Florence in Transition

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Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

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THE "NOVI CIVES" IN FLORENTINE POLITICS FROM 1343 TO THE END OF THE CENTURY

II

One of the most striking features of Florentine trecento history was the progressive democratization of the city's political life through the entry of new citizens (novi cives) into the signory. During its earliest days, rule over the primitive urban commune had been the exclusive preserve of the Florentine aristocracy and the great rural proprietors of Tuscany. At that time, and throughout the twelfth century, the city was a signorial center and its organization a loose medieval configuration of lay and ecclesiastical liberties, immunities, prerogatives, and privileges. Over the course of the next two and a half centuries we witness the erosion of certain of these traditional rights and the emergence of novel forms, procedures, and practices that mirror the aspirations and interests of a changing urban society.

This society was the creation of successive waves of immigrants who flocked to the city in hope of increasing their patrimony and augmenting their status. This mass influx produced a quantitative change that is relatively easy to assess, for the phenomenal urban growth of the city is a fact of number.1 Much more difficult to determine, however, is the qualitative effect of these migrations on the political character of Florentine life. Here perforce the question is that of the changing nature of the rapport between newcomer and established patrician, and this is not a

This is an expanded version of a paper published in Mediaeval Studies, 24 (1962), 85–82.

fact that can be expressed statistically. Alterations in the relationships between classes and the attendant modifications in social feeling and political sentiments lead the student to that land from which few who are committed to the teachings of rational psychology ever return. Even more rare is the devotee of irrational psychology who upon his return is able to communicate his experiences. If the history of ideas walks across time on dove's feet, as Nietzsche has suggested, how is one to follow the still more delicate traces created by the nuances of social change during the second half of the fourteenth century? The documentation is starkly public and frankly economic, with little evidence that might serve to illuminate the interior social world of the Florentines. The illusiveness of the quarry is no reason for abandoning the hunt, but the trial has been so little explored and so ill defined that one must forego more conventional and rigorous methodological approaches in favor of flexible and impressionistic techniques.

Over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries new men continued to exert great pressure upon the government for a stronger voice in the disposition of political questions. As we have observed, the year 1343 was the scene for the collapse of concerted patrician resistance to this trend; the perseverance of the new men was finally rewarded when they won a substantial share in public life, thus becoming an integral part of communal politics. They continued to play a critical role in the civic arena through the closing decades of the century. Their participation in the expanded bureaucracy of the government altered irrevocably the political environment of the republic, while their entry into high office encouraged the transformation of the loosely organized commune into a tightly knit territorial state. Their sustained presence in the public world was likewise instrumental in modifying the political behavior and attitudes of certain well-established families. A description of these changes and an attempt to assess the character of novel relationships between new men and patricians can assist us in a search for insight into the intricate workings of the politics of the rising territorial state. Since the process was dialectical, an understanding of politics and the public world can serve as a base for rendering historically intelligible political sentiments coming to the fore after the 1340s.

2 Between 1343 and 1348 approximately half the 270 members of the priorate, the highest communal office, were from families who had never sat in the signory before. Cf. M. Becker, "La esecuzione della legislatura contro le pratiche monopolistiche delle arti fiorentine alla metà del secolo quattordicesimo," ASI, 117 (1959), 15–16. For a discussion of the electoral reforms of 1343, see G. Brucker and M. Becker, "The Arti Minori in Florentine Politics, 1342–1378," Mediaeval Studies, 18 (1956), 96–97. Half the new men were matriculated in the major guilds, and the remainder were enrolled in the arti minori. The model for this type of statistical analysis is presented by N. Ottokar in Il Comune di Firenze alla fine del ducento (Florence, 1926), pp. 26–27.
To select the interval from 1343 through the 1380s is to concentrate upon that era when new men exerted greatest influence upon public life. They were not a decisive element in public affairs earlier, when both the rule and the style were patrician and easygoing. The year 1343 witnessed the first great influx and 1348 lent added impetus to this political mobility. The leather bags containing the names of all deemed eligible for the high magistracy of prior were opened to many candidates from "small families" (famiglie piccole). These novi cives were to be selected for office to replace men of the patriciate declared ineligible as a consequence of strict enforcement of the divieto. This restriction was imposed to prevent multiple office holding by men from great clans. Not surprising, therefore, was the persistent challenge to the earlier, relaxed government of an entrenched patriciate.

The term "novi cives" is used here to designate a very affluent segment of those immigrants who had only recently established residence in the city, gained Florentine citizenship, and commenced to assume an active part in civic affairs after 1343. Differences between these new men and the older, notable families were of degree rather than of kind. The latter were scions of the most prosperous urban houses, themselves novi four or five generations back, whereas the former had only lately come from the thriving families of the Tuscan countryside (contado). Both were matriculated in the guilds, masters of their own shops, and employers of labor. Therefore there was fundamental unanimity between these two groups on a variety of economic questions. The same type of accord obtained in agricultural matters, since patrician and new man alike were owners of extensive rural holdings. This compatibility of interests was further reinforced by joint business ventures, partnerships, monetary obligations, and marriage ties.

The character of the novi cives, and consequently the tone of Florentine politics, was deeply influenced by changes that had occurred outside the city walls. The environs of Florence had gradually become a microcosm of the city, and during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the economic and social milieu of the countryside came to resemble more and more that of the metropolis. The contado was not the exclusive preserve of the great magnates; much land had come into the hands of the

4 This statement and the general description that follows is based upon an impressionistic reading of the materials found in the cartularies of the early Florentine notaries. Cf. Archivio Notarile, A 981–83, B 1238, 1473, 1948–50, 2527, C 102, I 104–5, M 293, 490–91, P 413, R 40, 159. I was unable to locate L 76, listed in the inventory as the cartulary of Ser Lapo di Gianni (1298–1327).
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free peasants and rural bourgeoisie. Feudal conditions tended to be limited to those less populated districts most remote from the city or to those areas still dominated by the old noble houses of Counts Guidi, the Pazzi of Val d’Arno, and the Ubaldini. Feudal restrictions on person and property were disappearing throughout the countryside. Agricultural labor was hired when available, land was bought and sold in brisk fashion, and estates rented or let for shares to free peasants, rural artisans, notaries, and merchants.

Crafts, trades, and home industries had taken hold in the rural communes and popoli of the contado; goods were circulated during the course of its manufacture to small shops, each of which, like its urban counterpart, was more or less independent. These developments over a two-and-a-half-century period stimulated diversity of occupation, heterogeneity of production techniques, varieties of skills as well as a wide experience in a mobile, quasi-urban environment that made it possible for men to transfer their sphere of socioeconomic activity from the contado to the city with a minimum of trauma. Therefore the novi cives cannot be classified as immigrants if the term implies a startling shift in life patterns. Even after they had entrenched themselves in the city, their ties with the contado remained firm. So strong were these bonds that the distinction between city and countryside soon blurred.5

In Volume One we noted that new men who acquired Florentine citizenship were from the wealthiest and most influential classes of the contado. Patterns of migration reveal that this stratum was the first to leave the countryside for the city and that they were soon followed by families only a little less prosperous. This trend, persisting until the middle years of the fourteenth century, had the effect of leaving the poorer elements to cultivate the land. The signory designed communal legislation to dissuade these serfs and agricultural laborers from abandoning their traditional calling and used the power of the courts to prevent them from severing their legal ties with rural Tuscany.6 The results of a recent study of the countryside support the conclusion that in territories under Florentine jurisdiction, the phrase “Stadtluft macht frei” had little meaning.7 The new citizens of Florence were not the fugitive slaves and miserable serfs described by historians of a generation ago such as Davidsohn, Pardi, and Caggese, but were rather scions of affluent country families who could well afford to establish residence in the city, purchase real estate and build a dwelling, pay urban imposts over a period of from five

to ten years, and still have sufficient capital to matriculate in one of the Florentine guilds and open up shop.  

In many instances before the new men could be transformed into veri, antiqui et originari cives, they had to be sponsored by prominent Florentines who were willing to go surety for them and vouch for their continued good behavior.  

On other occasions the new men were held responsible for posting a sizable bond. They were also required to demonstrate that they were "true amatores of the city" and men with deep commitments to the principles of Florentine Guelfism. Since the atmosphere of the medieval city-state was intimate and personal, the origins, ancestry, backgrounds, allegiances, and opinions of those who petitioned for citizenship were well known to the signory, and when the communal councils voted on these requests this information became a matter of public record. Men who had served the republic well on the battlefield established particularly strong claims on Florence's affection which paved the way to citizenship, and, conversely, those whose loyalties were suspect found themselves confronted with formidable obstacles. Those guardians of political orthodoxy in Florence—the Parte Guelfa—kept detailed dossiers on the juridical status, regional ties, and political reliability of the would-be citizens and their families. Since the captains of the Parte and other advisory bodies played an important role in the selection of new citizens, the reputation of the aspirant came under careful scrutiny. When a truly prominent applicant petitioned, eminent members of this panel would speak reassuringly about his qualifications. 

In late Medieval Florence the entry of the novi cives into civic life was a gradual and complex process. There was a protracted interval during which they were given an opportunity to become familiar with the workings of the intricate Florentine political system. Their earliest experiences in this realm came with their participation in guild affairs. These corporations were the very foundation of the Florentine constitutional system, and as such they played a crucial role in communal politics. It was not possible to hold elective office without being inscribed in one of the twenty-

8 See Plesner's telling critique of these older interpretations in ibid., pp. 116–22.  
9 LF, 37, fols. 76r–82 (June 21–July 8, 1356); P, 43, f. 165 (October 17, 1356) Ibid., 51, f. 8r; LF, 37, f. 56 (August 21, 1363). On occasion, as many as eighty-four Florentines acted as fideiussores for the novo homo.  
10 P, 45, f. 105r (December 12, 1357). The amount averaged 200 lire. There is one instance in which the new citizen agreed to make a loan to Florence of 500 florins, and it is interesting to note that he was declared immediately eligible for office. Cf. P, 47, f. 98 (December 23, 1359).  
11 P, 45, f. 86r (October 23, 1357); P, 45, f. 105r (December 12, 1357).  
12 Conversely, the chances of the petitioner would be damaged if an influential Florentine, such as a Rossi, Tornaquinci, or Strozzi, were to speak against him. Cf. LF, 34, f. 118r; ibid., 35, f. 10; ibid., 39, f. 211r.
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one guilds enumerated in the Ordinances of Justice of 1293. Great political questions were debated in the guild halls as well as in the communal councils so novi cives could familiarize themselves with pressing issues of the day. Several times a month the membership was called by the signory to give advice in the Palazzo Comunale on a variety of civic matters ranging from an over-all realignment of foreign policy to the most incon­sequential details of public administration.

Under the aegis of the guilds some of the most memorable legislation was initiated; it was drawn up by members and presented to the signory by guild captains in petition form and, after being approved by the communal councils, became the law. In drawing up these proposals, the novi cives gained first-hand knowledge of civic problems such as the relationship between church and commune, distribution of the republic's grain supply, the feasibility of hiring mercenaries, and procedures to be employed in eradicating tyrannous political factions. The guilds also operated in a judicial capacity, maintaining their own courts and prisons; therefore, novi cives were also able to gain valuable experience in the law.

The signory required the novi cives to serve a period of political apprenticeship before moving from guild affairs to public office. They were not admitted into the priorate or its colleges, nor, for a period ranging from ten to twenty-five years, were they permitted to serve in the sensitive post of guild captain. These stipulations had the effect of institutionalizing a Florentine cursus honorum whereby the novice progressed gradually through lower positions, thus acquiring political experience until finally he was eligible for membership in the supreme magistracies of the republic. He participated in guild affairs, sat in the communal councils, and served in various administrative posts of the city and contado before assuming the grave responsibilities of high office. Until the 1340s novi cives were rarely entrusted with the charge of carrying out communal foreign policy. Diplomatic missions were staffed almost exclusively by the most renowned patricians, since these men were the best harbingers of the city's prestige. Similarly, offices in the statusworthy Court Merchant and in the most prestigious of all Florentine organizations—the Parte Guelfa—were the sole preserve of great tycoons and the aristocratic set.

Entrenched families were willing to see the novi cives represented in the commune provided the overwhelming preponderance of power remained in their hands. Since the majority of newcomers were enrolled in the minor guilds, the tendency was to restrict the number of seats open to minori in such crucial posts as priorate, colleges, and communal treasury. But in 1343 a serious and sustained challenge was launched against this system of apportionment which had obtained for almost half a century

when the new men from the major guilds joined the *minori* and succeeded in gaining greater representation. An epidemic of bankruptcies, an empty communal treasury, and a disastrous experiment with despotism discredited the patriciate and made it difficult for them to resist the demands of the new citizens.\(^{14}\)

In the past, *novi cives* had pressed hard for a voice in the signory, gaining ephemeral victories in 1293, 1323, and 1328. In part, their dissatisfaction with the status quo and their persistence stemmed from the political backgrounds of these affluent immigrants. Before settling in the city this group had long dominated the social, economic, and political life of their native rural parishes.\(^{15}\) They had exercised great influence over the local assemblies and established their right to participate in the election of officials empowered to dispense justice and levy taxes. They themselves served as consuls, rectors, and syndics and regularly represented their *popolo* before the various Florentine courts. It was during these sessions that vital issues concerning the recruitment of military forces, the responsibility of the *popolo* for maintaining roads, bridges, and fortifications, and methods for raising communal revenue were debated. These men of the *popoli*, *castelli*, and rural communes zealously guarded their hard-won prerogatives against all who sought to dispute them. They contended against feudal lords and church dignitaries on questions of liability for corvees, ownership of lands, payment of rents, and the right to elect functionaries. They petitioned the signory for prorogation of levies, challenged communal claims that they were responsible for the crimes committed by exiles and criminals in their section of the *contado*, and requested reductions in tax assessments.\(^{16}\)

Thus, since the new citizens were accustomed to exercising political power in the *contado*, they were not without expectancies in this area upon arrival in the city. They also had much to offer the republic beyond their varied experience on the level of everyday politics, for prominent among their number were many from the learned professions. The

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\(^{14}\) For a comprehensive treatment of these bankruptcies, see A. Sapori, *La crisi delle compagnie mercantili dei Bardi e dei Peruzzi* (Florence, 1926). *Tratte*, 1155, contains the names of all bankrupts from the letter ‘A’ through ‘S’ and was to be used for the purpose of barring the *falliti* from communal office. The *Atti del Podestà* and the *Camera del Comune* contain additional names and bring the total to 300.

\(^{15}\) Cf. J. Plesner, *L’émigration*, pp. 63 ff.; A 981–83. During the middle years of the fourteenth century many of the new men had sufficient capital to undertake the profitable and vital role of farming communal taxes. See especially *CCE*, 56, f. 190. Cf. also *ibid.*, 58, f. 134; *ibid.*, 59, f. 60; *ibid.*, 172, unnumbered folios; *Scrivano*, 3, unnumbered folios. Less than 5 per cent of those communal officeholders whose descent can be traced had immediate ancestors who were agricultural laborers.

\(^{16}\) *CCE*, 1 bis. This is the first complete set of treasury records and runs from October, 1342, to July, 1343; it contains a great variety of materials pertaining to relations between the city and countryside. Earlier documents of the *camera* are so fragmentary that they cast little light on this question.
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lawyers and notaries who were particularly conspicuous in their ranks contributed a theoretical knowledge of techniques of administration and political procedures. As the functions of communal government became more diverse and complex, the legal training of these novi cives became more indispensable to the republic.\(^ {17} \) Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the signory's responsibilities mounted as Florence extended her rule over Tuscany, with the consequence that her bureaucracy proliferated. Few members of the patriciate were willing to undertake careers in a civil service that was both underpaid and held in disrepute.\(^ {18} \) Therefore we find the novi cives coming to occupy a variety of critical administrative posts, especially in the middle years of the trecento, while at the same time being denied entry into the more prestigious offices of the commune, guild courts, and Parte Guelfa. Moreover, they were especially vulnerable to attack from the captains of the Parte, who demanded they be barred from any public office on grounds that they were unable to establish a bona fide political pedigree. Since the new men, liable for proscription on spurious charges of political heterodoxy, staffed the communal bureaucracy, a political assault upon them undermined the effective force of the emerging public world.

II

In the 1330s the commoner aristocracy and affluent magnates of the greater guilds came to treat public office as if it were their own private preserve. Among the best represented of all the city's families were the Bardi, Cavalcanti, Frescobaldi, Gherardini, Rossi—magnates all. It was to these nobles that the regime turned for advice in matters of foreign policy and communal finance: when special balie (extraordinary commissions) were founded, their names were among the most prominent. Soon the most pressing public problems were dealt with by these balie, and bankers of the houses of Frescobaldi and Bardi joined their popolani counterparts, the Acciaiuoli and Peruzzi financiers, in directing affairs of

\(^ {17} \) Of all notaries who held communal office between 1343 and 1382, 65 per cent came from families recently migrated to the city. While their numbers increased in the rapidly growing civil service, their representation in the signory declined by half. This statement is based upon a comparison of the number of seats held from 1328 to 1342 with those occupied from 1343 to 1348. The holdings of this group in the funded communal debt averaged 200 florins.

\(^ {18} \) Notable exceptions to this statement are to be found in every prominent Florentine family. However, those who assumed this type of career were frequently the least affluent. For the names of these men, see CCE, Vols. 1–30. All employees of the commune were required to pay a tax on their salaries, and, therefore, their names are recorded in the camera.
During this decade there was a marked tendency to grant concessions to magnates and to be generally mindful of claims of the Florentine aristocracy. This regime represented the interests of a handful of the city's most prestigious guilds, and dominant families matriculated in these corporations were to form a homogeneous patriciate. Until 1340 the signory was secure and self-confident; except for sporadic instances of seditious activity by such magnate families as the Caponsacchi in 1329 or the treasonous negotiations of a Della Tosa with a foreign tyrant, domestic tranquility prevailed.

In this atmosphere of relative internal accord and burgeoning communal prosperity, the trend was toward a fusion of magnate and popolano grasso into an elite whose rule would be tolerant of patrician prerogatives and appreciative of aristocratic style. This tendency toward lenient government had long been in evidence and at moments seemed to have achieved genuine stability. Disunity among the Florentine elite, the surge of new men, the intervention of pope or Angevin monarch, humiliating military debacles, and, most telling of all, declining public revenue, each in turn and at critical junctures had served to prevent the consolidation of aristocratic hegemony. The interests of urban magnates were almost identical with those of wealthy popolani, and, except for the persistence of violence, little seemed to stand in the way of this amicable fusion.

Soon this government of the guild patriciate abandoned strict interpretation of the Ordinances of Justice and decreed that those who held the dignity of knighthood and had not been classified as magnates since 1293 were to be declared eligible for the highest elective offices in the republic. Shortly thereafter, a special commission was established with authority to create new knights, and in 1335 the statutes of the Parte Guelfa empowered the captains to bestow a bounty of fifty florins upon anyone deemed worthy and willing to assume the honors and burdens of knighthood. Throughout its tenure the signory was extremely solicitous of the welfare of all sectors of the Florentine nobility. At no time in communal history were more grandi to escape the rigors of communal law through

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19 In the early months of 1336, the war against Martino della Scala was directed by the “Sei sulla guerra.” Among their number was Ridolfo de’ Bardi, Simone della Tosa, Acciaiuoli Acciaiuoli, Giovenco de’ Bastari, Celli Borioni and Simone Peruzzi; Bardi, Peruzzi, and Acciaiuoli were also well represented in the bala authorized to raise revenue. Cf. A. Saporiti, La crisi, pp. 107–8.


21 Giudice degli Appelli, 124, I, f. 25r (February 20, 1329), Feo della Tosa, one of the many condemned on this count, paid 200 lire on September 20, 1337, for judicial dispensation. Cf. ibid., 124, I, f. 22.

grants of judicial dispensation than in those halcyon years immediately preceding the democratization of the Florentine state in 1343.

Clearly, the regime was concerned with the problem of staffing the officer cadre of the citizen army, and the benign policies it advocated were intended to encourage the high-born to serve as knights in the elite cavalry. Despite the lure of subsidy and civic honor this program was fated to fail, yet we must not be misled by our knowledge of the unfortunate outcome into underestimating the enthusiasm with which the signory embarked upon this venture. The regime of the 1330s was willing to recall exiled magnates and restore them to full citizenship if they would put their arms at the disposal of the republic. Grave doubts were voiced concerning the efficacy of mercenary troops, and men remembered that Rome had been great when citizen armies commanded by public-spirited generals had taken the field. Her decline ensued with the enlistment of foreign contingents who fought for gold rather than love of country. A few among the city's magnates were responsive to this type of appeal, and Brunelleschi, Della Tosa, and Ricasoli still led the republic's host; however, these nobles were the exception rather than the rule.23

As in earlier days, public policy was predicated upon a curious duality that did little to encourage the maintenance of a military caste. Knighthood and service to the state were accorded their niche in the pantheon of civic virtues, but those who followed these noble callings still found themselves bound by the harsh restraints of collective life. Judicial dispensation and preferential treatment might be meted out to certain nobles, but the Ordinances of Justice remained in effect. Granted the hyperbole of this magnate complaint: “If a horse is running along and hits a popolano in the face with its tail; or if in a crowd one man gives another a blow on the chest without intending harm; or if some children of tender age begin quarreling, an accusation will be made. But ought men to have their houses and property destroyed for such trifles as these?” the emotion from which it stems is real enough.24

In his justly famous description of “the greatness and state and magnificence of the commune of Florence,” Giovanni Villani laments the fact that in 1336–38 there were only “seventy-five full-dress knights.” “To be sure, we find that before the second popular government now in power was formed (before 1293) there were more than 250 knights; but from the time that il popolo began to rule, the magnates no longer had the

23 G. Villani, Cronica, I, 134. At this time over 600 affluent Florentines maintained horses and weapons, and, although they did not usually serve in person, they did send hired replacements. C. C. Bayley, War and Society in Renaissance Florence (Toronto, 1961), p. 8.
24 D. Compagni, Cronica, ed. I. del Lungo (Florence, 1889).
status and authority enjoyed earlier, and hence few persons were knighted.” The observation “i cavallieri non ebbono stato” was commonplace at this time. To the good burgher Villani, who only despised the lawless among the magnates, this was a tragic portent of military disasters to come.

The need for law and order, the desire to preserve Florentine libertas against the machinations of powerful clans, and the persistence of certain features of impartial and impersonal government led to the accumulation of numerous judicial and political restraints upon the magnates. Indeed, these restrictions were lessened during the decade of the thirties, but still no one gained any ostensible civic advantage from magnate status. Therefore nobles continued to petition the government for the privilege of becoming commoners. No attack was made upon the social prestige of the nobility, and yet men were anxious to abandon their magnate status; this type of action demonstrates the incommensurate magnitudes of the trecento social and political universes. The guild aristocracy that so admired the code of the nobility was unwilling to abrogate the dread Ordinances of Justice. Nor were they eager to restore all magnates to their full political rights; they were, however, desirous of imitating the way of life of this order and happy to receive the benefits of noble martial prowess.

Giovanni Villani’s so-oft-quoted observations pertaining to Florentine magnates and knights are of course relative, based as they are on a comparison of status and authority enjoyed by the nobility in 1336–38 with that of the era before 1293. As informative as this comparison is, it tells us very little about the degree of influence the magnates still exercised during the 1330s. The history of this era suggests that statements by chroniclers that magnates had little status and less authority must be challenged. Granted there was something of a decline, however, we still see affluent commoners of the guilds eagerly seeking to marry into magnate families and priding themselves on kinship with mighty feudatories of the Tuscan contado. Nor can we doubt the civic pride taken by theseburghers in the most aristocratic of all Florentine organizations—the Parte Guelfa. Did not these selfsame commoners consistently elect the scions of magnate houses to represent the commune in the most solemn of public ceremonials? When visiting dignitaries arrived in the city, were they not graciously welcomed and entertained by noble patricians? The very forms and amenities of communal life were replete with the ethos of chivalry,
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and the artisan and merchant guilds were a part of its pageantry with their costumes, military companies, coats-of-arms, and processional.

Only after 1343 did popular interest in the play of knightly arms diminish. The medieval tournament lost much of its favor, to be greeted with apathy if not scorn. Tenderly and with ample consideration earlier communal society sought to choose from among the spectrum of knightly virtues, retaining variety. Later, the imperatives of the public world became harsher as more men were knighted, not for valor at arms, but rather to inspire awe among peasants of the countryside when they rode out to serve as communal officials. More and more high civil servants bore the honorific title of "knight," so that as the proud term lost meaning in the realm of private style, it acquired greater public significance. Soon the designation failed to evoke admiration from il popolo, since it was being widely conferred on many who governed the state and directed the wars of the second half of the trecento.

The decline of the Florentine knight can be seen not only from the vantage point of altered communal attitudes toward the magnate; emphasis must also be placed upon changing methods of warfare. The heroic work of the army in the early years of the fourteenth century had been the suppression of insurrection and defense of the Florentine contado. For the most part this had been accomplished by a series of relatively brief campaigns waged within easy distance of the city. The militia of the

27 State ritual prescribed that milites should represent the commune. During a later interval, when communal legislation was restrictive and the nobles lost ancient prerogatives, the signory still insisted that important embassies be captained by a miles: "Atque fiat responsum per unum militem antiquum qui bene sciat totum et res antiquas." Cf. CP, 19, f. 16 (July 21, 1380). This is, of course, not surprising since Florence was not isolated from the chivalric currents of trecento Europe. Even the working class desired to emulate the bachelorhood of knights; in 1343 Walter of Brienne permitted them to have their own coats-of-arms, form squads attired in special livery, and fly banners bearing their insignia. Thirty-five years later all of this was to be reviewed by the Ciampi, revolutionaries. Upon seizing power, these humble woolcarders were to create milites of their own. Cf. C. Falletti-Fossati, Il tumulto dei Ciampi (Rome, 1882), p. 172; Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, rub. 566; A. Doren, Le arti fiorentine (Florence, 1940), 2, 230–31.

28 The last great tournaments staged in Florence during the trecento appear to have been those of Easter, 1343. No mention is made of major jousts in the writings of Giovanni Villani which treat the subsequent period of Florentine history (to 1348), or in the massive chronicle of his kinsmen Matteo and Filippo, which runs through 1363. Likewise, Marchionne di Coppo Stefani does not note the occurrence of a major tournament, and his chronicle concludes in 1385. Literary men before 1343 referred consistently to the tourney. Among the more prominent literati were Francesco da Barberino (Documenti d'Amore), Folgore da San Gimignano (Le Rime), and Giovanni Villani (Cronica, 10, 128). The tourney of 1343 failed to elicit the enthusiasm of the citizenry. Cf. G. Villani, i, 2. Much later, in the early quattrocento, when literary men such as Leonardo Bruni Aretino were trying to revive certain of the military virtues associated with knighthood, they were contemptuous of the ornamented knight of the mock tournament (the miles gloriosus). Cf. C. C. Bayley, "De Militia," War and Society, p. 379. The dignitas of knighthood came to be intimately connected with civic virtue.
contado, although far from trustworthy, frequently proved to be quite useful, and this force in combination with citizen armies captained by nobles and great feudatories, achieved a succession of notable victories. Long-range campaigns in distant places were beyond the competence of such troops; subsidies and foreign military commanders who led their own contingents seemed an adequate alternative.

During the decade of the thirties the remedy of citizen militia and communal knight became obsolete; no longer could they be relied upon to realize the ambitious schemes envisaged by the new Florentine imperialism. Until then the signory’s policy had been largely defensive and only mildly expansionist. Most of the republic’s military energies over the previous thirty years had been expanded in fending off dissident exiles, rebellious feudatories, and middling German emperors. For such purposes foot and mounted militia had been indispensable, but during the 1330s Florence promoted a grand design that included alliance with far-off Venice and the dispatch of troops into Lombardy, so that Pisa might be defeated and Lucca conquered and annexed. These plans could only be executed by mercenary armies capable of waging protracted warfare in foreign lands. The issue at stake was no longer the reduction of a single castle in rural Tuscany, but, rather, large-scale warfare throughout north Italy. In major battles of 1341 fewer than a score of Florentine knights saw action, and although the treasury records do indicate that certain grandi did continue to serve as captains, the terms of their employment had altered dramatically.29

By 1342 they were hired under the same type of contract that prevailed for the city’s other mercenaries, and thus native milites lost their grandeur and become pensioners of the state. An occasional Buondelmonti, Della Tosa, or Ricasoli might win the acclaim of the crowd for his daring at arms, but it was to the office of the condotta that the signory looked for victories over the numerous free-booting companies that streamed into Italy during the middle years of the trecento. Soon this office, along with special commissions, was in the business of enlisting the city’s would-be enemies under the Florentine banner and paying marauding companies to evacuate Tuscan territory. The warfare of those years seldom brought honor but frequently resulted in victory. The military virtues associated with knighthood found little expression on the battlefield, and in the

29 Among the magnates who filled military posts at this time were Adimari, Agli, Bardi, Bordoni, Cavalcanti, Mozzi, Spini, and Tornaquinci. Cf. CCE, 1, fols. 2r–36; ibid., 11, fols. 13r ff.; ibid., 24, f. 48; ibid., 28, fols. 628–42. These magnates received a stipend from the commune for recruiting and leading Florentine troops in battle. Popolani from high-born families also served in the same capacity. Albizzi, Bastari, Guicciardini, Mazzinghi, Raffacani, Rimbaldesi, Rondinelli, and even Medici were included among their number. CCE, 1, f. 28r; ibid., 4, fols. 68 ff.; ibid., 11, fols. 10r–11r; ibid., 21, f. 40; ibid., 24, fols. 40–41.
closing years of the *trecento* they even elicited scorn from such writers as Sacchetti. Fools and knaves, parvenus and the vulgar were awarded golden spurs, but one must not conclude that all Florentines denigrated the virtues of a militant nobility.\(^{30}\)

Much later the humanist chancellor Leonardo Bruni Aretino implored the Florentines to restore the republic’s militia; to him, the year 1351 had been disastrous for his beloved adopted city, for it was then that the signory abolished the last vestiges of a citizen army.\(^{31}\) Machiavelli’s well-known views were much more extreme: he attributed the decline of civic spirit to *il popolo’s* repression of the nobility when after 1343 the law was implemented so assiduously. Democratization and a stern regimen stifled martial spirit among the citizenry, and Machiavelli saw the resurrection of the militia as a mechanism for recovering this antique virtue.\(^{32}\) Certainly this penetrating observer of the Florentine past sensed the leveling effects of the rule of law imposed so stringently beginning with the 1340s. But like others outside the literary tradition of *quattrocento* humanism, he failed to consider fundamental changes in military tactics which encouraged the city to have greater recourse to mercenaries. The Ordinances of Justice and other repressive enactments of *il popolo*, enforced rigorously after 1343, did far less to discourage Florentines from assuming the burdens of knighthood than had the new strategies of war. The remedies of the thirties which sought to restore the *milites* to full political rights proved ineffectual since citizen knighthood had become militarily obsolete. Popular government and the attendant leveling met with less resistance because this once-proud order had deteriorated.

III

The early 1330s, then, had been years of relative harmony for the men of the old patriciate—magnate and high-born commoner alike (*popolano*)—and the signory’s policies reflected this cordiality. Only the most affluent sat in the communal councils, and very few new men were able to win entry into this charmed circle. Yet this accord was precarious. By 1338 we can observe a hardening of communal policy toward the magnates and a general transformation of the regime’s program which had serious repercussions for the entire privileged class.\(^{33}\) It meant the dissolution of the

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33 The basis for this change was the pressing communal need for revenue in order to mount an offensive against neighboring Pisa. This demand for additional revenue came at a moment when the yield from gabelles (the republic’s principal source of income) had declined precipitously. By 1341 the signory was exerting every effort to recover communal property. According to a provision enacted in May of that year much of the
easy, laissez-faire conduct of public life—the gentle paideia. The world of Florentine business underwent its most severe crisis and public revenue declined until it was no longer adequate for the ambitious, imperialistic plans of the republic. Under the impact of these twin pressures, the regime found it necessary to reduce the privileges and immunities of the entrenched classes. Vigorous tax reforms were proposed to revive a declining treasury, but few who sat in the councils were willing to support them. Co-operation among the patriciate was pervasive in periods of prosperity, but with the onset of adversity the bonds became strained. The ruling elite divided sharply on the issue of the feasibility of maintaining the costly alliance with the papacy. Furthermore they were split on the question of the desirability of pursuing the expensive war against Lucca. Many were reluctant to see direct taxes imposed upon their capital and lands. As to the role of the magnates in these troubled years, they ignored many vital communal needs and continued to press for the repeal of the loathed Ordinances of Justice, which increased penalties against them as well as for the establishment of a signory that would be solicitous of their private interests.

In September, 1342, the overwhelming majority of affluent popolani and magnates championed the desperate remedy of establishing a dictatorship. Walter of Brienne was installed for life as lord of the city and was granted sweeping powers. In one of his first acts he demonstrated his sympathies toward the magnates by absolving the Bardi, Frescobaldi, Nerli, Pazzi, and Rossi from condemnations incurred as a result of their leadership of the abortive revolution of November, 1340. Eminent members of these families were permitted to return from exile, and they soon numbered among Brienne's most trusted counselors. Adimari, Bardi, Donati, Rossi, and others undertook far-flung diplomatic missions for the new lord of the city. Adimari, Cavalcanti, Rossi, and Tornaquinci held high administrative posts in the Florentine contado. Numerous magnates were granted judicial dispensation from convictions on

_bona et iura communis_ had been usurped by "magnates et potentes," and since the citizenry was afraid of these haughty and powerful lords, no attempt had been made to wrest the property from them. Now the Officials of the Towers were to have extraordinary authority to recover state property, and any citizen was to have the right to make secret denunciations (in tamburo) against predatory "magnates et potentes." Cf. _DP_, 2, fols. 12-12r.

34 _LF_, 19, fols. 29-187r (June 8, 1340-May 20, 1341).

35 B. Barbadoro, _Le finanze della repubblica fiorentina_ (Florence, 1929) 125 ff.; _LF_, 17, f. 90.

36 Cf. _CCE_, I bis, fols. 130r-249; _Atti del Esecutore_, 17, f. 17r. For the despot's decree absolving the Bardi, Frescobaldi, Nerli, Pazzi, and Rossi from condemnations incurred as a result of their participation in the rebellion of November 1, 1340, see C. Paoli, _Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene_ (Florence, 1862), 76. The citation given by Paoli for the document should read: _Balie_, 2 fols. 12-13, instead of: _P_, 32, f. 12.
charges of treason; the Falconieri and Guidolotti had been declared enemies of the Holy Roman Church and rebels against the state in 1304. Now these clans, but recently listed among the despicable Ghibelline nobles of the city, had their citizenship and property restored. The Pulci and Circuli, who had attacked their native city in the company of the perfidious Ghibellines of Pisa, were likewise granted dispensation. A host of rebel magnates had condemnations for capital offenses annulled. 37

The most vital concern of the Florentine magnates was the abrogation of the Ordinances of Justice, and here, too, their desires were given serious consideration. Although Brienne did not acquiesce completely, he did make substantial alterations in one of its most vexatious clauses: the degree of responsibility for crimes of kinsmen was drastically reduced so that only close blood relations were liable. 38

Unfortunately for Brienne, the very magnates so frequently recipients of his largess were at best only mildly enthusiastic in their support of his signory, and as soon as popular rebellion erupted in July 1343, they joined the surging mobs in the streets and attacked his palace. Immediately upon regaining its ancient liberties, the government of the republic was taken in hand by a coalition of magnates and popolani grassi. The office of prior was now open to Florentine magnates. For the first time since the winter of 1292, Adimari, Bardi, Cavalcanti, Foraboschi, Mannelli, Pazzi, and Spini entered the highest magistracy of the republic. For almost two months these scions of the best families met with their commoner peers to treat the great public questions of the day. Il popolo was not ungrateful to these aristocrats for their heroism on that glorious St. Anne's Day, the 26th of July, when they came to the fore and provided leadership so that an undisciplined demonstration could become a successful revolution. It was therefore fitting that these aristocrats should be allocated a generous share of high communal offices. Not since the thirteenth century had such an opportunity been presented to the magnates.

This aristocratic coalition had an unparalleled chance to demonstrate its qualifications for political leadership. The prestige of such magnate families as the Adimari, Bardi, Cavalcanti, Donati, Frescobaldi, Pazzi, Rucellai, and others was at its apogee. 39 Certainly, high-born popolani

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37 Other ranking families of magnate status granted dispensation for comparable crimes were the Amadori, Corbizi, Falconetti, and Visconti.

38 On June 10, 1349, an adviser to the signory proposed that the Ordinances of Justice be re-established as they had been before Brienne had tampered with them. This counselor suggested that all magnates to the sixth degree had been responsible for their kinsmen before the coming of Brienne. CP, 1, f. 6.

39 It appeared reasonable to Giovanni Villani—no warm friend of the magnates—that they should have a share of political offices since they had been the "principali" in the July revolution against Brienne. The chronicler added that the popolani grassi "accustomed to governing," supported the "grandi co' quali aveano molti parentadi." Cf.
and magnati had previously proven their ability to co-operate politically. There was even some sympathy with demands of magnates for cancellation of the Ordinances of Justice. Based upon the performance of this patriciate, however, one must conclude that few signories in the annals of the republic showed themselves to be so inept and shortsighted. Granted that the circumstances were hardly propitious—the city was faced with a staggering public debt, confidence in the Florentine business world was at its lowest ebb, and unrest among the many workers of the city’s lana industry was widespread; still, the uncreative and pedestrian quality of this regime’s policies remain striking. The legislation enacted during its tenure represented a response to the narrowest of interests and reflected the egoism of the highest echelons of communal society. In actions the ruling patriciate expressed their desire to return to the easy, laissez-faire program of earlier days which at best was suitable only for intervals of great general prosperity. At these times the tendency was to minimize the role of government so that few fiscal burdens and restraints would be placed upon the patriciate. The tax structure was adjusted to increase the income from direct levies which fell on the population as a whole, while imposts on capital and property, which struck the patriciate, were canceled. 40 Such an approach was bound to fail at this time, because communal needs far exceeded the ever-dwindling tribute collected from direct levies. No longer was it possible to finance the business of government in the traditional and time-honored manner; new and daring techniques were imperative if the camera was to be rescued from the limbo of bankruptcy. In the face of this challenge, the aristocrats of August, 1343, saw fit to increase the retail sales tax and to reapportion the city so that their own tax assessment would be drastically reduced. This failure to respond to communal needs surely was a factor in demonstrating the unfitness of the magnates to govern. 41 Their political partners, the great popolani, so closely bound to the magnates by kinship and business interests, were faced with a stark and painful alternative. Since November, 1342, the treasury had been unable to amortize or even pay interest on the public debt, and therefore the great popolani, who were the principal creditors

Cronica, 12, 18. Seven magnates were chosen to serve in the highest communal magistracy (the Quattordici) along with seven popolani. The magnates were Ridolfo de’ Bardi, Pino Rossi, Giannozzo Cavalcanti, Giovanni Gianfigliazzi, Testa Tornaquinci, Bindo della Tosa, and the ubiquitous Talano Adimari.

40 CCE, Vol. 2 (this volume of the treasury records covers the tenure of the signory of the Quattordici).

41 For an assessment of the communal fiscal dilemma in August–September, 1343, see M. Becker, “Florentine Popular Government (1343–1348),” Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 104 (1961), 360–65. This aristocratic regime was unable to pay salaries to communal retainers or honor the republic’s commitments to its citizens living in Verona as hostages. P, 32, f. 60 (September 16, 1343).
of the republic, were denied the use of their capital as well as return from their investment. Fiscal reforms, even if they involved sacrifice, were, then, mandatory at this time; but judging from the policies pursued by those controlling the camera, only the most fatuously sanguine could have believed that they would be initiated by this particular coalition.

The incapacity of magnates to govern effectively was also evidenced by their judicial policies—or lack of them. Much more significant than the annulment of the Ordinances of Justice was the fact that high crimes of magnates went virtually unpunished during the summer and early fall of 1343. The authority of Florentine courts was made almost ineffectual, and as a consequence private rights repeatedly triumphed over public law. Communal properties were widely appropriated by the great clans for personal use, and this was symptomatic of what might be described as the beginnings of a systematic dismemberment of the Florentine state. The bonds of community were in the process of being severed, and the tendency was unmistakably toward dissolution of the commune. The great work of the next regime involved the successful repression of these centrifugal forces and containment of the egoism of powerful clans.

Giovanni Villani contends that at first il popolo were satisfied to see the signory in the hands of those magnates who had been so instrumental in ousting Brienne, believing them to be peaceful and law-abiding. Soon, however, this fund of good will was dissipated and the superbia of these men became quite evident. The chronicler Stefani observes that the popolani grassi, thoroughly disenchanted with their magnate confreres, quickly came to the realization that their interests could be better served if they aligned themselves with masters of the lesser guilds, for these minori (novi cives for the most part) could be counted upon to be “subservient and reverent” and do the bidding of their social superiors. According to Stefani, the great popolani who assumed office after the overthrow of Brienne in 1343 were accustomed to holding the lion’s share of public posts, but it was not long before they found themselves relegated to a subordinate role. This seemed unjust since there were 20,000 popolani and only 1,000 or so magnati. Their loss of representation appeared to be an inevitable consequence of their unfortunate alliance with magnates who would be

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42 Giovanni Villani’s contention that the high crimes of magnates were not prosecuted by this aristocratic regime (Cronica, 12, 19) is borne out by the appropriate volume of the Camera del Comune. Cf. CCE, Vol. 2.

43 Moreover, suspicion among the populace mounted because of the pervasive fear that the magnates were conspiring with neighboring tyrants to the detriment of the city’s liberty. Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, rub. 599; Giovanni Villani, Cronica, 12, 21. Very shortly certain Bardis, Frescobaldi, and Rossi were exiled because they had been convicted of plotting with Pisa. A Donati was condemned on a similar charge. Stefani, rub. 599, 605; G. Villani, Cronica, 12, 32.

44 Stefani, rub. 588.
satisfied with nothing less than complete hegemony over the Signoria. Subsequent communal history was to demonstrate that Stefani's assessment was not far from the truth: the popolani grassi did indeed find the nouveaux lesser guildsmen to be much more co-operative as political partners than the magnates.\footnote{Cf. M. Becker, "Florentine Libertas: Political Independents and Novi Cives, 1372–1378," Traditio, 18 (1962), 393–407. Stefani, rub. 599. The chronicler also notes that at this time many disgruntled magnates entered the service of foreign governments.}

Certainly, popular feeling against the magnate rulers cannot be an entirely reliable guide in the fixing of responsibility for the misrule of Florence during August and September of 1343. When the rancor of il popolo exploded and the mob joined forces with the republic's militia to besiege palaces of the Bardi, Cavalcanti, Donati, Frescobaldi, and Pazzi, certain of the magnates supported the popular cause. Moreover, many popolani had sided with the nobles and as officeholders had shown the same incapacity to lead the republic in its desperate hour. The fact remains, however, that the deepest resentments were against the magnate class, and the contempt and disloyalty of leading magnates toward the popular regime of October, 1343–48, did little to repair this opinion. Stefani notes that so intense was the distrust of il popolo that "almost all the grandi" fled the city and "retired to the contado and remained there."\footnote{Stefani, rub. 599.} Now newcomers to the political arena had an unprecedented opportunity to succeed or to fail.

IV

As we have already observed in the first volume of this study, Tuscan poet and chronicler, from Dante through the young Giovanni Boccaccio and Giovanni Villani, displayed marked ambivalence toward the novi cives. On the one hand there was warm espousal of the democratic doctrine of nobility of deeds over lineage, while on the other, the ambition and energies of the parvenu elicited contempt from Dante and his contemporaries. Even the growth and expansion of the polis were regarded as the sinful consequence of avarice and "bestial appetite." The "upstart people" had lowered the tone of civic morality so that Dante and the young Villani pined for a return to the golden times when a homogeneous ruling class was not menaced by discordant elements. The experience of the late thirties and early forties altered Villani's views, just as that of the fifties and sixties modified the prejudices of Matteo Villani and the mature Giovanni Boccaccio. The older Villani recognized the incalculable damage done the polis by the "grandi e potenti" who sought only to tyrannize the city. It had been the mag-
nates who were responsible for the betrayal of the republic's libertà. If this patriciate was disloyal, not so the novi cives. The chronicler appreciated the positive contribution made by this order, but was unable to accept it as a permanent fixture of the Florentine political world; this remained for his brother Matteo. The experience of the early fifties instructed him in the political value of these new citizens. Indeed, they might be lacking in "liberal studies," but they courageously opposed the craven policies of tyrannous aristocrats eager to undermine the sacred libertà of the republic. Even Boccaccio, so firm a champion of courtly culture, turned against the once-idealized nobility. By the sixties they were "rapacious wolves of high lineage."47

Leading chroniclers and literary men, from Matteo Villani through Franco Sacchetti, depicted the principal threat to the traditional liberty of the polis in different accents than did the men of Dante’s time. The political machinations of old and venerable families, not the influx of new people from the countryside, menaced Florentine libertà. Alarm over the bestie fiesolane was replaced by a pervasive fear that ancient clans such as the Albizzi would establish a tyranny. There was also deep-seated suspicion that these aristocrats were anxious to barter away the polis' cherished freedoms to win private advantage and personal power.48 The first step in their quest for domination over the signory would involve the ousting of novi cives from office. Those in opposition to these intrigues found themselves in the unaccustomed position of defending the new men against their high-born adversaries. No longer were the novi cives charged with spreading the virus of factionalism throughout the city and undermining the "Roman inclination towards order and good government"; rather, the Albizzi and that dread bastion of the Florentine aristocracy—the Parte Guelfa—were held responsible for the many ills besetting the republic.49

Economic policies favored by the novi cives were in part the cause for this transvaluation of values whereby they gained stature in the


48 M. Villani, 8, 108; Stefani, rub. 720, 726. The fears expressed by the chroniclers were echoed by the advisers to the signory who urged that the government be wary of the action taken by its patrician ambassadors lest the city lose its libertà at the hands of secular rulers and ecclesiastical princes. Cf. CP, 1, unnumbered folio (March 14, 1355). Spokesmen for the colleges admonished the government to restrain the Albizzi in order that they remain subject to the communal regime. Cf. CP, 12, f. 100 (April 8, 1373). Similarly, they beseeched the priors to make certain that the captains of the Parte submit "to the will of the commune." CP, 8, f. 55r (March 18, 1367).

49 The captains of the Parte were accused, in the council halls, of fomenting suspicion among the citizenry, creating disunity and acting in such a manner as to discredit the Guelf cause in Florence. Cf. CP, 2, f. 159r (January 20, 1360); ibid., 4, fols. 101r-103 (September 24, 1363).
eyes of their contemporaries. Entry of the new men into communal government on a large scale in 1343 altered the tone of Florentine politics but did nothing to disrupt the socioeconomic base of republican society. Approximately half of their number were matriculated in the greater guilds, and these, coupled with the older officeholders, also from the arti maggiori, meant that the seven greater guilds could count upon holding three-fourths of the seats in the signory. The remainder were occupied by new men from the fourteen minor guilds who were selected from the most affluent segment of the artisan, shopkeeper world.  

This distribution of offices was maintained until 1378 and served to guarantee the political hegemony of the maggiori. The silk guild (Por San Maria) more than doubled its representation in the signory over the preceding fifteen-year period, and holdings of the new men from this rapidly burgeoning major guild in the funded communal debt averaged the considerable sum of 142 florins. The wool guild (Lana) likewise increased its allotment of high communal offices, and the new men from this guild also owned extensive Monte holdings. The shares held by novi cives matriculated in the twenty-one guilds (major and minor) averaged the impressive sum of fifty-seven florins. The tax assessments of this new group of officeholders stood in a ratio of five to six and a half in comparison to those imposed upon members of the urban patriciate.  

Therefore we should not be surprised to find that these wealthy newcomers, possessors of extensive capital and themselves employers of labor, were in substantial agreement with the patriciate on many aspects of communal economic policy. All the guild masters joined forces to stamp out rebellious movements among Florentine workers in the years between 1343 and 1345. The new government stripped il popolo minuto of the privileges and unaccustomed status recently conferred upon it by the ousted despot, Walter of Brienne.  

In formulating agrarian policy this signory rigidly adhered to the traditional program and remained unsympathetic to any innovation threatening the interests of great landed proprietors. After 1348 the regime enacted various ordinances designed to depress the wages of agricultural laborers and buttress the authority of their masters.  

51 M. Becker, Florence in Transition, I, 190–221.
52 Atti del Capitano, 17, f. 72. For a further consideration of this question, see M. Becker, "Oligarchical, Dictatorial and Popular Signorie," 425–29.
53 N. Rodolico, Il Popolo minuto (1343–1378), (Bologna, 1899), pp. 173–74. For fines against agricultural laborers who violated these ordinances, see Ufficiali del Biado, 102, 12, fols. 1–8 (August 13–September 1, 1353). For records of payments made by these
incidence of taxation on those who owned land in the city and countryside remained virtually unchanged throughout this period. On the vital question of monetary policy the new government followed the lead of merchants of the wool guild and reformed the Florentine coinage system: the value of the gold florin in which merchants received payment for cloth was augmented, while the silver coinage paid to workers was depreciated. Vintners, ironmongers, hosiers, and doublet-makers willingly gave their support to petitions presented by greater guildsmen. A seller of oil and a coopersmith favored a request by the wool guild asking that their rectors be granted immunity from communal law. The new representatives in the government also championed the cause of hard-pressed Florentine banking houses and as a result the government was able to win precious time for these harassed companies so that they might postpone making restitution to their numerous creditors.

This consensus on fundamental economic problems did not preclude the existence of certain areas of disagreement. But these tended to be peripheral, and while they did serve to alienate some elements of the patriciate from the novi cives, there was a substantial segment of older families who were not dissuaded from seeking the adherence of the new men. According to the testimony of the usually well-informed chronicler, Donato Velluti, who was much involved in communal politics at this time, these political notables actively sought to win support of the new men recently enrolled in the minor guilds when they favored repeal of certain legislation adversely affecting the minori: laws to reduce their representation in government. Therefore, despite the presence of such vexing questions as establishment of price ceilings on goods and services, enforcement, or lack of enforcement, of antimonopoly legislation, and the sensitive problem of the authority of guild consuls over those who followed a trade without troubling to enroll in any of the city’s minor guilds, there were patricians who realized that

men, see especially CCE, 70, fols. 11-30r (April 6–30, 1358). In 1383 the character of Florentine legislation pertaining to agricultural laborers was altered radically and the signory offered many inducements to these men to farm in the contado. Cf. P, 72, f. 161v; LF, 41, f. 116v.  
54 G. Villani, 12, 97; Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina, ed. R. Caggese (Florence, 1910–21), 2. 279.  
55 LF, 23, f. 4r; 26, f. 7; Duplicati Provvisioni, 4, fols. 27, 103.  
56 P, 48, f. 133; LF, 36, f. 39v.  
THE "NOVI CIVES"

a liaison with the novi cives could be founded upon a mutuality of interests.\textsuperscript{59}

The leaders of the novi cives after 1343 constituted an elite drawn from the upper echelons of manufacturers and traffickers in domestic goods and services. This wealthy group soon gained the confidence of many of their social superiors with whom they had much more in common than with the humble artisans and shopkeepers of the city. Michele di Jacopo Arrighi, armorer, was one of Florence's affluent creditors, who championed the cause of popular government. When the aristocratic captains of the Parte Guelfa challenged the authority of the signory, Michele spoke before the advisory councils exhorting the priors "to recover their honor and obtain their will." In the company of the popular Ricci leaders and a prominent new citizen, the grocer Niccolò Delli, Michele spoke for implementation of the law of 1366 whereby lesser guildsmen (principally nouveaux) were accorded representation in the captaincy of the Guelf party. During the war against the papacy, the armorer stood firm in support of alliance with the church's dread enemy Bernabo Visconti, urging strict adherence and militancy against papal lieutenants. While the republic was negotiating with the church for peace, Michele spoke against the restoration of the inquisition in the polis.\textsuperscript{60}

Another armorer who also followed a hard line toward the papacy was Simone di Biagio. Even as peace negotiations with the Holy See were being consummated, he spoke in favor of conserving "unity" with the Visconti. Going beyond this, he recommended Florence give aid to the redoubtable Bernabo. His most germane contribution to legislative discourse, however, was staunch advocacy of reduction in interest rates. Like many another new man, he approved of equalization of the tax burden: "Et quod fiat equatio inter cives pro solutione pecunie" was his principle. To this end he persistently urged the signory to enact an estimo. Needless to say, few aristocrats believed this course viable. Biagio was sympathetic to the plight of communal creditors, always contending the "fides communis" be conserved. When the treasury was unable to meet Monte obligations, he suggested a meeting between creditors and government to search out alternatives. Later he pro-

\textsuperscript{59} On the problem of antimonopoly legislation, see M. Becker, "La esecuzione della legislatura," pp. 8–29. On disputes concerning the jurisdiction of guild consuls, see Atti del Esecutore, 29, fols. 196r–197; ibid., 40, f. 112.

\textsuperscript{60} On Matteo di Jacopo Arrighi, see CP, 8, fols. 58, 59r; 14, f. 89; 15, fols. 86r, 92–93r; CCE, 38, f. 49; LF, 24, f. 83. For numerous other novi cives, affluent creditors, and supporters of popular government, see M. Becker, Florence in Transition, 1, 221–23. Among these were Niccolò Delli the vintner; Valeriano Dolcibene, ironmonger; Tellino Dini, used clothing dealer; Giovanni Goggio, grain importer, and so on. Cf. also G. Brucker, Politics and Society, pp. 41–56 for these and other nouveaux figures and L. Martines, "La famiglia Martelli e un documento," ASI, 117 (1959), 29–43.
posed that monies derived from judicial condemnations be employed to reduce the Monte debt. He appealed to patriotic impulses in calling upon fellow citizens to loan capital to the treasury without demanding interest. Exhibiting solicitude for “iura communis,” he advocated, like numerous novi cives, strict controls over public properties. Perhaps his most vehement declamations were reserved for the theme of “iustitia” (“vigorose fiat iustitia”). To Biagio, justice meant punishment of the guilty “especially the overpowerful” (“maxime maiores”), not merely the “parvos sed magnos.”

The doublet-maker Francesco Bonaiuti shared these sentiments, supporting a provision granting the signory additional authority to seize and send to trial malefactors. More crucial was his advocacy of a law whereby criminous great burghers (popolani grassi) could be deprived of certain key political rights by being compelled to assume magnate status. Essentially, this barred the popolano from sitting in the priorate or either of its colleges (in a word, the highest elected magistracies of the republic—the signory). His distrust of the Florentine nobility was revealed when he opposed a law permitting nobles to have one of their number in the sensitive post of the regulatores. This newly created office performed important bureaucratic tasks in the contado where aristocratic influence might be most intense. The general problem of office holding in rural regions also engaged the doublet-maker. Here again he opted for legislation designed to limit the influence of great families, favoring strict enforcement of the divieto over contado offices. Such a law would prevent individuals from the same family from holding office simultaneously or in rapid succession.

Bianco di Bonsi was extremely active in the signory and, although nouveau, served in the high post of prior in 1353, 1356, 1365, and 1378. In 1359 he was chosen for the most prestigious elective position, gonfaloniere of justice. Like so many other newcomers, he was experienced in treasury work. If there is a single proving ground for the novi cives, it is the camera. As a group their work in the treasury makes them understanding of and sensitive to economic needs of an emerging territorial state. In Bonsi’s case he espoused fiscal interests of the polis against traditional immunities and liberties of the church. Following a hard line calculated to promote public imperatives, he spoke out in favor of state appropriation of numerous bequests to pious foundations and religious companies. Later he supported more extreme measures,

61 CP, 15, f. 129; 16, fols. 55r, 104, 124; 18, fols. 51, 68r, 117r; 19, f. 84r; N. Rodolico, I Ciampi (Florence, 1945), p. 193.

62 P, 43, f. 151; LF, 34, fols. 115, 118; P, 44, f. 55; LF, 34, f. 121.
counseling on behalf of the election of public officials to impose forced loans upon the Tuscan clergy.\textsuperscript{63}

The merchant Frozzo Casini likewise took a stern stand on matters ecclesiastical, having little sympathy for time-honored privileges. He would not recognize the clergy’s claims for immunity from communal jurisdiction; nor was he tolerant of others violating laws of the republic. He supported strengthened magistracies possessing greater powers, particularly over crimes of violence. In conjunction with this, he, too, advocated increased authority of public officials over communal property. In the company of other new citizens and their patrician adherents, he espoused imposition of the \textit{estimo}. Also he saw the main prop of public order in a firm alliance between \textit{populus et artes}. Here again sentiments of the public-spirited found an echo in this small merchant championing an accord between the “people and the guilds”: in concert they might save the state from the machinations of the over­mighty.\textsuperscript{64}

The political career of Giovanni di Ciari, a well-to-do dealer in used clothing (a respected \textit{trecento} occupation) illustrates the perils of supporting communal authority. The family was counted among the chief rate payers of the S. Spirito quarter of the city, and Giovanni served as prior in 1351, 1356, and 1361 while intermittently sitting with the college of the Twelve. In the early fifties he spoke for strict justice against the warring Ubaldini feudatories of Tuscany. A few years later, as representative of the colleges, he entered the celebrated debate racking the city concerning benefit of clergy, siding with the priors against the pope. In this instance he counseled the government to write to the pontiff “defending the justice done [by communal magistrates] in the case of the priest Bricciolo.” Giovanni also contributed to the discourse on public finance, urging the signory to elect “cives artifices” (citizen artisans and masters) to investigate modes for raising needed revenues. The war with Pisa, bitterly opposed by the church, engaged Giovanni’s talents; he served on a \textit{balia} directing the conflict and staunchly supported it. In 1367 he received a commonplace reward: the aristocratic Guelf party struck him down. In that year he was declared \textit{ammonito} which to all intent and purpose branded him a political heretic. Suffering proscription, his civic career terminated in dishonor, he was visited with the dread political ostracism.\textsuperscript{65}

This was no isolated happening. Those \textit{novi cives} who spoke for the claims of the emerging public world or served in its burgeoning admin-

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{63} LF, 40, f. 284; CP, 4, f. 88; CCE, 54. 
\textsuperscript{64} CP, 16, fols. 59r, 68r, 69r, 128; 18, fols. 28, 136. 
\textsuperscript{65} CP, 1, part 2, f. 8; DP, 6, f. 25; \textit{Prestanze}, 2, f. 3 (1355); CP, 1, part 2, f. 3; 2, fols. 4, 20; P, 51, f. 1; \textit{ibid.}, 56, f. 112r; CCE, 68, f. 135r.}
Administrative machinery threatened aristocratic privilege and ecclesiastical liberties. Men without clan connections or membership in powerful consorterlie ran great risks in seeking to implement impersonal government that could only menace entrenched interests. Francesco Alderotti spoke vigorously for taxation of the clergy and was declared ammonito. His brother Matteo was an official in charge of the sale of church property and a firm supporter of the artifices. Proscription and exile were his lot. Two members of the nouveau riche Asini family likewise were declared ammoniti; their fate was quite typical of that befalling novi cives who advanced large sums of capital to the treasury, served as tax farmers, and acted in a variety of bureaucratic roles. An identical destiny confronted the affluent notary Ser Albizo di Messer Filippo da Barberino, civil servant and creditor of the treasury. The two sons of Bindo Benini were also declared ammoniti for hostility toward the Parte Guelfa. Later, in the revolution of 1378, one was made a knight of il popolo. Simone Bertini was an early victim (1358) who had repeatedly purchased communal gabelles on vendors of foodstuffs, fulling mills, and so on. Another was the druggist Ugolino di Bonsi, key treasury official and substantial government creditor. Nicolò di Bartolo del Buono regularly acted as a tax farmer for minor gabelles as well as serving in a plethora of public offices, from that of magistrate over a rural commune to ambassador to the Romagna. Shortly after he spoke before the signory, urging concord and union among citizens, he was visited with political ostracism. Certain of the Davizzi, among the most important holders of Monte shares, likewise suffered in this manner as did the extremely affluent Petriboni bankers. Still other victims were the Ferratini, Gucci, Guidetti, Perini, Rinuccini, and others.66

Such a figure as Giovanni Dini, druggist and importer of spices, was justly celebrated in his own lifetime for civic service. Included among those especially commended by the signory for acting to conserve the liberty of Florence against the machinations of the church, he was granted immunity from a ban of excommunication. (How efficacious such a grant was must remain unanswered.) He was a member of the balia of Eight, later called the “Eight Saints,” who guided the republic in its desperate war against the Holy See, and in 1378 was rewarded by

66 On the Alderotti, see P, 64, f. 137; CP, 16, f. 24. On the Asini, see Estimo, 8, f. 3 (1352); Monte, 442, f. 47 (1361); CCE, 192; Cambio, 12, f. 26r. For Ser Albizo, see Stefani, rub. 765; CCE, 77, f. 21. On the sons of Benini, see P. Conti, Il libro segreto della ragione di Piero Benini e compagni (Florence, 1937); CCE, 73, f. 68. For Simone Bertini, see M. Villani, 8, 91; CCE, 81, f. 3r; Monte, 437, f. 67; CCE, 173, f. 21. For Del Buono, see M. Villani, 8, 31; CCE, 25, f. 61r; 29, f. 274; 33, f. 200; CP, 1, part 1, f. 22r; Scrivano, piccolo, 2, f. 2. These and other political casualties will be dealt with in volume 3 of this study.
il popolo for service to the state with the patent of knighthood. It was he and his confreres who were later to be commended by Machiavelli for caring more about their country than about the welfare of their own souls. Like so many other novi cives and patrician reformers, he championed impersonal government and the strict rule of law, favoring legislation against carrying deadly weapons as well as challenging the sanctuary churches offered the criminous. Irregularities in legislative procedures also attracted his attention; he saw to it that private petitions were not voted upon unless submitted to scrupulous examination by the signory. In foreign policy he demonstrated abiding concern for Florentine interests. Older ideologies played little part in his thinking, so that, for him, the correct course was always to surmount immediate difficulties: this might involve shifting alliances or even assuming unpopular risks and responsibilities. Dini was credited by the chronicler Stefani with having revealed the existence of a conspiracy against the state. He also suffered ostracism as did so many other public-spirited men.67

For the most part we have concentrated only on names of politically active novi cives from the initial letters of the alphabet. The list could be multiplied many times, but the inferences to be drawn would be little altered. The new men were gaining a reputation for being responsible citizens and trustworthy political allies of those seeking to make public order prevail over special privilege and private rights. These harbingers of impersonal government had assumed challenging and dangerous roles in new, uncharted times.68

Problems confronting the republic in 1343 were novel and complex. The tone and style of Florentine politics were transformed; never again would it be possible to reconstruct the Guelf political system which had served the city so well over many generations. Fissures had been discernible as early as 1340, but now not even the most sanguine of Florentines could hope to avoid a breach between the twin bulwarks of the Guelf confederation—the papacy and the kingdom of Naples. The city was unable to sustain its time-honored role as financial fulcrum of this alliance because bankruptcy was imminent. A similar fate lay in store for many of the great Florentine banking houses; Neapolitan barons and high clergy were no longer the commune's Guelf friends but rather her nagging creditors whose demands could not be satisfied. There were other forces that were working to erode old Guelf ties: persistent papal support for the claims of the deposed, much despised

67 Stefani, rub. 752, 781, pp. 354, 400; P, 60, f. 148 (January 21, 1373); ibid., 64, f. 19 (April 22, 1376); LF, 40, f. 52; CP, 12, f. 129r; 15, f. 81r.
68 Especially pertinent in this context are the careers of numerous judges and notaries to be treated in the next volume.
RISE OF THE TERRITORIAL STATE

despot, Walter of Brienne; policies followed by the Holy See in making appointments to the Tuscan church; meddling of the Inquisitor in secular affairs; sweeping juridical claims of ecclesiastical courts; and the untimely death of the military captain of the Guelf forces, King Robert of Naples, in 1343.69

At this juncture, captains of the twenty-one guilds, two-thirds of whom were novi cives, responded to the crisis by presenting two petitions to the signory which were adopted by the councils and became part of the statutory law of the realm. These measures were designed to prevent the impatient prelates and Neapolitan barons from using the ecclesiastical courts to press their claims for restitution.70 During the interval from 1343–47, a combination of old and new men from the guilds acted in concert to strengthen the prerogatives of secular tribunals. They also made radical innovations in the communal credit structure aimed at averting the city’s impending bankruptcy. In the face of bitter ecclesiastical censure, the communal debt was funded and declared to be both negotiable and interest bearing.71 Throughout the decade of the 1350s speakers for the college of the gonfaloniere, where new men had their greatest representation, persisted in advocating policies that brought the republic into sharp conflict with her old allies. They voiced their disapproval on the matter of sending subsidies to the papal legate and called upon the signory to withdraw contingents of Florentine cavalry stationed in the kingdom of Naples.72 Spokesmen for this college bitterly opposed an alliance with the Holy See because they believed it would constitute a breach of Florence’s treaty obligations with Milan. Consistently they admonished the signory not to take any action that might antagonize the powerful Visconti despot and


70 A. Panella, “Politica ecclesiastica del comune fiorentine,” ASI, 2, part IV (1913), 327–65; A. Sapori, La crisi, pp. 197 ff.

71 B. Barbadoro, Le finanze della repubblica fiorentina (Florence, 1929).

72 CP, 1, 2, f. 25; ibid., unnumbered folio (March 12, 1355). Tellino Dini’s statement to the signory expresses the view held by the new men: “Non placet nullo modo legam factam cum le gato.” Domimus Tommaso Altoviti rejected this proposal in favor of a “lega cum ecclesia.” His suggestion was seconded by the prominent patricians Carlo Strozzi and Andrea Bardi. Cf. CP, 4, f. 103r. Marco Strozzi urged the Florentines to send troops to Naples as recompense for the many services rendered to them in the past by the king.
THE "NOVI CIVES"

urged the government to maintain a strict neutrality in the hostilities between Milan and the papacy. These views clashed with traditional propapal sentiments and caused sharp cleavages among the citizenry. During the 1360s and 1370s successful papal efforts to re-establish dominion over the Patrimony altered dramatically the tone of foreign policy discussions held by the signory. Leading novi cives such as Giovanni Goggio, Ricco Taldi, and Tellino Dini openly advocated an alliance with Milan to serve as a counter to the ever-growing power of the papacy in territories bordering the republic. Suspicion of ecclesiastical designs against the city's libertà mounted throughout this interval, and by 1375 the church was looked upon as the principal threat to Florentine liberty. Despite assurances by Avignon that the papacy had no territorial ambitions in Tuscany, the new men remained unconvinced and continued to press for the adoption of alternatives far removed from those of traditional Guelfism.

Advocacy of a foreign policy independent of ancient ties with the papacy and Naples placed the new men in opposition to the more conservative elements of the patriciate captained by Piero degli Albizzi, Carlo Strozzi, and, later, Lapo da Castiglionchio. These ottimati believed passionately that the republic's interests could best be served by integrating communal policy with that of the Holy See. In 1359 Piero degli Albizzi, backed by the Parte Guelfa, induced the signory to ally with Cardinal Albornoz, the papal legate. According to the testimony of Matteo Villani, the citizenry were outraged by this maneuver; such prominent novi cives as Tellino Dini advised the signory to dispatch an ambassador to the curia in order to reverse policies initiated by the ottimati and the legate. The chroniclers Villani, Stefani, and Velluti concurred in the judgment that the Albizzi faction and Guelf captains were motivated by a desire to aggrandize themselves: rich ecclesiastical benefices and lucrative administrative posts in the papal states were tempting rewards; therefore the bene comune was neglected

73 Giovanni Dini advised the signory not to send a subsidy to the papal legate because it might offend Milan. Cf. CP, 12, f. 119r. The same sentiments were voiced by the guild captains. Cf. CP, 7, f. 6. Ricco Taldi stated that if for any reason it became necessary to send troops to aid the papacy, the government should first take counsel with the citizenry. CP, 12, f. 72r. Schiatta di Rocco proposed that the government not contract an alliance with any lord or commune "maiori" than Florence. Cf. CP, 10, f. 114.
74 Ibid., 9, fols. 21-65.
75 Communal counselors expressed fear that the Holy See might absorb lands belonging to neighboring Lucca and Arezzo and that papal lieutenants might intervene in the domestic affairs of Siena and other Tuscan communes, thus destroying the libertà of their citizenry. Cf. CP, 12, fols. 66-67. Speakers also accused the church of aiding the rebellious Florentine feudatories, the Ubaldini clan, in their war against the city. Ibid., 12, f. 77r.
76 Ibid., 2, f. 44. See also footnote 72.
and the libertà of the republic placed in jeopardy. It was the propapal ottimati who posed the chief threat to republican liberty, while the novi cives and their allies were counted among its staunchest defenders. Three years later the self-same controversy arose again over the feasibility of war with Pisa. The church and ottimati vigorously opposed this risky venture, while the blacksmith Andrea Donati, the oil vendor Andrea Terii, the vintner Francesco Fabrini, the goldsmith Nerio, and others of their station enthusiastically championed this undertaking.

The same novi cives who tended to be suspicious of the propapal machinations of the Albizzi faction and wary of foreign entanglements were also hostile to the ancient liberties, prerogatives, and immunities enjoyed by the Tuscan church. They were anxious to reduce the authority of ecclesiastical courts so that clergy might be brought under communal jurisdiction. They also disputed the time-honored right of sanctuary and favored imposing harsh penalties upon criminous clerics. However, the greatest pressure these men exerted was in the area of tax reform. Here novi cives attacked the invidious standards of the medieval commune when they demanded that taxes and imposts fall equally upon clergy and laity. Another suggestion entailed the appointment of communal officials who were to supervise the execution of wills and administer the endowments of pious foundations and religious confraternities. This zeal for reform was not confined to things ecclesiastical but radiated into many other sectors of civic life. The affluent butcher Schiatta di Ricco called upon the signory to redistribute the tax burden so that greater equality would prevail among the citizenry; this involved new assessments commensurate with the wealth of each particular quarter of the city. Ricco also suggested that the signory elect special officials to review the system of tax rates. The grocer Niccolò Delli entreated the signory to force those who owed money to the commune to make immediate restitution. As spokesman for the college of the Dodici, he pressed for the equalization of forced loans (prestanze); this was an ever-present problem, and Delli's sentiments were shared by numerous novi cives who advised the signory on economic matters.

77 D. Velluti, La Cronica domestica, p. 253.
78 CP, 4, f. 96; LF, 36, fols. 130r–135. The statements made by the chroniclers Velluti (p. 240) and Filippo Villani (11, 102) are borne out by the records of the advisory councils to the signory. We note that Piero degli Albizzi, Carlo Strozzi, and the Guelf captains consistently advocated peace. Cf. CP, 3, f. 14; ibid., 4, f. 53r; ibid., 5, fols. 4–4r.
79 Ibid., 1, 2, fols. 132–133; ibid., 3, f. 8; P, 63, fols. 70r–73; LF, 40, f. 150.
80 CP, 4, f. 97; ibid., 14, fols. 48–57r.
81 See footnote 69 and CP, 10, f. 114.
82 P, 60, f. 1; ibid., 64, f. 129; CP, 5, f. 108r; ibid., 11, f. 106.
by the *gonfaloniere* Recco di Guido Guazza, by far the most radical of those *novi cives* whose opinions are recorded in the minutes of the communal legislative debates. This maverick later became infamous in the eyes of his compatriots for vigorously and successfully championing a drastic reduction in the interest rate on the funded communal debt. Stefani contends that this was the most extreme step taken by the government in over a century, and Guazza's name was recorded in the diary of the Curiani family, owners of extensive *Monte* stock, as being "Gonfaloniere di Ingiustizia." This inveterate foe of entrenched privilege was first noticed when he spoke up boldly in favor of taxing clergy and raising the amount of the bond that nobles of certain Florentine territories had to post. Shortly thereafter he proposed legislation authorizing the commune to sell property of the Tuscan church; he was counted among the signory's most ardent supporters during Florence's war with the papacy. For his novel opinions and enthusiasms, he was promptly excommunicated by the Church; two years after this ban was proclaimed, he rose in the councils to argue against the re-establishment of the inquisition in Florentine territory. Guazza was the first speaker to congratulate Filippo di Cionetto Bastari for his daring oration imploring the signory to oust the propapal Albizzi family from their commanding position over Florentine politics.

The *novi cives* warmly espoused state authority as a restraint against the entrenched strength of great families who tended to be a law unto themselves, and legislation enacted under their aegis reflects this deep concern. They were most anxious to curb the lawlessness prevalent among these *potentes* so that inhabitants of the city and *contado* might live in peace and tranquility. In 1346 two artisans spoke in favor of legislation designed to curtail the power of very great clans: these *potentes* were to be prohibited from contracting marriages with the families of any foreign prince, lord, or baron since such an alliance would inordinately increase their status. Any offspring from such a union was to be automatically barred from exercising any jurisdiction and was to be required to pay the heavy fine of 1,000 florins. The government also acted to fix severe penalties against any patrician who lawlessly usurped ecclesiastical property. The following year the doublet-maker Domenico Dante counseled the enactment of a provision

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83 Technically, Guazza does not qualify as *nouveau* since his family sat in the signory earlier. His is included because he, like others, belonged to families out of public office for over half a century. I wish to thank Professor Brucker for this fact. Cf. *ibid.*, 12, fols. 3, 10r-11; *P*, 64, f. 17; *LF*, 40, f. 230; Stefani, rub. 881-83; D. Marzi, *La cancelleria della repubblica fiorentina* (Rocca S. Casciano, 1910), p. 100.

84 *CP*, 12, f. 10r.


86 *P*, 33, f. 18r.
canceling permission to bear arms formerly granted by the commune to certain great families; this was to be done because of the “lamentations” of the citizenry concerning the terrible violence being committed against them daily by the potentes. In 1352 a petition was presented by several “peace-loving populares” which was seconded by two notaries new to the Florentine political scene. It stated that any commoner who behaved in a lawless manner could be declared a magnate by a vote of the signory and captains of the twenty-one guilds (two-thirds of whom were novi cives). The effect of making a citizen a magnate was to deprive him of many of his political rights. For example, he was not to be permitted to sit in the signory or to hold other critical posts. This petition was amended and then enacted with this preamble: “... in order to conserve and defend the liberty and innocence of the commoners, the poor, the weak and the clergy,” those who were convicted under this law were not only deprived of high office, but were not permitted to live in the same section of the city as their kinsmen. The threat of vendetta or reprisal by relatives of lawless Florentines encouraged the government to take steps to weaken the consorteria (family ties) of powerful clans. In 1361 there were further inroads into the authority of great families when a law was enacted compelling all those who had formerly been classed as magnati (nobles) but whose legal status had been transformed by action of the signory to that of popolani (commoners) to appear before the priorate and renounce their consorteria. Florentines whose status had been altered in this way were not to be permitted to hold office in the signory for two decades. Other severe measures were taken to reduce the influence of the patriciate over communal courts: anyone seeking dispensation from a verdict of these tribunals was obliged to present a petition to the signory which required a three-fourths vote for approval, then ratification by a two-thirds vote of the communal councils. Legislation of this type was implemented by various directives issued by the signory to the judiciary stating that sentences were not to be suspended; special officials were elected to enforce this mandate. The coopersmith Guido Pizzini, the doublet-makers Augustino Cocchi and Francesco Bonaiuto, the furrier Piero Neri del Zancha, the grocer Giovanni Dini, and the hosier Andrea Niccolini were but a few of the many novi cives who enthusiastically battled for the supremacy of communal law over time-honored prerogatives of the established patriciate.

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87 DP, 7, f. 66r.  
88 P, 39, f. 192.  
89 Ibid., 68, f. 164.  
90 Ibid., 43, f. 1.
The *novi cives* warmly supported the Ordinances of Justice, which increased the penalties on lawless nobles and required this class to post bond as a guarantee for their good behavior. One of the first measures taken by the popular signory of 1343 was to restore these "most fortunate ordinances," which had been abrogated by the preceding regime. The government was also much concerned with their vigorous enforcement.\(^{91}\)

In 1349 the wine merchant Federigo Soldi, the notary Ser Jacobo Gherardi, and three other new men, Jacobo Mezze, Francesco Benini, and Puccio Carletti, favored extending the liability for any crime committed by a member of a noble house to his kinsmen even as distant as the sixth degree.\(^{92}\) The hosier Augustino Cocchi spoke in behalf of legislation requiring all nobles who desired to serve abroad to first obtain permission of the government.\(^{93}\) The notary Ser Piero Guccio supported the proposal that would reinstitute the practice of permitting commoners to deposit secret denunciations against lawless *magnati* in a special box affixed to the door of the court of the Executor of Justice.\(^{94}\) Spokesmen for the colleges favored the exaction of special taxes to be levied against the nobility of the *contado* and, in the company of Recco di Guido Guazza, suggested that this class be compelled to increase bond.\(^{95}\) Particular suspicion was harbored against certain noble families who had a long history of disloyalty to the republic and who were excessively given to acts of violence and brigandage. By a provision of the signory and the councils, the Adimari, Bostichi, Della Tosa, Donati, Gherardini, Giandonati, Rossi, and Visdomini families were singled out for special retribution.\(^{96}\) At the same time, certain members of less powerful and more law-abiding noble houses were permitted to renounce their status and enroll in the ranks of the commoners in order to avoid restraints imposed upon the *magnati*. By a special decree of the popular regime in October, 1343, 550 Florentine nobles were permitted to change their class affiliation.\(^{97}\) This practice was continued, and in the summer of 1349 an extraordinary commission was appointed by the signory to select those *magnati* considered most worthy of commoner status. Many of these new *popolani* changed their names, separated themselves from their consorts, and relinquished their coats-of-arms; yet popular distrust of these former

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\(^{91}\) *P*, 32, f. 73.


\(^{93}\) *LF*, 24, f. 20.

\(^{94}\) This measure was designed to prevent crimes by nobles against "libertatem et statum popularium." The magnate Piero Foraboschi spoke against its adoption. Cf. *P*, 48, f. 30.

\(^{95}\) *CP*, 1, 2, f. 130r; *ibid.*, 6, f. 118.

\(^{96}\) *P*, 37, f. 99; *LF*, 30, f. 46.

\(^{97}\) Stefani, rub. 595; G. Villani, 12, 23.
grandi and potenti persisted. In 1371, two novi cives, Bernardino Cini Bartolini and Ser Nigio Ser Giovanni seconded a proposal to extend the political disabilities imposed upon former magnati. By these measures the signory was able to reduce the number of nobility, set strict limits upon the political participation of former members of this class, and weaken the force of dynastic ties, while at the same time buttressing communal prerogatives. This movement was intensified during the 1370s, when the novi cives played an even larger role in communal politics. By the summer of 1378 this trend had broadened into a frontal assault which divested the magnati (referred to anachronistically in the pertinent documents as “milities”) of other ancient rights and destroyed the effective force of their clan ties.

The tendency to exalt the authority of the state at the expense of the privileges of the great families was a dominant theme during those intervals when the novi cives were well-represented in the government. This motif was implicit both in the many condemnations handed down by the republic’s courts against those lawless magnati and popolani who appropriated communal rights and property for their own use and in the numerous attempts of the various popular signories to compel the culprits to make restitution of their usurpations. In 1344 the courts fined 16 members of the Bardi family a total of 3,000 florins on this count. The Buondelmonti and Pazzi were condemned to pay 5,161 lire and 3,249 lire, respectively, on similar charges, while the eminent Rossi and Della Tosa were obliged to restore extensive communal properties to the treasury. The following year a provision was enacted stating that the republic was desperately in need of revenue, and the signory was enjoined to recover “the property and rights of the city so that Florence might continue to live in libertate et iustitia.” In 1349 three new men counseled the enactment of even more stringent legislation framed to achieve this end, and such speakers from the college of the gonfaloniere as Antonio Niccoli and Andrea Fei continued to urge further reforms in this area. Special commissions were created whose chief function was the preservation of perquisites of the republic and strengthening the jurisdiction of civil tribunals. The founding of these balle and the extension of their prerogatives were enthusiastically advocated by Recco di Guido Guazza and other new men. Soon these novi cives gained the support of certain public-spirited opponents of the factions such as the political in-

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98 Stefani, rub. 748; P, 40, f. 39.
99 Ibid., 58, f. 164.
100 Balie, 16, fols. 2r–6; P, 66, f. 31; LF, 40, f. 298.
101 CCE, 6, fols. 72r–89; ibid., 7, fols. 115–17; ibid., 17, f. 6r; P, 33, f. 43.
102 DP, 5, f. 64.
103 CP, 12, f. 175; LF, 29, fols. 23–24.
dependents Giovanni Magalotti, Filippo di Cionetto Bastari, Caroccio Alberti, Andrea Francesco Salviati, Francesco Vigorosi, and, last but not least, Salvestro de' Medici.  

The chronicler Stefani was particularly well-informed about the events of these years, since, in addition to serving on the balia of the Dieci della Liberta and later acting as a fiscal officer for this commission, he also was a key Florentine diplomat and was frequently in attendance at communal council meetings. He tells us that the Dieci forced great families to restore possessions of the republic, and this information is substantiated by documentary evidence. But what is much more significant, the chronicler calls attention to the steps taken by this balia to undermine the authority of the great lords in the contado. This movement to extend republican jurisdiction into the outer reaches of the countryside and to bring these remote territories “under the arm of communal justice” was accelerated in the late 1370s and early 1380s and culminated in 1384 with the destruction of the liberties, immunities, and exemptions of the great Florentine feudatories, the Counts Guidi and Ubaldini. Stefani provides us with an insight into the motives of the new men whose energies contributed so much to the rise of state power. This group, according to the chronicler, harbored a deep resentment toward those grandi and potenti who used their privileged position to commit numerous extortions against their inferiors. Stefani and an anonymous priorista made particular mention of those nobles and mighty commoners who used the church courts and the power of ecclesiastical office to oppress the less powerful. These patricians held a monopoly of high church positions in Tuscany, and it was this group, in the opinion of the signory of July, 1375, who exploited the Florentines—“especially the populares and artisans sub calore iusticiae.” Through their actions these lawless and factious men threatened the liberty of the city and prevented the people from conducting their affairs in peace and tranquility.

V

Like the sentiments of the chroniclers Matteo Villani, Velluti, Stefani, and Morelli, those of the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati, foremost humanist of his generation, reflect a fundamental reinterpretation of

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104 These men were all instrumental in displacing the Albizzi and Ricci from communal politics. Stefani, rub. 731; P, 60, f. 2r; ibid., 64, f. 17. For their political opinions, see especially CP, Vol. 12.
106 Stefani, rub. 588; CP, 12, f. 175.
108 N. Rodolico, I Ciompi (Florence, 1945), p. 42; Stefani, rub. 616.
the character of the republic’s politics. No longer were the novi cives depicted as the principal threat to the proper conduct of civic life. Instead the intransigent, factious, propapal segment of the urban patriciate were considered to pose the most serious challenge to the orderly workings of communal politics. These immoderate men, in the opinion of Salutati, were responsible for the enormities committed in the name of traditional Guelfism. Using the prestige and power of the Parte Guelfa, nobles and great popolani sought to control Florence and formulate policy that would assure the triumph of the propapal cause. This would necessarily involve catapulting the philopapal Albizzi faction into power through devious techniques of political proscription. Any who withstood this tide were denounced as “Ghibellines” and driven from office. It was this stratagem that provoked an undeclared civil war in the city of Florence.

In this campaign of vilification, novi cives and their adherents were logical targets since their objectives frequently clashed with those of the captains of the Parte and the Albizzi faction. The popular government of 1343, which reduced the influence of the great families, extolled the impersonal force of communal law, and promoted a foreign policy independent of Avignon, was anathema to the propapal patricians who had so long ruled the city as if it were their own private preserve. Beginning with the fall of 1346 and ending disastrously with the summer of 1378, these patricians repeatedly worked through the organization of the Parte Guelfa to subvert the various popular regimes that held power intermittently. Giovanni Villani contended that the legislation passed in 1346 was expressly designed by the Guelf captains to oust novi cives from the government and to break the hold of the twenty-one guilds over civic affairs. This was to be accomplished by barring from public life novi cives who failed to fulfill their communal fiscal obligations or whose ancestors were not native-born Florentines. In this way the rule of the “antichi e originali” citizens would be restored, and those men of “unknown and insufficient origins” were to be removed from the lists of candidates eligible for communal office when, in the opinion of “true citizens,” they were judged to be unworthy of such high honor. Giovanni Villani saw this as the first move in a calculated plot to stifle the political aspirations of the new men. The dénouement soon followed when in January, 1347, the captains of the Parte Guelfa initiated even more sweeping legislation to weaken further the power of the newcomers and their political allies and thus put an end, once and for all, to the popular regime. Anyone whose forebears had sympathized with the Ghibellines or who came from territories under Ghibelline domination or who was not reputed to be “a true

110 G. Villani, 12, 72; P, 34, f. 93r; LF, 26, fols. 93r–94r.
Guelf and lover of the Parte of the Holy Church" was to be declared ineligible for office in the republic. Those who did assume communal posts in violation of this edict were to be fined the exorbitant sum of 500 lire. At first there was extensive public support for this type of legislation, even among the novi cives and their friends; apparently, few of these men believed they would be affected by these measures, for were they not amatores of the Parte Guelfa? Did they not stem from the most prosperous rural Florentine families? Had they not despised the pro-imperial Ghibellines and did they not share the prejudices of the aristocracy against foreigners who resided within the city walls? Soon, however, it became evident that the anti-Ghibelline, anti-foreign legislation would be used not only against the novi cives but also against dissident members of the patriciate, enemies of the captains of the Parte Guelfa, supporters of popular government, opponents of papal foreign policy advocated by the Albizzi, and political independents who refused to ally with any faction.

Major chroniclers agreed that the intent of these laws was admirable and even favored amendments to buttress them, but they were deeply disturbed by the partisan and factious spirit in which they were enforced. Accusations of political heterodoxy on grounds of Ghibellinism were soon made against men from all social strata, and by 1378 few felt secure. The tense atmosphere of these times encouraged the formulation of a fundamental question that was to have broad implications for subsequent political orthodoxy and right to membership in the Guelf party. The medieval commune was composed of a cluster of quasi-autonomous bodies and institutions. The Parte, the most prominent of these, asserted its authority to select its own members. As with many medieval legal questions, conflicting precedents could be cited because of the in-

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111 G. Villani, 12, 79; LF, 26, fols. 127–28. This measure barely gained the necessary two-thirds majority required for passage.
112 The initial measure of January, 1347, had several safeguards that were designed to protect the new 'artefici.' Cf. G. Villani, 12, 79. The word 'artefici' (in Italian) or 'artifices' (in Latin) is used to describe men whose occupations range from small-scale producers of goods to the great industrial entrepreneurs. According to Villani, as soon as it became evident that the Parte wanted to use this type of legislation to overthrow popular government in Florence, two-thirds of the members of the priorate wished to annul the anti-Ghibelline laws, but the power of the captains was so great that this was impossible. Cf. G. Villani, 12, 92. The new men disfranchised by these laws were Bartolo di Gruerio; Lorenzo Buonaccorsi; Gallo di Rossi, recently of Poggibonsi; Iacobo Faloci, also of Poggibonsi; Neruzzio, a hosier; and Francesco Guerrio, a carpenter. The only patrician affected was Uberto Infangati, a banker, and he was restored to communal office two years later. In 1360 he was sentenced to death for treason in absentia. Cf. CCE, 20 fols. 20–20r; ibid., 22, f. 61r; ibid., 23, f. 18; ibid., 25, fols. 78r–86.
113 The novi cives were never anxious to extend the rights of citizenship. Cf. P, 66, f. 57; LF, 26, fols. 93–94r.
formal and *ad hoc* character of the communal constitution. In 1349 the 
*Parte*'s claim was placed in jeopardy when the signory arrogated to it-
self the right to confer Guelf status upon worthy individuals and groups.

During the next few years the signory used this power when it accepted
petitions of families who contended they had been excluded from the
*Parte* and unjustly accused of being Ghibellines; the signory ordered the
*Parte* to admit them. The communal councils acquiesced to requests
from syndics of rural communes, newly integrated into the Florentine
state, that the inhabitants be recognized as "veri et originali guelfi,"
despite the fact that Ghibellines had previously lived in these areas.

In 1354 Florence sent ambassadors to San Gimignano to reorganize the
territory; upon their return, the signory acted upon the advice of its
emissaries and conferred the benefits of citizenship upon the populace. Henceforth, the men of this region were to be known as
"guelfi populares, veri, originari et antiqui." Captains of the *Parte*
responded to these challenges by raising the matriculation fee so that
anyone applying for admission, whose ancestors had not been enrolled,
was required to pay 100 florins. Since this sum was equivalent to
twenty-five years rent on the average artisan's shop, this measure
was designed to be an effective deterrent to all but the most af-
fluent. The signory continued to assert its right to receive men into
the *Parte Guelfa* and maintained that it alone had authority in these
matters. Further, it declared that the captains could not accept members
unless prior approval was obtained from the signory. There were other
issues dividing the *Parte* and the signory: the most delicate of these was
the question of economic autonomy. In 1351 the communal councils en-
acted a provision authorizing the signory to elect state auditors to review
accounts of the *Parte* reaching back over two decades. This problem had
disturbed the rapport between the *Parte* and earlier popular regimes; its
persistence emphasized the ambiguous character of communal governments
in which the boundary between the authority of quasi-independent bodies
and the force of public law tended to become a twilight zone. Nowhere
was this dilemma better illustrated than in the bitter dispute over the fis-
cal autonomy of the *Parte*. Giano della Bella, patrician leader of the popular regime of 1293–95,

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114 *Diplomatico*, Strozzi (November 21, 1311); *Diplomatico*, Spedale degli Innocenti
(July 30, 1325).
115 *P*, 45, fols. 113–14r.
118 *CP*, 1, 2, f. 5; *P*, 40, f. 137.
119 *Parte Guelfa*, numeri rossi, 1, f. 51.
120 *Statuti del Capitano* (1355), 11, bk. I, rub. 201; *P*, 37, f. 22r.
121 *Ibid.*, 38, f. 226; *ibid.*, 39, f. 15r.
had been among the first to challenge the warrant of the *Parte* to deprive Florentines of their right to hold office on charges of Ghibellinism. During the middle years of the fourteenth century, the controversy still raged around this crucial question. Did the signory or the *Parte Guelfa* have ultimate jurisdiction in this matter? The legislative debates of 1354 disclose that Florentines were far from united on this question, with the *novi cives* and their allies favoring the signory. In the years immediately following the Black Death, the Ricci clan assumed leadership of the popular party and continued in this role until the end of the 1360s. During these two decades they tended to support measures advocated by the *novi cives* to reduce the influence of the *Parte Guelfa* over communal politics and favored the supremacy of the signory. Uguccione dei Ricci, spokesman for this group, consistently urged the signory to assume responsibility for protecting the liberty of the city against the intrigues of those who threatened the independence and sovereignty of the republic.\(^{122}\) He included among the foes of *libertà* intransigent feudatories, lawless nobles, avaricious emperors, and designing popes. He was a militant partisan of a pragmatic foreign policy free from commitments to the old Guelf allies—the Holy See and Naples—and a resolute defender of communal sovereignty against the claims of quasi-independent institutions. The assumption of this posture placed him in the vanguard of those who opposed the *Parte Guelfa*. Antagonism mounted when he supported an alliance with the Ghibelline Visconti; this enraged the Albizzi leadership of the *Parte*. He then actively encouraged the Florentines to take up arms against neighboring Pisa and continued to exhort the signory to press on for total victory over its archrival. While his exertions were loudly applauded by the *novi cives* and won Uguccione much popularity among the masses, they were scorned by the prominent oligarchs Piero degli Albizzi and Carlo Strozzi, whose desperate attempts to make peace were vigorously backed by the *Parte* and the papacy.\(^{123}\)

The *novi cives* were anxious to gain representation in all communal bodies and institutions and looked to Uguccione for leadership. In 1358 they won a singular victory when Uguccione successfully led an assault against the preponderance of aristocratic influence in the *Parte Guelfa*; the proportion of representation accorded the nobility in the captaincy was substantially reduced and the number open to the *novi cives* from the major guilds was increased.\(^{124}\) Eight years later he again took up the cause of the new men, and, for the first time in communal history, those from the minor guilds were given two seats in the sacred precincts of the *Parte*. A series of provisions were enacted in the winter of 1366 justifying

\(^{122}\) CP, 1, 1, f. 4; *ibid.*, f. 51r; *ibid.*, f. 110.

\(^{123}\) Cf. footnote 84 and CP, 2, f. 119r; *ibid.*, 8, f. 57.

\(^{124}\) P, 45, f. 189.
this radical step; fear was rampant among the citizenry since “even true Guelfs” were being accused of Ghibellinism and driven from public life. By adding new men to the captaincy, the signory hoped to preserve “the good and peaceful state of the city” and defend the “libertà” of its denizens. Before such accusations could be made in the future, they had to be investigated and verified by five of the seven captains from the guilds. Uguccione and his partisans contended that the Parte Guelfa desired to enslave Florence, make the inhabitants her vassals, and, thereby, destroy the “buono stato” of her artisan and merchant classes. But the presence of novi cives in the supreme magistracy of the Parte would prevent this and preserve the libertà of the citizenry—“especially the artisans and merchants.”

A new rapport was emerging between the novi cives and those elements of the patriciate hostile to the philopapal, Albizzi-led Guelfs, which had the effect of drawing these men together into a parte popolare. When the chief Guelfs of the city objected to receiving new men from the minor guilds into their ranks, Uguccione threatened to assemble the merchants, artisans, and il popolo together in a parliament; this, he insinuated, would be the beginning of revolution in Florence. When the captains of the Parte Guelfa were charged with having “defamed and injured the priors,” Uguccione was quick to suggest that these evil men be punished for their superbia and that representatives from the seven major and fourteen minor guilds be called upon to fix the penalties. At this time the Ricci and other popular leaders were coming to rely more upon support of the artisans and “middling citizens” (modici cives), new to the political scene, who were consistently in attendance at legislative debates. They urged the communal councils to grant these new men a share of the important posts in the contado and advised the signory to consult with the newcomers on formulation of foreign policy. The Ricci and their followers counted upon these new men to be a force “for the public good and the conservation and increase of liberty”; it was hoped

125 Ibid., 54, f. 133r; D. Velluti, La Cronica domestica, p. 249. Tommaso di Mone, seller of grain, speaking for the gonfaloniere, contended that adoption of these measures would unite the city, strengthen the “populus,” and increase the security “of the middling and minor citizenry” (mediorum et minorum con civium). Cf. CP, 8, f. 1.

126 The terms used by Uguccione, as reported in the chronicle of Velluti (p. 250), are “i popolari, artefici” and “I popolo di Firenze.” These men were to defend “il bene comune” against “le famiglie popolari grandi.” Cf. also Stefani, rub. 695. Uguccione’s brother Rosso exhorted the signory to elect citizens who were “amatores statum et communis” to conserve the libertà of Florence. Cf. CP, 8, f. 28r.

127 Ibid., 8, f. 57. Rosso also criticized the injustices committed by the captains against the lower orders, and he and his brother Uguccione spoke on behalf of legislation favoring the lesser guildsmen. Ibid., 7, fol. 25r, 80, 87. The term “modici cives” first appears in the Consulte e Pratiche when the government was urged to convene an assembly of these men who are described as “sapientes, delectores communis.” Ibid., 5, fol. 116r-119r. For a similar request by Uguccione, see ibid., 7, f. 18 (September 27, 1365).
that in the process they would bring honor to the merchant class and stymie the tyrannical aspirations of the Parte Guelfa. 128

Out of the struggle against the Parte emerged the most renowned of all trecento Florentine popular leaders. Salvestro de' Medici had consistently been an audacious speaker for political causes that were bound to win him the enthusiastic adherence of the novi cives from the greater and lesser guilds. In 1363 he boldly proposed that revenues from certain properties belonging to the church be assigned to the republic and that the clergy be compelled to make extensive loans to the communal treasury. In the following year, during another session of the councils, he attacked the philopapal Parte Guelfa for its attempt to drive a new citizen from public life for his alleged Ghibelline sympathies; enraged, he went on to suggest that the government should conduct an inquiry into this type of nefarious practice and punish the provocateurs. At the moment when Uguccione was bitterly castigating the Parte, Salvestro called upon the prior to resist the machinations of the evil capitani who were seeking "to gain control of the city of Florence." Like the Ricci leader, he then entered a plea for unity between merchants and artisans in order that they might "avoid being divided by those who desired to seize power." 129

Along with other popular leaders such as Tommaso Strozzi, Giorgio Scali, Benedetto Alberti, and Filippo di Cionetto Bastari, he advocated that the new middling citizens play a more decisive role in communal affairs; particularly, he desired that they be consulted on the conduct of diplomatic relations with the papacy and be included in the captaincy of the Parte. There was little doubt that the advice these novi cives offered the signory and Guelf councils would parallel the opinions held by Salvestro and other popular figures: under no circumstances should Florence ally herself with the Holy See; nor should the Parte be permitted to continue its reckless proscriptions. These views were anathema to the Albizzi leadership of the Guelfs, and the offense was compounded when Salvestro and the new citizens reopened an old wound in the body politic by again championing an alliance with Ghibelline Milan. 130 Suspicion of papal ambitions in Tuscany persisted and further intensified the hostility of popular leadership; now, more than ever, these men were coming to favor an aggressive, antipapal foreign policy. Salvestro's speeches in the council halls indicate he was the most impassioned spokesman in this cause. 131

Throughout Florentine history there had been others who had assumed a similar stance but they had uttered their sentiments under very different

128 Ibid., 8, fols. 70, 89r; P, 54, f. 86r (December 12, 1366).
130 CP, 12, f. 172r (November 12, 1374); f. 160r (October 31, 1374).
131 In 1376 he proposed that the government confiscate all ecclesiastical property if the pope did not meet Florentine demands. He went on to suggest that these lands be sold and that the revenue be employed to wage war against the papacy. Cf. ibid., 14, f. 85.
historical conditions. In the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the new men were only perfunctory participants in civic life; however, by the 1360s and 1370s this order provided a substantial political base on which a program could be grounded. Since their entry into Florentine politics in sizable numbers in 1343, the influence of the novi cives had been expanding, and their political behavior indicated they would make trustworthy confederates in the chronic struggle to preserve libertà.

VI

In the minds of many Florentines, the Albizzi faction and the Parte Guelfa stood condemned as the subversive arm of the Holy See plotting to undermine the republic. At the start of the 1370s, the Ricci chiefs were also accused of harboring the same treasonous designs. According to Stefani, Uguccione was bribed with tempting offers of rich ecclesiastical benefices if his kinsmen forsook the cause of the parte popolare and joined the Albizzi to bring Florence into the papal camp. As long as these two great clans opposed one another, the republic and its libertà were secure, since each was strong enough to prevent the other from completely dominating the machinery of state. However, once a coalition was formed there was the problem of checking its power in order to block the rise of a propapal despotism. If the republic was to be saved, the parte popolare would have to be reconstituted as the one force capable of fighting for “the welfare of the commune” (il bene di comune). It would then be necessary for them to restrain the political influence of the great clans and, thereby, preserve the rule of public law, communal jurisdiction, state property and rights, and the impersonal machinery of government. The events of January, 1372, justified the worst fears of Stefani and his public-spirited contemporaries: the Ricci did indeed ally with Carlo Strozzi, Bonaiuto de’ Serragli, and other prominent members of the revivified Albizzi faction. Strozzi saved the prior Bartolo di Giovanni Siminetti from bankruptcy, and the latter in turn coerced his colleagues into passing a law raising the Parte Guelfa authority to unprecedented heights. Michele di Vanni di Ser Lotto, who had labored long and hard with Piero degli Albizzi to ally Florence with the Holy See, was also instrumental in forcing through this legislation. The Parte was granted autonomous status and freed from all governmental checks; no measure could be enacted against this organization without obtaining its consent.

132 Rub. 726.
134 D. Velluti, La Cronica domestica, p. 253; Stefani, rub. 730.
The laconic Stefani bitterly observed that the merchants and artisans of the city were now indeed the slaves of the tyrannical Albizzi-Ricci faction. His pessimistic sentiments were echoed by the counselors to the signory, and when in April of the same year a new priorate entered office it sought to undo the work of the factious leadership of the Parte Guelfa.135 Sitting in the signory were four novi cives and four nonfaction men; only the gonfaloniere of justice was a follower of the Albizzi. It was this combination of new men and political independents, backed by Salvestro de’ Medici, Giovanni Magalotti, Giovanni di Luigi MoZZi, Luigi di Lippo Aldobrandini, and other popular leaders, who now advanced a far-reaching program for conservation of the republic’s libertà against their adversaries.

The fundamental legislation enacted by this most democratic of all Florentine regimes was initiated by the artifices and populares of the republic. The composition of the government from April, 1372, to July, 1375, indicates that the artifices were the novi cives and the populares were the nonfaction independents who now resolutely battled per il bene di comune. In documents of the period, this coalition referred to itself as “artifices and populares” who were “zelatores of the popular status of the city.”136 The phrase “popular status of the city” implied the existence of a political atmosphere free from the inordinate influence of the Parte Guelfa and the factions. It also connoted a respect for statutory law and the verdicts of communal courts. It postulated impartial assessment and collection of taxes, curtailment of ecclesiastical immunity and privilege, and equality before communal magistracies. Peculation of public funds, revenue delinquencies, and crimes by the powerful against the poor and the weak were not be be tolerated. To this end magistrates were enjoined to obey the letter of the law and not to be swayed by personal considerations. Extensive syndication of all state functionaries became the order of the day. Special officials and new rectors were to be chosen by the signory to buttress public authority in Florentine territories. Other officers with extraordinary powers to enforce governmental edicts were to be elected.137 The collection of direct taxes was to be regularized and important reforms were to be made in the Florentine treasury. Communal accountants

135 The description of the events offered by Stefani in rub. 731 of his chronicle is substantiated by the records found in Volume 12 of the Consulte e Pratiche. See especially folio 10, which contains a report of the famous speech made by Filippo di Cionetto Bastari before the signory, calling upon the citizens to defend the “statum popularis” against the Ricci and Albizzi. The same judgment is expressed by Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli in his Ricordi, ed. V. Branca (Florence, 1956), p. 25, when he condemns the Ricci and Albizzi for not allowing the “artefici” and the men “di piccolo affare” to live in peace.

136 CP. 12, f. 13.

137 Ibid., 12, f. 55r. These men were to preserve the city “in sua libertate.” Cf. ibid., 12, fols. 14, 36r.
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were selected to protect the estates of minors and to recover usurped properties. Finally, the intractable, lawless elements among the patriciate were to be driven out of political life so that artisans and populares might live and work in peace.138

The regime of 1372 also proclaimed itself the defender of Florence's most treasured possession—its libertà, "whose price no one could estimate."139 In order to preserve this precious inheritance, it would be necessary to eradicate all factions and divisions within the city. To this end, the signory acted favorably on a petition presented by the "artisans and populares" barring leading members of the Ricci and Albizzi houses from public life for a protracted interval. Shortly thereafter, the scope of this law was extended and harsher terms were laid down—again at the behest of artisans and populares.140 At the same time as the signory limited the authority of great families, it acted to enhance the political prestige of new men from the lesser guilds in a most dramatic way. In April, 1372, minori were admitted into the Mercanzia, the august council of the High Court of the Merchants, for the first time in communal history. Even the relatively democratic Stefani was shocked when the signory accepted the petition requesting elevation of parvenus into the hallowed precincts of this magistracy, and he commented bitterly that the artisans had gained much in past years as a result of conflicts between the Ricci and Albizzi. With the founding of the new signory, he protested, they were entering those halls where only "the most solemn, most experienced, and most wise merchants of Florence" ought by right to sit.141 Lapo da Castiglione, principal publicist for the aristocratic ethos of the Parte Guelfa and the archenemy of popular government in Florence at this time, mourned the many rewards and honors bestowed upon these unworthy upstarts and later blamed them for the many ills that befell the commune. The laments of Lapo were uttered in the palace of the Guelf party and in letters to his son, but as a member of the balia and counselor to the signory he did not oppose the admission of the novi cives into the Mercanzia; rather, he piously orated that the government should do what was useful for the commune and the guilds.142 The records of the debates

138 F. Perrens, Histoire de Florence, 4, 528; Diario di anonimo fiorentino, ed. A. Gherardi (Florence, 1867), p. 494; Capitoli, 11, fols. 72, 76, 80.
139 P, 60, f. 2r.
140 Ibid., 60, f. 157. Under no circumstances was this provision to be suspended.
141 Rub. 734. See D. Velluti (p. 241) for a description of the effect that factionalism had upon the new men from the lesser guilds. On the seating of these men in the Mercanzia, see G. Bonolis, La giurisdizione della Mercanzia in Firenze nel secolo XIV (Florence, 1901), p. 82. The petition that initiated this legislation was presented by the "artifices" of Florence. Cf. CP, 12, f. 20 (April 21, 1372).
142 Ibid., 12, f. 20. For the private opinions of Lapo on this question see L. Mehus, Epistola o sia ragionamento di Messer Lapo da Castiglione (Bologna, 1753), p. 162. For a description of his political outlook, see P. J. Jones, "Florentine Families and
of the councils from 1372 to 1375 indicate that there were other speakers with the same commitments as Lapo who were reluctant to talk against the new men. There was also a misleading unanimity among speakers on the feasibility of establishing an extraordinary commission to repress the overweening power (maioritas) of the great families. Even though the Ricci and Albizzi formally agreed to abide by this proposal, they did not abandon their old political grudges and consuming ambitions. Deprived of the authority of public office, they turned away from the signory and embraced the Parte Guelfa as the most effective means for realizing their aspirations.

Novi cives and their confederates were firmly entrenched in public life and continued to dominate the signory until 1382. Not satisfied with having reduced the influence of the Albizzi and Ricci over communal affairs, these men now sought for a broader distribution of public offices. The officials elected to investigate usurpation of the commune's rights and properties by the great families soon learned that these selfsame Florentines were also guilty of violating the divieto. This ancient legislation prohibited members of the same family from holding high office simultaneously and fixed an interval during which an individual was declared ineligible for re-election; it also prevented the nobility from occupying certain key posts. These enactments gave an impersonal tone to the conduct of civic affairs since they restricted the power of large old families and encouraged the political mobility of novi cives. In the judgment of Matteo Villani, it was the divieto more than any other single type of legislation, which was responsible for the rise of the new men. The lists of candidates for office inscribed in the Tratte reveal that during the seventies large numbers of patricians were barred from office because of the effectiveness of the divieto. If one member of the Strozzi family sat in the priorate, fifty of his kinsmen might be denied entry. But like so many other statutes the divieto was frequently observed in the breach. Records of the legislative debates before 1372 suggest that enforcement


143 CP, 14, f. 14. Only Uguccione dei Ricci spoke out against this proposal, complaining that it was an illegal measure taken at the behest of private citizens who acted without communal authorization.

144 M. Villani, 8, 31.

145 E. Sestan, "Il comune nel trecento," in *Libera Cattedra di Storia della Civilta Fiorentina: Il Trecento* (Florence, 1953), p. 27. For charges against two members of the Albizzi family accused of violating the divieto, see Stefani, rub. 739. The chronicler was one of four communal officials who investigated this matter, and he was convinced of their guilt. Documents in the *Sindacato del Podesta*, 20, fol. 43–45 substantiate this. A summary of these materials can be found in G. Masi's *Il sindacato delle magistrature comunali nel secolo XIV* (Rome, 1930), p. 112.
of the *divieto* was closely tied to other political considerations. The *Parte Guelfa* repeatedly used the tactic of pressing for anti-Ghibelline legislation in order to force the signory to accept a relaxation of the *divieto* against the patriciate and opening certain offices to them.

This curious connection between legislation on the *divieto* and measures against Ghibellines served further to tangle the already complex web of communal politics. When the *Parte* threatened to enforce rigorously the provisions against Ghibellines, the signory proposed that the communal councils agree to a redistribution of offices so that the patriciate might be better represented. Upon occasion the *novi cives* would dissent, and since a two-thirds majority was necessary for passage of legislation, the ameliorative efforts of the signory would be frustrated. It was the presence of new men in government that reduced the number of posts open to older families. In the 1350s, Donato Velluti justified his support of anti-Ghibelline legislation on the grounds that only one of his relations had been declared eligible for office over a four-year period. In his estimation, the term "Ghibelline" was synonymous with the phrase *novi cives* and it was these pushy upstarts who were responsible for his family's dilemma.\(^\text{146}\)

During subsequent decades the more factious leaders who dominated the *Parte Guelfa* saw the new men as wholly contaminated with the virus of Ghibellinism. Opposition of the *novi cives* to the Albizzi-sponsored papal alliance intensified this animosity, and in the 1370s the *Parte* struck venomously at this group when it ostracized the most prominent of their number on the spurious charge of Ghibellinism.\(^\text{147}\) The popular party, led by the Ricci during the fifties and sixties, tended to be just as obdurate in their support of the *divieto* and in their hostility to propapal alliances and anti-Ghibelline legislation. But in 1372 when the Ricci deserted their old political allies and joined the camp of the Albizzi they reversed roles and became ardent proponents of political proscription and extreme partisans of the philopapal policies of the *Parte Guelfa*. The new men, better represented in the signory than at any time since 1347, turned their energies toward conserving popular government. The *Parte Guelfa* had conducted in past times campaigns of vilification and abuse which contributed greatly to the decline of earlier popular regimes. The

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\(^\text{146}\) D. Velluti, *La Cronica domestica*, p. 241. Even those Florentines most hostile to the new men agreed that there were no bona fide Ghibellines in Florence at this time. Cf. "Discorso d'autore incerto (1377)," in G. Capponi, *Storia della repubblica di Firenze* (Florence, 1930), I, 593. "... e veramente ognuno era diventato guelfo d'animo, di volere e di ogni suo pensiero. Potessi dire che a Firenze non fusse akuno ghibellino che non fussi antichi nobili rubelli: ma della gente comune mezzana e minore di che nazione si fusse tutti di volontà erano guelfi."

\(^\text{147}\) Among those accused were Ugolino di Bonsi, seller of spices; Manente d'Amedeo and Valeriano Dolicibene, vintners; Giraldo di Paolo Giraldi, tanner; and numerous others referred to in the judicial records. Cf. especially, *Atti del Esecutore*, Vols. 785, 790.
new men of 1372, much more experienced in the tactics of political warfare, adroitly sought to contain the *Parte* and to eradicate factionalism. Formerly they had attempted to achieve these ends by allying with the Ricci; now they hoped to accomplish them through increasing the impersonal force of government by undermining the political influence of great families of the *Parte Guelfa*. The *divieto* was indeed a powerful weapon in their hands, and by coupling it with the ingenious technique of conferring noble status upon their political adversaries, the *novi cives* could look forward to disfranchising the more hostile elements of the city.

Partisans of the Albizzi-Ricci coalition numbered approximately one-sixth of all Florentines eligible for communal office. The personal and intimate character of urban life made it difficult for men to camouflage their loyalties and political affiliations; therefore it was easy for *novi cives* to seek out their enemies. Ouster of the Albizzi and Ricci from the signory was the first step and was followed by repeated attack against their adherents. These faction men were seen as opponents of the government—revolutionaries, if you will—whose leaders had been barred from public office and whose only remaining political bastion was the *Parte Guelfa*, and even this encampment was becoming insecure. The Florentine state was drifting toward war with the papacy, and by 1375 the philopapal sympathies of the *Parte* bordered on treason. The *Parte* stood against the powerful tide toward war that was coming to be popularly regarded as a crusade in defense of Florence’s sacred liberty. When the Albizzi and their followers, from the vantage point of the *Parte*, hurled charges of Ghibellinism against the *novi cives* directing this war for the preservation of the republic, they were placed in the position of seeking to crucify men regarded by the masses as secular saints. *Novi cives* such as Giovanni Dini and Guccio di Dino Gucci were in fact numbered among the “Eight Saints” who demonstrated that they preferred the safety of their country to the salvation of their own souls when they undertook leadership of the government in war. For their heroic efforts, both suffered excommunication at the hands of the church and abuse from the *Parte*. In July, 1378, however, knightly status was bestowed upon these two patriots by a grateful *popolo*. Other new men were also to be dishonored by the papacy and *Parte* only to receive accolades at the hands of the people. Events from 1372 to 1378 tended to make heroes of new men like Tommaso di Mone, also one of the Eight Saints; Niccolò Lapozzi, an official chosen to defend the *libertà* of the city; and Recco di Guido Guazza, proponent of the confiscation of ecclesiastical properties. All these men were excommunicated by the church and attacked by the *Parte*. Andrea di Feo, a paving contractor; Maso di Nero, a ropemaker; Francesco di Geri, an ironmonger; and many others held important offices at this time and suffered
assaults from the *Parte*. It was the new men who were the patriots and unequivocal champions of the Florentine republic, while the Guelf patriciate were seen as enemies of the government and perpetrators of sedition.

The overwhelming majority of Florentines eligible for high office during the middle years of the *trecento* were neither extreme Guelf partisans nor committed members of factions; rather, they were political moderates who counseled caution and compromise in most things. Despite their capacity to temporize on a variety of issues, they remained firm in their patriotic commitments to the defense of libertà and republican government. They understood well the pragmatic character of Florentine politics and recognized that on the day-to-day level there must be compromise in order to insure survival of the republic. This conciliatory attitude extended even to the burning question of the *divieto* and enforcement of anti-Ghibelline legislation. During the fifties and sixties these moderates favored relaxation of the *divieto* and opposed the extensive use of political proscription. They hoped to reconcile the great families to existing constitutional order by easing stipulations of the *divieto* and, thereby, to convince them it was unnecessary to denounce the *novi cives* as political subversives in order to gain a larger share of communal offices. At the same time they sought to placate the *novi cives* by reducing the threat of political proscription while upholding the principle of the *divieto*. The moderates suggested that the law be suspended for short periods of time, and then only as a temporary measure. The chronicle of Donato Velluti serves to clarify the political dilemma of men of moderate stripe: they were most anxious to remain in the good graces of the *Parte* and yet avoid antagonizing the *novi cives*. Velluti, who wrote about the adverse effect of the *divieto* upon the political ambitions of his own large family, rose in the council halls to exhort the signory to mitigate its most drastic features. In the same speech he urged that priors meet with captains of the *Parte* and reform the anti-Ghibelline legislation. This he did in the company of other Florentine moderates such as Stefano del Forese, Giovanni Lanfredini, and the ubiquitous Giovanni Geri del Bello. These middle-of-the-roaders won their point in 1354, and the captains ceased proscribing Florentine citizens until 1358. In January of that year, new and more terrible procedures were introduced by these captains who, in the opinion of Matteo Villani, desired to intimidate the signory and establish themselves as "little tyrants" over the city. The extreme Guelfs who successfully advocated this reign of terror were overtly propapal and employed the new techniques of political persecution to force through an alliance with the

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148 *Ibid.*, 800, f. 4r.
149 *CP*, 1, 2, f. 72.
papal legate in 1359. Despite efforts of the moderates, the attacks were intensified, and in April 1363, Matteo Villani himself fell victim to the intrigues of the captains on the tired charge of Ghibellinism.\textsuperscript{151} His proscription and subsequent dismissal from office revealed the vulnerability of nonfaction men who counseled moderation and stood as political independents. The partisans and allies of the great clans were either represented in the \textit{Parte} or had a voice in the powerful political cliques of the city; in this way they were able to achieve a modicum of security. Now the threat of disfranchisement encompassed the independents as well as the \textit{novi cives}. As much as any other factor, this common insecurity welded these two groups together and induced them to unite against their mutual adversaries.

Few Florentines were optimistic about the outcome of what was now frankly spoken of as “la guerra cittadinesca” raging between the faction men and their opponents. The political confidence of the moderates was giving way to a pervasive sense of despair. Even the most sanguine of Florentine chroniclers, Velluti, could only hope that Divine Providence would end this “citizen war” before it brought his beloved city to ruin, but he seriously doubted that his prayers would be answered.\textsuperscript{152} Matteo Villani’s history concludes as a diatribe against those men of “pessima e iniqua condizione” who imposed capricious tests of political orthodoxy upon virtuous citizens. Even more vitriolic was his polemic against those captains of the \textit{Parte} who were willing to betray Florence’s sacred liberty in exchange for high ecclesiastical office.\textsuperscript{153} But the independents sitting in the communal councils at this time were intent upon finding positive remedies for this intolerable situation. No longer did they offer the soothing balm of compromise to the great oligarchs, for it was evident that the Albizzi and \textit{Parte} would not be easily reconciled to the existing constitutional order. Stefani maintained that the citizens felt they were now at the mercy of the evil Guelf captains.\textsuperscript{154} In January, 1364, Giovanni Geri del Bello, advisor to the signory, charged the captains were unjustly defaming “good citizens” who were known to be ardent supporters of Guelfic principles. He then called upon the priorate to act as “savior” (salutificator) of the beleaguered citizenry. Others speaking on this question, who became prominent in the government after 1372 as political independents, were Barna di Valorino Curiani, Niccolò Alberti, Bernardo Bigliotti, and the candid Salvestro de’ Medici; they, too, recognized that the signory had

\textsuperscript{153} G. Brucker, “Trial of Matteo Villani,” pp. 53-55.
\textsuperscript{154} Stefani, rub. 674. Stefani’s contention is supported by the fact that large numbers of prominent citizens were being persecuted by the \textit{Parte}. Cf. rub. 743; \textit{Atti del Esecutore}, Vols. 752, 790.
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to stand as a buffer against the tyrannous aspirations of those who sought
to overthrow the popular and free status of the city.\footnote{155 CP, 5, f. 7. Benedetto di Geri del Bello, Giovanni’s brother, was proscribed by the Parte in 1377. Cf. Stefani, 770.}

Many of the men the Parte denounced as Ghibellines were notaries
who held a variety of administrative positions in the city and countryside. As early as February, 1347, less than a month after enactment of the
initial laws against Ghibellines, when the first proscriptions took place,
a number of these officeholders were charged with political heterodoxy.\footnote{156 Atti del Esecutore, 79, fols. 7–7r.}

These notaries constituted the hard core of the Florentine bureaucracy,
and without their continued participation in civil life it would have been
difficult to carry on the daily business of government. The notary
performed those routine political tasks which most directly impinged upon
the daily life of the citizenry, ranging from the enforcement of verdicts of
the courts to the maintenance of walls, bridges, and roads. It was these
men who conducted investigations of such sensitive questions as the pecu­
lation of communal funds and the usurpation of state property. They also
handled the payment of mercenaries, the collection of many different but
equally unpopular communal levies, and acted as conservers of the re­
public’s rights. In the course of these manifold activities they were subject
to a plethora of pressures from those desiring a reduction in their tax as­
essment, a lowering of their gabelle, certification of payments alleged to
have been made on behalf of the commune, title to disputed property, the
squelching of investigations, and favorable action in the matter of the
exercise of extralegal authority by the great patricians of the city and
contado. If these lesser officeholders could resist the threats and blandish­
ments of the overmighty, then impersonal government would indeed have
some opportunity to survive in Florence. In enforcing the verdicts of the
courts and carrying out the letter of the law, these notaries risked incur­
ing the enmity of powerfully entrenched interests and even the disfavor
of their own fellow citizens. Their problems were compounded since
they were, for the most part, novi cives of modest origins and, therefore,
contemptible to those whose dignitas and pride of blood set them above
the rule of communal law. It can be suggested that the antipathy of the
potentes toward state functionaries was directly proportional to the office­
holder’s lack of status and to the frequency with which the exercise of
his duties interfered with the interests of the aforesaid patricians.

That lesser men of state came under the concerted attack of the dynasts
implies that the political importance of minor posts frequently was not
commensurate with the humble title used to designate the routine charac­
ter of their function. These men were pickets on the boundary line that
separated public law from private rights. The signory could not afford
to regard these political careerists, bureaucrats, and civil servants as pawns to be sacrificed in artfully waged civic games without suffering a considerable attrition of its own authority. Matteo Villani held the controversial post of official over the funded communal debt when he fell victim to the machinations of the Parte. Other officers of the Florentine treasury who suffered an identical fate were Giovanni Parenti and Michele di Puccio.\(^{157}\) Communal officials over the grain supply, the shops of the Platea, those in charge of the assets of bankrupts, syndics over judicial officers, reviewers of the accounts of the republic, rectors over communal property, those empowered to enforce the city's sumptuary laws, tax collectors, and a host of other civil servants who served in numerous key positions throughout the Tuscan countryside were all casualties of the bitter political vendetta being waged by the Parte Guelfa against Florentine officialdom.

In 1366 the Parte struck at the most prominent of the republic's bureaucratic luminaries when it ostracized Niccolò di Ser Ventura Monachi, chancellor of the commune, on the shopworn charge of Ghibellinism. This time the signory rose up and defended Monachi with a will. The sentence of the Parte was canceled by action of the priorate and communal councils. Because of his laudable character, his sincere faith, his great prudence, and his faithful labors on behalf of the republic, the chancellor was restored to the full honors of his office and his rightful place among the Guelf hosts of Italy.\(^{158}\) Unfortunately for Monachi, however, the case was far from closed, and during the following decade the political persecution of this leading civil servant was resumed. His tribulations bring to light the complex interplay of personal motives behind the attacks on Florentine bureaucrats. Monachi had incurred the hatred of Bonaiuto de Ser Belcaro, of the patrician house of Serragli, for being the instigator of an accusation brought against the latter in the Court of the Executor. It was alleged that when Bonaiuto had been prior in 1372, he exerted pressure upon the government to grant a certain rural commune, in which he had an interest, a substantial reduction in its tax assessment. The unnamed men who presented this indictment, presumably inspired by Monachi, are referred to in the copy of the charges as peaceful merchants, artisans, and guildsmen—good citizens all. It was their contention that Bonaiuto had accepted a bribe and acted to defraud the republic of

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\(^{157}\) Estimo, 307, f. 1; P, 36, f. 69. Another leading Florentine bureaucrat, Donato del Ricco, a lawyer, was also struck down by the Parte. In 1366 he spoke in favor of adding two minor guildsmen to the Guelf captaincy. Three years later he opposed sending a subsidy to the Holy See, and in the following decade he counseled that Florence make war "viriliter" against the church and under no circumstances should the commune settle for anything less than complete victory. Cf. P, 54, fols. 81–83; CP, 10, fols. 107, 129r; ibid., 14, fols. 78r, 86; Stefani, rub. 775.

its rightful revenues. There were great outcries of popular discontent when the magistrate failed to convict Bonaiuto on this count, so convinced of his guilt were the Florentines. Three years later Bonaiuto was chosen chief of the priorate by the Florentine system of lots and thus not in a position to be revenged. Monachi was deposed from the office of chancellor, and in 1378 this "truthful, loyal man," outspoken foe of that sect of "criminous men" who loved to proscribe "against every dictate of reason," was finally branded Ghibelline.

The figure behind Monachi's disfranchisement in 1378 was Lapo da Castiglionchio, the most vigorous and most despised of all proponents of Guelf orthodoxy. Married into the highest echelons of the Florentine aristocracy—Bardi, Cerchi, Amieri, Cavalcanti—claiming direct descent from the most ancient of the Tuscan feudatories, loathing trade and tradesmen, this grande prized "the lordly life" (la vita signorile) which prevailed in those happy days when his patrician forebears had ruled Florence. For him commerce was degrading and true grandeur possible only for those who never stooped to the vile arti or mercanzia, but conducted themselves like the nobility of old, preferring country life, estate management, and the chase, to the meaner pursuits of the city. For the most part, urban life was without honor and never bestowed "great fame" on those families who deserted their ancestral heritage. Lapo's model Florentine family was the Ricasoli, who, like the Castiglionchi, were "noble, venerable and great men," contemptuous of the new vulgar pursuits and who held tenaciously to the old ways, maintaining themselves in "grandeur" in the countryside. Indeed, it was true that in recent times some of the Ricasoli had become merchants, but they had only trafficked in the noble wool trade with foreign lands and not in "base merchandise." Unlike the nouveaux riches, the Ricasoli, Bardi, and Peruzzi were merchant pilgrims engaged in the virtuous business of the arte della lana and not in petty affairs or usurious transactions.

Lapo's zeal for the traditional was matched only by his contempt for the new order and its principal harbingers, the novi cives. Had not some of these upstarts been vassals of the Castiglionchio family who had gone to the city, made their fortunes in base trades, and then acquired the precious right of citizenship? Now these new men of piccolo affari sat in the communal councils and were too presumptuous to heed the wise advice of their betters. Lapo bemoaned the fact that these parvenus had become so powerful a force in Florentine politics by 1373 that it had become necessary to

159 Atti del Esecutore, 675, f. 32; Stefani, rub. 749; Parte Guelfa, numeri rossi, 5, f. 49.
160 Stefani, rub. 735. Monachi's own guild, the judges and notaries, conducted an investigation into his proscription and stated that it was clearly illegal. Cf. D. Marzi, La cancelleria, pp. 101–2.
grant them very important concessions. He wondered whether it was ever truly possible to dissolve the bonds of fealty. Were not these new men indeed still vassals in the sight of God, since their ancestors took an oath that bound them to their lord in perpetuity? But nowadays the new men have forgotten their ancient ties and no longer have "the old love" for patrician families such as the Ricasoli, Serragli, and Castiglionchi. The same men who lacked respect for the prerogatives of the patriciate were also without reverence for Holy Church and were, therefore, to be numbered among her Ghibelline foes who richly deserved the political fate which the Parte had in store for them.

Lapo, eminent canon lawyer and lecturer on the Decretals; his brother, Alberto, captain of the Parte Guelfa in 1366 when the first attempt was made to proscribe Monachi; and his nephew, Simone di Francesco da Castiglionchio, who denounced Matteo Villani as a Ghibelline, were among the most rabid partisans of Guelf political orthodoxy. The traditional meaning of Ghibellinism, with its emphasis upon strict loyalty to the imperial cause, was alien to Lapo and his generation, for was not the papacy itself looking for an alliance with the emperor which would help to restore the Holy See to Rome? By their definition, Ghibellines did not revere the patriciate, were in sympathy with the novi cives, and were without devotion to Holy Mother Church. To Lapo and his cohorts, the government that waged war against the papacy from 1375 to 1378 had departed so far from these Guelf principles that it deserved to be stigmatized as Ghibelline.

162 D. Marzi, La cancelleria, p. 100; G. Brucker, "Trial of Matteo Villani," 50-51. Tribaldo da Castiglionchio was also high in the councils of the Parte, and in 1354 he spoke for the enactment of anti-Ghibelline legislation before representatives of the commune. Cf. P, 41, f. 63. The case of Alberto suggests that holding high office in the Parte was not without its advantages. He was convicted by the communal courts for peculation of state funds when serving as a castellano in the Florentine contado. He petitioned the signory for judicial dispensation and it was granted. Cf. ibid., 42, 133r (October 9, 1355). Lapo himself was accused of using a public trust—in this instance, his position as Florentine ambassador to the papal court—to advance the interests of his own family. Specifically, the charge involved his willingness to compromise his city in return for benefits to be conferred upon his nephew, Simone di Francesco. Cf. Atti del Esecutore, 510, fols. 29-30r (June 29, 1367). Despite the concreteness of the allegations, Lapo was exonerated on all counts. In 1377 he was made a savio of the Parte for life. Cf. Stefani, rub. 775.

163 Lapo writes in a bizarre manner of the origin of the names "Ghibelline" and "Guelf." The former stems from "gerentes bellum" against the Holy See, while the latter is derived from "gerentes fidem" to the church. Cf. R. Davidsohn, "Tre orazioni di Lapo da Castiglionchio," ASI, 20 (1897), 225-46; L. Mehus, Epistola, p. 78. Lapo consistently favored very close ties with the church. In 1367, when an alliance with Milan—the foremost papal antagonist at this time—was being hotly debated in the government, Lapo argued that the priors "in no way ought to remove Florence's obedience and devotion from the Roman church." If the papacy desires an alliance against Milan, Florence should not decline, for disobedience to the will of the pope is dangerous to the well-being of Guelf cities. Cf. CP, 9, f. 22r. The following year he counseled that it
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Prior to 1375, the attacks of the Parte were sporadic rather than sustained, but after the outbreak of the war against the papacy they were intensified until they became an all-out assault directed against the state itself. At a time when the signory was telling the populace that Florence was engaged in a struggle to preserve her liberty against the onslaughts of her mortal enemies, the rapacious papal lieutenants, Lapo was contending that the republic had embarked on an evil venture against an invincible enemy which was certain to end disastrously unless the Florentines sued for peace. In the language of Virgil, whom he so much admired, Lapo "had hardened his heart to the internecine strife" and was willing to use the power of the Parte to drive those political independents and novicii who were enemies of Mother Church from the government so that this unholiest of wars might be terminated. But the signory was not content to sit idly by and turn the other cheek while its membership was suffering political proscription. The government countered with the most refined and artful techniques of political character assassination calculated to discredit Lapo and his ilk. The Ricasoli and Serragli were charged with being "ferocious and lawless nobles," and the ultimate weapon was used when they, along with the Castiglionchi, were accused of being Ghibellines. So successful was this campaign of vilification that in June, 1378, when the populace rioted, it was against these obstreperous aristocrats that it moved with torch and ban of exile.

The hero of this coup was Salvestro de' Medici, who acted pro parte popularium mercatorum et artificum to protect "the merchants and artisans, the poor and the weak" and all those who desired to live in peace, free from the menace of the fierce nobility. The Parte was accused of promoting dangerous innovations and fomenting violence which had swept

would not "be useful to make an alliance with Bernabo [Visconti] qui natura repugnat guelfum ghibellino inimicho (sic)." He went on to advise the signory not to ally with the Holy Roman Emperor or to vote him a subsidy until His Majesty promised to do the will of the church. Needless to say, Salvestro de' Medici and such leading new men as Tellino Dini, ironmonger; Ricco Taldi, coopersmith; and Schiatta di Ricco, pork butcher, were not in agreement with the opinions of the doctrinaire Guelf. Cf. ibid., 10, f. 58r; ibid., 9, f. 22r.

He went on to state that even though the forces of the church might be driven out of Italy, the Holy See would remain there "in facto et jure. Et ideo pax sine intermissione procuretur." Cf. ibid., f. 65 (December 26, 1377), The speaker for the gonfaloniere expressed an antithetical view when he called the papal vicars "vulpini." Another spokesman from the same college castigated the iniquitous Tuscan prelates and called them "rebelles" and "hostes" of the commune. Cf. ibid., 15, f. 29 (August 14, 1377); f. 47 (October 17, 1377). The entry for May 11, 1376, in the Diario di anonimo fiorentino, p. 308, calls the Florentines "veri cristiani eletti da Dio" to contest the authority of the papacy. It is well to remember that the antipapal teachings of the Fraticelli were intense at this time. Cf. M. Becker, "Politics and Heresy," pp. 71-73.


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the city to the brink of revolution. Through its flagrant and unscrupulous use of proscription, the Parte had caused “scandala” and instigated a reign of terror among the citizenry. Therefore, in order to restore the city to that free and peaceful condition so necessary for the well-being of the artisans and merchants, the Parte was to be stripped of its authority and the contentious nobility to be vigorously persecuted. To this end, legislation sponsored by Salvestro was promptly enacted and a special commission established to rule over the city. Two-thirds of the membership of this balia were novi cives, and they were enjoined to remove the yoke of the Parte from the shoulders of the citizenry. One of their first measures was to declare Lapo a rebel and to deprive his clique of their political rights.\[166\]

The new men and the political independents had achieved a concordia ordinum which enabled them to strengthen the machinery of state. Brought together by the fiery hostility of factions and the animus of the Parte Guelfa, personal antagonisms, suspicions, and social prejudices tended to erode. These two groups co-operated in advancing a program that exalted the authority of the signory to unprecedented heights. More intensively than ever, they employed state power to reduce the influence of great families over the Florentine church, contending that these patricians were using ecclesiastical courts to exploit “artisans and populares.” Then they proceeded to attack clerical tribunals, which in their opinion had been responsible for much injustice and oppression; a provision was enacted permitting any citizen to appeal from a verdict of these courts to the signory. The government also sought to render ineffectual the authority of the inquisition in territories under Florentine jurisdiction. State officials replaced clergy in certain instances as executors of last wills and testaments. Ecclesiastical tax immunities were revoked, clergy were compelled to pay heavy imposts, and numerous church properties were confiscated by the state to be sold or rented to the Florentines. The signory treated the problems of usury, the licensing of pawnbrokers, and the taking of interest as matters to be dealt with by public law without any concern for traditional ecclesiastical prerogatives. Never before had the divieto been used with such telling effect to preserve authority of the state against the might of old families. A protracted campaign was conducted by the signory to rectify certain economic abuses prevalent in civic life so that communal rights would prevail over private interests.\[167\]

By 1378 this consensus omnium bonorum had not only resulted in strengthening the government as a buffer against the aggressive aristocracy, but it had also altered markedly the status of new men. The latter

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166 C. Falletti-Fossati, Il tumulto dei Ciompi (Florence, 1882), p. 328. Lapo’s home was one of the first to be burned and three years later he died in exile.

were in a position where they could justly claim citizenship, not merely because they had satisfied legal technicalities or economic requirements, but rather on the grounds that they had fulfilled the moral expectancies of their society. Petrarch in defining the term "cives" wrote, "By citizens, of course, I mean those who love the existing order; for those who daily desire change are rebels and traitors, and against such, a stern justice may take its course." It was the novi cives and their allies who best met Petrarch’s definition.

This transvaluation of values whereby the novi cives who had been regarded as the sowers of civic discord in the age of Dante, only to become the defenders of the commonwealth three generations later, found expression in the lives and writings of the eminent humanists of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. To Coluccio Salutati, Florence was a city of "merchants and artisans," not of soldiers, knights, and nobles, for without trade and industry the city could not hope to survive. It was the moderate guildsmen, great and small, who had acted to help preserve the liberty of the people against the excesses of the Parte Guelfa and the superbia of the nobles. This view was imbedded in Florentine historiography until challenged by Machiavelli at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In the early quattrocento the prominent humanist Leonardo Bruni Aretino praised those popular regimes which the Greeks called “democratic” because it was only under this type of government that liberty and equality before the law could be safeguarded: “All our laws aim only for this, that the [Florentine] citizens may be equal because true liberty has roots only in equality.” This just condition could only be maintained, according to Bruni, if the most powerful families were prevented from monopolizing public office. Poggio Bracciolini, leading exponent of the classics and a successor of Bruni in the Florentine chancellery, extolled trade and commerce because it was only through these activities that cities gained the wealth that made possible their splendor, beauty, and art. He canonized bourgeois virtue by arguing that the desire for riches was good since it was natural to all men, and he condemned those who preached disrespect for material possessions as hypocrites. Finally, it should be noted that Coluccio, Bruni, and Poggio,

168 Epistolae Seniles, 14, 1, to Francesco di Carrera (November 28, 1373). The relevant passage is cited by Jacob Burckhardt in The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy (New York, 1958), 1, 28.
along with their fellow humanists Carlo Marzuppini and Benedetto Accolti, were all *novi cives*, and each in turn was elevated to the exalted office of Chancellor of the Republic. Unlike their famous predecessors Brunetto Latini and Monachi and their *trecento* literary prototypes Dante, Compagni, and the Villanis, each of whom suffered political persecution at the hands of their compatriots, the latter-day humanists lived out their lives secure in the service of the state. That they were born in Arezzo, Terra Nuova, or Stignano in Val di Nievole was the occasion neither for scorn nor ridicule nor political proscription.