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SOMMARIO

ANNO XIX (2016) - n. 1

À LA GUERRE COMME À LA GUERRE.

ATTORI, RISORSE E DINAMICHE DELLA COMPETIZIONE STRATEGICA
IN EUROPA E NEL MEDITERRANEO FRA XV E XVIII SECOLO

a cura di Mario Rizzo

<i>Il prisma della guerra. Qualche considerazione introduttiva a proposito di strategia, storia ed economia</i> di Mario Rizzo	p.	7
CHRISTOPHER STORRS, <i>The Fiscal-Military State in the Eighteenth Century</i>	»	19
DAVID PARROTT, <i>Interests, Corruption and Military Effectiveness: The French Army of Italy and the Campaign of 1657</i>	»	51
PHILLIP WILLIAMS, <i>Mare Nostrum? Reform, Recruitment and the Business of Crusade in the Fleets of the Seventeenth Century Mediterranean</i>	»	77
ARTURO PACINI, « <i>Como lo hacen los particulares</i> »: <i>l'alternativa asientoadministración nella gestione della flotta spagnola nel Mediterraneo nel XVI secolo</i>	»	103
DAVIDE MAFFI, <i>Asentistas del rey. Il mondo degli appalti militari nella Monarchia spagnola durante il XVII secolo</i>	»	135
MICHELE MARIA RABÀ, <i>La difesa del Ducato di Milano agli albori della dominazione asburgica. Contributo e 'remunerazioni' degli hombres de negocios italiani al servizio dell'Impero</i>	»	159
ALESSANDRO BUONO, MATTEO DI TULLIO, MARIO RIZZO, <i>Per una storia economica e istituzionale degli alloggiamenti militari in Lombardia tra XV e XVII secolo</i>	»	187
SÉVERIN DUC, <i>Il prezzo delle guerre lombarde. Rovina dello stato, distruzione della ricchezza e disastro sociale (1515-1535)</i>	»	219
GREGORY HANLON, <i>Destruction and Reconstruction of the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza in the 1630's and 1640's</i>	»	249

SOMMARIO

ARTICOLI

- MARIO ROBIONY, *Gli orologi che hanno cambiato il mondo: innovazioni e strategie industriali alla Solari di Udine (1948-1988)* » 279

NOTE

- ANDREA FILOCAMO, *L'Italia nell'Unione Monetaria Latina: analogie e differenze con l'eurozona* » 321

STORIOGRAFIA

- PAOLO PECORARI, *Aldo Stella e la storia economica e sociale* » 345

DESTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF THE DUCHY OF PARMA AND PIACENZA IN THE 1630's AND 1640's

The Thirty Years' War constitutes the major event in Italian history between the Council of Trent and the French Revolution, but it is woefully understudied and the impact of hostilities on the lives and property of contemporaries remains *terra incognita*. This research examines not only the plundering of the Duchy of Parma and Piacenza by Habsburg troops in 1636-1637, but also describes the many ways war imposed financial costs on the population, before, during and long after the fighting. Many of these costs have never been taken into consideration by historians who argue the positive net benefits of war for economic development.

Duchy of Parma and Piacenza, Italian Thirty Years War, war damage, post-war reconstruction, wartime taxation

Benché la guerra dei trent'anni costituisca il principale evento della storia d'Italia nel periodo compreso fra il Concilio di Trento e la Rivoluzione francese, purtroppo essa è poco studiata, e di conseguenza l'impatto delle ostilità sulle vite e sui beni dei contemporanei rimane ancora in larga parte sconosciuto. Questo articolo non solo esamina la depredazione del Ducato di Parma e Piacenza da parte delle truppe asburgiche nel 1636-1637, ma descrive anche le tante forme in cui la guerra impose pesanti costi alla popolazione locale, prima, durante e dopo i combattimenti. Molti di questi costi non sono mai stati presi in considerazione da quegli storici secondo i quali lo sviluppo economico avrebbe complessivamente tratto beneficio dalla guerra.

Ducato di Parma e Piacenza, Guerra dei trent'anni in Italia, devastazioni belliche, ricostruzione postbellica, tassazione in tempo di guerra

Wars occasion a bonfire of human and material resources that usually commences even before the shooting starts, especially if belligerents can see imminent conflict looming on their horizon. Economic historians have been known to assess positively the ways in which military activity – euphemistically called the security sector – stimulates a broad range of manufacturing enterprises and commercial dis-

tribution networks. The late Enrico Stumpo once argued that war and military expenditure were positive stimuli that spurred economic growth in Piedmont, which compared favourably with more peaceful Tuscany¹. My project here is not to condemn war in principle, for it figures on the horizon of every human community since the beginning of time. But an honest assessment of its economic impact should try and measure the cost of war compared to the hypothetical situation wherein the state would have remained in perfect peace. The Thirty Years' War was the most important event in Italian history between the Council of Trent and the French Revolution. The assessment of the impact of this great war on the peninsula has hardly begun, so there is a great deal to learn².

Italian princes and republics still desired territorial aggrandizement in the seventeenth century, or else sought to recover lands lost to their neighbours in previous contests since the Middle Ages. Here we will examine the war brought upon the duchies of Parma and Piacenza by the megalomania of its young duke, Odoardo Farnese (r. 1622-1646), who let himself be seduced into joining Cardinal Richelieu's alliance against the House of Austria. Already as a boy it was clear to observers that he displayed an obsessive interest in glory and status³. From the onset of his reign in 1622 as a boy of ten, he sought to transform his dreams into great deeds. Odoardo appointed as his principal minister Count Fabio Scotti, who convinced him that Spain was on the road to rapid decline. After years of bellicose speech, Odoardo signed a treaty of offensive alliance with France in 1633 and began to hire mercenaries from across Italy. Impatient to begin the war against Spain, he pressed Louis XIII to initiate hostilities as quickly as possible, and chafed with impatience until the Habsburg victory at Nordlingen in September 1634 forced France to intervene directly in the anti-Habsburg cause. While waiting for the call to act, Odoardo dipped into the great chest of good coin amassed by his predecessors

¹ E. STUMPO, *Guerra ed economia: spese e guadagni militari nel Piemonte del Seicento*, «Studi storici», 26 (1986), pp. 371-395; ID., «*Vel domi vel belli*»: arte della pace e strategia di guerra fra Cinque e Seicento. I casi del Piemonte sabauda e della Toscana medicea, in *Guerre, stati e città: Mantova e l'Italia padana dal secolo XIII al XIX*, Mantova 1988, pp. 53-68.

² A recent doctoral thesis by G. CERINO BADONE, *Le Seconde guerre d'Italia 1587-1659*, Università del Piemonte orientale, 2011, still unpublished, is a significant first step.

³ U. BENASSI, *I natali e l'educazione del duca Odoardo Farnese*, «Archivio storico per le province parmensi», 9 (1909), pp. 99-227.

in order to purchase military provisions for the several thousand men who bided their time in Piacenza and Parma⁴.

Seventeenth-century warfare was largely articulated around the possession of fortresses and castles; Parma and Piacenza were serious strongholds whose walls were buttressed with Italian trace fortifications in the sixteenth century, each held more securely by a great citadel where the Farnese stored their military hardware. War-related expenditure began with extensive repairs and improvements to each of these fortresses, in order to protect them from a Spanish *coup de main*. Work crews dug out a covered way along the outer rim of each ditch, and erected palisades along it. Strategic emplacements like the port area of Piacenza along the Po river outside the walls were supported by independent redoubts and batteries constructed of earth, surrounded with palisades and topped with a fringe of wooden gabions (a framework of branches filled with dirt and rubble to protect men from musketry). A typical redoubt contained seventy or eighty gabions, each one half a metre wide and three-quarters of a metre high, requiring almost 500 poles over two metres long. A single redoubt felled 240 trees, stripping the natural cover for 500 to 700 m². The damage to the forest cover from a single, small earthen redoubt was both noteworthy and durable⁵.

In the period leading up to the war, and over the course of it, a multitude of locations required such structures to render them defensible. Villages such as Fontanellato, Poviglio, Rottofreno, among perhaps dozens of others, set to work erecting earthen walls and bastions, trimmed with palisades. The necessities of war made short work of regulations governing wood-cutting, although it is difficult to assess this kind of damage from the surviving sources. Towns and larger villages usually possessed a tumbledown stone or brick rampart last reinforced in the 1550s. These old walls now required patching up, digging deeper ditches around them, throwing up earthen sconces or ravelins topped with gabions before the gates and planting palisades wherever they were judged opportune. Scores of feudal castles needed similar repair and while crews laboured to strengthen defenses, watch-

⁴ G. HANLON, *Parma nell'epoca del Duca Odoardo "Il Grande" 1630-1650*, in *Storia di Parma*, IV, *Il Ducato farnesiano*, edited by G. Bertini, Parma 2014, pp. 163-193.

⁵ V. MATOUŠEK, *Building a model of a field fortification of the Thirty Years' War near Olbramov (Czech Republic)*, «Journal of Conflict Archaeology», 1 (2005), pp. 114-132.

men were delegated to inhabit steeples and towers to watch for threats on the horizon⁶. This great and expensive task of local fortification was never finished and – as it turned out – proved largely ineffectual. For the duration of the war, villagers took turns guarding these posts and patrolled the surrounding area both day and night. The Farnese duchy's vast militia, estimated at over 30,000 infantry and 700 cavalry, carried out these tasks by rotation. These measures just increased the cost of insecurity. Local communities then required the services of militiamen and professional soldiers for months at a time to defend them, who needed to be fed and kept warm over the winter⁷.

No sooner had the Farnese army marched away westward for its fateful encounter with destiny with the Spanish in early September 1635, than deserters infested the frontier region and robbed farms and villages. Towns not yet fortified like Borgonovo set to work erecting new works and patrolling the countryside, drawing men away from the annual tasks of threshing and harvesting the grapes⁸. By the onset of winter, forays by Lombard militiamen and paramilitary bands crossing the border southwest of Piacenza spurred wholesale mobilization there and along the Po river frontier. The return of the debris of Duke Odoardo's force and a powerful escort of a thousand Savoyard cavalry at Christmas placed the duchy in immediate danger, now that it sat isolated far from the French army in the Monferrato. Each side found it necessary to seize resources and forage their horses and oxen in enemy border territories, to alleviate the enormous demand on these commodities within their respective states and to deny them to the enemy. The controversial decision (probably Odoardo's) to invade the semi-neutral Duchy of Modena in search of vital fodder spread the insecurity from the western frontier to the

⁶ For the situation in Lorraine, entirely comparable to Northern Italy, see M. GANTELET, *Réguler la guerre aux frontières des Pays-Bas espagnols: la naissance empirique du droit des gens (Metz, 1635-1639)*, in *Les ressources des faibles: Neutralités, sauvegardes, accommodements en temps de guerre (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècle)*, edited by J.-F. Chanet e C. Windler, Rennes 2009, pp. 221-240.

⁷ M. STEVENIN, *Une fatalité: les devastations des gens de guerre dans l'Est de la France (1620-1660): l'exemple de la Champagne*, in *Les Malheurs de la guerre, I, De la guerre à l'ancien à la guerre réglée*, edited by A. Corvisier e J. Jacquier, Paris 1996, pp. 161-179.

⁸ BIBLIOTECA PASSERINI-LANDI, PIACENZA (hereafter BPLP), ms. Pallastrelli, n. 126, *Croniche o diario del Rev. Sgr. Benedetto Boselli, rettore della chiesa di San Martino di Piacenza, 1620-1670*, p. 112.

eastern border too⁹. In February Spanish and Modenese troops unfurled over the Parmigiano in search of booty, occupying a number of rural towns like Colorno for a few weeks.

When the return of warm weather permitted full-blown hostilities in May 1636, armies on the move did their best to destroy the enemy's rural economy by disrupting irrigation and destroying mills on a vast scale. Neither the French nor the Spanish field armies were large enough to conduct a proper siege of a powerful fortress, so harming the adversary indirectly by laying waste to the countryside feeding them was their best strategy¹⁰. The French and Savoyards ravaged the entire northern and western part of the Novarese in its rapid advance on the Ticino during the month of June. The offensive was stopped dead at the bloody battle of Tornavento on June 22, in which the Franco-Savoyards came close to complete disaster. After a stubborn, bloody day of fighting, the Franco-Savoyard forces hesitated for a month along the Ticino river. The Marques de Leganés gradually strangled the tenuous supply line of the invaders from his great fortified base of Novara, forcing them to retreat into Piedmont a month later¹¹. Victor Amadeus then dispersed his field army into garrisons to protect his state from marauding enemy detachments. The Habsburg army was now free to pressure Odoardo to withdraw from the war. Key towns on the western frontier (Rottofreno and Castel San Giovanni), and the Apennine border (Borgo Taro) of the Farnese duchy were already in the hands of enemy garrisons, intent on starving the inhabitants into submission. After the middle of August, a strong Spanish invasion force beset the duchy from the Pavese, from the Reggiano and across the Po from the Cremonese to isolate the two fortress cities from each other. Next they sought to close off the arrival by sea of French rescue forces by occupying rural castles and villages in the principal river valleys leading to the Apennine passes. Duke Odoardo, who still refused to hear of peace, withdrew his professional soldiers into the cities and a handful of strategic castles like Rivalta, Berceto and Montechiarugolo.

Odoardo decreed a full-scale mobilization of citizens to work on

⁹ ARCHIVES DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES, LA COURNEUVE, *Correspondance Politique Sardaigne*, vol. 24, letter from the Count of Verrua to Cardinal Richelieu, 11 January 1636; G. HANLON, *The Hero of Italy: Odoardo Farnese, Duke of Parma, his soldiers and his subjects in the Thirty Years' War*, Oxford 2014, pp. 144-146.

¹⁰ BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE MADRID, ms. 2367, Italia 1636, p. 45.

¹¹ G. HANLON, *Italy 1636: Cemetery of Armies*, Oxford 2016.

city fortifications. However, it was impossible to halt the daily life of the entire population to deal with the war. Rather, the rural refugees were dragooned into this work in exchange for food, while even the social elites – including nobles and the rich monks of San Giovanni Evangelista of Parma – were personally liable for similar service in crisis situations. Decrees on 5 and 7 September 1636 ordered everyone to make themselves available for *corvées* of all kinds, and tallied the male and female citizens by neighbourhood¹². Between November and December, once the threat of siege had passed, about a hundred workers served on the Parma fortifications every day, a bit more than twice that number if one includes soldiers and bombardiers, judging from the bread rations allotted to the workers¹³.

While the state's need for soldiers and labourers grew exponentially, war close to home paralyzed the economy and collapsed the peacetime tax revenues. The effect of war on the treasury was immediate, long before the enemy made their appearance. Odoardo's chief minister Fabio Scotti, largely responsible for convincing the duke of the wisdom of this war, took his case to the Communal government of Parma on January 3 to press them for a huge surtax of 80,000 ducati (about 800,000 lire), given that «the excise taxes [*dazi*] yield nothing because of the war»¹⁴. For example, the brickmakers shut down their ovens and ceased to make cement, bricks and tiles, «because nobody is collecting stones [for making cement] nor have we prepared lumber or firewood, given that people have other designs than to build»¹⁵. Export industries collapsed, for the onset of war in 1635 also closed off the roads leading to the Habsburg State of Milan, with which commercial relations were traditionally intense. Antonio Villa, who leased the Postal service in Fiorenzuola for three years, watched helplessly as the busy traffic with Milan and Cremona shut down. Then the extension of the war to Modena stopped movement in that direction too, and finally, during the summer, roads to Genoa were occupied by enemy soldiers, making the duchy's isolation almost complete. His postal horses were increasingly subject to requisition by the army. Similarly, Giovan Francesco Bertinelli, who leased the postal service in Fornovo, which led to the Lunigiana and

¹² ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI PARMA (hereafter ASPr), *Gridario*, b. 32, n. 72 and 73.

¹³ ASPr, *Governo Farnesiano, Milizie*, b. 36.

¹⁴ ASPr, *Archivio Comunale di Parma*, b. 331, *Minute delle Ordinazioni*, 3 January 1636.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18 March 1636.

Tuscany, suffered the shutdown of that busy corridor from the beginning of 1636. The war shut down the commerce of olive oil over the passes with Tuscany and Liguria, leaving the tax collectors who had purchased the right to levy the tolls without any revenue. Businessmen like these had invested considerable sums to manage horses and lodgings, and relied on smooth service to recover their outlay¹⁶. One could easily go bankrupt from the impact of war without suffering ruin from soldiery. Giovan Stefano Bolzoni leased wholesale the waters of the Enza river near Montechiarugolo for three years with the intention of distributing them to nearby peasants and landlords who irrigated their fields. Local farmers just assumed that whatever hay they grew would be confiscated without payment by the contending armies, and so neglected to grow any fodder crops that required rented water. The millers fled the border area as well, such that nobody drew upon the leaser's available water. Bartolomeo Cantoni, a miller leasing a mill from the Ducal Camera at Gazzano, near the city, also lost his investment when peasants carried their grain directly to Parma, to store it and mill it there¹⁷.

The toll collector at the border bridge with the Duchy of Modena tallied his losses since August 1635. All the tolls and *dazi* were off: those imposed on silk cocoons, on woven cloth, on the baking ovens and the butcher stalls, upon which the rich city based its revenues. To compensate for the shortfall, the city imposed an easily monitored chimney tax, which had the virtue of making rich people pay disproportionately. Rich people were hit even harder by the new window tax of 5 soldi per month on each façade opening; shopkeepers paid the equivalent of two windows for their storefront. Once the enemy troops spread across the district, these new taxes were supplemented by very heavy impositions of all kinds, like the increase of 50 percent on the milling of grain, the *macina*, on 9 September 1636, which hit humble people particularly hard. The councillors then imposed additional taxes on cheese, on fruits, on decks of cards, on wine consumed in private, on wine served in public places, on cakes and pastries, salami and fresh pork, on spirits, on large livestock and on hay to feed them, on ovens and charcoal to heat them, on writing paper. This impressive document of 8 Octo-

¹⁶ ASPr, *Magistrato Camerale di Parma*, Memoriali, b. 23, n. 237, 3 September 1636, and n. 249, 20 September 1636.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 19 January 1637 and 2 January 1637.

ber 1636 reveals the duke's urgent need for money to pay his precious professional soldiers¹⁸.

The district north of Parma suffered two invasions by Habsburg and Modenese forces, first in February 1636 following a Farnese sweep of the rich granaries around Reggio Emilia. In reprisal a sizeable contingent seized towns in the rich Bassa Parmigiana like Colorno and Soragna while soldiers stripped the hamlets of linens and the bedding, the silver, the crockery, the footwear and whatever else they fancied¹⁹. Medieval and early modern warfare entailed the automatic right of soldiers to plunder the subjects of an enemy prince. The peasantry understood that they possessed no rights in wartime and that enemy troops were likely to seize or destroy their belongings. Moreover, soldiers expected booty as their due, their "dowry", to compensate them for the lack of timely pay²⁰. They prized the oxen and cows above all else, which could be herded to convenient locations and then either butchered or employed as transport. Practically no item was safe from soldiers. At Colorno the invaders camped for a couple of weeks and made off with the entire contents of the Monte di Pietà. Soldiers disliked burdening themselves with an assortment of domestic articles with small retail value, so negotiated with the town through a foreign intermediary to sell the contents back to the inhabitants for lire 25,000²¹. Orderly extortion and other "contributions" were preferable to disorderly looting from the point of view of the officers. A good portion of the invaders were Italians from Lombardy, Modena and Naples, which made it easier to maintain communication between the soldiers and the suffering civilians. Colonels could sell safeguards to towns as well as to specific individuals. While they occupied the district, soldiers launched forays to collect animals for their soup pots²². War was an efficient means of helping oneself to the property of others, and armies practised this on a vast scale²³.

¹⁸ ASPr, *Archivio Comunale di Parma*, b. 331, *Minute delle Ordinazioni*, 9 September and 8 October 1636, and 30 March 1637.

¹⁹ R.E. MOHRMANN, *Everyday life in war and peace, in 1648: War and Peace in Europe*, edited by K. Bussmann e H. Schelling, Münster-Osnabrück 1998, pp. 319-328; see also GANTELET, *Réguler la guerre*, pp. 221-240.

²⁰ F. REDLICH, *De Praeda Militari: Looting and booty 1500-1815*, Wiesbaden 1956, pp. 3-10.

²¹ ASPr, *Carteggio Farnesiano Interno*, b. 383, 22 March 1636.

²² REDLICH, *De Praeda Militari*, pp. 50-52.

²³ M. COSTA, *Psicologia militare: elementi di psicologia per gli appartenenti alle forze armate*, Milano 2003, p. 54.

As disruptive as the invasions of February and March were to the Parmigiano, the level of destruction pales with that inflicted by victorious Spanish forces unfurling over the duchy in the aftermath of the battle of Tornavento. Leganés deployed a strong contingent of several thousand professional soldiers and a large body of militia to lift a sluggish Farnese siege of Rottofreno. After being routed outside the town on August 15, Odoardo's army retreated into the strongly fortified Piacenza and Parma, and into a handful of reinforced castles serving to keep the lines of communication open with the Ligurian Riviera from which French seaborne reinforcements might arrive. Habsburg troops intended to ravage the duchy with the aim of depriving it of the means of resistance. They literally destroyed the rural infrastructure, the hamlets and the mills in order to demoralize the population so that Odoardo's subjects would cry out for peace at any price. The invaders then occupied the duchy's medieval castles and seized the grain, fodder, animals and other treasures sheltered there, and then utilized the same strongpoints as bases from which to raid the outlying district. They forced the prostrate rural population to pay for safeguards and to contribute resources to the Habsburg troops. This rigour against Parma would comfort the duchy's neighbours like Modena, Guastalla and the Doria fiefs threatened by Odoardo, and encouraged them to continue in the Habsburg alliance. These were all measures recommended by Raimondo Montecuccoli in the famous textbook he penned during these very years²⁴.

Offensive war against a rich, untouched territory was the moment in which senior officers enriched themselves. Officers often drew from their own purses to keep their companies and regiments operational; they reimbursed themselves at their enemy's expense by seizing the assets of conquered territories. Since medieval times, offensive warfare in late summer or early autumn sought to deprive the enemy of freshly-harvested grain and grapes²⁵. Gil de Haes, a Flemish military enterpriser and colonel of a German regiment in Spanish service, led the force that unfurled over the countryside west of the Trebbia river and Piacenza. In a few weeks his soldiers collected some 50,000 Spanish doubloons from the district²⁶. «La contrée était riche. Elle possédait

²⁴ COSTA, *Psicologia militare*, p. 116.

²⁵ W.P. CAFERRO, *Warfare and economy in Renaissance Italy 1350-1450*, «Journal of Interdisciplinary History», 39 (2008), p. 173.

²⁶ I have no specific value for the Spanish doubloon in 1636. A Doble d'Italia was worth 26.25 Piacenza lire, making the sum collected by de Haes worth over 1.3 million lire. ASPr, *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, p. 603.

de si riches pâturages et de si nombreux troupeaux». The colonel herded a thousand large head of livestock into the Duchy of Milan as prizes²⁷. These partially compensated the loss of cows and oxen to French and Savoyard armies earlier that year.

After August 19, the Habsburg regiments crossed the Trebbia and occupied villages and towns in the former Pallavicino State, a lush territory east of Piacenza. A force numbering five or six thousand troops spread across the Piacentino intent on occupying all the strong points and subjecting Piacenza itself to a loose blockade. Some sizeable villages, such as Carpaneto, south of Piacenza, were put to the torch, according to the chronicler of these events, Giovanni Pietro Crescenzi Romani. Most others were taken either by force or surrendered after short negotiations²⁸. Many of the feudatories commanding militiamen retreated into the castle, and some paid the Spanish commanders not to set fire to the defenceless villages. Castles usually surrendered after enemy cannon battered the walls for a few hours, or a couple of days at the most, delivering great quantities of freshly-harvested grain and livestock to the conquerors. Where the defenders put up a stiff fight, as in the important trading village of Bettola, they were massacred by their assailants.

Meanwhile another strong force of Spanish, German and Neapolitan forces crossed the Enza river frontier into the Parmigiano. Leganés placed them under the direction of Don Vincenzo Gonzaga, uncle of the reigning duke of Guastalla, who knew the district well²⁹. These forces broke up the bridges across the Parma river and the naviglio between Parma and Colorno. «Li Spagnoli e Tedeschi volevano venire a rovinare il stato, come fecero», wrote an eyewitness parish priest living in the Bassa Parmense. The presence of Habsburg troops emboldened the inhabitants of Casalmaggiore in the State of Milan to cross the Po river in search of plunder. A body of them was surprised on August 26 by a Farnese detachment of horse, and some drowned while trying to swim back across the river, while scores of others were taken prisoner and held for ransom in Parma³⁰.

²⁷ C. RAHLENBECK, *Gilles de Haes*, Ghent 1854, p. 13; Rahlenbeck's sources are not indicated. A similar figure appears in the book by the libertine writer F. PALLAVICINO, *Successi del mondo dell'anno MDCXXXVI*, Venezia 1638, p. 76.

²⁸ G.P. CRESCENZI ROMANI, *Corona della Nobiltà d'Italia, ovvero compendio dell'Istorie delle famiglie illustri*, Bologna 1639-1642, I, pp. 322-325.

²⁹ ASPr, *Archivio Gonzaga di Guastalla*, b. 63, Lettere, 12 August 1636.

³⁰ C. TROMBELLA, *La 'Memoria' di Colorno (1612-1674) di Don Costantino*

In the light of recent literature, campaigns to deliberately lay waste to enemy regions seem to have been the exception, even during the brutal Thirty Years' War; the invasion of the Farnese duchy constituted one of these exceptions³¹. «We are inflicting extensive damage on Parma and Piacenza, preventing them from harvesting the grapes and interdicting their food supply by demolishing the mills», wrote the governor of Milan to Madrid at the end of September³². Apart from Carpaneto, most larger villages were spared burning and were subjected to heavy contributions instead. A chronicler in the town of Soragna blessed his feudal lord, a relative of a leading Lombard aristocrat in the Spanish high command, the Cardinal Trivulzio, for seeking to safeguard the property of town inhabitants. The rural dwellers, on the other hand, suffered the loss of their animals, their household goods, and the burning of their houses³³. Similarly in Busseto, the little capital of the Pallavicino State, Spanish forces under Don Martin d'Aragon aimed four cannon at the gate to induce the town's surrender. After short negotiations, town officials consented to a large contribution of 1,000 doubloons, a sum so large that it took months to collect it. The local council subjected ecclesiastical properties to pay a portion of it notwithstanding church claims of exemption. Officers kept the soldiers in hand in the town itself, but they plundered the countryside and dismantled buildings in search of firewood. In the nearby town of Fiorenzuola, the town supplied the garrison lodged in the castle with some 200 bread rations daily, which seriously depleted their own stocks³⁴. These had been collected from the exposed countryside before the invasion, leaving rural populations short of food. But an accord with the invaders allowed the inhabitants to plant some crops in the fall. A quick understanding with the enemy officers was in everyone's interest, for «la contribution, même écrasante, restaure la sécurité, un bien inestimable»³⁵.

Canivetti: Parte Prima, 1612-1658, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi di Parma, Facoltà di Magistero, 1997-1998.

³¹ R.G. ASCH, 'Wo der soldat hinkömbt, da ist alles sein': *Military violence and atrocities in the Thirty Years' War re-examined*, «German History», 18 (2000), pp. 291-309.

³² ARCHIVO GENERAL DE SIMANCAS, *Estado*, leg. 3344, n. 205.

³³ A. BOSELLI, *Cenni storici di letteratura dialettale parmense*, «Archivio storico per le province parmensi», n.s., 5 (1905), pp. 43-57.

³⁴ M. BOSCARRELLI, *Contributi alla storia degli Stati Pallavicino di Busseto e di Cortemaggiore (sec. XV-XVII)*, Parma 1992, pp. 97-117.

³⁵ GANTELET, *Réguler la guerre*, p. 236.

Soldiers lodged in castles and towns rejoiced at the opportunity to strip bare the countryside, largely abandoned by frightened inhabitants. Officers were supposed to give permission to soldiers to leave camp and forage for loot, and we do not know if they received a share of the spoils³⁶. Military codes permitted soldiers to burn buildings whose occupants fled in order to avoid contributions, and fire was used as a weapon of war from time immemorial. Abandoned rural houses, barns and storehouses were frequently burned, along with the looms and whatever objects the owners could not take with them³⁷. The Chevalier Antoine de Ville, who published a manual instructing how raiding parties should operate, condemned the increasing tendency towards indiscriminate burning. «C'est contre les loix de la guerre, et on n'en retire pas d'avantage, car l'ennemi agira de la mesme sorte. C'est une coutume brutale, contre les sentimens naturels (sic) qui nous incommode autant qu'il endommage l'ennemi»³⁸. Near Fontanellato in the Parmigiano, the fearsome troopers of Count Schlick, «uomini piuttosto barbari e feroci, che umani» destroyed houses «come demoni»³⁹. Soldiers just as often demolished houses without the aid of fire. Even unthreatening soldiers required firewood, and were not about to expose themselves to ambush while collecting it. Two friars conducted an inspection tour of Count Sanvitale's castle in Fontanelato and the adjacent town at the end of January 1637, hoping to remove religious icons to the greater safety of their monastery. Most of the furniture inside private houses had been transformed into firewood but the soldiers had not yet dismantled the buildings themselves. A detachment of thirty soldiers still held the castle, the structure of which was largely undamaged. Even more surprising, the great barrels and casks were still intact. But thirty soldiers fed ten separate fires in as many hearths scattered around the great edifice, and the friars feared for the furniture, which soldiers customarily used for fuel: «nel salotto vi è un fuoco, e tutti abbruggiavano asse, travetti e mobili». The friars gagged from the stench caused by just six soldiers lodged in the chamber of the countess Sanvitale: «vivono con fetore

³⁶ REDLICH, *De Praeda Militari*, pp. 9-10.

³⁷ S. PORTER, *Destruction in the English Civil Wars*, Dover (NH) 1994, pp. 32, 97.

³⁸ A. DE VILLE, *De la charge des gouverneurs des places*, Paris 1674 (I ed. 1639, dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu), p. 494.

³⁹ BIBLIOTECA PALATINA DI PARMA (hereafter BPPr), ms. Parmense 462, *Da Libri della chiesa di Corticelle* (copy Affò), p. 314.

grande, vi mangiano, dormano, fanno cucina, cantina e ogni altro necessario alla loro sordidezza et io non vi potevo stare, tanto è il fetore che si trova in dette stanze». By then these soldiers had instructions not to shoot the inhabitants if they tried to return to their houses and make them habitable in midwinter⁴⁰. They had collected some furniture that they were willing to sell back to the Count and the inhabitants. A week later, the colonel Count Schlick sent carts to collect whatever stores and furnishings remained in town to transport them to San Secondo, which served as Don Vincenzo Gonzaga's district headquarters⁴¹.

In Germany, soldiers often destroyed everything, including the churches; Catholic armies in Italy did as much. The Franco-Savoyard army ransacked all the churches within reach of their patrols, and went beyond snatching silver sacred vessels and silken textiles, to smashing roof tiles and burning wooden furnishings⁴². Spanish and German troops garrisoned in Colorno burgled all the houses, ripped off the doors and stripped the window sashes and shutters, and knocked over walls in order to extract the iron fittings. In the church they carried off the organ, the altar hangings, the statues of saints and whatever else they thought was valuable: «il Turco poco più haveria fatto!»⁴³. There and elsewhere, the soldiers robbed the churches of their bells, which they could melt down and cast into weapons and munitions⁴⁴. In fact, garrisons and camps collected and “recycled” metal on a large scale. Camp followers included bakers, butchers, launderers, armourers and other hangers-on who provided a multitude of services, buying and selling small arms, armour and other military paraphernalia every day. Metalworkers with the army shod horses and cast metal into musket locks. One choice target was the humble barrel, each of which might cost peasants the equivalent of months of income. Sol-

⁴⁰ ASPr, *Archivio Sanvitale*, XXIII, *Archivio Storico*, b. 855, Letters from Fra D. Col, prevosto to Count Sanvitale, 23 and 31 January 1637.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Letter from Fra Daniele da Piacenza to Count Sanvitale, 7 February 1637.

⁴² F. BERTOLLI, *L'Invasione Franco-sabauda del 1636 nel Novarese e nel Milanese*, in *Il Ticino: strutture, storia e società nel territorio tra Oleggio e Lonate Pozzolo*, edited by G. Amoretti, Gavirate 1989, pp. 51-70; on Germany, J.-M. BOEHLER, *La guerre au quotidien dans les villages du Saint-Empire au XVIIe siècle*, in *Les Villages face à la guerre, XIV^e-XVIII^e siècle*, a cura di C. Desplat, Toulouse 2002, pp. 65-88.

⁴³ TROMBELLA, *La 'Memoria' di Colorno*, 5 February 1637.

⁴⁴ BPPr, ms. Parmense 737, Hippolito Calandrini, *L'Heroe d'Italia, ovvero Vita del Serenissimo Odoardo Farnese il Grande*, p. 834.

diers routinely smashed these, burned the staves and sold the hoops to armourers and army blacksmiths for paltry amounts of cash⁴⁵.

There were plans to occupy the Farnese duchy completely, but as the weather turned cold, Spanish generals thought better of it, preferring to post strong garrisons in the large villages at the foot of the Apennines like Fornovo, Sala Baganza, Torrechiara. Troops stationed in the high country in winter would have been cut off by snow, without much in the way of food stores or firewood, in a country where thousands of militiamen were still under arms⁴⁶. After nine months in the field, most of the troops were badly dressed, and a harsh winter would be their undoing. As the Habsburg soldiers settled into their vindictive occupation, they transformed quick rapine into an unbearable burden.

We are blessed with an inexhaustible mine of information on the type and scale of vexations in the form of petitions (*memoriali*) to the Ducal financial administration, where people who had leased property belonging to the Farnese domain suffered damage which entitled them to remediation at the discretion of the functionaries. Since this constitutes a mass of documents numbering many bundles, here I will randomly cite just a few petitions to give some idea of the suffering of Farnese subjects great and small. One lessee of a considerable estate found it impossible to feed 80 large head of livestock belonging to the duke (exclusive of his own), and in consequence moved them at great expense across borders into Guastallan and Mantuan territory in search of fodder; 95 cartloads of hay worth 4,000 lire, crossed the Po and back again, paying customs and excise duties. Some of the oxen and cows died from hunger while others strayed, to his complete loss. By September, unable to exploit the estate he managed, plant the wheat and spelt or fertilize the fields with the livestock, he withdrew to Parma with his family⁴⁷. The fruit trees and vines remained unpruned, resulting in far lower yields the following summer once peace returned. Renting large herds of precious cows and oxen

⁴⁵ B. SANDBERG, *The Magazine of all their pillaging: Armies as sites of second-hand exchanges during the French Wars of Religion*, in *Alternative Exchanges: Second-hand circulations from the 16th century to the present*, edited by L. Fontaine, New York and Oxford 2008, pp. 76-96.

⁴⁶ BIBLIOTECA UNIVERSITARIA DI BOLOGNA, ms. 9E 27, Letter to Don Martin D'Aragona from D. Ventura, religious in the service of Don Vincenzo Gonzaga, 29 November 1636.

⁴⁷ ASPr, *Magistrato Camerale di Parma*, Memoriali, b. 24, n. 245, Luogotenente Buzzi, 11 July 1637.

was a huge investment, greater than building a noble palazzo in the city. Simone Brigenti invested 14,000 lire just for the livestock of the Campo del Bo estate, most of which were taken by Spanish and Modenese soldiers, or else died of hunger and exposure for lack of shelter. The livestock he saved from depredations he had to feed from his own private resources. Campo del Bo could not be ploughed or planted for 1637, due to the lack of draft animals. He received no payment for providing 400 kg of cheese (worth about 600 lire) to the Parman garrison defending Montechiarugolo. These were considerable losses, larger than the annual revenues of all but a few noble families⁴⁸. Ducal functionaries instructed lessees to herd the livestock away from threatened zones and across borders. Mantuan territory, although technically part of the anti-Habsburg coalition, was treated as neutral by Leganés, on the reciprocal understanding that the Duke of Mantua would not raid the nearby Cremonese. Ducal oxen and cows in their hundreds pastured there or survived on expensive imported commercial fodder⁴⁹.

Rural prosperity followed time-worn, slow-changing routines that hedged against the perturbing effects of bad weather. War disrupted the most cost-effective methods of producing flour from local stocks. Millers Marc'Antonio and Giorgio Zattelli who leased the ducal mills at Colorno watched crews dismantle them to strengthen the town fortifications. The enemy soldiers later carried off the hardware necessary to reconstruct the mechanism, along with enough grain and flour to feed 150 people for a year⁵⁰. Closer to Parma, Bartolomeo Cantoni, miller at Gazzano, fell insolvent after peasants began to carry their stocks of grain to grind in Parma instead. Even in Piacenza, safe behind strong walls, millers suffered severely when the Spanish diverted water from the Trebbia river canal that fed multiple canals running through the city, forcing inhabitants to turn smaller machines with animal power or by hand, at considerably greater cost⁵¹. The important class of rural entrepreneurs took a beating even when the actual damage inflicted was marginal. Alessandro Coghi, a notable from the village of Sacca, purchased the right to sell salt there, but in

⁴⁸ Ibid., 22 July 1637; the value of the cheese I calculated from another account from merchants of Reggio who were owed 26,626 lire for 18,344 kg of cheese. ASPr, *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, p. 688.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 694-696.

⁵⁰ ASPr, *Magistrato Camerale di Parma*, b. 23, n. 211, 6 August 1637.

⁵¹ CRESCENZI ROMANI, *Corona della Nobiltà d'Italia*, II, p. 330.

the storm of war his neighbours fled across the Po and left him with unsold stocks of it⁵². Angelo Sementi, who purchased the lease on the butcher stall in Colorno for 1,000 lire, suffered losses not only from the seizure of the meat animals and disrupted supply, but also because many of his customers fled the jurisdiction, collapsing the demand⁵³. The soldiers also emptied his wine cellar, a private asset for which he could not hope for compensation. Innkeepers lost heavily too, for these substantial houses with their well-stocked cellars were leased from the duke for substantial sums. Domenico Mori, who rented the inn at Ponte d'Enza on the border with the Duchy of Modena, saw his assets destroyed to the tune of 7 or 8,000 lire, which for him was followed by 45 days in debtor's prison⁵⁴. Marc'Antonio Petorazzi rented the inn at Soarza fully furnished, but abandoned it when enemy soldiers arrived and helped themselves to everything. Then they stripped the walls of their metal dowels, the iron hinges on the windows, and burned the doors and window shutters to render the house uninhabitable. The Ducal Camera refused his claim for compensation outright on the grounds that he was a native of Cremona, in enemy territory⁵⁵.

Small-scale peasants renting holdings from the Ducal Camera lost their seed grain to Spanish troops and could not plant the next season's crops. Vittorio Martani, renting only 7 biolche (circa 2 hectares) near Cortemaggiore, saw the house burned by soldiers along with the stocks of grain and his furnishings, while the livestock were led away⁵⁶. Pietro Barbieri of Cologna rented a piece of land close by the walls of Colorno, closed off by hedges and valuable mulberry trees, which the Spanish cut down in order to have a clear field of fire. He lost his fodder stocks to feed enemy animals⁵⁷. Cesare Rondani, also of Colorno, couldn't pay his rent after the Spanish and Modenese troops sacked the town and its district. They burned as kindling all the wooden stakes he planted, cut down his vines and his fruit trees too. Wherever they made their campfires, nothing would grow again⁵⁸. Other modest people suffered greatly when enemy soldiers used bar-

⁵² ASPr, *Magistrato Camerale di Parma*, b. 23, n. 211, 26 November 1636.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, n. 252, 20 September 1636.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 236, 3 September 1636.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, b. 24, n. 262, 22 July 1637.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, no date (1637).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 September 1637.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, b. 25, n. 25, 10 January 1637.

rels to buttress their parapets, before dismantling the casks in order to collect the iron hoops for scrap metal, which they carried off to their camp at Castelguelfo⁵⁹. Tomè dall'Oglio, who rented a humble meadow near Colorno, bordered with mulberry trees, lost the grain growing there to Farnese horse stationed in the town. This loss was magnified when soldiers cut down the trees to create a field of fire⁶⁰. These humble people, who suffered additional personal hardships, were often sub-lessees of the nobles who were on the hook for the sizeable sums invested. We know of the extent of these losses only because they had been rented from the Ducal Camera, but we can only presume that most inhabitants lost their private belongings in equal measure. A modest town notable in Soragna, Pietro Belino, tallied his losses in the aftermath of the withdrawal of Habsburg troops on 4 February 1637. In addition to 500 lire in direct contributions, he suffered the seizure of his wine, firewood and, above all, costly livestock⁶¹.

People lost precious resources to Farnese forces too, beginning with the gardener-custodian of the duke's fruit trees near the palace, who suffered 551 lire damage when the sentinels helped themselves to the Florentine pears⁶². In Piacenza, which Don Martin d'Aragon subjected to an ever-tighter blockade, soldiers of the garrison, suffering from a lack of firewood, resolved it by burning doors, window frames and the rafters of abandoned houses (of which there were many in the aftermath of the plague of 1630-1631)⁶³. On 28 November, a strong column of soldiers escorting 50 carts emerged from the city and foraged eastward along the Po for 10 kilometres in search of fodder, straw, wood and whatever fowl they encountered⁶⁴. But there were many other private losses hidden from view. The misfortune of Tomè dell'Oglio of Colorno, whose mulberry trees were cut down by soldiers, must have been reproduced on a vast scale. Silk-worm-raising had extended throughout the Po valley in the decades before the war. In both Parma and Piacenza, many gardens and the

⁵⁹ Ibid., b. 24, n. 297, 5 August 1637.

⁶⁰ Ibid., b. 23, 2 October 1636.

⁶¹ BOSELLI, *Cenni storici di letteratura dialettale parmense*, pp. 1-127.

⁶² ASPr, *Magistrato Camerale di Parma*, b. 23, n. 270, 5 November 1636; and *ibid.*, *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, p. 661.

⁶³ CRESCENZI ROMANI, *Corona della Nobiltà d'Italia*, II, p. 330.

⁶⁴ ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI FIRENZE (hereafter ASFi), *Mediceo del Principato*, filza 3182, Letter from the Tuscan resident in Milan, Domenico Pandolfini to the Bali Cioli in Florence, 29 November 1636.

principal avenues (stradone) were lined with ‘mori’ or mulberry trees producing leaves for the precious worms. The ducal gardens in both cities contained many of them: they also lined the bastions and the casemates of the fortifications. But in addition, innumerable trees separated fields outside the walls, which we can see in the careful sketches of Farnese towns and castles. The sale of leaves and of the silkworm cocoons they generated enriched people of every social class. Enemy soldiers sometimes cut these down to inflict harm on the duchy’s economy, but friendly soldiers cut them down also if they obstructed the fields of fire around ramparts and redoubts⁶⁵ (Fig. 1). It would take years for trees and vines, freshly replanted, to produce leaves and fruit in similar amounts. The authorities periodically decreed the removal of trees and vines surrounding the ramparts of cities and castles, as in Parma on 4 January 1637, just as the war was winding down. The Governatore delle Armi Ottavio Cerati decreed that all trees and vines planted on the counterscarp to a distance of 235 pertiche (about 760 metres) had to be removed by evening of the following day, whether they were fruit-bearing or not, at the expense of the landlords. In peacetime officials tolerated gardens planted there by wealthy citizens and worked by peasants and city dwellers. The wood produced thereby would be consigned in part to the garrison, and in part to the Ducal treasury, while the poor refugees were invited to glean twigs and branches for their own use⁶⁶. Finally, a last net loss to the duchy was the cost of removing a multitude of new fortifications erected around the duchy, and dismantling a host of obstacles erected to bolster the feeble defenses. These required teams of work crews along with the precious oxen and carts⁶⁷.

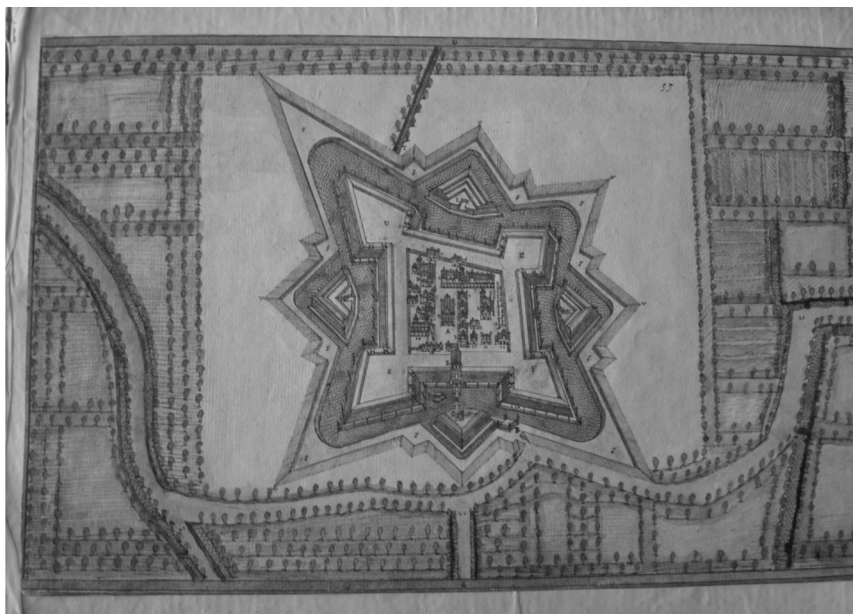
Duke Odoardo’s subjects suffered greatly from the gradual breakdown of public order and social solidarity under the weight of enemy occupation, reflected in the menacing decrees issued by the authorities to curb the abuses. Soldiers, and particularly the indispensable French and Swiss troops, were not subject to urban tribunals, but rather depended upon the rigour or indulgence of their individual colonels. A decree of 24 August 1636 complained that people pur-

⁶⁵ ASPr *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, pp. 654-656 for details. For a visual record one might consult the coloured drawings contained in the album BPPr, ms. Parmense 3711, dated around 1640: in particular for Rottofreno, Poviglio, Fontanelato, Montechiarugolo.

⁶⁶ ASPr, *Gridario*, b. 33/54, 4 January 1637; the Parman pertica measured 6 bracci, each 0.54 metres.

⁶⁷ BPPr, ms. Parmense 737, Calandrini, *L’Heroe d’Italia*, p. 869.

Fig. 1 – *Fortified village of Poviglio, circa 1640, highlighting the vast number of mulberry trees planted in the vicinity of the fortifications*



Source: BPPr, ms. Parmense 3711, *Piante di alcune città d'Italia*.

porting to be soldiers roved the villages and roads under the guise of collecting forage and provisions without any kind of authorization, and that these thieves would be treated ‘more belli’, or executed under martial law⁶⁸. As enemy parties approached, refugees herded thousands of cattle into Parma and Piacenza and packed them into crowded stalls, where soldiers and others contrived the means to acquire them by fair means and foul⁶⁹. Just like the Spanish camp, cities received a tidal wave of scrap metal, cookware (*rami*) and lumber, stolen from a wide variety of victims and sold for rock-bottom prices. The governor of Parma called a halt to the commerce of scrap, presuming that the vendors had acquired it through illicit means⁷⁰. This could

⁶⁸ ASPr, *Gridario*, b. 32, n. 66, 24 August 1636.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 78, 22 September 1636.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 91, 8 January 1637.

not solve the problem, however, for after the Spanish army withdrew, peasants and landlords converged on Parma in search of pitchforks, shovels and an array of «ferri rusticali» hoarded in the city that would enable them to resume cultivation⁷¹.

The harvest of 1637 was insufficient to cover the needs of the duchy, since the invasion disrupted the processes of ploughing and planting. The stock of seed grain in the ducal stores was not enough to provide all the possessions of the Ducal Camera, neither for wheat, which fed the workers, nor for spelt, which fed the animals⁷². One of the most urgent tasks for the duchy was to reconstitute the stock of draft animals. Camillo Novelli, the duke's *marescalco*, reported how one might distribute some of the Farnese animals to needy *fattori* who were desperate to have them. The governor of Parma also requested 20 mules from the duke's animals grazing in the Apennines so that they might be rationally distributed to help thresh the new wheat harvest, since there weren't enough oxen left to accomplish that vital task⁷³.

Ducal authorities had decreed the transfer of food stocks from farms to city storehouses long before the Habsburg invasion, something that noble and ecclesiastical landlords would have instructed on their own initiative. In the spring of 1636, before the full-scale invasion of Habsburg forces, ducal authorities purchased additional grain from Mantua, and paid a considerable amount for its haulage across the Po at Viadana. By late summer, Spanish forces interdicted all the routes leading to external sources of grain. By the onset of winter, food shortages were severe in the rural districts. Don Vincenzo Gonzaga, commander of Spanish forces around Parma, required eight tonnes of flour and additional grain to feed his own troops, for the peasants had abandoned their farms and there was no more food to confiscate⁷⁴. Leganés feared the consequences of withdrawing the same soldiery – especially the Germans – back into winter quarters in the State of Milan, for they were accustomed to take whatever they wished⁷⁵. Their fears were prophetic, for after quartering two companies of German dragoons on the rich district of Casalmaggiore just

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, b. 32/96, 27 February 1637.

⁷² ASPr, *Carteggio Farnesiano Interno*, b. 384, 17 July 1637.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, b. 385, 7 July 1638.

⁷⁴ ASPr, *Archivio Gonzaga di Guastalla*, b. 63, Letter from the duke instructing the military governor of Reggio Emilia to supply food to Don Vincenzo's men around Torrechiera, 20 January 1637.

⁷⁵ AGS, *Estado*, leg. 3839, 30 January 1637.

across the Po river for two or three months, the exasperated citizens mobilized the town militia and threatened to fight⁷⁶.

The hostilities tapered off at the beginning of 1637, about a month before the peace accord between Duke Odoardo and the King of Spain came into effect on February 4. On 15 January the Habsburg forces lifted their siege of the border castle of Montechiarugolo on the Enza river, scene of stubborn fighting. Andrea Pugolotti recorded the news that «Don Martino d’Aragona [...] ha havuto ordine di Sua Maestà Catolica di non far più danni a questi stati e popoli, in grazia di Madama Serenissima»⁷⁷. Not all the hostilities ended immediately, for on 3 February an enemy force advanced onto the open ground outside Parma’s western Santa Croce gate, hoping to seize the livestock pastured there. The city governor sent the militia after them and chased them away at Ponte Taro, killing a few and recovering their booty, «un gran fatto d’arme». French soldiers were dismissed from the cities and remaining castles in Farnese hands on February 5, the day after the peace came into effect, and marched off to continue the war elsewhere. The invading forces then made a tapered withdrawal in the week following February 15, including from Borgo Taro, which the Farnese had usurped from the Landi in the sixteenth century and which rightfully belonged to the Spanish ally Prince Doria⁷⁸. A decree of February 11 forbade anyone to try and recover booty from the enemy soldiers, in order to hasten their departure and forestall fresh violence⁷⁹. Duke Odoardo promised to begin dismantling the fresh fortifications the Spaniards threw up around the towns they held, like Rivalta, Rottofredo, the fort on the island across from Piacenza in the Po, and a strong bridgehead at Ongina near Piacenza, all of which held the city in a chokehold. On 26 February, Odoardo transferred control over the fortress town of Sabbioneta north of the Po river to two Neapolitan colonels who installed Habsburg garrisons there⁸⁰. Six months of enemy occupation, judging from the surviving burial registers, killed no fewer than 10,000 of the duke’s subjects, perhaps 90 percent of whom were civilians. The deaths would con-

⁷⁶ E. LODI, *Memorie storiche di Casalmaggiore*, edited by E. Criani, Cremona 1992, pp. 117-120.

⁷⁷ A. PUGOLOTTI, *Libro di memorie. Cronaca parmense del XVII secolo*, edited by S. Di Noto Marrella, Parma 2005, p. 98.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁷⁹ ASPr, *Gridario*, b. 32, n. 44, 11 February 1636 (sic). The document clearly dates from the following year.

⁸⁰ ASPr, *Casa e Corte Farnesiana*, ser. II, b. 29, fol. 132.

tinue after the last enemy troops departed, until the onset of warmer weather in the spring of 1637⁸¹.

In the first phase of reconstruction, it was necessary to determine from local *podestà* (rural officials) how much grain, wine and other foodstuffs were available to people in the country, determine a quick assessment of the damage inflicted, and carry out a rapid census of the survivors⁸². In the context of ongoing famine it was necessary to prevent the situation from worsening, and to coax people who had fled abroad to return to the duchy to cultivate the land. By May the duke sought to organize private charities to feed the rural population in the desperate weeks before the new harvest, by facilitating payment in foodstuffs instead of coin, by waiving customary regulations prohibiting private stockpiles and by introducing foreign grain and making it available at unregulated market prices, without levying the customary taxes on it⁸³. Landlords were instructed to devote any wind-fall cash they received to plowing and planting and to no other purpose (which suspended parents' savings towards dowries, for example). Simultaneously ducal authorities released at low prices the stocks of flour milled during the war, which had been purchased at a higher cost⁸⁴.

Rebuilding the duchy would require as much ducal revenue as fighting the war, but the tax infrastructure was in a shambles. It is worth reminding the reader that ducal officials customarily levied taxes on silk cocoons, fruit and grapes (or wine) sold on city markets. The vast damage to all of these hit the tax revenues especially hard. We should emphasize a special asset of the duke of Parma, the salt-spring installations of Salsomaggiore, where a rich brine was evaporated in great bronze pans to produce the duchy's precious salt supply. In the years just before the war, the Dogana di Parma had dispensed 41,745 pesi (342,309 kg) of salt, worth about 250,000 lire annually, not including another 1 percent not taxed. This just represents the portion of Parma, and if we include the amount produced for Piacenza, we might double that figure. The 500,000 lire provided just over 10 percent of total Farnese revenues in 1635. The winter invasion from the

⁸¹ HANLON, *The Hero of Italy*, pp. 201-207.

⁸² ASPr, *Gridario*, b. 32, n. 98, 27 February 1637; the archives of the Podestà remain utterly unexplored to this day.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, b. 33/53, no date (January), and 61, 4 May 1637.

⁸⁴ ASPr, *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, p. 718, sale of flour in Poviglio, 29 April 1637.

upper Taro valley imperilled these precious installations. An unsigned report of 22 March 1636 recommended removing the heavy pans to Parma for protection, along with the considerable stocks of salt contained in the local magazines. Special carts would have to be built to draw the two giant containers weighing 6,500 kg each, hauled one pan at a time from the salt springs to Parma, over the space of a week. The danger from the winter invasion passed, and so nothing was done. Spanish war parties did not fail to target the installation in the summer, burning the buildings and seizing the salt, breaking up the copper cauldrons and hauling them away⁸⁵. The seizure and almost complete destruction by Spanish soldiers of the precious salt springs infrastructure at Salsomaggiore during the summer of 1636 was a crippling blow both to the local economy and to the duke's tax receipts. In the short term, it entailed purchasing large supplies of salt in Mantua and Ferrara, then carting them to Parma at considerable extra expense⁸⁶.

At full production, the Salsomaggiore salt springs could produce over 150,000 pesi annually (1.23 million kg), worth 6 lire per peso, or a revenue of close to a million lire⁸⁷. In the aftermath of hostilities, the lack of oxen, horses and mules made it difficult to provide freshly rebuilt works with enough firewood to evaporate the water. The chief finance minister Pietro Rossi proposed to force villages in the vicinity to each provide a pair of oxen and carts⁸⁸. During the summer of 1637 an expert visited the ducal ironworks to see how quickly they could make new vats to cook the salt; these promised to provide 40 strips (*lastre*) of iron to cast the cauldrons on-site. There were four such vats functioning by then, one of which had not been finished. These four containers would provide 540 pesi of salt every two days for all of September. A fifth vat permitted them to increase production to 675 pesi every two days – or 338 pesi daily equalling 2,767 kilograms, or about nine-tenths of pre-war production. At time of inspection, there were stocks of 9,840 kg and about 2,000 vintine of *fasci*, or measures of firewood, enough for 12 days of production. These ambitious plans were hampered by a lack of men cutting firewood and the usual shortage of haulage teams to bring them to the springs. The expert proposed hiring extra men and paying them, in-

⁸⁵ ASPr, *Carteggio Farnesiano Interno*, b. 384, 22 March 1636.

⁸⁶ ASPr, *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, p. 650, 15 September 1636.

⁸⁷ ASPr, *Carteggio Farnesiano Interno*, b. 384, 11 October 1637.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 15 March 1637.

stead of using forced labour. Work crews had not finished erecting sheds over the cauldrons to replace those burned by the Spaniards, which meant that cooking the salt had to be suspended every time it rained, and the salt collected then dissolved anew in rainwater. When everything was restored, the expert Giulio Cesare Trompelli hoped to have 10 cauldrons bubbling, including two that belonged to feudatories. The modern works were nevertheless not as efficient as the ones they replaced, for the new iron cauldrons required more firewood than the copper ones. In the largest spring, it was still necessary to rebuild the wheel that would draw up the water from the well and fill the cauldron⁸⁹. A report from mid-century noted that the communities within twelve kilometres of the springs were subject to *corvées* providing wood to the works. By 1648 the works had not been completely restored. The new works were managed directly by the Ducal Camera until the end of the Castro War, at which point they were farmed out to Giovan Paolo Giudici, with two feudatories producing smaller amounts. Another consortium produced salt out of the establishment in Salsominore, not far away, selling it to the Ducal Camera. There were no fewer than 119 springs providing salt water in the district, using 11 cauldrons⁹⁰.

Given the collapse of the duke's normal revenues, Pietro Rossi was desperate to find cash, first to prosecute the war, and then to pay the most pressing debts. Crises like war distort prices, and effect an inversion of normal market forces, by which fodder acquires great value, while precious objects are sold for trifles. In May the Depositario transmitted to the mint six gold cloths from the Ducal Wardrobe in Piacenza that produced only 200 lire⁹¹. I doubt that the recorded losses inflicted on the ducal patrimony included the goods liquidated at knockdown prices in order to acquire good coin, like the 17,600 lire obtained from Samuel Parigi, a Mantuan Jew, by selling «diverse robbe inutili della Guardarobba di SAS»⁹². The destruction of the war should also include almost 100 kg of silver plate melted down into coins to pay the troops at the end of the conflict⁹³. Emergency funding encouraged the duke to confiscate the lands of rebels and delinquents of every status. Before they stopped convening during the height of

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3 August 1637.

⁹⁰ ASPr, *Casa e Corte Farnesiana*, b. 47, fasc. 2, undated memoriale, circa 1650.

⁹¹ ASPr, *Mastri Farnesiani e Borbonici*, b. 32, p. 601.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 690.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 670, 30 December 1636.

the crisis, ducal tribunals confiscated the houses and lands of a wide variety of people who committed offenses, and then tried auctioning them off hurriedly to raise money⁹⁴. The duke seized the local assets of Troilo Rossi, Count of San Secondo, who served as a colonel of cavalry in the Spanish army until his death in combat in the Valtellina in November 1635. Subtracting the debts, the lands and buildings across his several fiefs were still worth five million lire, but it proved impossible to unload them at reasonable prices during and after the war⁹⁵. These judicial actions would have ceased towards the end of 1636 when war suspended all the tribunals, and then again during Lent in 1637. This would have brought these expropriating decrees to a halt, but the forced inactivity of the judges meant that they and all the junior personnel would lose their fees⁹⁶. Once the tribunals began their work again, they were forced to deal with a multitude of accusations against people accused of helping the Spanish forces during the occupation. People had to pay legal costs for goods seized to reimburse creditors; they paid the cost of their incarceration for debts, losing the assets in question as well. This litigation required them to hire lawyers in their defense, and pay still more fees to petition their pardon and the recovery of their property from the Consiglio della Dettatura. A host of individuals petitioned the duke for reductions in fines inflicted upon them for a wide variety of misdemeanours during the war, from guiding enemy troops, to plundering the countryside, to assault and battery and murder⁹⁷. If they proved insolvent, bailiffs were authorized to seize the property of the father for the son, the employer for the servant, one brother for another. Heavy fines were inflicted for such misdemeanours as removing bread from the city, or leaving the duchy without permission. These harsh provisions were only removed in November 1637, ten months after the end of the fighting⁹⁸.

In the aftermath of the war, texts of every kind emphasized the necessity of raising funds, or «riscuotere denaro» to reimburse duke Odoardo's impatient creditors. In Piacenza, the Comunità begged the duke to issue a decree forbidding bailiffs from seizing draft animals

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 720.

⁹⁵ ASPr, *Casa e Corte Farnesiana*, b. 48, *Confisca del feudo di San Secondo dal 1636 al 1650*; ASPr, *Carteggio Farnesiano Interno*, b. 384, Letter of 11 April 1637.

⁹⁶ ASPr, *Gridario*, b. 32/97.

⁹⁷ ASPr, *Consiglio della Dettatura*, *Suppliche*, b. 43.

⁹⁸ ASPr, *Gridario*, b. 32/110, 14 November 1637.

like oxen that were absolutely necessary to relaunch grain production⁹⁹. There was no question of suspending the levy of the huge wartime surtax of 80,000 ducati on Parma, but officials were notified to stop seizing the property of people who paid their share bit by bit. Fabio Scotti, who continued as the duke's principal minister, convoked a number of officials in the Sala of the Ducal Palace to admonish them for their lukewarm service and lacklustre administration during the war. Simultaneously, he authorized his accountants in the Ducal Camera to readjust a host of debts and credits¹⁰⁰. The city squeezed the various tax collectors (*daziari*) to relinquish some of their takings, but consented in exchange to not make them responsible for more money than they had in fact collected. If the government ruined the *daziari*, it would have been difficult to find people willing to farm the city revenues¹⁰¹.

The incorrigible Duke Odoardo continued to make matters worse by his fiscal mismanagement. In April 1637 he received an indemnity from Spain of ducati 100,000 for expenses incurred while holding the town of Sabbioneta – close to a million lire! This he intended to spend on a sumptuous tournament in Piacenza, to «rallegrare la città» and to demonstrate once again his «animo eroico» and the «grandezza de' suoi pensieri»¹⁰². The duke also refused to disband all his troops, the remnants of whom in Piacenza he maintained on the proceeds of a chimney tax applied on magistrates as well as subjects in both the city and the countryside, and by increasing the grain milling tax (the *macinato*) by 20 percent¹⁰³. In Parma the remaining troops in the citadel and the city caused havoc in order to have their pay, along with the employees at the court, making the chief finance minister Pietro Rossi desperate. The city did not generate enough revenue to pay off turbulent and menacing soldiers, while seizures from impoverished rural communities were out of the question.

Lowering the tax pressure was out of the question too. In December 1638 the city of Parma increased the annual tax levy on both city and rural property by 300,000 lire. A new tax was levied on mer-

⁹⁹ ASPr, *Governatore e Comunità Piacenza*, b. 3, 25 February 1637.

¹⁰⁰ BPPr, ms. Parmense 737, Calandrini, *L'Heroe d'Italia*, pp. 894-96.

¹⁰¹ ASPr, Archivio Comunale di Parma, b. 331, *Minute delle Ordinazioni*, 20 June 1637.

¹⁰² BPPr, ms. Parmense 737, Calandrini, *L'Heroe d'Italia*, pp. 898, 920; the duke signed the receipt for it in his own hand; ASPr, *Casa e Corte Farnesiana*, b. 29, fasc. 1, April 1637.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, September 1637.

chant capital, while the court levied fees on officials and notaries, including nobles, employees of the court and captains of militia, categories that had once been exempt from such imposts¹⁰⁴. In the background lurked tensions that would erupt into Duke Odoardo's War of Castro against Pope Urban VIII Barberini. Duke Odoardo was unable to pay the interest on his mortgaged fiefs and other assets in Lazio to his Roman bankers. These were encouraged by the papal nephew Taddeo Barberini to stand firm, in the hopes that the duke would sell them to the papal family. Odoardo resisted this solution and relations with Rome soured after 1640. To finance new recruitment of soldiers, the city issued bonds or *luoghi di monte* at 500 lire apiece, bearing interest of 7.5 percent to anyone who had money to invest¹⁰⁵. The city then proceeded to launch a new *estimo* for the better evaluation of the principal direct tax, the *cavallo morto*, whose increase replaced the hated chimney tax¹⁰⁶. Under pressure from the duke for contributions, the international bankers who frequented Piacenza's fair four times a year announced their intention in May 1641 to quit the city definitively. Before the plague of 1630, the fair witnessed the redistribution of staggering sums of money implicating transactions across much of Europe; the bankers contributed much to the prosperity of the city. Not willing to serve as a milk-cow for Odoardo's adventures, they took their leave. Duke Ranuccio re-established a commercial fair in Piacenza in 1687, but it was only a shadow of its former splendour¹⁰⁷.

Particular groups wishing to crawl out from under debt petitioned the community to permit a lottery. The merchants of Parma petitioned the Anziani to put up silver plate as prizes for a lottery held at Christmas 1637, the first instance that we encounter. The city designated officials to supervise the operation in order to prevent fraud¹⁰⁸. It must have been successful, for others followed in due course. The grocers Francesco Barbieri and Ottavio Poleroli put up prizes consisting of capons, cakes (*spongiate*), *salami* and «altre cose mangiative», under the watchful eye of the community, which would estimate the

¹⁰⁴ ASPr, Archivio Comunale di Parma, b. 332, *Minute delle Ordinazioni*, no date (December 1638).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 16 November 1640.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 April 1641.

¹⁰⁷ BPLP, ms. Pallastrelli, n. 126, *Croniche o Diario del Rev. Sgr. Benedetto Boselli*, p. 145, May 1641.

¹⁰⁸ ASPr, Archivio Comunale di Parma, b. 331, 23 December 1637.

value of the prizes and attend to the extraction of the numbers. Only weeks later, Gasparo de Giacomoti obtained the right to offer prizes of maiolica, silk stockings and a variety of other merchandise¹⁰⁹.

Pietro Rossi also addressed another major, more intractable problem, the restoration of the currency, which he adulterated in a decree of 10 November 1636 by issuing a copper currency in denominations of 10, 20 and 30 soldi¹¹⁰. A decree of 17 February 1637 invited people to declare how much debased coinage they held, so that they could eventually exchange it for sound money. Andrea Pugolotti, an artisan who held more than 800 lire worth of these, did not think the exchange would happen soon, and considered it a serious loss for artisans¹¹¹. Meanwhile, the duchy was using Modenese currency at a premium. Rossi had those coins assayed and hoped they could be collected and recast as Parman coins, although in the interim he leaned towards fixing by decree a local monetary equivalent for foreign coins. Another solution was to prohibit people from using Modenese coins. This was not a problem so easily resolved. Years later the ovenworkers and brickworkers complained that the value of coins was so out of line that coins which were worth four units now were worth eight, pushing up the artisans' expenditures past their revenues (because prices for these commodities were fixed by regulation)¹¹². The city of Parma had borrowed heavily during the war, in the duke's name, from Florentine bankers Lorenzo and Angelo Galli, Antonio Salviati and Antonio Francesco Tempi. These would not accept their reimbursement in debased coinage, and charged a hefty fee for currency exchange above the circa 25,000 lire interest that fell due in 1641¹¹³. The war of Castro (1642-1644) occasioned new financial burdens that delayed monetary reform, such that it proved difficult to import precious foreign cereal during the famine of 1648-1649 for want of proper currency¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., b. 332, *Minute delle Ordinazioni*, 27 December 1638 and 19 January 1639.

¹¹⁰ PUGOLOTTI, *Libro di memorie*, p. 98.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 99.

¹¹² ASPr, Archivio Comunale di Parma, b. 332, Letter of Francesco Molinaro, anziano of the brickworkers' guild, 22 March 1640.

¹¹³ Ibid., 30 June 1641.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., *Minute delle Ordinazioni*, b. 333, 6 May 1648; the Congregazione dell'Abbondanza was ordered to record the quality of the coins it handled, in order to constitute adequate funds with which to purchase grain, «stante la cattiva qualità delle monete che corrono di presente in questa città».

Traumatized subjects of the Duke of Parma sought to place a figure on the damage they had incurred. The Venetian writer Ferrante Pallavicini, cited by Crescenzi Romani, proposed a figure of 8,530,000 scudi d'oro, or about 64 million lire on the Piacentino alone, although we have no way of knowing how he came by that number¹¹⁵. The same writer declared that Habsburg soldiers at Fiorenzuola, at Salsomaggiore and in a few other places seized plunder worth 100,000 doppie d'oro: this would correspond to 3.5 million lire in the 1643 value of the coin¹¹⁶. Not included in Pallavicini's estimate would be the huge surtax of 500,000 scudi imposed on Piacenza by Odoardo. An anonymous functionary provided the duke with a statistical table of damage to Farnese patrimonial assets throughout the Parmigiano, which amounted to lire 466,287 and 6 soldi. Doubling these, to reflect the more badly damaged Piacentino, would give us a figure of about a million lire. It is unclear whether this refers just to the replacement value of the capital, or the value of production lost in the subsequent years. In any case, it probably does not include any relief the ducal administration was willing to accord the crowd of people who leased these assets. And it ignores entirely the losses suffered by individuals in their private property, which were not subject to any compensation¹¹⁷. Can we invent a plausible total figure at around 100 million lire, combining the Piacentino with the Parmigiano, the Stato Pallavicino and the upper Taro districts? Divided by the population of a quarter-million inhabitants, this would equal about 400 lire for every man, woman and child in the state, where a skilled artisan might have earned 250 lire annually, and agricultural workers much less.

It is difficult to assess the true figure because in addition to the physical destruction of property, war and occupation played havoc with the whole range of commercial exchanges and with the resources behind them. Farms were rebuilt and herds of large livestock were reconstituted within a few years but a great deal of commercial capital had been squandered, and entrepreneurs in both the city and the countryside suffered ruin. It is difficult to measure the effect of war

¹¹⁵ CRESCENZI ROMANI, *Corona della Nobiltà d'Italia*, II, p. 328.

¹¹⁶ ASPr, *Carteggio Farnesiano Interno*, b. 388, 13 January 1643, List of the value of various Italian coins relative to the Parman lira.

¹¹⁷ ASPr, *Casa e Corte Farnesiana*, ser. II, fasc. 2, *Calcolo et Ristretto del danno havuto per la Ser.ma Camera Ducale per la guerra nell'Infrascritti luoghi*, 27 March 1637.

on the economic decline of the Duchy of Parma. Already at the end of the sixteenth century capital was fleeing the cities to be invested in the countryside, particularly into a growing industry of butter and cheese. Piacenza's weaving industries gave way to the production of silk thread by the late seventeenth century. The decline of artisanal activities in Piacenza was especially marked in the decade 1650-1660, decades after war's end, while those with money purchased more farmland. Financial investment and tax collection routinely brought 10 to 13 percent annual returns in the reign of duke Ranuccio I (1592-1622), but barely 3 to 5 percent in the deflationary years after mid-century¹¹⁸. In the absence of deeper research into property-holding in the countryside, we are completely in the dark concerning the standard of living of Farnese subjects. If the calculation of 100 million lire is an exaggeration, it is probably not inflated by many multiples, and might actually be close to the truth if one includes the multitude of hidden damage occasioned by war, such as the loss of trees of every description. When Enrico Stumpo minimized the long-term damage inflicted upon Piedmont in its great wars, the author perhaps had more disciplined armies in mind. Odoardo's war and the invasion were only one chapter in a longer story involving all of Italy, however. Six months of occupation and 10,000 fatalities were surely only a fraction of the losses inflicted on the modern provinces of Asti, Alessandria, Biella, Novara, Pavia and Vercelli, where the war proved interminable. Hopefully, historians will soon find this problem, the extent of demographic and economic damage of the Thirty Years' War in Italy, worthy of study.

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¹¹⁸ P. SUBACCHI, *La ruota della fortuna: arricchimento e promozione sociale in una città padana in età moderna*, Milano 1996, pp. 71-84.