth century witnessed a massive extension to the Republic's involvement in the Terraferma; her intervention in the Trentino can appear as an integral part of, or a logical extension to, a grand strategy. And that is how many Italian historians of the nineteenth and early centuries tended to represent the situation. The work of historians like Tommaso Gar, Riccardo Predelli and Giuseppe Gerola remains invaluable - particularly for its identification of the source material - but it can be informed by a desire to represent the Republic as the fore-runner of Italian Unification <sup>(15)</sup>.

Having said that, it is nevertheless evident that Venice closely followed her predecessors as rulers of Verona in appreciating the strategic value of the Adige and the Val Lagarina. The reasons were partly economic. An embassy dispatched to Giorgio di Liechtenstein, prince-bishop of Trent, and Leopold of Habsburg, count of the Tyrol, on 4 March 1406 was to urge for the opening of the Adige route to allow merchants from the north easier access to Verona and other markets <sup>(16)</sup>. On 8 July 1406 the Senate recorded that both the prince-bishop and the Republic wanted to encourage trade <sup>(17)</sup>. Among the terms of the alliances established for five year periods between the Republic and Frederick of Habsburg, count of the Tyrol, on 2 June 1407 and 18 March

---

<sup>(15)</sup> E. g. Gerola describes the Castelbarco dynasty as «fortunata preparatrice al nostro Trentino meridionale dei giorni gloriosi della veneta dominazione», *Frammenti Castrobarcensi*, in «Archivio Trentino» XVI (1901), p. 3. He also describes the fifteenth century in the Val Lagarina as an «età aurea» followed by «secoli del lutto» after the War of the League of Cambrai, *L'Emblema di San Marco*, in «San Marco», I (1909), p. 4, pp. 9-10. For the contribution of Gerola, P. M. TUA, *Giuseppe Gerola*, in «Archivio Veneto», ser. V, XXIII-IV (1939), pp. 251-260 and pp. 259-288. For an example of the archival work of Gar and Predelli, *Appunti fatti sopra documenti di storia trentina che si conservano all'Archivio Generale di Venezia*, Biblioteca Comunale di Trento, MS 2885.

<sup>(16)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Secreta*, reg. 3, c. 1r.

<sup>(17)</sup> *Ivi*, c. 31r-v.

1417 were clauses allowing trade <sup>(18)</sup>. On 11 November 1412 the Republic sent an envoy to secure the release of merchants from Verona and from the lordship of one of its *commendati* in the Val Lagarina, Marcabruno Castelbarco di Beseno, who had been seized in Trent while transporting merchandise from Germany; the value of the Trentino trade routes was also to be stressed <sup>(19)</sup>. But perhaps because Venetian merchants were themselves relatively little involved at this stage, the Republic on occasion had to be reminded of the value of the route in petitions from Verona and in the reports of its *rettori*. When in 1414 the *rettori* of Verona informed the Senate that flooded conditions on the Adige had prevented a group of Veronese merchants from controlling their rafts of timber, sweeping them through customs «infra passum Tridenti» and causing the confiscation of goods worth 2,000 ducats by agents of the count of the Tyrol, the Senate agreed on 6 August that the Collegio should send an embassy to Frederick of Habsburg - but at the expense of the merchants concerned <sup>(20)</sup>.

However, the Republic did not need prompting from her subjects or officials to recognise the strategic importance of the area in political and military terms. When Verona petitioned the Senate on 16 July 1405 that Azzofrancesco Castelbarco be admitted to the «gratia» of the Republic and «bene et laudabiliter tractetur», the reply was that it was Venice's intention to regard Azzofrancesco as a «bonum amicum et bonum vicinum» <sup>(21)</sup>. His lands extended into the Veronese as far as Chiusa, and if factions within the Castelbarco clan delayed a formal alliance with Venice until 17 March 1407, Azzofrancesco must have found good cause to be grateful for Venetian support. In his will of 7 July 1410 he entrusted his young heir, Ettore, to the Republic's protection, and named Venice as his successor should his line die out. It had by 23 June 1411 when Venice ordered the occupation of his castles <sup>(22)</sup>.

<sup>(18)</sup> R. PREDELLI, ed., *I Libri Commemorativi della Repubblica di Venezia*, in «Monumenti Storici della R. Deputazione Veneta di Storia Patria», ser. I, VII (1883), pp. 321-2 and pp. 381-2. Frederick IV, «Tascavuota», was allocated the county by Leopold, his elder brother, in 1406, A. COSTA, *I Vescovi di Trento*, Trento, 1977, p. 112.

<sup>(19)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Collegio, Commissioni Segrete, 1408-13*, c. 92v.

<sup>(20)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 50, c. 139v.

<sup>(21)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Segreta*, reg. 2, c. 127r. Azzofrancesco had already sent an embassy to Venice, BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Idea*, cit., p. 103.

<sup>(22)</sup> *Libri Commemorativi*, cit., VII (1883), pp. 320-1; BARONI CAVALCABÒ, cit., pp. 77-8 and pp. 87-9; I. DOSSI, *Documenta ad Vallis Lagarinae historiam spectantia*, in «San Marco» VI (1914), p. 10.

But even before the fall of Verona, Venice had welcomed an alliance with the castellans of the southern Trentino; possibly all parties were encouraged in this direction by an *approchement* between Francesco Novello da Carrara - *de facto* ruler of Verona from May 1404 - and the prince-bishop of Trent, leading to the former ceding property and territory in Verona and its contado to the latter <sup>(23)</sup>. On 17 February 1405 the Republic secured treaties of *recommendatio* with many of the castellans in the region, and in the years that followed the Republic tried actively to retain the loyalty of these *recommendati* and *adherentes* <sup>(24)</sup>.

For example, in December 1410 Venice was alarmed to hear that Frederick of Habsburg, count of the Tyrol - though formally an ally - had given the Republic's *adherentes* in the Trentino until 6 January to attend him, as *advocatus* of the Church of Trent, and to receive formal investiture for their fiefs. An ambassador was dispatched on 29 December to tell the count that these «*recommendati*» were «*obligati*» only to Venice, and that he could neither claim the right of investiture «*nec alias promissiones querere*»; on the same mission the ambassador was to remind the Trentino lords of their duty to Venice <sup>(25)</sup>.

However, threats to the allies Venice claimed in the Trentino remained. On 2 April 1411 another embassy was dispatched to the count to protest at repeated attacks on another of the Republic's *adherentes*, Giacomo di Caldonazzo, and to object to the summons sent to another, Marcabruno Castelbarco di Beseno, to attend the count at Merano and to swear an oath of fealty for fiefs held in the Tyrol; as one of the Republic's *recommendati*, «*non potest ad hoc astringi*» <sup>(26)</sup>. There

<sup>(23)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Secreta*, reg. 2, c. 125v. Venice was not prepared to recognise these Carrara concessions.

<sup>(24)</sup> *Libri Commemoriali*, cit., vol. VII (1883), pp. 308-9.

<sup>(25)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Collegio, Commissioni Secrete*, cit., c. 36r; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 65; The Republic was acutely aware of the need to gather intelligence in this strategic area. The ambassador was told to return «*plenissime informatus de novis et conditionibus partium predictarum*».

<sup>(26)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Collegio, Commissioni Secrete*, cit., c. 21r and cc. 39v-40v; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 85-86 and *passim*. Of all the Republic's clients in the southern Trentino, Giacomo and Marcabruno appear to have required the most diplomatic and military protection. On 1 July 1410 Venice accepted Giacomo as one of its adherents on the same terms as those applied to his recently deceased father, Siccone, *Libri Commemoriali*, cit., VII (1883), p. 346. On 10 August 1412 the Republic claimed to be ready to defend Giacomo's refusal to swear homage to Frederick before the pope and the university of Bologna, A. S. Ven., *Senato, Secreta*, reg. 5, c. 57r. And see below, p. 178.

followed a decision of the Senate of 13 April 1411 to send «*unam personam*» to the «*castellanos recommendatos nostros*» to remind them «*quod illi sunt recommendati nostri non vadant nec faciant iuramenta fidelitatis*» <sup>(27)</sup>.

The Republic was also watchful of the activities of the prince-bishop of Trent, of the *advocatus* of his Church, Frederick of Habsburg, and of their temporal overlord, Sigismund king of the Romans; a particular focus for Venetian concern was the support or sanctuary given in the Trentino to the exiled claimants to the signoria of Verona and Vicenza, as represented by Brunoro della Scala. In negotiations with Giorgio di Liechtenstein in July 1406, the Republic tried to insist that Brunoro be expelled from his jurisdiction <sup>(28)</sup>. The support given to the exiled della Scala - possibly as early as 1410 - by Aldrighetto Castelbarco di Lizzana was one of the factors behind the growing suspicion and hostility shown by the Republic to that member of the Trentino clan <sup>(29)</sup>. The terms offered him by the Senate in November 1416 included the insistence that he ban from his lands all Venetian outlaws, but in May 1417 Andrea Valier, the Republic's *provveditore* in Rovereto, intercepted a letter from Brunoro to him <sup>(30)</sup>. On 24 September 1419 the Senate was alarmed to hear that one of Brunoro's brothers, Nicodemo, had petitioned the pope for the now vacant see of Trent <sup>(31)</sup>.

Aldrighetto's support of the della Scala was compounded in Venetian eyes by his construction of a *bastia* and the imposition of a new toll: both threats to trade in the Val Lagarina; all contributed to the Republic's

<sup>(27)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato, Misti*, reg. 49, c. 15r; *Collegio, Commissioni Segrete*, cit., c. 46r-v.

<sup>(28)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato, Segreta*, reg. 3, c. 31r-v.

<sup>(29)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 98-9; J. E. LAW, *Venice, Verona, and the della Scala after 1405*, in «*Atti e Memorie della Accademia... di Verona*», ser. VI, XXIX (1977-8), pp. 180. However, his brother Guglielmo renewed his alliance with Venice on 15 February 1415 and as an act of good faith - and possibly out of embarrassment at his brother's actions - offered the Republic his castles of Albano and Nomi for five years; Venice declined the offer but assigned him 200 ducats a year to help defend his lordships, *Libri Commemoriali*, cit., vol. VII (1883), p. 375.

<sup>(30)</sup> G. GEROLA, *Per la Storia delle Fortificazioni venete di Rovereto*, estr. da «*Atti dell'Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati*», ser. III, XII (1906), pp. 35-6; LAW, *Ibidem*.

<sup>(31)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato, Segreta*, reg. 7, c. 109r. Nicodemo had received a succession of favours from Martin V; for example he was made *cubicularius* of the pope as early as 28 November 1417, Archivio Segreto Vaticano (= A. S. Vat.), *Diversa Cameralia*, reg. 5, c. 205v. On the long disputed succession to this strategic bishopric, COSTA, *I Vescovi*, cit., p. 116.

capture and eventual retention of Aldrighetto's castle and borgo of Rovereto in 1416 <sup>(32)</sup>. But Venetian intervention in the southern Trentino was also encouraged by the more general political situation. The attempt by Giorgio di Liechtenstein to reassert his temporal authority encouraged his southern feudatories to seek the protective alliance of Venice <sup>(33)</sup>. In negotiations with the prince-bishop in July 1406, the Republic claimed - rather unconvincingly - that it had been unaware that the castellans it had accepted as *recommendati* in February 1405 were his vassals; but the Republic was not prepared to abandon its clients, promising only to correct the castellans if they acted against the prince-bishop <sup>(34)</sup>.

Moreover, the prince-bishop's long-running dispute with the counts of the Tyrol, and his attempts to loosen the *compattate* that submitted much of his temporal authority to his Habsburg *advocati*, prevented the emergence of a strong central authority to control the castellans and pre-empt Venice <sup>(35)</sup>. But in their turn, the ambitions of Frederick «Tascavuota» created alarm in the southern Trentino, and attracted the opprobrium of the international community as represented by Sigismund and the Council of Constance. On 21 November, 1415, in response to the complaints of Giorgio di Liechtenstein, the notorious actions of Frederick - his usurpations of the rights, property and authority of the prince-bishop - were condemned <sup>(36)</sup>. On 3 March 1417 Frederick was likened to Pharaoh for his refusal to heed the warnings or the Council of the decrees of Sigismund <sup>(37)</sup>. For these reasons, Frederick's ability and willingness to challenge the Republic's interference and influence in the southern Trentino were compromised <sup>(38)</sup>.

<sup>(32)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp.101-110 and pp. 252-54; Q. PERINI, *Contributo alla Genealogia Castrobarcense*, VI: *Aldrighetto Castelbarco-Lizzana*, «Rivista Tridentina», 1912, pp. 105-8.

<sup>(33)</sup> See the series of investitures of the Castelbarco, A.S.T., *Archivio Vescovile*, «Sez. Lat.», capsas XXII, n. 3.; also the acts of reconciliation between Giorgio and the Arco and Castronovo of May 1404 in the same collection and capsas XXXVII, n. 49; B. BONELLI, *Monumenta Ecclesiae Tridentinae*, III, Trent, 1765, pp. 121-2.

<sup>(34)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato, Secreta*, reg. 3, c. 31r-v.

<sup>(35)</sup> In 1399, the prince-bishop and the chapter of Trent had been forced to accept - belatedly - the terms of the 1365 *compattate*, F. F. DEGLI ALBERTI, *Annali del Principato Ecclesiastico di Trento* (reintegrati ed annotati da T. GAR), Trent, 1860, pp. 771-2.

<sup>(36)</sup> J. D. MANSI, *Sacrorum Consiliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio*, XXVII, Venice, 1784, coll. 801-6; ALBERTI, *Annali*, cit., pp. 280-5.

<sup>(37)</sup> MANSI, *Collectio*, cit., coll. 1016-1022.

<sup>(38)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 105.

The tensions and divisions existing within the Trentino and the caution, or uncertainty, of Venetian policy are well illustrated by the rebellion in Trent of 2 February 1407 <sup>(39)</sup>. The Republic's first reaction was to encourage the revolt <sup>(40)</sup>, but when a party in the city appeared ready to submit to the Republic's protection - and perhaps its lordship - Venice backed away from the dangers involved in ousting a prince-bishop and confronting the Habsburgs <sup>(41)</sup>. Certainly Frederick feared Venetian military intervention: on 2 February 1408 payment was made to a spy to go to the Padovano and Vicentino to see if the Republic was recruiting «gentes magnas» to send to the Val Lagarina <sup>(42)</sup>. However, while Venice fully appreciated the value of Trent, caution continued to prevail, and when on 7 and 8 July 1409 the Senate discussed an offer from exiles from the city to surrender it, the Republic went no further than stressing the need to insure that the city was in friendly hands, and to open diplomatic negotiations with the Habsburgs <sup>(43)</sup>. And caution can again be detected in the way Venice was prepared, on 30 November 1416, to hand the «terra» of Rovereto back to Aldrighetto Castelbarco di Lizzana, and garrison the castle only on a temporary basis, provided he became a «bonum amicum et servitorem» of the Republic, and desisted from threats to its security and to trade on the Adige <sup>(44)</sup>.

However the Republic's failure or refusal to exploit to the full the political division of the Trentino was in part the consequence of

<sup>(39)</sup> On Bellenzani and the revolt in Trent, P. ORSI, *Un nuovo documento sul Bellenzani*, in «Archivio Storico per Trieste, l'Istria e il Trentino» III (1884), pp. 90-4; D. REICH, *Rodolfo de' Bellenzani e le rivoluzioni trentine*, in «Tridentum», X (1907), pp. 1-38; *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*; COSTA, *Vescovi*, cit., p. 114.

<sup>(40)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 75-84.

<sup>(41)</sup> Venice informed its representative, Paolo Leone, that it would be improper to accept the city of a prince-bishop under its protection, sending there *rettori*, and allowing it to fly the Venetian standard, *ivi*, p. 77.

<sup>(42)</sup> ORSI, *Nuovo documento*, cit., pp. 93-4.

<sup>(43)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Secreto*, reg. 4, c. 36r. Venetian caution was again revealed in a Senate discussion of 5 December 1409 when one of Frederick's captains offered to sell Trent to the Republic, RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 250-1. Possibly there were both earlier and later moves to surrender, pawn or sell the city to Venice, *ivi*, p. 100, pp. 220-1; REICH, *Rodolfo de' Bellenzani*, cit., pp. 220-1; F. CUSIN, *Il confine orientale d'Italia*, I, Milan, 1937, p. 299.

<sup>(44)</sup> GEROLA, *Fortificazioni venete*, cit., pp. 34-5. Fears of the threat posed by Sigismund and of the unreliability of Aldrighetto and Frederick of Habsburg persuaded the Republic to abandon this caution in 1417, RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 102-112, pp. 211-4.

indigenous forces similar to those facing the prince-bishop and the count of the Tyrol. Venetian intervention provoked its own reaction. Aldrighetto di Lizzano was only the first ally from among the Castelbarco castellans to turn against Venice; by 1436 his brother Guglielmo was reconsidering his position. On 13 August, he received the investiture of his lordship from the prince-bishop, and formally rejoined the vassals of the Church of Trent. Guglielmo apologised for not doing this on the prince-bishop's entry to his diocese in 1424, but cited as his excuse the obedience demanded with force from Guglielmo and others of the clan by Venice, which had «tyrannically» occupied the Val Lagarina. He was not willing at this stage to break all his ties with the Republic, but his overlord Alessandro di Mazovia tactfully chose to refer to his vassals as a «tesaurum incomparibilem» of his Church, and acknowledged the pressure exerted by Venice <sup>(45)</sup>. The wording of this rapprochement makes it clear why Filippo Maria Visconti was able to find allies ready to turn against Venice in the southern Trentino <sup>(46)</sup>.

However, the limited scope of the Republic's intervention in the area was also due to other demands on its resources and efforts. As historians like Verci and Cusin have made clear, the period when Venice was extending her influence and lordship over the Val Lagarina and Rovereto was also one when the Republic was heavily engaged in protecting, extending and reasserting her authority in Friuli, Istria and Dalmatia <sup>(47)</sup>. The decision made by the Senate in 1409, not to challenge the authority of the prince-bishop of Trent by acquiring his

---

<sup>(45)</sup> A.S.T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.», capsula XXXIII, n. 20. Aldrighetto and his brother Guglielmo appeared in the Veronese *estimo* of 1409, but Guglielmo appeared alone in 1418, 1425 and 1433, G. GEROLA, *Il testamento di Azzone Castelbarco*, in estratto di «Rivista Tridentina», VIII (1909), p. 7; BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Idea*, cit., 107-8, p. 115, DOSSI, *Documenta*, cit., p. 13. On 21 July 1424 the Senate sent an embassy to the new prince-bishop to protest at his attempts to get those members of the Castelbarco clan still allied to Venice «quod ad presentiam suam comparent ad prestandum sue paternitati homagium, et fidelitatis et obedientie iuramentum». The Republic claimed that it had protected them at great expense from the threat of tyranny, that the prince-bishop's predecessor had recognised their position and that the castellans would prove good neighbours, RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 255-6.

<sup>(46)</sup> R. ZOTTI, *Storia della Valle Lagarina*, I, Trent, 1862, pp. 288-309; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 231-248; F. CUSIN, *Le aspirazioni straniere sul ducato di Milano*, in «Archivio Storico Lombardo», n. s., I (1936), pp. 332-3.

<sup>(47)</sup> G. B. VERCI, *Storia della Marca Trivigiana e Veronese*, Venice, 1786-91, XVIII and XIX; CUSIN, *Il confine*, cit., pp. 139-315.

episcopal city, was probably in part conditioned by the difficulties the Republic was experiencing in its dealings with another ecclesiastical principality, that of the Patria del Friuli <sup>(48)</sup>. The Republic's involvement north of the Livenza probably insured that her intervention in the Val d'Adige was more respectful of the traditional frontier, while the international disapproval provoked by Frederick of Habsburg's usurpation of the rights and property of Giorgio di Liechtenstein probably heightened Venetian caution.

\* \* \*

The marginal nature of the Republic's intervention in the Trentino can also be illustrated from the involvement of one of its own citizens, Vittore Emo, in the Val Lagarina. Vittore was the illegitimate son of Gabriele Emo, one of the Venetian nobles most experienced in Veronese affairs, and most closely involved in the acquisition of that city by the Republic <sup>(49)</sup>. His son was one of the small number of Venetians to take advantage of the sale of the assets of the *Fattoria Scaligera* <sup>(50)</sup>, and then opportunities beckoned in the Val Lagarina. Probably when his influential father was *capitano* of Verona from 1411 to 1412, he married Agnese d'Arco, herself of a noble Trentino family, and the widow of Azzofrancesco Castelbarco. In his will of 6 July 1420, Azzofrancesco had commended his son Ettore to Venice; after his death and the extinction of that branch of the Castelbarco clan, his lands and castles passed to the Republic <sup>(51)</sup>. Agnese was a person of substance. Apart

---

<sup>(48)</sup> J. E. LAW, *Venice and the problem of sovereignty in the Patria del Friuli*, in «Florence and Italy, Renaissance Studies in Honour of Nicolai Rubinstein», ed. P. DENLEY and C. ELAM, London, 1988, pp. 135-147. On 12 September 1409 the pope excommunicated all those who had rejected the authority of Giorgio di Liechtenstein, A. S. Vat., *Sala degli Indici*, Indice 323, G. G. CONFALONIERI, *Sommarium et Index Provisionum seu Expeditionum Alexandri Papae V*, c. 7v.

<sup>(49)</sup> J. E. LAW, *Rapporti di Venezia con le provincie di terraferma*, in AA.VV., «Componenti Storiche Artistiche e Culturali a Venezia nei secoli XII e XIV», Venice, 1981, p. 83.

<sup>(50)</sup> G. SANCASSANI, *I beni della Fattoria Scaligera e la loro liquidazione ad opera della Repubblica Veneziana*, in «Nova Historia» XII (1966), p. 24 and p. 26; G. M. VARANINI, *Un esempio di ristrutturazione agraria quattrocentesca nella bassa veronese: il monastero di S. Maria in Organo e le terre di Roncanova*, in estr. di «Studi Storici Veronese Luigi Simeoni», XXX-XXXI (1980-1), p. 27.

<sup>(51)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Procuratori di S. Marco di Citra, Commissarie*, Misti 145 (Bettino Andriolo q. d. Marco di S. Maria Formosa), fasc. IV; A.S.T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.», capsula XXXII, n. 73.

from her dowry of 2,000 ducats, she was due a further 2,000, and other items and property by the terms of her husband's will. However, Agnese had difficulty in getting the Republic to respect Azzofrancesco's wishes, which the Senate had promised to do on 9 November 1411 <sup>(52)</sup>. On 6 June 1413 Agnese successfully secured a judgement from the Venetian magistracy of the *avogari di comun* assigning her the property due from the estate of her first husband. She had complained that the Republic's representatives in Avio and Dossomaggiore, the vicar Marco de Torre and the *fattore* Giovanni da Montagna, had not accepted her claims, and the *avogari* instructed the *podestà* of Verona to use his superior authority on her behalf <sup>(53)</sup>. This he appears to have been unwilling to do; on 16 May 1414, the *podestà* was still investigating her claims <sup>(54)</sup>. On 26 September 1415, the Senate had to insist once more that Agnese be paid what she was owed <sup>(55)</sup>.

Legal controversy also surrounded Emo's own holdings in the Val Lagarina a few years later. On 23 November 1420, the *podestà* of Verona, Bartolomeo Storlato, wrote to the doge seeking guidance in respect of a letter of 4 November from the magistracy of the *auditori nuovi* <sup>(56)</sup>. Emo had approached them over holdings he claimed to have acquired in the Val Lagarina from Fantino Morosini, *camerlengo* of Verona. Emo had argued that they were more extensive than Storlato and some of his colleagues and predecessors recognised, and the *auditori* had been sufficiently impressed to ask the *podestà* to summon eighteen witnesses from the area to verify his claims. Storlato objected that Emo's witnesses were only «rustici» and hence unreliable; he thought that Emo's exaggerated claims should be tested against the memory and record of the officials concerned. The ducale in reply of 27 November praised Storlato's watchfulness against those seeking to act «sub fraude in damnum nostri comunis» <sup>(57)</sup>.

A slightly more sympathetic response greeted Emo's next recorded encounter with the Venetian state. A ducale of 26 May 1424 referred to the ex-Castelbarco properties he was renting in the Val Lagarina from

<sup>(52)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, c. 65v.

<sup>(53)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Avogaria di Comun*, «Lettere», reg. 666/2.

<sup>(54)</sup> *Supra*, note 51.

<sup>(55)</sup> GAR and PREDELLI, *Appunti fatti*, cit., c. 32r from A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 51, c. 69r.

<sup>(56)</sup> A. S. Ver., *A. A. C.*, reg. 9, c. 32v.

<sup>(57)</sup> *Ivi.*, c. 33r.

1419 for a five year period <sup>(58)</sup>. He had paid the lease of 4,300 lira for three years, but in 1424 he had met only a small proportion of his obligations because for two years he had been unable to collect his rents in grain: allegedly the barns and warehouses where his tenants had been used to store their produce had not been allocated to him in the lease. After the views of the *rettori* of Verona had been obtained, Emo was allowed to pay off his debts in three instalments. However this concession was not enough; by 19 April 1425 he still owed between 2,500 and 3,000 lira. Again he was given extra time, and the *rettori* of Verona were ordered to assist him in collecting what he was owed <sup>(59)</sup>.

In fact, Emo's position was more desperate than the Republic recognised; shortly afterwards he was killed by resentful peasantry <sup>(60)</sup>. A ducale to the *podestà* of Verona of 23 June 1425 revealed that the Venetian magistracy of the *Cattavere* had been informed that Vittore had died intestate, and without heirs or close kin <sup>(61)</sup>. The *podestà* was told to inventory his property and keep it under good guard; and on 25 August Bragadino appointed the experienced Giovanni da Montagna to collect the revenues outstanding in both cash and kind <sup>(62)</sup>.

However the Republic was not allowed to enjoy these revenues for long. A ducale of 9 July 1425 told Bragadino to respect the rights of the Arco family in the area <sup>(63)</sup>. And in the course of September and October 1426 Giorgio Emo was able to prove that he was Vittore's heir on the basis of three reliable witnesses who had heard Vittore designate

---

<sup>(58)</sup> A. S. Ver., *Archivio della Camera Fiscale* (= A.C.F.), reg. 3; c. 11v; A. S. Ven., *Grazie*, reg. 22, c. 15v.

<sup>(59)</sup> A. S. Ver., A.C.F., reg. 3, cc. 13v-14r; A. S. Ven., *Grazie*, reg. 22, c. 47r. On 19 October 1424, the Republic decided to administer these properties through an agent, Marco de Torre, for a year; below note 82.

<sup>(60)</sup> The murder possibly took place at Fattole in the Basso Veronese, VARANINI, *S. Maria in Organo*, cit., p. 27; I. THOMSON, *Studies in the Life, Scholarship and Educational Achievement of Guarino da Verona*, University of St. Andrews (Ph. D. thesis, 1968, III, pp. 861-2.

<sup>(61)</sup> A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 9, c. 132v.

<sup>(62)</sup> A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 9, c. 135r. A notary, he had already administered ex-Castelbarco property at Avio and Dossomaggiore in June 1413, A. S. Ven., *Avogaria di Comun*, Lettere, reg. 666/2. His father Francesco had served the della Scala in a similar capacity, G. B. BIANCOLINI, *Notizie Storiche delle Chiese di Verona*, Verona, 1749-71, II, pp. 424-27. Giovanni's involvement in the Val Lagarina was very similar to that of another Veronese, Marco de Torre, with whom he was at times closely associated, above p. 171 below p. 176.

<sup>(63)</sup> A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 9, c. 135r.

him as such in Verona <sup>(64)</sup>. On 10 October a ducale informed the *rettori* of Verona that all Vittore's properties and rights had passed to Giorgio Emo <sup>(65)</sup>.

These episodes are revealing in several aspects. Clearly Vittore Emo must have seen the Val Lagarina - like the Veronese - as an area of opportunity. His hopes must have been encouraged by his marriage to Agnese d'Arco and by the support of the Venetian government. But he, and his appointed heir, do not appear to have been either representatives or pioneers of Venetian investment in the area. From the evidence of the sale of the property of Francesco and Guglielmo Castelbarco by the Venetian *governatori dell'entrate pubbliche* from 1442, none of the purchasers were Venetian <sup>(66)</sup>. Explanations for this may partly be found in the difficulties of rent collection experienced by Vittore in the Veronese and Val Lagarina. However, more important was the distance of the area from Venice. Also of likely relevance is the fact that the Republic's presence in the Trentino remained marginal, and the basis of its authority was uncertain.

This is the impression left by an examination of the nature of the Republic's government in the area in the early fifteenth century. In some respects the Val Lagarina appears to have been firmly integrated within the expanding Venetian territorial state, in violation of the rights of the prince-bishop of Trent and the Habsburgs. The Republic forgot, or ignored, the assurance made to Giorgio di Liechtenstein on 8 July 1406, that his rights and those of his Church would be respected; instead, the Senate became anxious «quod homines dictorum locorum contententer pervenisse ad manus nostri dominii et animenter ad bonam fidelitatem et obedientiam nostram» <sup>(67)</sup>. The Republic accepted the fiefs of Azzofrancesco Castelbarco when feudal custom insisted on their reversion to his suzerain <sup>(67a)</sup>. The Republic went on to occupy the

<sup>(64)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Archivio Notarile*, busta 1234, n. 261.

<sup>(65)</sup> A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, reg. 9, 164r.

<sup>(66)</sup> For the sale of the estates of Francesco and Guglielmo, A. S. Ven., *Governatori delle Entrate Pubbliche*, busta 170, cc. 79r. ss.

<sup>(67)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Secreto*, reg. 3, c. 31r-v; *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, c. 56r.

<sup>(67a)</sup> Azzofrancesco received formal investiture for his fiefs from the prince-bishops of Trento on 27 May 1385 and 9 April 1391, G. PEROLA, *Una rettifica alla genealogia castrobarcense*, estr. di «San Marco», I (1909), p. 2; A.S.T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.», caps. XXII, n. 3, c. 62r. Further on 21 September 1391 he swore allegiance to the Habsburgs on behalf of himself and his heirs, while on 5 May 1400 he acknowledged Leopold as his «princeps ac dominus» and entered his «societas», caps. XXXIII, n. 20, caps. XXXII, n. 1.

fiefs of Aldrighetto di Lizzana and other members of the clan identified as persistent enemies or traitors.

Moreover the Republic not only invaded the Trentino, but also introduced alterations to its internal structure. On 8 September 1411 the Senate granted lists of privileges to the inhabitants of the ex-Castelbarco fiefs which confirmed and extended the fiscal economic and jurisdictional concessions secured from their previous lords, privileges which were rehearsed in a ducale of Francesco Foscari of 29 November 1451 <sup>(68)</sup>. On 8 March 1443 further privileges followed: in view of the loyalty of the communities of Ala, Avio, Brentonico and Mori in the Republic's war with Filippo Maria Visconti, these communities were allowed to elect their own vicar with jurisdiction in civil matters <sup>(69)</sup>.

The Republic also dismembered the Castelbarco fiefs that came into its hands by sale and lease to communities and individuals, and the policy of selling off such assets was intensified as the Republic searched for funds to finance its growing commitments on the terraferma <sup>(70)</sup>. On 17 November 1434, the *provveditore* of Rovereto and one of the *governatori delle entrate pubbliche* from Venice acted on a commission of 10 October which in turn followed a Senate decision of 11 February, and began to auction off all the rights and properties held by Venice in the Val Lagarina <sup>(71)</sup>. The plethora of such sales, and the difficulty of administering them - and possibly the need to secure the loyalty of the Val Lagarina - persuaded the Republic to waive outstanding payments on 29 July 1438 <sup>(72)</sup>. As mentioned, when Guglielmo and Francesco

<sup>(68)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, cc. 55v-56r; A. S. Ver., A.C.F., busta 28, n. 226 (a seventeenth century compilation of documents on the privileges of the communities once subject to Azzofrancesco); ZOTTI, *Storia*, cit., pp. 263-7; A. AMADORI, *Nascita di confini meridionali della regione in Vallagarina*, in «Studi Trentini di Scienze Storiche», LVI (1977), pp. 24-25.

<sup>(69)</sup> S. PILATI, *Il vicariato di Brentonico*, in «Rivista Tridentina», III (1903), pp. 406-9; F. PEROTTI-BENO, *I vicari di Avio*, in «Tridentum», VII (1904), pp. 293-4. Venice continued to issue privileges as communities in the southern Trentino came under its control, privileges designed to weaken their ties with their previous lords without compromising the Republic's authority, BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Contributi*, cit., p. 241, ss.; M. KNAPTON, *Per la storia del dominio veneziano nel Trentino durante il '400*, in «Civis», III (1984), pp. 353-4.

<sup>(70)</sup> Above, note 66.

<sup>(71)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 59, c. 29r. For instances of their earlier activity, A.S.T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.», capsas XXXIII, n. 12 and capsas XXXII, n. 35. 46; Dossi, *Documentacit.*, p. 13.

<sup>(72)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 233.

Castelbarco challenged the Republic, they were treated as traitors and their property was auctioned from 1442 <sup>(73)</sup>.

As the records of the *governatori* and other central Venetian magistracies make clear, the Republic regarded the Val Lagarina as subject territory. The Republic appointed - and when necessary disciplined - its own officials <sup>(74)</sup>. But the area did not acquire the status of the major provinces of the Venetian *terraferma*, and Rovereto, although it expanded in the Venetian period, had no tradition of secular or ecclesiastical government, and did not acquire the administrative importance of cities like Verona <sup>(75)</sup>; in fact, the Republic's territories in the Trentino were seen in some senses as extensions of the Veronese. Correspondence regarding Agnese d'Arco and Vittore Emo - already referred to - indicates the superiority of the *rettori* of Verona over the Republic's representatives in Avio and Dossomaggiore. The *Camera Fiscale* in Verona appears to have had responsibility for the revenues of the Trentino <sup>(76)</sup>. On 21 March 1414 the inhabitants of the ex-Castelbarco fiefs in the Val Lagarina were allowed to direct appeals to the *podestà* of Verona if they could not afford to conduct their business in Venice <sup>(77)</sup>.

Moreover, the one permanent Venetian office in the area, the *provveditore* or *podestà* of Rovereto, does not appear to have been held by the more prominent members of the nobility <sup>(78)</sup>, while the officials appointed to guard and administer Azzofrancesco's fiefs were often Veronese citizens. Fregnano da Sesso, who had served the della Scala as a soldier and who had advised Venice on the defences of Verona, was appointed *capitano* of Avio and Dossomaggiore by the Senate on 18

<sup>(73)</sup> Above, note 66. BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Idea*, cit. pp. 104-5, documents 78-81; ZOTTI, *Storia*, cit., p. 58; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 237 ss.

<sup>(74)</sup> E. g. the case of Lorenzo Minio, GAR and PREDELLI, *Appunti fatti*, cit., c. 33v-34v.

<sup>(75)</sup> The castle and the *palazzo pretorio* are the two most obvious indications of the growth of Rovereto in the quattrocento, GEROLA, *Fortificazioni venete*, cit., p. 4; *idem*, *L'Emblema di S. Marco nella Valle Lagarina*, estratto di «San Marco», I (1909) pp. 9-11; TABARELLI and CONTI, *Castelli*, cit. pp. 121-4.

<sup>(76)</sup> However, the first *provveditore* of Rovereto was to draw his salary from the *Camera* of Vicenza, C. MARGONI, *Commissione data dal doge Tommaso Mocenigo al primo provveditore veneto in Rovereto*, Rovereto, 1887.

<sup>(77)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 50, c. 84r. However the concession did not prove acceptable for long, A. S. Ver., *A.C.F.*, busta 28 n. 226.

<sup>(78)</sup> KNAPTON, *Dominio veneziano*, cit. pp. 357 ss.

September 1411 <sup>(79)</sup>. His colleague and successor was the Veronese lawyer, Marco de Torre <sup>(80)</sup>. From 1417 the post was held by the Trevisan lawyer Giacomo de Redusio da Quero <sup>(81)</sup>, but in 1420 de Torre returned for an extended term until an unfavourable report on his conduct led to his replacement in February 1426 by another Veronese lawyer, Antonio Casalorcio <sup>(82)</sup>.

That the area could be regarded as an extension of the Veronese can also be seen from the measures the Republic took when acquiring and defending its gains. Verona claimed to have contributed 14,000 lira to the cost of the acquisition of Azzofrancesco's castles in the first place <sup>(83)</sup>. Very soon afterwards, on 18 September 1411, the Senate discussed a report drawn up by Fregnano da Sesso and forwarded by the *rettori*

---

<sup>(79)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, cc. 55v-56r; *Collegio Commissioni* (1408), c. 51v; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 251-2. The Senate was impressed by his «probitate, virtute et fidelitate». Fregnano replied «quod servitor noster erat et quod de eo proberemus disponere et mandare prout nobis videbitur quia ipse erat paratus omnibus nostris mandatis fideliter obedire». He had probably been involved in securing the Castelbarco castles for Venice. For his service with Antonio della Scala in 1387, G. DE STEFANI, *Bartolomeo e Antonio della Scala*, Verona, 1885, p. 33 and p. 149; for his survey of Veronese fortifications in 1408, A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 48, c. 39r-v; A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 56, c. 110v.

<sup>(80)</sup> Marco had been present when Agnese d'Arco had handed the Castelbarco castles to Venice on 19 August 1411, *supra*, note 51, A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, cc. 55v-56r; *Avogaria di Comun*, «Lettere», reg. 666/2.

<sup>(81)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Collegio Notatorio*, reg. 5, c. 83v; A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 9, c. 33v. He was the brother of the chronicler Andrea who mistakenly dates the appointment to 1406, A. DE REDUSIO, *Chronicon Tarvisinum*, in L. A. MURATORI, ed., «Rerum Italicarum Scriptores», XIX, Milano, 1731, col. 738.

<sup>(82)</sup> A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 9, c. 32v and c. 33v, c. 145v and c. 148r. The evidence suggests that de Torre had private interests in the area; on 19 October 1424, he took over Emo's leases for a year as the Republic's agent, A.C.F., reg. 3, c. 12v. Veronese continued to feature in the administration of the area; Giovanni Pompeio and Bartolomeo Martelli were involved in the auction of Castelbarco property in 1442, *supra* note 66. However, the traffic in office-holders was not one way. The doctor of laws, Franceschino da Trento, was vicar of the *podestà* of Verona Nicolao Venier at a crucial time, between October 1411 and November 1412, A. S. Ven., *Avogaria di Comun*, «Raspe», reg. 6, c. 227r-v; A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 56, c. 182r ss. He served in the same capacity several times again in Verona, and elsewhere within the terraferma state, A. S. Ver., *Archivio Notarile*, reg. 705, c. 32r; A.A.C., reg. 165, c. 151 and reg. 10, cc. 61r-62r; B. PAGLIARINO, *Chroniche di Vicenza*, Vicenza, 1663, p. 282.

<sup>(83)</sup> A. S. Ver., A.A.C., reg. 56, cc. 189v-191r. Probably the money was raised by a loan; on 15 May 1412 the prominent Veronese citizen Giovanni Pellegrini complained to the Council of Twelve that he had not been recompensed for the 500 ducats he had advanced for the acquisition of Azzofrancesco's castles, *ivi*, c. 203v.

of Verona on the condition of the castles of Avio and Dossomaggiore. They were in a poor state of repair, and «cum ultra omnia alia loca et castra dictarum partium sint utiliora et meliora pro diffensione et securitate civitatis nostre Veronae», it was felt appropriate that Verona should meet these costs <sup>(84)</sup>. The *rettori* were urged to convene a meeting of suitable citizens and persuade them of the Republic's case. However, according to the reports of the *podestà* Egidio Morosini and the *capitano* Gabriele Emo, the policy encountered local resistance; the Senate repeated its view on 5 November and urged the *rettori* to consult «cives omnes deinde ad utilia comunis deputatos et alios qui sibi videbuntur»: «quod dicta castra accepta fuerunt solummodo pro defensione et securitate civitatis nostre Verone» <sup>(85)</sup>. The meeting duly took place on 14 November and the *rettori* presented the view that Verona should raise 3000 ducats for work that was for its own benefit <sup>(86)</sup>. It appears that by 21 November a small group had been persuaded to provide the money <sup>(87)</sup> but the *rettori* had also agreed to allow the commune to petition Venice for relief in view of its other recent contributions to military expenditure and the expenses caused to the city by flooding and famine. The petition was ready by 4 December, and while it conceded that «necessitas non habet legem», the past and present burdens facing Verona were listed so persuasively that the demand for 3000 ducats was withdrawn by the Senate on 11 December.<sup>(88)</sup>

However, for reasons that are not clear, that concession was probably rescinded; on 12 August 1412 the commune of Verona claimed that the city had spent over 3000 ducats on the Castelbarco castles <sup>(89)</sup>.

<sup>(84)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, cc. 55v-56r.

<sup>(85)</sup> *Ivi*, c. 64v. However the proposal did not secure the necessary majority, although put to the vote three times. Was the Senate's refusal to accept the measure withheld from Verona by accident, or design?

<sup>(86)</sup> A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, reg. 56, c. 187r.

<sup>(87)</sup> *Ivi*, c. 188v.

<sup>(88)</sup> In Verona it was argued that the citizens who had approved the Venetian request had not been fully enough informed of the conditions of the city and its *contado*. But in Venice the argument was modified; the Veronese *nuncii* claimed that the sum had not been approved by the proper procedure, presumably by the Councils of Twelve and Fifty, A. S. Ven., *Senato Misti*, reg. 49, c. 269v; A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, reg. 56, cc. 189v-191r; LAW, *Venice, Verona*, cit., p. 172.

<sup>(89)</sup> A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, Reg. 56, cc. 206v-209v; LAW, *Venice, Verona*, cit., pp. 173-4; G. M. VARANINI, *Il Distretto Veronese nel Quattrocento*, Verona, 1980, p. 92. The sources give the impression that the pressing need for funds over-rode both the petition of Verona and the votes of the Senate.

Moreover, Venice did not abandon the strategy of asking its subject cities to pay for the defence of areas considered vital for their own protection and prosperity, and in the case of Verona and the Trentino the Republic's arguments were implicitly recognised if not explicitly admitted by Veronese acknowledgement of the value of the «passus Tridenti versus Alemaniam». On 23 March 1412 the butchers of Verona told the Council of Twelve of the soaring price of meat provoked by surcharges placed on the cattle brought «de partibus tridentinis» <sup>(90)</sup>.

The political confrontation with Frederick of Habsburg which had caused these rises also forced the Republic to ask Verona and Vicenza for 1000 men each to defend its client Giacomo de Castronovo di Caldonazzo - «recommendatus noster - in the Valsugana. He had repeatedly turned to Venice for protection against the harassment he suffered at the hands of agents of the count of the Tyrol <sup>(91)</sup>. Now in 1412 he appeared in person, and on behalf of his sister Ziliola de Castronovo di Ivano - to complain that servants of Frederick had attacked «territorium suam inferentes damnos et offensiones locis et subditis suis». The Republic felt the need to defend its clients so that they should stay «in fidelitate et obedientia sua», and on 8 July 1412 dispatched Paolo Leone as *provveditore* to gather intelligence in Verona and Vicenza and «ad partes et loca nostra montanearum», and to consider ways of raising troops locally <sup>(92)</sup>. The matter was discussed in Verona on 14 July, and on 27 July Paolo asked for 100 horse to be added to the infantry levies <sup>(93)</sup>. These measures proved inadequate to protect Castronovo territories <sup>(94)</sup>, but it was with relief that on 2 September 1413 the Veronese councils discussed the news of a five year truce between Venice and the count of the Tyrol <sup>(95)</sup>. However, the Republic called again on Verona to support its actions in the Trentino; the campaigns that led to the retention of Rovereto were financed by Verona as well as directed by the *rettori* of the city <sup>(96)</sup>.

\* \* \*

<sup>(90)</sup> A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, reg. 56, c. 200v.

<sup>(91)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Collegio Commissioni Segrete* (1408-130), c. 21r, cc. 39v-40v; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 86 and p. 92.

<sup>(92)</sup> A. S. Ven., *Senato Segreto*, reg. 5, c. 41v and c. 45r.

<sup>(93)</sup> *Ivi*, c. 54r; A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, reg. 56, c. 2054-v.

<sup>(94)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 92 and pp. 96-8.

<sup>(95)</sup> A. S. Ver., *A.A.C.*, reg. 56, c. 232v. The truce began on 3 August, RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., p. 96.

<sup>(96)</sup> In view of the unwillingness of Aldrighetto to pay for the repair of the castle of Rovereto, it is possible that Verona faced further costs; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit.,

In the course of the first half of the fifteenth century Venice came up against, and crossed, many traditional frontiers. But in the case of the boundary between the Veronese and the Trentino the Republic modified rather than changed the situation. It would be wrong to talk of territorial occupation on a par with the acquisition of Vicenza and the Vicentino or Padua and the Padovano. Rather, the Republic created a frontier or buffer zone - una zona di cuscinetto - and not the clear-cut frontier attributed by some historians to the «Renaissance state». Initially Venetian intervention was hesitant, opportunist, with the aim of securing the frontier and the Adige commercial route as it entered the Veronese. But even after a more aggressive and expansionist phase, carried out at the expense of the Castelbarco between 1439 and 1440, Venetian gains did not add up to a solid block of territory with recognised or easily definable frontiers, but rather a conglomeration of lordships with Rovereto as an improvised capital. The statutes of Rovereto of 1425 owed more to Trent than to Venetian direction <sup>(97)</sup>.

As the nature of these statutes helps to confirm, a cause and an effect of the Republic's encroachment on the southern Trentino was the active survival of the traditional sources of legitimacy and authority in the area. Relations between them and the Republic were not always hostile. For example, in 1426 Venice was prepared to support the prince-bishop's claims to places held by the Visconti - notably Riva - to prevent an alliance between Alessandro di Mazovia and Filippo Maria <sup>(98)</sup>. Again, a number of letters survive for 1449-50 which show the Venetian *podestà* of Rovereto accepting the authority of the prince-bishop in the disciplining of members of the clergy within his diocese but outside his temporal jurisdiction <sup>(99)</sup>. On the other hand, on 31 May 1426 Sigismund, king of the Romans, reminded the prince-bishop that his fief was held from the empire, and not to support «rebelle nostros

---

pp. 102-3; GEROLA, *Fortificazioni venete*, cit., pp. 36-7. Rovereto and other castles in the southern Trentino were regarded as part of the Veronese by Giorgio Sommariva in 1478, Biblioteca Comunale di Verona, MS 2904, *Lettere, Ducali, Opinioni*. Marino Sanudo saw the region as part of the Veronese in 1493 and 1515, but had seen it as separate in 1483, KNAPTON, *Dominio veneziano*, cit., p. 357.

<sup>(97)</sup> KNAPTON, *Dominio veneziano*, cit., pp. 354-5.

<sup>(98)</sup> RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 225 ss.; S. TROILO, *Andrea Giuliano Politico e letterato veneziano del Quattrocento*, Geneva-Florence, 1932, pp. 48-54.

<sup>(99)</sup> A. S. T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.», caps. LXVII, nos 4, 5 and 6; Dossi, *Documenta*, cit., pp. 17-18.

Venetos» <sup>(100)</sup>. Alessandro himself came round to that view; on 13 August 1436 he denounced the Republic's rule in the Valagarina as a tyranny achieved by force, and at the expense of the Castelbarco whom he regarded as his «amicos si vassallos et servitores» and a «tesaurum incomparabilem» of his Church <sup>(101)</sup>.

In crossing the frontier into the Trentino Venice encountered jurisdictional problems more formidable and fundamental than the political and military ones. All were to contribute to the Republic's loss of the area in the War of the League of Cambrai.

---

<sup>(100)</sup> A. S. T., *Arch. Vesc.*, «Sez. Lat.», capsula LXVII, n. 3.

<sup>(101)</sup> *Ivi*, capsula XXXIII, n. 20. Members of the Castelbarco continued to turn to the prince-bishop for investiture of lands held by Venice, BARONI CAVALCABÒ, *Idea*, cit., pp. 111-2; RAVANELLI, *Contributi*, cit., pp. 232 ss.

*SUMMARY - In the course of the first half of the fifteenth century Venice came up against, and crossed, many traditional frontiers. But in the case of the boundary between the Veronese and the Trentino the Republic modified rather than changed the situation.*

*It would be wrong to talk of territorial occupation on a par with the acquisition of Vicenza and the Vicentino or Padua and the Padovano. Rather, the Republic created a frontier or buffer zone - una zona di cuscinetto - and not the clear-cut frontier attributed by some historians to the «Renaissance state».*

*Initially Venetian intervention was hesitant, opportunist with the aim of securing the frontier and the Adige commercial route as it entered the Veronese. But even after a more aggressive and expansionist phase, carried out at the expense of the Castelbarco between 1439 and 1440, Venetian gains did not add up to a solid block of territory with recognised or easily definable frontiers, but rather a conglomeration of lordships with Rovereto as an improvised capital. The statutes of Rovereto of 1425 owed more to Trent than to Venetian direction.*

