Power and Economic Development: The Rise and Decline of Medieval Bologna

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The following essay may be read simply as the story of several centuries of Bolognese history, but it is hoped that its greater value inheres in the analytical experiment embodied in it. I have sought to examine Bologna's development from about the 11th century to the early 16th century as a case study of the relationship between quantitative and qualitative change and, more specifically, between changing patterns of economic growth and their interactions with changing patterns of power. The conventional history for this long period has been pieced together from many partial studies, providing a work of synthesis that may have some value in itself, assuming that synthesis to be reasonably valid. And I trust that the experimental effort will stimulate others.

I.

Bologna, by which I shall mean the city and encompassing hills and plains (roughly, today's province) in the period 1000-1500 A. D., underwent well-established periods of growth, stagnation, decline, and renewed growth.

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Broadly speaking, economic historians recognize that the eleventh century was a period of healing and consolidation, of recovery and slow growth, after a long series of political and military disruptions associated with Lombard, Byzantine, and Imperial struggles. The twelfth century was a period of marked quickening and expansion of economic activities. The thirteenth century was the heyday of Bologna's economic prosperity. The fourteenth century was uneven in its pattern, but the trend at mid-century was down, a process that persisted until well into the fifteenth century, toward the middle of which there ensued a reversal and upward movement.[1]

The period of most rapid growth and highest prosperity is associated with the formation and flourishing of the *Comune di Bologna,* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Economic troubles are associated with the final breakdown of the commune and the turbulent emergence of the *signoria* (or « overlordship ») in its various manifestations in Bologna in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[2] As we shall see, economic and non-economic processes interacted in such a fashion that one cannot speak of a one-way causal relationship. An extension of this latter interpretation will be a principal point of the study.

At the peak of her economic strength in the medieval period, Bologna was more a commercial than an industrial city. Her continuing economic potential was dependent upon a surrounding agricultural economy of substantial diversity and strength, given more than local importance through its meshing with a set of powerful commercial and financial gilds, which organized both the economic and the political life of Bologna.

The blessings of soil and terrain, and their long and careful exploitation, in part provided the basis of Bologna's strength. Her agriculture, combined with her central location and interaction with Italian political and economic currents, and the vital role of « *lo Studio* » — the University of Bologna[3] — explain the initial emergence of Bologna's medieval prosperity. But if the interaction between the economic activities associated with the countryside, the University, and the gilds explain Bologna's rise to economic

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1 The most succinct and comprehensive survey of medieval Bologna is Luigi Dal Pane, *La vita economica a Bologna nel periodo communale* (Bologna: Tinarelli, 1957). Hereinafter, *La vita economica.*

2 Arturo Palmieri, *La montagna bolognese del medio evo* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1929), pp. 231-411, provides a detailed survey of the processes and structural relationships of this long period, covering both narrowly economic and broader materials. Hereinafter: *La montagna.*

3 For the present study, the most useful works have been Albano Sorbelli, *Storia della Università di Bologna,* vol. I, *Il Medioevo* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1944); S. Stelling-Michaud, *L'université de Bologne... aux XIII^e^ et XIV^e^ siècles* (Geneve. Drox, 1955); and Hastings Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages,* vol. I, *Salerno, Bologna, Paris* (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1895).

splendour, it is those same three sources of activity that subsequently brought about her downfall.

Both the land and the economic activity of the city had their political and military sides, the land with its aggressive feudatories determined to maintain control over the countryside, and the mercantile and financial gilds, with their *Comune* and its armed forces equally determined to deny that control. In the middle was the University, contributing to economic development and political confusion in varying measure.

The thirteenth century, which saw the flowering of Bologna, was also the century within which there began a long period of conflict and frustration, and an ultimately hopeless power struggle between the personnel associated with the land, the University, and the gilds.

The struggles centering upon these three sources of dynamism, conflict, and power in Bologna took place within a more complicated and intertwining series of processes whose general outlines will also be woven into the story. These processes, which are the details of a larger picture, include 1) the decline of feudalism proper and the persistence of feudatories, in town and country, 2) the emergence of the gilds within the city, as the principal supporters and beneficiaries of communal organization, and the Guelph-Ghibelline struggle associated with this emergence, 3) the efforts made by the communal powers to control and to « modernize » the communications, agriculture, and social structure of the countryside, which placed them in deadly conflict with the rural and urban feudatories and subsequently with larger powers external to Bologna, 4) the intermittent disruption of the agricultural and commercial foundations of Bolognese economic dynamism, and 5) the insidious effects that atavistic social and political aspirations had upon the possibilities of consolidating power within the *Comune*. Having examined these developments, a compressed comment will be made concerning 6) the troubled beginnings and consequences of the *signoria* in Bologna. The major and minor elements and processes of change will be discussed with considerable interlocking and overlapping.

II.

Ignoring the suburbs, today's city of Bologna preserves much of the appearance and shape of its medieval past. It lies in a level hexagonal area, ringed by the foothills of the Appennines at the southern edges and flattening out to the plains that become the Po Valley and Romagna to the north and east. Direct access from Bologna to the west and southwest by land is not to be had easily even today; but various northern, eastern, and southern directions were pursued regularly by the merchants of medieval

Bologna.[4] Cities to which Bologna had access by road, canal, river, or pass included Venice, Milan, Turin, Rimini, Ravenna, Ferrara, Piacenza, Modena, Florence, Pisa, Lucca, and Pistoia — although the critical passes to the Tuscan cities were costly to traverse, both because of terrain and the frequent enmity of those who held them, as will be discussed later.

The circumstances of geography (as regards both her location and her agriculture) and of history provided the context of Bologna's growth in economic strength, a growth chiefly fostered by these closely-related developments: those of the University, the mercantile and financial gilds, and the commune. The powerful economic stimulus provided by the University would not have been so potent without an accompanying reorganization of the economy along classic gild lines. In turn, the emergence of the gilds was both enhanced by and itself enhanced the political transformation of Bologna from a subject imperial city to an independent commune. From having been a passive entrepôt, Bologna came to be, by the thirteenth century, a thriving center. By then, her physical, human, and economic measurements[5] placed Bologna in the forefront of the economic strongholds of the Italian peninsula.

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[4] See FERDINANDO MILONE, *L'Italia nell'economia delle sue regioni*, vol. V, *Emilia* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1958) for a general discussion of the geography of the region, and DAL PANE, *op. cit.*, p. 27 ff. for one directly relevant to the present focus. PALMIERI, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-343, and in *Le strade medievali fra Bologna e la Toscana*, in « Atti e Memorie della R. Deputazione di Storia Patria per le Province della Romagna (hereinafter: «Atti»), ser. IV, vol. VIII (1918), pp. 17-51, provides fine discussions of the transportations problems and developments of the period.

[5] What might appear to be population data of a certain solidity for the city begin for the year 1371, when a census of Cardinal Anglico showed 8,000 *fuochi* (hearths) in the city. But the solidity crumbles when one attempts to estimate whether 4, 5, 6, or more souls warmed around one hearth; i.e., whether there were 32, 40, 48, or more thousands of residents of the city. See PAOLO MONTANARI, *Documenti su la popolazione de Bologna alla fine del Trecento* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1961), and GIOVANNI BATTISTA SALVIONI, *La popolazione di Bologna nel secolo XVII*, in « Atti e Memorie ecc. », cit., ser. III, vol. VIII (1890). See also Palmieri as noted below. Salvioni leans to the figure of 32,000, and Bellettini toward the higher figures. The year 1371 followed upon years of plagues, wars, and famines; it thus seems reasonable to agree with Montanari that the population of the thirteenth century was substantially greater than that of the late fourteenth century (Montanari, p. 1). This position is strengthened when we examine the careful figures of Palmieri for the Bolognese hills and plains. Using *estimi* for the *contado* of 1303, Palmieri states the population outside the city to have been 22,500 for that year. (*La montagna*, pp. 238-240). In 1396, a true census showed 35,500 residents in the city and countryside (*ibid.*, p. 241). Dal Pane estimates the population to have been close to 50,000 in the mid-fourteenth century (in the city), and about 117,000 for city and country in the early fourteenth century (*op. cit.*, p. 41 and p. 39, respectively). A further indirect but significant indication of the growth of the city is to be found in the history of its expanding perimeters. These reveal an expanding phase in the eleventh century, followed by increasing density of population. In the year 1206 a new perimeter was ordered, and was slowly put in place over the next century or so, while the population continued to

Two interacting processes of change were to undo and reverse this happy set of developments — one within and one external to Bologna itself — and both were attributable to the factors that made for the prosperity itself. The explanation for both rise and decline revolves around the changing sources, uses, and possessors of power, and the inability of any one individual, group or institution to gain, to use, or to hold power to the necessary degree.

The University played a vital role in Bologna's medieval development, and may be interpreted as having taken the lead in stimulating Bologna's prosperity. We shall begin our discussion with its role.[6] From its origins in the late eleventh century, through its period of grandeur and greatness in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, its debility in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and its transformation in the sixteenth century, the University lived in a state of tension. The tension at once nourished and weakened the University — tension between Emperor and Pope, between revived Roman and traditional feudal institutions and law, between feudal and urban «economics», and between the economic stimuli and «international» prestige of the University on the one hand, and on the other, its frequently reactionary teachings (essentially Ghibelline in import) as viewed by the communal authorities (whose leanings were generally Guelph).

Probably the first true University, the University of Bologna was certainly the first University of students, rather than of masters (as in Paris). It was controlled by the relatively wealthy and mature students who went there to study law. Its democratic structure was a further source of tension in the hierarchical medieval setting, as was its teaching of both civil and canon law, initially under the guidance of Irnerius and Gratian.[7] Its location in the heart of the city, its secular control, and its unsettling tendency to produce students more attracted by feudal than by either mercantile or clerical values — whatever their own origins — did nothing to relieve the many tensions. This secular institution's existence was more than once aided and abetted as well as objected to by the Church;[8] and although its teachings were imperial

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grow. During the late 1320's the walling of the city was completed, and the city came to resemble a fort. No further expansion of the walls ever took place; indeed they were still standing at the turn of the twentieth century, when they were in large part deliberately destroyed. See ANGELO FINELLI, *Bologna nel Mille. Identificazione della cerchia che le appartenne a quel tempo*, and *Bologna ai tempi che vi soggiornò Dante e l'ultima cerchia murata* (Bologna: Riuniti, 1927 and 1929).

6 Of the works on the University cited above, Sorbelli is the most useful for the economic historian. DAL PANE, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-52 explicitly relates the University to the economy of Bologna.

7 Irnerius (Irnerio) was born about 1055 and died in 1130. Gratian's dates of birth and death are unknown to me, but his principal work, the *Decretum*, was completed about 1142. See RASHDALL, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-132.

8 In medieval Bologna, as at other times and places, specific or broad interests of the Church often placed her in opposition to tradition, and sometimes led her to act in contrary ways at the same time and place. In general, the urban oligarchy and the

in their import, the University's contribution to Bologna's economic development made it a major, if indirect and often conflicting, source of Guelph strength in the city, and a principal stimulus to the emergence of the commune itself.[9]

The tensions between the University and the other powers of Bologna, as well as within the University itself, were perhaps most vividly displayed in the University's most notable thirteenth-century professor, Rolandino Passaggeri. The latter was both a leading radical and a leading conservative figure, in that it was he who articulated the principles that were designed to suppress and destroy the influence of the Ghibelline feudatories, while at the same time he fought hard to establish a set of strong privileges for the faculty and students of the (effectively Ghibelline) University. Passaggeri was immediately successful in both of his attempts; however, over the longer period neither attempt succeeded, which is part of the larger story of Bolognese instability.[10]

The economic, political, and social impact of the University was decisive in Bologna's development. Already in the early twelfth century the student population exceeded one thousand, and it rose to at least twice that number in the thirteenth century.[11] More important than the sheer numbers of students was their quality, and their consequent economic meaning.

The students were drawn from all over Italy and from much of the rest of Europe — from England, Switzerland, France, and among other areas and most especially, Germany.[12] They were necessarily, in large majority, drawn from the higher strata of medieval society. They were relatively rich and, because they were « graduate students », older than might be expected. On both counts they were likely to be accompanied by families and retainers. Several consequences followed: 1) the students' numbers as such were deceptively low, and should be multiplied by two or three in order to begin to measure their economic impact; 2) their economic influence was important

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Church found a common enemy in the rural feudatories, but the complex qualities and interests of the medieval Church, of the University, and of both urban and rural powers were often to confound what might have been expected in their relationships with each other. Something of the nature of these complexities will be brought out below.

9 See ARTURO PALMIERI, *Rolandino Passaggeri* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1933), pp. 5-6. (Hereinafter: *Passaggeri*).

10 PALMIERI, *Passaggeri*, passim. See also GIORGIO CENCETTI, *Rolandino Passaggeri dal mito alla storia*, « La Mercanzia », anno V, June, 1950, pp. 33-38.

11 STELLING-MICHAUD, *op. cit.*, p. 91, places the student population at one to two thousand in the years 1180-1230.

12 STELLING-MICHAUD, *op. cit.*, p. 21. See also GEORGE B. PARKS, *The English Traveller to Italy*, vol. I, *The Middle Ages* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1954), esp. pp. 181-191 and the appendix where the English students at the University in the period are listed and identified.

in several ways: *a*) they carried with them specie from their own lands;[13] *b*) they were in frequent need of loans, a persistent characteristic of students; *c*) they created a demand not only for additional housing, food, books, and brothels, but also for the broad range of goods that made up medieval trade. They thus stimulated construction, production, commerce, and finance, and gave support to a lively group of money-changers, money-lenders, merchants, and artisans, supporting a scale of activities that led directly to the emergence of the largest number and to the power of Bologna's gilds, and to Bologna's prosperity.[14]

The University appears quite surely to have been the prime stimulating influence on Bologna's medieval economic dynamism. There is a certain obscurity surrounding the founding of the University there, both as to timing and reasons. The explanation for its later decline in vitality, and its diminished contribution to Bologna's strength are clearer. Bologna could not maintain a monopoly of the « University market », of course, nor was such a position necessary for the University to continue to play a stimulating if relatively less decisive role in the Bolognese economy — for, although the number of universities multiplied in and out of Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the demand for education was apparently growing at least as fast. The University's problem was rather that it lost both faculty and students to others because of the terrible strife that began to develop within the confines of Bologna.[15]

The initial emphasis of the University was the revival and elucidation of Roman law, under the guidance of Irnerius.[16] Somewhat later, Gratian played the same role in the teaching and formulation of canon law, in which his influence has been lasting. A university of law, different and distinct from the several informal law schools that dotted Europe before and during

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[13] DAL PANE, *op. cit.*, p. 51, and STELLING-MICHAUD, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-91. In the year 1191 the Bologna mint was brought into existence through a diploma of Henry VI. This was one of the most famous mints in Italy and it persisted until the unification in the nineteenth century. See FRANCESCO MALAGUZZI VALERI, *La Zecca di Bologna* (Milan: Cogliati, 1901).

[14] The most comprehensive study of the gilds of Bologna is VITTORIO FRANCHINI, *Le Arti di Mestiere in Bologna nel secolo XIII* (Trieste: Univ. of Trieste, 1931). On the present point, see pp. 29-31.

[15] See SORBELLI, *Storia della Università...*, pp. 200-202, where he discusses the rise of the other universities in Italy and elsewhere in the twelfth and subsequent centuries (e. g., at Vicenza in 1204, Arezzo in 1215, Padua in 1222, Vercelli in 1228, Perugia in 1276, Genoa and Florence in 1321, Pisa in 1338, Pavia in 1361, and so on). It is notable how many of the Italian universities were founded with a beginning nucleus of faculty drawn from Bologna. By the fourteenth century, as we shall see below, this drain became systematic, and it was encouraged both by the pull of other cities and the push provided by the unsettled conditions of Bologna. Many of the newer universities failed to survive the passage of time.

[16] STELLING-MICHAUD, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

the eleventh century, took root in Bologna in part because there had been an active notarial and law school there throughout at least the eleventh century, and as well because of the efforts of Irnerius and Gratian. In part the University emerged there because of Bologna's central location — « political » as well as geographic — between north and south. Whatever a full explanation might be as to why the first university of law emerged when and where it did [17] — and such an explanation would probably always contain an implicit *post hoc* quality — Bologna did have such a university and directly or indirectly the University was what contemporary economists would call its « growing point ». What grew around it was the *Comune di Bologna* and the gild system.

III.

The *Comune di Bologna* was born in 1116.[18] That the *Comune* owed its formal existence to an imperial diploma[19] should, on the face of it, occasion surprise; not simply because the very notion of a free commune was at least implicitly anti-imperial, but also because the Empire had been dealt an insulting blow in 1115, when the Bolognesi rose up to destroy the imperial *rocca*, the residence of imperial functionaries in Bologna. Alone, Bologna lacked the strength to wrest itself loose from the constraints of the Empire. The commune was born in part from the growing strength and determination of its leaders; but this was made effective because it was simultaneous with a general communal surge in northern Italy, at a time of temporary military weakness on Henry V's part. (In the same years the communal diploma was granted to Mantua, Lucca, Pisa, and Turin ».[20] Of considerably more importance for an understanding of Bologna's subsequent political and economic developments is the fact that the grant settled much less than it provoked; namely, at least a century and a half of struggle within the city, and between city and countryside. The struggle was persistent, erupting more than a few times into class warfare.[21]

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[17] STELLING-MICHAUD, *op. cit.*, p. 22 ff., runs through the various factors favouring the « location » of the University at Bologna. SORBELLI, ***Storia della Università***..., pp. 32-35, discusses the role of Irnerius (Irnerio) as probably the most important single figure in the emergence of the University in the late eleventh century. See also DAL PANE, *op. cit.*, p. 49, who emphasizes the relationship between the increasingly commercialized economy and the revival of Roman law at Bologna.

[18] See ALFRED HESSEL, *Geschichte der Stadt Bologna, von 1116 bis 1280* (Berlin: Ebering, 1910), p. 51.

[19] *Ibid.* See also GINA FASOLI, *Dalla « Civitas » al Comune* (Bologna: Patron, 1961), p. 180.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[21] Nor was the warfare confined to the limits of Bologna. Between 1131 and 1250, Bologna fought over one hundred battles « on its own account » — twelve apiece with

The modern historian who has inquired most into the medieval history of Bologna, Arturo Palmieri, concentrated more often than not on a process of struggle and conflict — within and between classes, in the city, and most emphatically, between city and country (both hills and plains). Palmieri's *La montagna bolognese del medio evo*, although a comprehensive history of medieval Bologna, is in large part a history of struggle. His *Rolandino Passaggeri* is once more a story of struggle; in this instance manifested in the career of one man whose life was so important to, and representative of, Bologna.[22]

The economic development of Bologna was intimately tied, both in its ups and downs, to a now fruitful, now destructive, struggle for power. The period of her most rapid economic expansion and dynamism in the thirteenth century encompassed three upheavals that might gain the name « social revolutions » today. All these changes moved in the same direction and drew power more and more into the hands of merchants and financiers; none, however, whether taken singly or in combination, was sufficient to establish a firm social order within the city, let alone as between city and country. The impulses and interests that underlay these upheavals were those that also promoted economic growth; but the roots that nourished the commune also poisoned it.

The *Comune di Bologna* represented both the form and the spirit of Bologna in its medieval essence. The communal period, 1116-1280,[23] was the peak of Bolognese independence and strength. It was also the period within which the commune sought, and failed, to establish a geographic hegemony that would provide lasting foundations for economic and political strength. The bitter fruits of the failure were Bologna's fare throughout much of the fourteenth century, the latter part of which was a period of decadence and depression.

Modena and Imola, thirteen with Forlì, eight with Faenza, ten with Ravenna, seven with Parma, five with Cremona, four with Pistoia, and so on. The latter do not include the battles fought with allies against Ferrara, Venice, Verona, Padua, Florence, and others. See GIDA ROSSI, *Bologna nella storia nell'arte e nel costume, Parte II* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1937), second edition, p. 76.

22 The two books just mentioned were cited earlier. See also three important essays: *I lavoratori del contado bolognese durante le signorie*, in « Atti », ser. III, vol. XXVIII (1910); *Feudatari e popolo nella montagna bolognese*, in *ibid.*, ser. IV, vol. IV (1923); and *Lotte agrarie bolognesi nei secoli XII e XIV (Rustici e borghesi contro la nobiltà)*, in « Atti », ser. IV, vol. XIII (1932).

23 HESSEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 519-520, dates the end of the commune at 1280. The struggles of the late thirteenth century, which reached their highest pitch of violence in the 1270's, also let to institutional surges within the commune aimed at its preservation which in their essence and their consequences signified the beginning of the end for fundamental communal institutions. See NICOLÒ RODOLICO, *Dal Comune alla Signoria* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1898), esp. pp. 33-34.

Feudalism died hard in Bologna, and its death struggle was of such intensity and duration that it brought down with it the commune, its prime enemy. The contest between feudalism and the commune resulted in the elimination of both, to the ultimate advantage (in the early sixteenth century) of a third power, the Papacy.[24] The origins of feudalism in Bologna were not unusual; they were in the need for military defense.[25] The secular feudatories held power on the plains, which they shared and contested with the Church; but their strongholds were quite understandably in the hills behind Bologna. There they were safe, and there they sat astride the two main passes that connected Bologna with Tuscany — i. e., with Pistoia, Florence, Lucca and Pisa.[26]

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there were significant numbers of allodial holdings around Bologna. However, both in the hills and in the plains the dominant form of agricultural organization strongly resembled the classic medieval manor. It was called the *curtis* (*il sistema curtense*),[27] and although the terrain differences made for some variations in organization as between the plains and the hills, the foundations were much the same: serfdom, harsh exploitation, economic isolation, and institutional rigidity. Population was growing rapidly in twelfth and thirteenth century Bologna, as were the needs for food, a growing labour supply, and free communications. Even before the thirteenth century, the *curtis* was showing signs of cracking, with independent proprietors or small merchants pushing through the seams, and with noticeable pressures toward liberalization of land tenure

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24 The persistent struggles within the city, and between the city and the countryside, extended over such a long period of time, and carried in their train such a great variety of disasters — famine, disease, fiscal calamity — that no one date can be chosen as signifying the mutual defeat of the contending forces. But the Battle of Zappolino (1325) can be pointed to as representing not only Bologna's greatest military disaster, but also the time when the mutual exhaustion and frustration of both « sides » had gone so far as to mix their forces in what must be considered an insane combination — resembling, perhaps, the mixture of religious forces in the later stages of the Thirty Year's War. See esp. PALMIERI, *La montagna*, p. 175 ff.; FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4; and ALBANO SORBELLI, *Il comune rurale dell'Appennino emiliano nei secoli XIV e XV* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1910), *passim*.

25 In using this terminology I have in mind the analysis of F. L. GANSHOF, *Feudalism* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1952), *passim*. There are of course notable differences between, say, northeastern France and the *contado* of Bologna in the tenth century; what is striking are the similarities. See PALMIERI, *La montagna*, pp. 11-18, and 46-134.

26 *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 49-53.

27 See LUIGI DAL PANE, *L'economia bolognese del secolo XIII e l'affrancazione dei servi*, « Giornale degli Economisti », 1959, p. 556, and ARTURO PALMIERI, *Le condizioni agricole bolognesi al tempo di Pier de' Crescenzi*, in « Pier de' Crescenzi », Studi e Documenti a cura di P. TOMMASO ALFONSI, *et al.* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1933), pp. 35-36. Hereinafter, respectively, DAL PANE, *L'affrancazione*, and PALMIERI, *de' Crescenzi*.

and utilization.[28] It is significant that both the first treatise moving toward a «scientific» agriculture in medieval Italy, and the first wholesale freeing of serfs (1256) took place in Bologna.[29] Pier de' Crescenzi (1233-1321) was something like a combination of Tull, Townshend, and Arthur Young; Rolandino Passaggeri (ca. 1217-1301) represented more a professorial combination of Jefferson and Hamilton.[30] There is a major reservation to be made, however: these great men of Bologna thought and worked within a turbulent social context that denied meaningful or lasting fruition to their contributions. If de' Crescenzi and Passaggeri may be taken as the individuals symbolizing rural and urban advance in Bologna, the Conte da Panico, his family, his descendants, and his allies may be taken as the symbol of violent and bitter resistance to any changes whatsoever in the countryside, with no little help from the great families residing in the city.[31]

When Henry V dispensed the diploma of 1116, it was not meant as an act of breaking the ties between his rule and Bologna, but of maintaining those ties within a modified framework. To the degree that autonomous power was subsequently gained in and by Bologna, it was held by the old and noble families («*le Casate*»), whose interests and residences mixed town and country. The first genuinely «bourgeois» rising in Bologna was marked by the revolution of 1228, and its result was to transfer control from an aristocracy to an oligarchy, from a traditional élite to one that had earned its power in the growing economy of Bologna over the preceding century or so.[32] The new powers had financial and mercantile bases — although, as was true over much of Italy, economic power gained from the land often found its way into the town activities, and urban-gained wealth usually sought land and titles of nobility.

It was the success of 1228, and its limitations, that led squarely to the tumult of 1255, which created a parallel government standing against the oligarchy. In Bologna, as elsewhere in communal Italy, the institution of the *podestà* was the manifestation of oligarchic rule. The *podestà*, frequently a feudatory from a friendly but different city was presumably above the

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28 DAL PANE, *L'affrancazione*, pp. 554-556, and PALMIERI, *de' Crescenzi*, p. 37.

29 See the articles just cited above, *passim*, and also CHARLES PARAIN, *The Evolution of Agricultural Technique*, «Cambridge Economic History of Europe», I (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1942), p. 127 and GUNNAR MICKWITZ, *Italy*, in *ibid.*, pp. 334-335. The second edition of this volume (1966) contains a fuller treatment of Italian agriculture by Philip Jones, in which further remarks on de' Crescenzi's contributions may be found. See pp. 374-375 and p. 378, especially.

30 The comparison between the two men, and the contribution that each man made, is treated fully by Palmieri in his essay on de' Crescenzi and in his book on Passaggeri, both cited earlier.

31 See PALMIERI, *Lotte agrarie bolognesi...*, p. 7 ff.

32 FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

factions of the town.[33] Whatever might have been the differing facts on that score, he was chosen by the communal powers, and may be presumed to have been their choice. He did not, except by chance, represent anything else. Challenging this, the lesser people of Bologna set up their own representative, *il capitano del popolo*, in 1255, and a parallel government.[34]

Just as there were two Bolognas, city and country, there were two Bolognas within the city itself.[35] That these combative groups could work together was demonstrated more than once; that it took a great crisis to bring about cooperation is also clear. Perhaps the two most vivid illustrations are found in 1) the Battle of Fossalta, where Lambertazzi and Geremei (Ghibelline and Guelph factions, respectively) together fought against the forces of Frederick II, for Bologna's greatest victory,[36] and 2) the freeing of the serfs in 1256, when the divided city powers combined to loosen the economic forces held down by feudal power in the countryside, and to weaken the latter power in the process.[37]

Bologna did not succeed in consolidating the hegemony it seemed to have gained in the years surrounding 1250, when it had successfully put down the principal contenders for power in the nearby areas in Emilia and Romagna.[38] Nor was the freeing of the serfs genuinely accomplished in 1256. Again in 1282 and 1304, decrees aiming at that same end had to be issued; still without complete success. The two failures were related to the fatal inability of the Bolognesi to consolidate a viable structure of power, most bloodily revealed in the violent internal struggles of the 1270's and subsequent decades.

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33 The life of the *podestà* at Bologna (to mention only it) was by no means one of grand luxury, or even of security. In Bologna, his tenure was for one year, he could not bring his family with him, could receive no gifts or even letters, could not move about freely, was not allowed to acquire wealth, and was to be judged at the end of his year. The judgment could, and sometimes did, deprive him of his stipend. If a war ensued with his own town or city he might be held as a hostage. See ROSSI, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

34 RODOLICO, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

35 Indeed, one may think of a third and fourth Bologna, as constituted by those in the city or in the countryside who were outside the circle of privileges of gild, or leading family; i. e., the genuinely powerless people of town and country.

36 The battle, which ranged Bologna and its allies against the forces of Frederick II, had 15-20,000 troops participating on either side. See J. C. L. SISMONDI, *A History of the Italian Republics* (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 76-6.

37 DAL PANE, *L'affrancazione*, esp. pp. 562-563. LODOVICO FRATI, *La vita privata in Bologna dal secolo XIII al XVI* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1928), second edition, p. 87 ff., states that « ...toward the middle of the thirteenth century there were 5,807 *schiavi*... » (My italics). *Schiavi* translated as slaves, of course, rather than as serfs (*servi*), but the context makes it clear that Frati's meaning is the latter rather than the former. See also pp. 402-403 of the article by JONES in «Cambridge Economic History», I, second edition.

38 SISMONDI, *loc. cit.*

The earlier needs of Bologna for protection from invaders that gave rise to feudalism had, by the eleventh century, declined. Relative military security made possible the rise of a commune dependent upon and able to nourish economic activities. But that same security gave the existing military power of the largely rural feudatories the ability to apply their military strength against the communal authorities of Bologna, in effect reversing their earlier protective functions. Some of these energies were absorbed by the Crusades — whose multiple effects, however, did nothing to lessen the aggressive potential of the feudatories against the communal power. In the Bolognese context, the struggle between feudatories and the bourgeois powers of the commune developed as a military standoff. The communal-commercial interest may elsewhere have had the greater long-run potential; but the feudal-military interests of Bologna had Bologna's vital agriculture, strategic location, and superior fighting abilities under their control. Neither the one side nor the other was sufficient to gain a lasting decision. Both groups found themselves, in the fourteenth century, relying increasingly on the strength of powers outside Bologna — respectively, the Papacy and the Visconti dukes — and these powers had the interests of neither of the Bolognese factions as their impelling motivation to participate. Now let us examine the evolution of the Bolognese gilds.

IV.

The closest thing to a « true » communal spirit in Bologna grew as the gilds grew, and it was represented in them militarily,[39] politically, and economically. The formal incorporation of gilds in Bologna took place in the last half of the thirteenth century,[40] and it covered the common run of mercantile, financial, professional, and artisan activities. It was these gilds, dominant among which were the important merchants and financiers, that provided the leading edge of economic and political change in the thirteenth century.

They, the merchants and financiers, ran the *Comune*.[41] When, after 1280, their dominant role was taken over by the notaries and judges, this

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[39] The military gilds — or « *armi* » — were organized by residential quarter. In their beginnings in Bologna in the first years of the thirteenth century, and before the revolution of 1228 (which the *armi* helped to precipitate) they served as a counter force to the armed force of the noble families — *delle torri*. See FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, p. 26 ff.

[40] But their informal emergence and functioning as a force in the city — especially among the merchants and financiers — extended well back into the twelfth century. See FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, where he also makes the point that the structure, the organization, of the gilds is almost identical with that of the commune. Also, DAL PANE, *La vita economica*, especially pp. 103-106.

[41] FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-68 and 158.

was more a sign of the lessening of creative economic activity than of a sharp contest for power coming from the new groups. That Passaggeri, himself a notary and a professor, should be the personal manifestation of the terrible struggles of the 1270's and 1280's and that he should be offered the personal dictatorship of Bologna — he, rather than some person or group more directly representative of mercantile and financial activity — is in itself a mark of what was happening.[42]

The merchants and financiers who were to dominate the gilds in Bologna were accepted into the political circles of the *Comune* in the twelfth century. Their help was needed by the aristocracy in shaping treaties with Ferrara and Lucca, because the relationships between Bologna and other cities were taking on an important economic content, beyond the competence of the nobles. From an advisory position the merchants and financiers soon found themselves sitting in the General Council of the Comune; in 1228 this was formalized.[43] It is worth noting here that in the third revolutionary set of developments of the thirteenth century, in 1282 and 1284, the new *ordinamenti sacrati e sacratissimi* precluded any *but* gild members sitting in the General Council, thus closing the circle — for a while.[44]

In the twelfth century, the efforts of the communal forces had been directed toward changing and solidifying new political forms and relationships, matters that have generally been more noticeable, as well as simpler to effectuate, than economic affairs of equal importance. But in the thirteenth century, it was economic change and progress that took on urgency, and it was the gilds that then sought and determined the style of the commune, which meant they had to gain formal control over it. Whatever else was involved, control implied a greater concentration upon the internal affairs of the Bolognese region, and this in turn meant opening up a hornets' nest. The last great show of internal unity was represented in the events of mid-thirteenth century, especially in the Battle of Fossalta, as suggested earlier.[45] In previous contests the Bolognesi had been auxiliaries, vassals,

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[42] See CENCETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

[43] FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-127.

[44] The new ordinances also almost fully deprived the noble families of their traditional rights and privileges, which had included not only a series of immunities (which came to be granted to the rising gild rulers) but also the «stationing» of their supporting military bands within the city. See AUGUSTO GAUDENZI, *Statuti del popolo in Bologna del secolo XIII. Gli ordinamenti sacrati e sacratissimi* (Bologna: Merlani, 1888), pp. vi and xx. Gaudenzi (p. v.) argues that the Bolognese *ordinamenti* not only preceded but also were used as a model by Pistoia and Prato in their similarly entitled ordinances, and by Florence (as a model for the latter's *ordinamenti di giustizia*). The full texts of the ordinances themselves may be found in Gaudenzi's work.

[45] See FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15, and CENCETTI, *ibid.* It was at this battle that Frederick II's son King Enzo of Sardinia was captured by the Bolognese. He was impri-

or fortuitous beneficiaries of larger external forces (Church or Empire) who moved for their own reasons, as they played a game on a very large board that required and allowed, now and again, sacrifices and gains for the lesser powers.[46] As Bologna's strength waxed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, she was able to gain more than she lost from the larger game; as she weakened in the fourteenth century, her fates were reversed. But during the thirteenth century, when the commune came closest to controlling both the *contado* and the town, Bologna was in a position where it seemed both possible and necessary that she fend for herself. The gilds, especially those of the merchants and the financiers, attempted to guide and to control the entire process.

It was before the thirteenth century that Bologna achieved greater control over and access to the paths of commerce leading north, south, and west. The principal river of the North is of course the Po, and the principal river moving toward Bologna before it runs further north is the Reno. The Reno was more navigable and closer to Bologna in the early than in the late medieval period, and it also connected with the Po by way of Ferrara, through whose center the Po once ran. The imperial diploma of 1116 was followed in 1123 by agreements granting privileges to Bologna at the expense of Ferrara, for imperial reasons having little to do with either Bologna or Ferrara.[47] In time, Bologna pushed east to gain control over Romagna by subduing Imola, and south against Pistoia. In the process she secured those rivers and roads that would enable Bologna to receive and to dispense goods and services. But this also set the stage for the life and death struggle between the gild-run commune and the feudal-controlled countryside, whose agriculture was critical to Bologna's wellbeing. The economic powers of the city could not long utilize their successes regarding lines of communication unless they could either subdue or gain cooperation from the powers that lay between the city and the external areas; and because it could neither subdue nor find cooperation from the feudatories, the city could not maintain what gains it had made beyond its own periphery. This was the cause and the measure of the commune's failure, and the focus of the continuing power struggle. That unresolved and bitter conflict underlay the ultimate economic decline and political vulnerability of Bologna.

Bologna was not unique in having such troubles in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but the growing economic strength of the towns of

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soned until his death twenty-two years later in the especially constructed (and still beautiful) *Palazzo Re Enzo* in the center of the city. Enzo was treated very well (better, apparently, than the *podestà*); indeed, legend has it that a natural son born to him was given the family name Bentivoglio (which may be rendered « I love you »), thus initiating that family which, in the fifteenth century, was to rule over Bologna.

46 FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

47 HESSEL, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

Tuscany in the thirteenth, and of Lombardy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (to mention no others), meant that Bologna must either expand or suffer economic passivity and stagnation.[48] It could not overcome its own internal weakness to find a firm basis for expansion; by the middle quarters of the fourteenth century it was paying the price.

The heyday of the commune and of the *società* of merchants and artisans, the *arti*, was the thirteenth century. It was also the heyday of the *armi*, the communal fighting organizations. What was successfully insisted upon throughout the thirteenth century — the right to bear arms as members of the commune[49] — was increasingly shirked in the fourteenth century.

Bologna also was not unique in its increasing reliance upon *condottieri*, then a commonplace in Italy. But rather soon even this means of defence (which was at least under her financial control) was abandoned, and the city alternatively turned itself over to or was conquered by one or another outside power — representing either the Church or the Visconti. One of the most astute of Italian historians, Nicolò Rodolico, finds the persistent and underlying weakness of the *Comune* symbolized in this practice, which he sees as exposing the fatal flaw of the mature *Comune*; to wit, indifference.[50] But the indifference noted by Rodolico must be seen as civic demoralization. In turn, this was a product of the continuous and costly frustrations facing the previously cooperating but now contending groups that made up Bologna — the merchants and financiers, the University, the religious societies, the *Comune* itself, and the powerful landed feudatories. The earlier opportunities and adversity that had welded the Bolognesi together produced a new society of numerous strong groupings who then became factions hopelessly divided. In undergoing this melancholy process, Bologna was finding her own variation of an oft-told tale.[51]

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48 Florence and Milan were both strong throughout the thirteenth century, of course. That strength, especially in Lombardy (whether economic or military) grew at an accelerating rate in the fourteenth century. Also, by the early fourteenth century, neighbouring Romagna (particularly Forlì) had become a stronghold of Ghibelline power and aspirations. Bologna was thus surrounded by economically competitive and militarily hostile groupings. See the citations in footnote 95, below.

49 Rodolico, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6, and pp. 98-99.

50 *Ibid.*, *passim*, but esp. p. 30.

51 In Bologna factionalism was both intensified and enhanced by the practice of the rich (mercantile or otherwise) to send their sons to the University of Bologna, where the educational materials and the process itself inclined in favour of the enemies of the commune. One consequence was that in critical periods both students and faculty would join with the anticommunal plots and forces. See, e. g., Arturo Palmieri, *I Maltraversi e la fine della nobiltà feudale della montagna bolognese* (Bologna: Palmaverde, 1959), pp. 11-12, 49-50. « I Maltraversi » were the principal anti-communal faction of the early fourteenth century in Bologna.

Between Bologna and Florence there were several differences worthy of comment. One of these (others will be noted later) was in the pattern and roles played by their respective gild systems. Among the seven dominant gilds in Florence, one finds (as in Bologna) the bankers, notaries and judges; but in Florence the dominant families and gilds were mixed inextricably in production, and in long-distance trade and finance. In Bologna, the *arti maggiori* in the thirteenth century were only two, not seven major gilds, and they were gilds lacking any special strength in long-distance trade and high finance, let alone an industrial base. To turn that around, and to see it more fully, the economic strength that existed in Bologna, dependent as it was on essentially entrepôt functions, encouraged industry, but it appears that a very large part of it was for local consumption.

As in Florence, the dyeing and finishing of woollens became important in Bologna in the thirteenth century, and added on to the lower-level production and trade of an earlier period. Silk came to be produced in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with at least some local mulberry and cocoon production.[52] To these typical medieval Italian industries, one may add the customary array of swordmakers, shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, jewelers, masons, and the usual range of retail production and commercial groups. The lesser gilds in Bologna were not politically weaker than their counterparts in Florence — if anything they were stronger, insofar as the Captain of the People had real power — but both they and their more powerful gild colleagues functioned on the basis whose lasting focus was local, and correspondingly weak, when Bologna's strength began to diminish.[53]

The strength of the gilds and of labour were associated with a shortage in the supply of goods and of labour, and it would appear that the period in which these shortages were most marked was in the latter half of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth centuries. The shortage of goods was a function of the growing University, and of the city that grew along with it; so was the shortage of labour. The latter gave one of the strong impulses to break the feudal power in the *contado*, as mentioned before. The shortage also led to continuing attempts to draw skilled labour to Bologna from nearby towns in Italy, especially from Tuscany. Gild organization was quite informal before the mid-thirteenth century, and membership was not in fact compulsory. After 1280, the gilds hardened, as did so much else in Bologna. Membership became compulsory, and the benefits of membership came to be

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[52] Regarding wool, see DAL PANE, *L'affrancazione*, p. 560. The fullest study of the Bolognese silk industry in the period is the unpublished thesis of PAOLO MONTANARI, *Ricerche sull'arte della seta in Bologna nei secoli XIII e XIV* (Bologna: The University Library, 1959-1960). For the present point, see pp. 19-20.

[53] That the «international» quality of Bologna's trade was more pronounced in the thirteenth than in the fourteenth century is shown by DAL PANE, *L'affrancazione*, p. 559 and ff.

less noticed than its constraints.[54] The hardening process was a reflection of a less buoyant environment economically, as well as politically.

It was noted earlier that after 1280 the gilds of *mercanti* and *cambiatori* took up a secondary position in the *Comune*, yielding to the *notai* and *giudici*. Franchini, joining Gaudenzi, sees Bologna's period of decadence as beginning at the time when that change takes place. However, where Gaudenzi sees the emerging strength of the *notai* as a cause of decadence, Franchini — with what appears to be more reason — sees it as an effect of something broader; namely, the decline of Bologna's economic importance. This in turn is viewed as a function of the growing economic importance of other Italian centers, not least that of Florence.[55] What must be recalled here is that the grandeur of the University of Bologna is, by the thirteenth century, not reduced, but it is no longer unique. The strength of the University, and of its reputation, was sufficient to attract a Becket in the twelfth, a Dante in the thirteenth,[56] and a Petrarch in the early fourteenth century, despite the existence of a growing number of universities in and outside Italy. The monopoly had disappeared long ago, of course. And even though the University continued to grow into the early fourteenth century, Bologna's greater size and economic complexity perforce diminished the relative economic importance of the University. What the University had stimulated, others had to extend; and this in turn required the must astute and deliberate guidance by the beneficiaries of past development. Such was not forthcoming; indeed the continuous struggle that gripped Bologna in her critical period weakened both the general basis of economic strength and the University itself.[57]

V.

The last generation or so of the thirteenth century was the period of most violent and prolonged struggle, and it also well revealed the terms of

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[54] FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141. Franchini also points out that in the struggles of the 1270's the powerful merchant and financial gilds found it both possible and necessary to ally themselves (in part) with the Lambertazzi (Ghibelline) faction, which had not much earlier been their sworn enemies. The enemies of the rich urban families were now more clearly the lesser *popolo*, of the lesser gilds, or outside of the gilds. See pp. 150-154.

[55] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[56] FINELLI, *Bologna ai tempi che vi soggiornò Dante*, p. 14 ff.

[57] ANTONIO FAVORO, *Ancora del tentativo di procurare una nuova emigrazione di scolari dallo Studio di Bologna a quello di Padova intorno alla metà del secolo XIV*, in « Atti », ser. IV, VII (1917), in the title of his study suggests what was happening, and what had happened earlier. See especially pp. 196-197. SORBELLI, *La Signoria di Giovanni Visconti a Bologna e le sue relazioni con la Toscana* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1910), pp. 286-287, underscores the troubles of the University in the 1330's and how, by 1350, it was necessary for the new *signore* to take explicit and substantial steps to attempt — unsuccessfully — some kind of resuscitation for the declining University.

that struggle. The factions that carried the struggle were the Lambertazzi (feudal, Ghibelline), and the Geremei (urban, Guelph).[58] If there was one man who stood at the center of the storm, and in spirit and in practice represented the best and strongest impulses of the *Comune*, it was Rolandino Passaggeri. Whatever else may have caused the failure of the *Comune*, it was not for lack of a leader of great talent and stature.

Already by 1255, Passaggeri was well-known in Europe, having written what was still regarded in the 16th century as a classic of the teaching and the practice of the notary's art.[59] He had served as chief notary both for the *Comune* and the *cambiatori* in the 1240's and is known to have enjoyed their confidence. Passaggeri remained above the conflict as such until it came to a head in the 1260's; and in the 1280's he withdrew once more, to spend the twenty years or so remaining to him exclusively in the University. In the meantime he had written a set of revolutionary codes that had the complete suppression of the feudal element as their aim, had codified a set of protective laws for the students and professors at the University (ranging all the way from maximum rents to legal privileges), had formed and led a group that in others' hands could become vigilante in its nature,[60] and he had been given, held, and swiftly given back power over the city. All this suggests that Passaggeri was a remarkable man; it is more to our point to note that, for Bologna, these must have been remarkable times.

The first signs pointing toward the raging conflict of the 1270's appeared after the freeing of the serfs in 1256. From that point onward, the Lambertazzi faction attempted to find the strength to gain control of Bologna, city and country, for the rural and city nobility. Power seesawed back and forth between the factions in the 1260's, and the crisis came to a head in the year 1274. In that year, the Lambertazzi attempted to persuade the commune to go to the aid of a group of Ghibelline exiles of Modena attempting to gain control of their city, which would then by agreement be subjected to Bologna. At the same time, the Geremei wished to use Bolognese strength to move against Guido da Montefeltro in Forlì, who represented a growing Ghibelline threat to Bologna. The battles that ensued were neither in Modena nor Forlì, but in the streets of Bologna, between the two factions.[61] At that time, Bologna had one hundred and eighty towers that served the primary

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[58] But it must be remembered that within the city were many pro-Ghibelline families of wealth and status. Cf. footnote 54.

[59] CENCETTI, *op. cit.*, p. 35, and PALMIERI, *Passaggeri*, p. 90. The work was entitled *Summa artis notariae.*

[60] The reference is to *La Compagnia della croce*, a body of militia two thousand strong, whose sole function appears to have been the surveillance of the city. *Ibid.*, p. 123. Regarding the offer of power to Passaggeri — whose powers were those of *signore*, but whose euphemistic title was *legislatore* — see *ibid.*, pp. 148-155.

[61] FINELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

purpose of a defensive family fortress, and the secondary purpose of prestige. They had begun to come into existence in 1109 when the very tallest tower, the Asinelli (which still stands and is about three hundred feet high) was begun. In the twelfth century the towers and the aristocracy both came into being;[62] but by the mid-thirteenth century at least one hundred of the towers were in Guelph hands. The battle, which raged for forty days and nights, was fought in the streets, and from the tops and at the bottoms of the towers, and the weapons ranged through all the harsh ingenuities then available to man. After more than a month of uninterrupted bloodshed, the battle was won by the Geremei, on June 2, 1274. It resulted in the expulsion of the Lambertazzi and their supporters from Bologna. Finelli places the number of those on the proscribed list as fifteen thousand (out of a population that could not have exceeded fifty thousand); Cencetti states that four thousand individuals (remaining in Bologna) were listed as being on good behaviour, and subjected to taxes and special contributions, and that the wealth of the escapees was fully sequestred.[63] It was after the bloodletting that the vigilante-style *Compagnia della croce* was formed. By 1279 the Lambertazzi were back again; they were expelled once more in 1280. Two years later, in 1282, and then in 1284, the *ordinamenti sacrati e sacratissimi* were formulated (largely by Passaggeri) and adopted. Their aim was to « provide a lasting basis for the new bourgeois society ».[64] Until these ordinances were promulgated, the noblemen and *magnati*, although losing power and prestige, had a formal place within the communal government, with seats in the general council. The provisions of the new ordinances not only prohibited seats in the ruling body of the commune to anyone not a member of an urban corporation, they also deprived the old nobility of its numerous privileges and immunities.[65] All this appeared to represent the « final » triumph of the bourgeois over the traditional elements. That finality was to reveal itself as an illusion within a few years.

After 1284, Passaggeri returned to the University, having been offered in fact, if not in words, the overlordship of Bologna. The commune had come to the edge of voting itself out of existence, and of placing itself under a *signore*. It is this situation that validates Hessel's terminal date for the *Comune*: 1280. The next generation and more was filled with the struggle between the *Comune*, which was proving itself inadequate to the tasks it faced (and that it had in part created for itself), and the emerging *signoria*.

The stubborn Lambertazzi were back in Bologna again in the 1290's, and expelled for the last time in 1299. They were never to return, as such; but

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[62] The old aristocracy of the city were known as the families *delle torri* and after 1228 that became *le Casate* (although the distinction was not that sharp as time went on).

[63] *Ibid.*

[64] PALMIERI, *Passaggeri*, p. 149.

[65] *Ibid.*

the feudatories still controlled the *contado*, and the interests which they represented precipitated new conflict all too soon. The faction that was to take their place, the *Maltraversi*,[66] could no longer be thought of as Ghibelline in the earlier sense; but they represented a similar group of feudatories hoping to control the commune and its bourgeois power. Their opposition came from the so-called *Scacchesi*, led by the Pepoli family.[66a] The Pepoli family sought to maintain the commune, but to place it under their own control. They soon found themselves alternately fighting not only their rural enemies, and their larger allies the Visconti, but also, at the very beginning, the Papacy.

VI.

The Papacy played an ambiguous part in Bologna's history throughout the whole medieval period, and the people of Bologna viewed the Church ambivalently. In the long struggle with the Empire, going back at least to the eleventh century, the Church emerged as the protector and supporter of communal and bourgeois impulses, even though that was incidental to its intent. To speak of the Church in the early period is to refer largely to the role of the bishops rather than the Pope, and to refer as much (or more) to the power that came from vast landholdings than from more purely religious authority. But the two were never far distant from each other.

The bishops gained control over vast amounts of land on the plains (which were organized under the *domus*, the ecclesiastical counterpart of the *curtis*) through pious donations, papal bulls, and the normally voluntary attachment of free areas (especially after 1123) seeking to keep free of the yoke of the *Comune*, or the alternative, the yoke of the local feudal lord.[67] If this placed *Comune* and Church in conflict, it also had another consequence: it checked the (actual or potential) landed power of feudatories. Thus, although the bishops from time to time placed themselves in sharp opposition to the commune and the commune often found itself fighting the bishops, their mutual attempts to increase power not only weakened the feudatories, it also brought the bishops and the commune to the point where they quite explicitly banded together against, first the rural feudatories, and later the Visconti dukes of Lombardy. Thus, in the early thirteenth century, the Church encouraged the activities of Dominicans and Franciscans, as forces opposing the secular and even licentious impact of the University — although the University in its larger consequences was the

66 See PALMIERI, *I Maltraversi*, passim, for an explanation of the origins, the composition, and the behavior of this faction.

66a The name is derived from the black and white squares of the chessboard, which were the arms or emblem of the Pepoli family. See Rodolico, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

67 See GINA FASOLI, *Sui Vescovi bolognesi fino al secolo XII; Possessi e rapporti con i cittadini*, in « Atti », ser. IV, XXV (1935), p. 10 and pp. 17-19.

fundamental basis of communal, anti-Ghibelline, strength. Earlier, in 1207, various communal officials found themselves excommunicated; over a century later, Taddeo Pepoli and Bologna fell under an interdict affecting the commune at the beginning of his *signoria*.[68]

The commune often relied upon the Church, and the people viewed the Church with affection; but not when the legates of the Church, who from time to time during and after the fourteenth century were the *signori* of Bologna, were complicit with the feudal elements (as in 1306), or when they were *stranieri* (as with Cardinal del Poggetto, in 1334, or Limousins, in 1376, both French) who adopted too well the feudal style.[69] The ambivalence concerning the University, itself ambivalent, was not confined to the Church, as was revealed when the Visconti family first gained control of the city (in 1350) and took several steps to strengthen and protect the University. This made considerable sense, insofar as the University was a nest of anti-communal feelings; but within a few years the papal legate and *signore*, Cardinal Albornoz, was himself taking such steps. This may be saying no more than that the role of the University was central in Bologna, and that its welfare, and influence over it, could not be dismissed by anyone who sought or held power — be he clerical, ducal, or communal in outlook.

VII.

We have yet to examine the path leading to the initial take-over by the Visconti. The economic aspects of that path took a sharp turn from good to bad in the twenty-five years or so just before 1350. The University's existence indirectly provides us with one strong, if impressionistic, indication of the earlier prosperity; and as well with a clear statement of what had transpired in subsequent decades. Petrarch was a student at the University in the years 1323-1326; and he returned for a visit in 1363. In that year he wrote to a friend about

> the deplorable state to which the strong, pleasing, and happy city of Bologna of my student days has been reduced. Now it is under foreign domination, bristling with walls and forts, guarded by innumerable sentries, and almost empty of students. Then it was free, without walls, made lively by the presence of tens of illustrious jurisconsults and thousands of students from all over Europe...[70]

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[68] See FASOLI, *Dalla « Civitas » al Comune*, p. 185; FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, p. 11 ff.; and RODOLICO, *op. cit.*, p. 123, for some of the contrasting episodes of the Church's relationships with Bologna. The interdict of 1338 led to the temporary closing of the University which, taken together with the generally turbulent situation, hastened the emigration of students and faculty. See also FAVORO, *op. cit.*, passim.

[69] PALMIERI, *I Maltraversi*, p. 54. Del Poggetto (or dal Poggetto), was the French Cardinal de Poiet. Albornoz ruled the city as papal legate in the 1350's.

[70] FINELLI, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93. See also SORBELLI, *Storia della Università*, pp. 221-22.

In Petrarch's time, as an indication of the prosperity to which he alludes, the silk industry had taken on its first burst of vitality.[71] The industry had been established in Bologna a century before, in 1231, when the first Lucchese silk *maestro* was settled in the city (as one instance of the more general pattern of conscious attraction of outside skilled craftsmen, common after 1228). The statutes of 1252 establish quite surely that the production and sale of silk were significant at that time, and that by then the mulberry leaf and cocoons were « produced » in the Bolognese contryside.[72] But the greatest stimulus to the industry came around 1314 when Bologna benefited from political struggle in Lucca, which led to a significant emigration of skilled Lucchese silkmen to Bologna (and to Venice). The years after 1314 were expansive, and the production of silk improved both quantitatively and qualitatively. Bologna gained from all this, despite the relatively unusual fact that the production process of silk in Bologna was controlled by Lucchese merchants who themselves conducted the external trade.[73] The benefit accrued in part to the city: but it is also significant that the external trade was in the hands of outsiders — a commentary on the reduced trading focus of the Bolognesi, who had earlier been more involved in long-distance trade than they were by the fourteenth century.[74] The kinds of prosperity suggested by Petrarch or by the health of the silk industry were to fall foul of a developing pattern of economic disintegration; and it is important to note that the major developments occurred before the widespread disasters associated with the plagues of mid-century. They emerge, in Bologna, during the *signoria* of Taddeo Pepoli (1337-1347).

The turbulence of the years following the long Lambertazzi-Geremei struggles, which ended at the closse of the thirteenth century, only to continue in different forms in the new century, may be seen as marking the birth pangs of the *signoria* in Bologna. The name first associated with this process was Romeo Pepoli; and Taddeo Pepoli, his son, was to be Bologna's second (the first to be noted below) *signore*. Before examining that development, it is useful once more to contrast Bologna with Florence.

When Florence moved toward the *signoria* it did so as a result of conflict between powerful Florentine bourgeois, struggling essentially over the *enlarging* pie that was Florence and Tuscany. When the struggle came to dominate Bologna, it was during a period of *declining* geographic and economic strength. The difference was to have more than one significance.[75]

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71 MONTANARI, *Ricerche...*, p. 10.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 27, and pp. 150-156.

74 FRANCHINI, *op. cit.*, p. 159, and DAL PANE, *L'affrancazione*, p. 559.

75 RODOLICO, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6. See also LUIGI SIMEONI, *Le Signorie* (Milan: Vallardi, 1950), I, p. 58.

The decline in Bologna's geographic strength was marked by a succession of unsuccessful battles, the most disastrous of which was at Zappolino, in 1325. Within two years, Bologna was to turn itself over voluntarily to a papal legate — for a while. Before then, a succession of thwarted attempts to gain power had been made by an earlier papal legate, Napoleone Orsini, who was chased from Bologna in 1306, and by Romeo Pepoli. Pepoli, a rich banker, and an aspirant to the position if not the title of *signore*, was much loved by the people. His principal rivals for power within the city were the two great families of the Gozzadini and Azzoguidi, whose machinations led finally in 1321 to the raising of a tumult in the main *piazza* that literally chased a fleeing Romeo Pepoli, who barely escaped with his life.[76] Pepoli, a few years later, joined with the remains of the exiled Lambertazzi and other external powers in an abortive attempt to gain power.[77] That attempt led to the disaster of Zappolino, which in turn caused Bologna to seek the protection of the Church. It was thus that cardinal Bertrando del Poggetto, entering the city with his militia in 1327, was proclaimed *signore* by the *consiglio generale*, by a vote of 958 to 3. Del Poggetto was ambitious, and rapidly expanded his control over cities in Emilia, Romagna, and elsewhere, using Bologna as his headquarters. It was then that Bologna was to find itself surrounded by the fortified wall that so depressed Petrarch. It also found itself being bled to death by the Cardinal's overly-ambitious military policy; and he too was chased from the city, in 1334. In 1335, Taddeo Pepoli, having hired mercenary militia, entered the city; by 1337 he could be proclaimed *signore* by the *consiglio*. Pepoli placed himself under the protection of Benedict XIII, in order to avoid being conquered by the latter.[78] From that date on, under one name or another, one group or another, and until 1506, the *signoria* was to be the form of government in Bologna. In 1506 it came under the direct control of the Papacy.[79]

Why did the commune disappear, and what, if anything, was the connection between that disappearance and the economic foundations of Bologna? As stated earlier, the events of 1255 established two parallel governments, that of *le Casate* (those who had gained formal control in 1228) who selected the *podestà*, and the government of *il popolo* (essentially, merchants and artisans, working through their *società*) with their *capitano*. For some time after 1255, the power of the latter, although it usually concealed the rule of a small financial and mercantile oligarchy, was greater than — if not

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76 Pepoli succeeded in doing so by scattering coins behind him as he ran, which diverted the pursuing crowds.

77 FINELLI, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

78 SIMEONI, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 251-252.

79 *Ibid.*, II, pp. 602-606. The Emperor Charles V was crowned in San Petronio (the *duomo* of Bologna) in 1519.

entirely distinct from — the former.[80] But in either case, the existence of communal government, like that of democratic government, required a state of affairs and attitudes that only occasionally existed in the thirteenth century, let alone in the fourteenth century. What was required was widespread public participation in the political and the military affairs of the *Comune*, and economic cooperation between town and countryside, rather than the occasional massing of riotous groups in the main *piazza*, brought there often enough by plotters having anything but the welfare of Bologna in mind.

Nicolò Rodolico, whose study of Bologna appears to have been prompted by an intellectual reaction to a traditional sentimental view of the commune, argues strongly and convincingly that its disappearance is not to be seen as arising from any special failing, or any special talent, of either Romeo Pepoli (who sought) or Taddeo (who obtained) the overlordship; instead (as noted above) it is to be understood as arising from the indifference of the people, large or small, to affairs going beyond their own shops and tables: that indifference, when set against the fiscal, political, and military needs of the times amounted in principle, and ultimately in practice, to an abandonment of the communal form.[81] Unless it could secure the vital symbiosis between city and *contado*, the commune as a form of rule was necessary limited in time, because it was so limited in scope. The communal form required voluntary and cooperative participation. Failing to achieve that, or even to approximate it, the *Comune di Bologna* died from neglect and from the apathy that is born of persistent frustration and conflict.

If this view is seen as overblown, the events of the mid-fourteenth century nevertheless give it substance. When Taddeo Pepoli died, in 1347, the overlordship passed into the hands of his two sons. Taddeo, who had tactfully refused the title *signore* in favour of the title *conservatore della pace e della giustizia*,[82] perhaps saw, and in any case acted as though he had, that the independence of the people was in fact an illusion, that the needs of the *Comune* were for « centralized power to defend both people and property, and the institutions of the communal society ».[83] After repeated wars and civil strife, social order, peace and justice were lacking in Bologna. Already in the first years of Taddeo's rule, the forms themselves — i.e., the statutes — had begun to change. When his sons inherited his power, they also inherited a fiscal disaster: a debt of 200,000 florins.[84] Presumably for that reason, the sons literally sold the city to Giovanni Visconti, Archbishop

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80 Rodolico, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

81 *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 47-49.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 69.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 86 and 90. The general significance of this sum may be gathered from two studies: In *La montagna*, Palmieri provides an appendix (pp. 473-480) devoted to the « cost of living at the end of the Middle Ages », which contains prices for a broad

of Milan, to which sale the Pope after some intimidation acceded, granting Giovanni a twelve-year vicariate.[85] The latter, finished in 1352, was seen by the new *signore* largely as a base from which to operate against Tuscany, which he promptly proceeded to do.

The new *signore* — not, of course, concerned with Bologna — was a true dictator, deciding on everything — « even the choice of the bell in the piazza »[86] — but principally on raising already oppressive taxes even higher, undertaking military expenditures, and building new fortifications in and around the city that would easily absorb such taxes as could be raised.

To relate the several episodes that took up the remainder of the fourteenth century would be as tedious as it would be sordid. The city passed from one Visconti to another, or one papal legate to another, and there were times when it is difficult to know under whose heavy hand the city lay. Not until Gian Galeazzo Visconti (the most powerful of the Milanese dukes) died at the edge of Florence in 1402 was the city to begin to find its rulers once more from within its own gates, and from its own past.[87] Well before that time, any economic or political vitality that may once have existed in the gilds had been squeezed out,[88] and the struggles within the city were between one aspiring family or another, with both sides using as their rallying cry: « *popolo! popolo!* ».[89]

By then, the long warfare between city and *contado* was all but over, and the city — but not Bologna — was the victor. For Bologna to have continued in strength required that her agricultural potential be realized — as during the thirteenth century it had been. Now the *contado* lay subdued and depleted, like an exploited colony, its vitality wasted. Economic growth would once more ensue, but there would be nothing of splendour about it.

The Bentivoglio family, which presided over a relatively peaceful and increasingly prosperous late-fifteenth century Bologna, made its appearance as a contender for power in 1401. That family was not innocent of the generally squalid nature of affairs in the early part of the century, and, in what was by then the natural manner in Bologna, it swept in and out of power more than once, before Giovanni Bentivoglio II in 1463 became *signore*, held the city until 1506, and ruled over something like a stable society.[90]

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variety of items (various animals, wine, cloths, weapons, implements, etc.). See also GIOVANNI SALVIONI, *Il valore della lira bolognese dalla sua origine alla fine del secolo XV* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1902), esp. p. 36 ff.

[85] SIMEONI, *op. cit.*, I, p. 252.

[86] *Ibid.*

[87] Except for the preceding year, 1401, when Giovanni Bentivoglio I seized power, only to lose it (and his life) to Gian Galeazzo Visconti within a year.

[88] SIMEONI, *op. cit.*, I, p. 253.

[89] *Ibid.*

[90] If also as a tyrant. See SISMONDI, *op. cit.*, p. 248.

Two further happenings should be noted, one largely as a matter of historical curiosity, the other as revealing the quality of the times, and they are not less interesting because they are immediately next to each other in time. Between 1403 and 1411, the ruler of Bologna was Baldassare Cossa, serving as Papal Legate. Shortly thereafter he was to become pope as John XXIII.[91] The twentieth century's John XXIII could take that name and number because Cossa's reign had a quality singular enough to cause history eventually to call him an anti-pope. As he left Bologna, there occurred a popular attempt to gain control of the city; indeed, it has been called the « *ciompi* » revolt of Bologna.[92] The artisans did gain control in 1411, lost it about a year later, and their leader was executed. The historical significance of this revolt reveals another difference between Bologna and Florence, as regards the fact of revolt. The revolt of the *ciompi* in Florence represented one craft, and they appear to have sought privileges for themselves that were an expression of a lingering medieval spirit; the artisans who took power in Bologna represented various trades (and professions) — blacksmiths, butchers, tailors, leather goods and shoe makers, barbers, and a few merchants and notaries. They seem to have been seeking a new (or much older, communal) and more broadly-based form of government. They were overthrown by a combination including expelled nobility, mercenary soldiers, and the Malatesta of Rimini.[93]

VIII.

The century or so between 1350 and 1450 was one of widespread (not just Bolognese) economic retrogression — or such is the widespread impression. But as Cipolla has pointed out,

> Such a view is indeed an over-simplification, and it certainly fails to give due weight to the great development of « new » areas during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[94]

One such « new » area was that in and surrounding Milan, whose period of substantial expansion and growth falls within (although it also

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[91] The dating on this as on many such matters is unsettled. Customarily, John XXIII is viewed as Pope for the years 1410-1415; but the Bolognese historians have him serving into 1411 as Legate. See SIMEONI, *op. cit.*, II, p. 602.

[92] ORESTE VANCINI, *Una rivoluzione di « Ciompi » in Bologna, 1411-1412*, pp. 562-563. This article is bound separately and filed clearly in the library of the Institute of Economic History at the University of Bologna, but the librarians are unable to identify the journal in which it was originally published.

[93] *Ibid.*, pp. 575-576.

[94] C. M. CIPOLLA, *The Italian and Iberian Peninsulas*, in « Cambridge Economic History of Europe » (Cambridge: The Univ. Press, 1963), III, p. 413, footnote 2.

laps over) both ends of the slow century.[95] Did the Duchy of Milan find economic strength and prosperty because of depression elsewhere, despite it, or, whatever may be true in those respects, for reasons that were not, strictly speaking, « economic » at all? It is the conviction that the last possibility is worth exploring very seriously that has motivated this inquiry; and this inquiry has bolstered the conviction. In attempting to state succinctly why this is so, I shall also be able to summarize the principal — if also tentative — findings of the present inquiry.

Bologna's rise to economic power became noticeable in the twelfth and established in the thirteenth centuries, when its population was equal to that of Florence, its role in international trade and finance notable, it had the ability to take a commanding role militarily (as at Fossalta), and its institutional creativity matched the splendour of its reputation as a center of learning. By the end of that century, and not too many decades into the next, all these achievements were being left behind, in a pattern of self-destructive bloodshed and declining economic importance. Even the University declined; not only relatively (which was inevitable), but absolutely (which was not).

How would analysts of economic development normally explain either the rise or the decline of Bologna? Certainly the first factors to claim attention would be the quantity and quality of natural and human resources, location, supplies of capital, and perhaps even education. If one were to compare Bologna with either Milan or Florence, both inland cities, one would not find Bologna wanting in any marked sense in these respects, so far as both reality and potential are concerned. Of the three areas, only Milan grew in its economic strength (and it grew greatly) in the depressed century. If what has been said up to this point is valid, the question of what other « factors » were relevant suggests itself; and the answer that also suggests itself most urgently is political power taken in its fullest sense.

Florence and Bologna both suffered economic decline during the period 1350-1450, and in both the marks of decline were apparent some years before 1350. Both also endured virtually continuous and unresolved contests for power. A contest for power also marked the history of Lombardy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but it was a contest in which the power of one group, the Visconti (and their successors, the Sforza) dukes steadily grew. It was in the nature of things that the consolidation of political and military power led to a transformation of the economic structure and institutions of Lombardy, and that these latter changes — marked by changing patterns of ownership, of land tenure and utilization, of production,

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[95] See C. M. CIPOLLA, *I precedenti economici*, in « Storia di Milano » (Milan: Fondazione Treccani, 1957), VIII, *passim*, and my own *The Economic Expansion of Lombardy, 1300-1500: A Study in Political Stimuli to Economic Change*, « Journal of Economic History », XXI (June, 1961), *passim*.

and of fiscal policy, *inter alia* — led to, or were, a process of economic development. When and why the buoyancy of the Milanese area came to an end, although it can be explained, is another story; suffice it to say here that Milan led the way from the medieval toward a more « modern » political form that had economic viability, and that such was not the case either in Bologna or in Florence.

Here an important distinction has to be insisted upon. One need not like the kinds of political changes accompanying the growth of economic strength in Lombardy to recognize them as not only accompanying but assisting, indeed underpinning, that economic strength. But if one is attempting to understand the process of economic development, it will nonetheless be found useful to recognize the relationships that facilitate it, and that hold it back. It has been the custom of economists, and of economic historians, to attempt to include all relevant factors (with a customary bow toward political affairs); it is my hypothesis that these « factors » should and can be analyzed in combination, rather than one after another, to find that set of relationships that make for what the physicists would call a « critical mass ».[96] The critical mass for economic development, at least in some cases, would seem to be that bundle of things that makes it possible for power to be gained and sustained by those who find ways to use it such that economic development ensues. That happened in Milan; it did not in Bologna.

Perhaps the point can be made in a reverse fashion. When Sismondi writes of late fifteenth century Bologna, he laments that

> While the republic of Florence thus lost its liberty, that of Bologna fell equally under the domination of the family of Bentivoglio. Its subjugation was still more disgraceful. No lustre whatever was attached to the name of Giovanni II (Bentivoglio), who governed that state from 1462 to 1508.[97]

The period to which Sismondi refers was one of renewed economic growth for both Florence and Bologna, and for both areas it was a time of political tyranny. « No lustre » may attach to such developments, unless we choose — as rightly we do not — to judge societies solely by their economic successes, come what may. However, if one is trying to understand the process of economic development — which is not the same thing as condoning its ways and means — it is appropriate to do so without sentiment. It is appropriate to take a hard look at the power that, at least in some societies, and perhaps in all, allows those who hold it to restrain, to allow, or to promote that kind of institutional change that is at the heart of economic development.

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[96] An extensive argument providing support for this position is put forth in my *Some Issues of Economic Development and of Development Economics*, « Journal of Economic Issues », I (September, 1967), *passim*, but especially in the latter third of the essay.

[97] SISMONDI, *op. cit.*, p. 248. The index entry for this point of Sismondi's is « Bologna, enslavement of ».