

Economic Crisis in the Kingdom of Naples in the Days of Phillip II

Luigi De Rosa

1. Phillip II's succession to the Emperor Charles V showed clearly that, although the fiscal burden had increased in the previous fifty years or so, it had not produced disastrous effects and had been kept at a level which was compatible with the country's economy. Indeed, it had brought considerable economic progress, which continued up to the beginning of Phillip's reign. We should say that, once he had ascended the Neapolitan throne, Phillip II was careful not to intervene immediately in matters of taxation, even though in 1550 the budget deficit was running at 50% of anticipated revenues¹. Yet only a few years passed before Phillip was obliged to ask for more money from his Neapolitan subjects. In 1559 he imposed a benevolence of 5-600 thousand ducats which, from being an exceptional contribution, became an ordinary one in 1564, to the value of around 1.2 million ducats annually. In the previous period the exceptional contribution had been fixed at just over 100 thousand ducats on average between 1502-1534 and from 1534 around 326 thousand ducats².

This was the only imposition levied up to the mid-1570s, but Phillip II received other revenues from a stricter application of existing taxes and from income which had not been alienated. Thus in 1562 he ordered a recount of households in areas in which the number of such

¹ *Archivio Generale de Simancas* (A.G.S.) *Visitas de Italia*, fascio 348, doc.n.18.

² L.De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno spagnolo tra crescita e decadenza* (Mondadori - Il Saggiatore, Milano 1987), pp.16,21.

households was thought to have increased, adding a further 12,800 to the number of taxable households. Moreover, from 1559 to 1566 he raised the tax on such households indirectly several times with an additional sum on households to pay for the Kingdom's roads and bridges, the poor condition of which had made communications within the country very difficult, another for the construction of coastal towers for defence against pirates³ and one to pay the Spanish infantry garrisoned in the Kingdom⁴. While the heavier tax burden was becoming increasingly difficult for the population to bear, in 1567 Phillip II asked the *Camera della Sommaria* to ascertain the number of impositions being levied, especially those decreed after his accession to the throne and to establish whether others could be levied. The *Sommaria* was also asked to ascertain whether export licences for corn, broad beans and other legumes had been sold, at what price and whether their price had increased subsequently.

From the investigation it emerged that Phillip II had levied many and substantial taxes on the Kingdom of Naples. The increases on corn exports alone had raised over 157 thousand ducats in 1556 and 1557. But although they were considerable and had been raised within a very short space of time, such revenues proved insufficient to meet the needs of the Court since they were all or partly capitalised at the current rate and sold to investors (individuals and institutions). The proceeds of the sale were used as a temporary stop-gap but state finances did not receive much benefit since it was now deprived of the revenue from the tax which had been sold. Thus, in the face of new needs, the only solution was to sell other revenues or impose new taxes.

2. The system of public finance that Phillip II was helping to build was hampered by the fact that, apart from the very large sums of money leaving the Kingdom to meet the political and military needs

³ From 1543 to 1597 the Kingdom was besieged by the Turks 14 times. Cf. Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, *Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane da Napoli, Relazioni* (henceforth *Relazioni*), (Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Roma 1992), p.148.

⁴ L.De Rosa, *op.cit.*, pp.21-22.

of the government in Madrid,⁵ there was a huge outflow of funds which were sent by religious bodies operating in the Kingdom to the Church of Rome and by foreign investors (Florentines and especially Genoese) to their native countries.⁶ This outflow impoverished the Kingdom's monetary circulation, which was based on the silver ducat and thus on essentially metallic currency. This helped to push up the price of silver with the result that coin clipping was widespread and difficult to stamp out.⁷ As a remedy for this shortage of money and in order to replace the large amount of clipped coinage the government was frequently obliged to import silver to mint coins, sometimes with great urgency.⁸ The danger of this situation emerged in a document of 1556 when the Viceroy, the Duke of Alba, urged the Master of the Mint, Gio. Batt. Ravaschiero, to proceed "as soon as possible" with the minting of around 200 thousand ducats in Spanish *reals* and around 70 thousand ducats in silver bars which had arrived in Naples from Spain, given the urgent need to pay interest to merchants who had made loans to the Court.⁹

The victory over the Turks at Lepanto did not have any favourable effects on the Kingdom's public finance. Although stability was returning to the Mediterranean, the conflict in Flanders continued to absorb resources which, as a contemporary wrote in 1573, were "enormous and brought the world to a standstill".¹⁰ Phillip II did not hesitate to squeeze the territories of his vast empire and ordered his Neapolitan subjects to pay 500 thousand *scudos*.¹¹ This amount was raised through the levying of new taxes, which were capitalised and

⁵ Most of the 2.226 million ducats or more that the Kingdom's Treasury paid out between September 1564 and February 1569 were sent abroad to pay for soldiers' munitions, victuals and wages. Cf. A.S.N., Camera della Sommaria, Consulte, vol 3, ff. 30 *et seq.*

⁶ L.De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno* op. cit, p.209

⁷ In 1564 coin clipping had reached such a point that 8-grana and 9-grana coins lost 60 to 70% of their value. Cf. A.S.N, Sommaria, Consulte, vol.2, ff.5 *et seq.*

⁸ For example, in 1552, a law had acknowledged that, in view of the continual exports of minted and non-minted silver from the Kingdom, the government was obliged to import it.

⁹ A.G.S., *Visitas de Italia*, fascio 348, fasc.n.7.

¹⁰ Cf. *Narrazioni e Documenti sulla Storia del Regno di Napoli dall'anno 1522 al 1667*, raccolti e ordinati da F. Palermo, (Firenze 1846), p.208.

¹¹ *Ivi.*

sold to private interests. These included a duty on playing cards in 1574, a new duty on oil in 1577, another on every barrel of wine, as a result of which the duty on wine in barrels amounted to 66% of its value, and in 1578 a duty on manna.¹² Furthermore, in 1575 the government had suspended the counting of households which usually took place every 13-15 years in exchange for a benevolence of a million ducats and had agreed that the loss of 4,636 households incurred by some communes be absorbed by others.¹³ Yet, despite new taxes, the demands of war grew increasingly and in 1575 government income did not even cover a third of expenditure.¹⁴

3. The war, which was being fought far from the Kingdom's borders, was an external constraint on the Kingdom's budget and, by stifling its functions, prevented it from becoming an instrument for the country's economic development. Another external constraint was the fact that, except for the silk industry and, to some extent, the woollen industry, the Kingdom depended on foreign imports (as A. Serra was to later point out)¹⁵ for most of its raw materials and industrial goods, which were procured in exchange for exports of silk and especially of cereals, legumes, dried fruit, oil and wine. Thus, in the event of a poor harvest, this second external constraint weighed heavily on the foreign account by increasing the export of currency and impoverishing monetary circulation. This is exactly what happened at the beginning of the 1570s when a run of bad harvests forced the government not only to ban cereal exports but also to import cereals.¹⁶ The producers who attempted to export cereals

¹² Cf. L. Bianchini, *Storia delle finanze del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, edited and with an introduction by L. De Rosa, E.S.I., Naples 1971, pp.266-268; *Narrazioni ecc.*, cit p.214.

¹³ A.S.N. Sommaria, *Consulte*, vol 5, ff. 180-180t; Bianchini, *op.cit.* p.252.

¹⁴ A.S.N., *Sommaria, Consulte*, vol.7, ff.123-126.

¹⁵ A. Serra, "Breve trattato delle cause che fanno abbondare li Regni d'oro e d'argento" (1613) in L. De Rosa (ed.), *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi del '600*, (Laterza, Roma-Bari 1994), pp.89 et seq.

¹⁶ There was most concern for the situation in Abruzzo and Apulia, the largest corn-producing regions, whose population had tripled in the course of the century, while the population of the other regions had only doubled. De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno spagnolo*, *op. cit.*, pp.45-47.

through contraband were threatened with heavy sanctions. These sanctions, with which the corn producers had been threatened in Abruzzo in 1571, were repeated in 1574 and in 1577 in all the Kingdom's provinces.¹⁷ The repetition and extension of such measures are clear signs that the Neapolitan government was losing control of the situation. As a result public finance and foreign account were badly affected, producing wide fluctuations in foreign exchange, whose rate often leapt ahead if we are to give credit to what the Duke of Urbino was told by his agent in Naples in December 1580. The agent had to send some money to the Duke but he delayed the operation, preferring to wait for the exchange rate to "fall a little".¹⁸

4. In a situation of bad harvests and rising living costs it was not possible to raise the fiscal burden.¹⁹ Since funds were needed to sustain the war,²⁰ the sovereign believed that these could be raised by privatising public land and ordered the *Sommaria*, which was responsible for the Kingdom's accounts, to examine once again the situation regarding the Kingdom's public lands and fortresses, especially those of Montecorvino and Olevano in Principato citra.²¹ and to establish whether they could be sold. The result was negative.²² and the government was once more obliged to ask the merchants and bankers for new loans and, in view of the urgency, to accept interest rates of as much as 15%.²³ Meanwhile, metallic money continued to flow out of the country so that, contrary to what the Duke of Urbino's agent had hoped, the foreign exchange rate did not come down.²⁴

¹⁷ D.A.Vario, *Pragmaticae, Edicta, Decreta*, cit, 1772, vol.I, pp.540-541.

¹⁸ *Narrazioni ecc.*, cit., pp.209-215.

¹⁹ A contemporary wrote in 1576: "Questo Stato è poverissimo; e per le gran gravezze che nel continuo sopportano, che è impossibile a poterle tollerare, in breve tempo se riandranno in campagna", that is to say they will become bandits. Cf., *Narrazioni e documenti ecc.* cit, p.213.

²⁰ A.S.N., *Sommaria, Consulte*, vol. 7, pp.340-345.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol 8, f.4 et seq.

²² *Narrazioni ecc. op. cit.* p.215.

²³ A.S.N., *Camera della Sommaria, Consulte*, vol.7, p.217.

²⁴ G.D. Turbolo, "Discorso sopra le monete del Regno di Napoli (1629)" in L.De Rosa, (ed), *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi del Seicento, op. cit.*, pp.260 et seq.

Indeed it worsened. In July 1582, the Viceroy had to acknowledge that money was scarce in the Kingdom and he again imposed the ban on the export of silver money, with heavier penalties.²⁵ Yet the measure had little effect. Two years later, in 1584, it was clear that money scarcity was undermining trade despite the repeated bans and harsher penalties.²⁶ The situation was becoming increasingly acute, as emerged in 1585, the following year, when famine over-ran the city of Naples following the poor harvest: when some corn cargoes which had been diverted to Spain failed to arrive,²⁷ the starving and enraged population rose up against the authorities, performing the barbaric act of killing the official in charge of the city's food supplies, Gio.Vincenzo Starace. The situation hardly improved the following year, in 1586, when the government again complained about the outflow of money from the Kingdom.²⁸

Assailed by the need to provide money to carry on trade and unable to continue purchasing precious metals for minting, in the 1570s the government began to allow the circulation of certificates of credit, *fedi di credito*, issued by *Monte di Pietà* which had been set up in Naples in 1539, authorising the state coffers to accept them for the payment of taxes and for other payments.

Certificates of credit were not new to Naples. Of various denominations, nominative and endorsable, with and without conditions, they were certificates of sums deposited with *Monte di Pietà* (which can be considered the first public bank in Naples). Not only were they proof of guarantee deposits on the same footing as notary deposits but, as they were transferable through endorsement, they could circulate freely.

The facilities granted to the certificates of credit issued by *Monte di Pietà* helped to cancel the negative effects stemming from money

²⁵ D.A.Vario, *op.cit.*, vol 1, pp.546-544.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.544.

²⁷ A.S.N., Camera della Sommaria, Consulte, vol. 9, p.162.

²⁸ F. Nicolini, "Il caso dell'Eletto Starace" in *Bollettino dell'Archivio storico del Banco di Napoli*, n.9-12 (1957), pp.675 *et seq.* cf also M. Mendella, *Il moto napoletano del 1585 e il delitto Starace*, (Giannini editore, Napoli 1967), pp.42 *et seq.*

scarcity²⁹, but the success met by the operation, with the benefits deriving from the possibility of investing the capital received from deposits in government stock, prompted other charitable institutions to demand the same privileges for their own paper issue.

The first of these was *Casa dell'Annunziata*, which in 1587 claimed its ancient prerogative to receive deposits, issue certificates and present them in royal courts, and to have them recognised as public bank paper. Two years later, *ospedale degli Incurabili* asked for and was granted the right to carry on transactions as a public bank under the name of *Banco di Santa Maria del Popolo*. In 1591, the same facilities were granted to *Casa Santa dello Spirito Santo*, which took care of the upbringing of young girls who came from backgrounds considered to be morally corrupt.³⁰ In the same year, *Ospedale di S. Eligio* obtained the identical authorisation, thus setting in train its banking activity, while another hospital in the city, *Ospedale spagnolo dei SS Giacomo e Vittoria* was authorised to carry on the same activity in 1597.

By granting several charitable institutions the status of public banks, the government had introduced into the Kingdom's public finances an embryo deposit and circulation bank and had achieved two aims: 1) that of replacing a part of the Kingdom's metal currency (which had become increasingly costly due to the necessity of importing silver) with money at zero cost; 2) that of securing lenders, since, although public banks were not allowed to lend to private citizens, they were allowed to grant loans to the government and to the City of Naples, at a lower rate than the market rate. To give them even greater standing, the authorities gradually transferred governments funds - which until then had been deposited in private banks - to public banks.³¹ By 1594

²⁹ M.A.De Santis, "Secondo discorso ecc." in L. De Rosa (ed.), *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi del '600, op. cit.*, p.62.

³⁰ In February 1599 it was noted that in Casa dello Spirito Santo there were "300 daughters of immodest women" and that the Casa was supported through "the administration of income and alms by lay men who also run a principal public bank for the benefits of the aforementioned charitable institution..." Cf. Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, *Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane di Napoli, Dispacci* vol.III (27 maggio 1597-2 novembre 1604), (Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, Roma 1991) (henceforth *Dispacci*), p.205.

³¹ A.S.N., Sommatoria, Consulte, vol. 14, f.137.

these funds were all deposited in the public banks: *Pietà*, *SS Annunziata*, *Spirito Santo*, *Popolo* and *S. Eligio*.³²

5. The authorisation granted to charitable institutions to carry on operations of deposit and circulation, that is, to operate as public banks, coincided with the progressive failure of private banks in Naples. These failures, which took place around the mid-sixteenth century,³³ in the 1670s³⁴ and after 1690,³⁵ were almost contemporaneous to those in Spain where the government was forced to declare bankruptcy and stopped all public debt payments in 1557, 1575 and 1596 (as well as later in 1607),³⁶ causing losses and failures not just among Spanish bankers but above all among the Genoese bankers who had financed the debt.³⁷

The fact is that public banks had begun to operate in a very difficult period. From 1589 to 1595 there was a succession of bad harvests,³⁸ leading to considerable increases in the price of bread which was also raised by the dearth of supplies due to clandestine exports of corn from the Kingdom. This contraband trade became so intense that, in the period 31 August 1591-31 August 1592, the Viceroy established the death penalty for those who committed it. Once the threat of the death penalty was over, however, clandestine exports resumed and with greater intensity. In July 1593 the Viceroy complained that due to the contraband

³² *Ibid.*, f.236.

³³ Very serious, for example, was the failure of *Banco di Ravaschieri* in 1552. Cf. A. Silvestri, "Sui banchieri pubblici napoletani nella prima metà del Cinquecento. Notizie e documenti in *Bollettino dell'Archivio Storico del Banco di Napoli*, n.2 (1950), pp.24 *et seq.* But around 1550 – the proof that such failures were not due to internal causes but to more general external factors – large-scale bank failures also occurred in Sicily. Cf. G. Luzzatto, *Spagna e Mezzogiorno nella storia dei banchi pubblici*, *Ibid.*, p.17.

³⁴ On bank failures in the 1570s cf., A. Silvestri, *Sui banchieri pubblici napoletani dall'avvento di Filippo II al trono alla costituzione del monopolio. Notizie e documenti*, *Ivi*, n.3, (1951), pp.3,8,9,13,16-17, 20, 27.

³⁵ N. Toppi, *De origine omnium Tribunalium*, (Naples, 1655), Pars I, Napoli, (ed. of 1785), pp.3-4.

³⁶ F. Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi nel Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II*, tr. It. (Einaudi, Torino 1953), pp.532-533.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.533.

³⁸ P. Burke, "Southern Italy in the 1590s: Hard Times or Crisis?" in P. Clarke (ed), *The European Crisis of the 1590s. Essays in Comparative History*, (George Allen and Unwin, London-Boston-Sydney 1985), p.80.

trade in grain going abroad, the price of corn was altered.³⁹ The increase in price and the scarcity of the product made it necessary to procure supplies from outside the Kingdom and, in order to pay for imports, there was an increasing outflow of gold and silver from the country.

In order to curb the situation, in March 1596 a law acknowledging that “contraband trade be carried on daily” decreed life imprisonment for those found guilty if they were not nobles and segregation for nobles. Other than the guilty parties, “all accomplices promoting and aiding such trade” were also subject to the same penalties.⁴⁰

6. The first effects of the scarcity of metallic money were felt by the Kingdom’s foreign exchange. Despite fluctuations, overall the exchange rate tended to rise. In 1595-96, the exchange rate at the Fairs of Piacenza, where debts and credits between European countries were cleared, fluctuated at around 136 and 137 *grana* a day instead of the usual 126 *grana*⁴¹, as did the exchange rate in Rome⁴² which was usually fixed at about 126. Other significant increases were recorded in Florence (from 116 to 124-125)⁴³ and in Venice (from 98 to 103-105).⁴⁴

The general and persistent increase in exchange rates must have been a cause of lively concern for the Viceroy at that time, Count Olivares. But the restriction he issued towards the end of 1596, which fixed the maximum exchange rate for Piacenza at 126 *grana*, produced the contrary effect. Even Marco Antonio De Santis, who had advocated similar measures only ten years earlier, acknowledged that the restriction of 1596 had “put a stop to all exchange operations”⁴⁵ and since it was not possible to export money from the Kingdom, the Genoese, who had been damaged by the suspension of public debt

³⁹ D.A. Vario, *op.cit.*, vol I, pp.544-545.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁴¹ L. De Rosa, *I cambi esteri del Regno di Napoli dal 1591 al 1707*, (Banco di Napoli, Napoli 1955), p.364.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.165.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.293.

⁴⁵ M.A. De Santis, *Secondo discorso ecc. op. cit.*, in L. De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi del '600*, *op. cit.* p.52.

payments in Spain and driven by their own needs, “gave orders for their bills at the fair [of Piacenza] to be redeemed at any price”, with the result that the exchange rate rose to 145.⁴⁶

After the attempts to place a ceiling on the exchange rate had failed, the Viceroy tried a different way to obtain a lowering of the rate: that of increasing the quantity of money in circulation. An agreement was thus stipulated in Madrid on 27 October 1594 between Phillip II and the banker Antonio Belmosto, who agreed to transfer one million scudos, both in real coins and in silver bars and ingots, to the Kingdom of Naples within the space of two years, in exchange for certain financial benefits.⁴⁷

1,500,000 ducats, corresponding to a million scudos, were brought into circulation between the end of 1596 and the beginning of 1597. But the expected benefits were not forthcoming; the exchange rate continued to rise and reached 147.5. The cause of such a sharp upturn was not only “the large quantity of money [which had the] effect of raising exchange rates” according to M.A. De Santis,⁴⁸ nor the scarcity of grain harvests but, above all, it was the sending of large sums to Milan. For those guilty of exporting corn, other foodstuffs and animals without a license, the government reintroduced the death penalty, which had already been established by the Viceroy, Count Miranda, for the period 1591-1592 when contraband activity declined. The death penalty was not only imposed on smugglers, whatever their rank or situation, with the confiscation of the corn, foodstuffs and animals, but it was also extended to carriers, servants, families, ship-owners and other accomplices and advocates of smuggling. In order to raise public awareness about the problem and to secure the support of citizens in stamping out the abuse – a sign of the very serious food

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.52,59-60, 72.

⁴⁷ On the subject of these benefits and the long dispute they gave rise to, cf. L. De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno spagnolo tra crescita ecc. op. cit.*, pp.73 *et seq.* On the constant increase in the Kingdom's public debt in the second half of the sixteenth century cf., also A. Calabria, *The Cost of Empire. The Finances of the Kingdom of Naples in the Time of Spanish Rule*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1991), pp.50-53.

⁴⁸ M.A. De Santis, *Secondo discorso. ecc., op. cit.* in L. De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi ecc. op. cit.* p. 71.

situation in the country – it was added that a third of the confiscated goods was to go to the accuser, a third to the officers appointed to combat the smuggling of foodstuffs, and a third to the Government.⁴⁹

Between 1597 and the beginning of 1598, the year of Phillip II's death, the foreign exchange rate in the Kingdom of Naples continued to rise.⁵⁰ On 30 December 1597 12,000 scudos were remitted to Milan and an "even greater sum" was promised at the earliest possible date.⁵¹ Yet Milan was only one of the centres in need of financial help. Spain and Flanders, where the maintaining of Spanish armies required increasing amounts of money,⁵² also awaited remittances from Naples impatiently. Geoffrey Parker has illustrated in a table and with graphs the cost of Spanish wars abroad from 1547 to 1598 and the increasing amounts spent by Spain on such wars is astounding. From 2 million florins in 1547-48 the figure rose to around 4 million florins in 1552-59, to 5 millions in 1572-75 and to 9 millions in 1590-98.⁵³ The situation did not get any better; indeed in 1598 it seemed worse than in 1589.⁵⁴

7. Throughout 1598 there was a succession of private bank failures. For example, in April the Genoese *Banco de' Mari* failed and the bankruptcy amounted to 500 thousand ducats.⁵⁵ In the following May the Viceroy granted the remaining 9 private banks a moratorium, so that they would be able to procure enough cash to meet the demands of the depositors.⁵⁶ But a few days later another Genoese bank failed, owned by the Olgiati, with a debt of 250 thousand ducats,⁵⁷ and its downfall was considered "extremely serious for this centre and of

⁴⁹ D.A.Vario, *op.cit* vol 1, p.546.

⁵⁰ L.De Rosa, *I cambi esteri ecc. op. cit.*, pp.68,164,234 *passim*.

⁵¹ *Dispacci*, p.99.

⁵² G. Parker, *Spain in the Netherlands 1559-1659. Ten Studies*, (Collins, London 1979), pp.36,40.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.101; and also *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road 1567-1659*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1972), pp.134, 287.

⁵⁴ G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders op. cit.*, p.247.

⁵⁵ The De'Mari brothers were undone by a speculation on corn that went wrong. Cf *Dispacci* 28 April 1598, p.127; 5 May 1598, p.129.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 12 maggio 1598, p.130; and *Ibid.*, 8 febbraio 1600, p.276.

great interest to most of the city since there are few private houses which do not use the bank for their transactions."⁵⁸ One week later *Banco Talani e Mari* failed, which had been set up only two years previously, with a debt of a million and a half ducats.⁵⁹

The succession of failures and their seriousness had aroused such panic in the city that a contemporary remarked that "the traders [of Naples] [had been] forced to account for and publish their credits and affairs" so as not "to be taken for bankrupts".⁶⁰

The moratoria granted by the Viceroy to the surviving Genoese banks did not produce the hoped-for results. None of the private banks were saved. Thus at the beginning of the seventeenth century, as Marc'Antonio De Santis acknowledged, "all the banks [were] charitable institutions" and since they "granted the faculty to pay with a written note"⁶¹ the lack of money did not make itself felt.⁶² The more so since there was an increasing trend against cash payments. Thus while in the past private bankers "considered it an affront not to pay all those who came to them in ready cash, of which they always had a large supply", public banks considered it "a great affront" if someone came to them and asked to be paid in cash made up of 200 scudo coins.⁶³

In 1598 international conflict abated. Spain was at peace with France once again and began peace overtures towards Britain⁶⁴ (although a peace treaty was stipulated only in 1604), even though the war with Holland continued. Fortunately, the summer harvests in the Kingdom of Naples were excellent and the government freely granted licenses to export corn both Apulia and Abruzzo.⁶⁵ Foreign

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p.130.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 19 maggio 1598, p.131.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Public banks adopted the book-keeping system of private banks, that is double entry book-keeping; moreover for transactions among their own clients they simply recorded the sums

⁶² M.A. De Santis, *Secondo discorso ecc. op. cit.* in L. De Rosa. *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi ecc. op. cit.*, p.54.

⁶³ *Ivi*

⁶⁴ J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World 1601-1661*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1982), pp.2 *et seq.*

⁶⁵ *Dispacci*, 23 giugno 1598, p.141.

exchange rates began to fall rapidly: for example, in 1598 the exchange rate from Rome fell from 146 in April to 130 in June.⁶⁶ Although it had urgent need of money the Neapolitan government did not increase taxation. It merely reduced the interest rate on the public debt from 13 to 7%, capitalising the 6% difference in order to sell it and to make a profit of one million ducats. In any case, the prevailing opinion was that peace would bring the Crown a large amount of money in a short time.⁶⁷

8. Philip II's exit from the stage marked the culmination of a long period of crisis in the economic and social life of the Kingdom of Naples; although this crisis began in the early 1570s, it had originated in the preceding decades and gradually became more acute until by the 1590s it had become dramatic. But what were its causes?

We have already mentioned some, connected with the conditions of the state budget and the country's foreign payments. However, the increase in the state budget deficit and in the balance of payments were not the sole causes of the crisis at the end of the sixteenth century. Silvio Zotta attributes the crisis to several factors, including bad harvests, natural disasters such as the climatic changes and the epidemics that struck both humans and livestock, and privileges granted to capital⁶⁸. However the origins of the crisis are even more complex. First of all, economic policy had no coherent direction. It is sufficient to point out that both consumption and the export trade were taxed indiscriminately in the sixteenth century and also later on, with the aim not so much of developing the country's economy as of ensuring revenue for the Court⁶⁹. While it was understandable that in a heavily populated city

⁶⁶ L. De Rosa, *I cambi esteri ecc op. cit.*, pp.68 *et seq.*

⁶⁷ *Dispacci* 30 giugno 1598, pp.139-140.

⁶⁸ S. Zotta, *Momenti e problemi di una crisi agraria in uno "stato" feudale napoletano (1585-1615)*, in "Mélanges de l'École française de Rome", *Moyen-Age-Temps Modernes*, tome 90, 1978, vol.2 pp.715-716. A shortened version in English has been published in A. Calabria-J.A. Marino (eds), *Good Government in Spanish Naples*, (Peter Lang, New York - Bern - Frankfurt am Main - Paris 1990). Quotations are from the unabridged version published in Italian.

⁶⁹ L. De Rosa, *Il Mezzogiorno etc.. op. cit.*, pp.23-24.

like Naples⁷⁰, swarming with soldiers and sailors, the retail consumption of wine should be taxed, it was not at all clear why there was considerable taxation on the export of wine in a country that, being one of the largest wine-producers of the time, needed to increase, and not reduce, its wine exports. Again, although it could be accepted that silk sold in the Kingdom of Naples should be subject to heavy taxation, it was unexplicable why silk for exportation should be subject to the same taxation, when the Kingdom of Naples was one of the major silk manufacturers in Europe, and silk manufacture was one of the mainstays of its wealth. It is difficult to understand why the tax for grazing sheep on the Apulian plateau was increased by 50%, and why the price of licences for the export of corn, barley and pulses should rise considerably, even in years of good harvests everywhere, when it was advantageous to step up the export of these products.

9. The Kingdom of Naples' economic crisis was further worsened and complicated by the mistakes made in monetary matters, in that the nominal value and the intrinsic value of the Neapolitan currency⁷¹ was maintained at a time when in the surrounding countries, in all the Italian states, including Sicily, the fine content or the weight of each metal currency was considerably devalued, without modifying its nominal value. By scarcely touching the value of the ducat, the government had, perhaps unwittingly, adopted a deflationary policy compared to the other Italian states, which led to two important consequences. On the one hand, it was advantageous to export gold and silver coins, gold and silver bars or ingots and even embossed silver and gold vases, because the ducat had a greater value than foreign currency. On the other hand, exports were penalised. Silk exports suffered most, and, in order to sustain them on the international market

⁷⁰ The population of Naples at that time was more than 220,000. Cf. L. De Rosa, "Naples, a Capital", in *The Journal of European Economic History*, n. 2, 1997, p. 351.

⁷¹ G. D. Turbolo) Discorsi e relazioni sulle monete del Regno di Napoli (1629), in L. De Rosa (ed.), *Il Mezzogiorno agli inizi del '600*, op. cit., pp.302 et seq.) wrote that the gold coins minted in the Naples mint were better than the others, a fact which, in his opinion, was "also an error, and on several occasions had made a petition about it, to avoid this loss for the owners of the gold, and the profit caused to the currency".

where there was already competition for silk from Tuscany and other regions of Italy and from France,⁷² silk manufacturers reduced prices to the detriment of quality, adopting fraudulent practices in manufacturing processes, mainly in dyeing, especially in dyeing black silk, which was the most sought on the international market. Fraud began in the 1570s and consisted of adding alum, iron filings, molasses and dry dregs from barrels to the dye. These were all substances which contributed to making the silk heavier, thereby allowing the price to remain relatively low. In the last decades of the sixteenth century, this kind of fraud had spread to all dye-shops and litigation had arisen which repressed the sector to such an extent that, in 1591, the Viceroy had issued a decree establishing those substances allowed in the dying of silk and threatening very severe punishments for those infringing the law, be they dyers or merchants.⁷³ This decree was repeated in 1599, despite strong protests from the dyers.

The Neapolitan silk sector's loss of reputation and the appearance and spread of fraud had repercussions in agriculture. It has been rightly emphasised that, independently of tax increases, silk exportation in Calabria showed a marked decline from 1587-88.⁷⁴

10. At the same time as the silk industry fell into decline, there was an agricultural crisis which was particularly acute between 1585 and 1600.⁷⁵ Zotta goes so far as to say that the long and complex crisis "revealed all the weaknesses (of South Italy's agriculture) and may have condemned it to backwardness lasting over many centuries".⁷⁶

Agricultural decline was evident everywhere. It was evident in Calabria: the greatest expert on the sixteenth century in Calabria, G.

⁷² G. Galasso, *Economia e società nella Calabria nel Cinquecento*, (L'Arte Tipografica, Napoli 1967), pp.346 *et seq.*

⁷³ Biblioteca Nazionale in Naples (B.N.N.), manuscript section: MSS XII. B. 46.

⁷⁴ G. Galasso, *Economia e società etc.*, *op. cit.*, p.362.

⁷⁵ Agricultural crises followed one after the other. They are recorded in 1534, 1551, 1553, 1558, 1562, 1565, 1570. Cf. G. Pepe, *Il Mezzogiorno d'Italia sotto gli Spagnuoli*, (Sansoni, Florence 1952), p.100. After the 1585 famine which caused the murder of G. V. Starace, there were very serious famines in 1590, 1591, 1593, 1596 and so on. Cf. A. Bulifon, *Giornali di Napoli dal 1547 al 1706*, edited by N. Cortese, vol. I, (Naples 1932), *passim*.

⁷⁶ Zotta, *op. cit.*, p.715.

Galasso, has reason to conclude that "the loss of revenue from farmers who had gone bankrupt was frequent in the *relevi*"⁷⁷ of those years, as was reference to the impossibility of finding rents from available land"⁷⁸. Agricultural decline, however, was not confined to Calabria.

In his research on the fiefs of Andrea Doria, Prince of Melfi, which were situated in various parts of Basilicata, Zotta reaches the same conclusions as Galasso. For example, in the case of the fief of Forenza, there was an expansion in production until the late 1560s. But, after a rather marked regression between 1569 and 1571 and a period of partial recovery between 1572 and 1590, from 1591 to 1610 there was a period of long and marked decline and the upturn recorded in 1597 and 1608 was an exceptional circumstance which could in no way reverse the general trend.⁷⁹ In another fief of the Dorias', Candela, between Basilicata and Apulia, the same pattern can be seen. Agricultural production at Candela was relatively stable until 1590, but from then until 1610, production fell by 36% compared to production between 1581 and 1590; furthermore, the size of cultivated land was around 12 to 13% smaller than it was between 1533 and 1540 which was when it had been at its smallest previously.⁸⁰

An identical situation can be seen in the fief of Lagopesole. Here, too, production levels began to fall in 1591, and between 1591 and 1600 the corn-growing area was reduced by 25% compared to that in the preceding decade, although, unlike the fiefs of Forenza and Candela, Lagopesole made a notable recovery in the first decade of the seventeenth century.⁸¹ There was no such recovery in the fief of Lacedonia, in Alta Irpinia: the losses of 22-23% between 1591 and 1610 continued to increase between 1611 and 1640⁸², and the same

⁷⁷ The *relevio* was the tax levied on the death of the feudal lord when his heirs inherited the fief. Cf. Bianchini, *op. cit.*, pp.23, 31, 117.

⁷⁸ G. Galasso, *Economia e società etc.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 353-354.

⁷⁹ Zotta, *op. cit.*, p.748. In another study on the fief of Fiorenza (S. Zotta, *Azienda agraria e sussistenza in una terra lucana*, in AA. VV., *Economia e classi sociali nella Puglia moderna*, Foreword by P. Villani, (Guida editori, Naples 1974, p. 163) the author reaches the same conclusions, based on the baronial *terraggi* that fell continually from 1591.

⁸⁰ Zotta, *Momenti e problemi etc.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 754 -755.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp.760-762.

⁸² *Ibid.*

pattern was to be seen in the Dorias' other fiefs, Leonessa and Cisterna.⁸³

The crisis was very acute in many areas of Basilicata. Even in those places where the crisis was not so marked, such as in Prince Caracciolo di Brienza's four fiefs, Brienza, Pietrafesa, Atena and Sasso, it caused a period of stagnation until 1620.⁸⁴

Apulia, too, was affected by the crisis. M. A. Visceglia has pointed out that the reduction in tithes "for many fiefs occurred early, and in any case can be dated between 1590 and 1620"; this was the case of Carosino, Torricella, Neviano, Cavallino, Oria, Pascalose, Massafra and others. In some of these decline was already evident in the 1570s.⁸⁵

The crisis was also felt in Terra di Lavoro. A. Lepre acknowledges that the Prince of Fondi's lands were not the only ones in which the signs of a "very difficult situation" were clearly visible between the end of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries;⁸⁶ the crisis affected many other agricultural areas in Terra di Lavoro, and not only fiefs.⁸⁷ Lepre goes on to note that, despite the fact that research on Terra di Lavoro and Terra d'Otranto is still in progress, as research "on a greater number of individual areas is completed, the data, though fragmentary in themselves, become part of a coherent overall picture".⁸⁸

11. Economic events were not the only forces that proved detrimental to the peasants' circumstances. The strengthening of the feudal lords' power also had an adverse effect on the peasants' lives. Often the feudal lords' rights and abuses were such as to force the population to move onto lands less burdened with feudal obligations; similarly, the promise

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.767.

⁸⁴ T. Astarita, *The Continuity of Feudal Power. The Caracciolo di Brienza in Spanish Naples*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992), pp.42, 89 - 90, 102.

⁸⁵ M. A. Visceglia, *Rendita feudale e agricoltura in Puglia nell'età moderna (XVI - XVIII sec.)* in "Società e storia", year III, n. 9, 1980, p.547 *et seq.*; cf. also Villani, *op. cit.*, pp.62 *et seq.*

⁸⁶ A. Lepre, *Terra di Lavoro in età moderna*, (Guida editori, Naples 1978), p. 52.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 140 *et seq.*

⁸⁸ A. Lepre, *Azienda feudale e azienda agraria nel Mezzogiorno continentale fra Cinquecento e Ottocento*, in A. Massafra (ed.), *Problemi di storia delle campagne meridionali nell'età moderna e contemporanea*, (Dedalo libri, Bari 1981), p.30.

of lower taxation was a sure method of luring people onto uninhabited lands and thus rendering these lands productive.⁸⁹ G. Delille has listed the feudal taxes that had a serious effect on people's lives,⁹⁰ taxes against which they protested and rebelled on several occasions.⁹¹ However, it was from the collecting of these taxes or dues, as well as from agricultural activity, that feudal revenue was derived. And it is not by mere chance that feudal revenue showed indisputable signs of growth at a time when the agricultural crisis affected the country as a whole. This was seen in Principato ultra, an area which corresponds more or less to the present-day province of Avellino;⁹² in Apulia;⁹³ in the Benevento region (Montesarchio, Cervinara, Ceppaloni, Airola and Arpaia),⁹⁴ in Corigliano Calabro, and in Calabria in general.⁹⁵ Evidence of abuses in other fiefs, however, is to be found in the research carried out by Lepre, Zotta and others, concerning other areas of southern Italy. The fact is that, given the surface area and the comparative poverty of the Kingdom of Naples, feudalism was particularly oppressive. At the end of 1599, there were 23 princes, 33 dukes, 65 marquises and 44 counts, making a total of 165 nobles, a number almost double that recorded in 1528, but a number destined to increase during the following years. In 1601, there were already 182 nobles; in 1613 239; in 1620 296, and so on.⁹⁶

This happened because the fall in income from investments in

⁸⁹ Galasso, *op.cit.*, p.105 *et seq.*

⁹⁰ G. Delille, *Croissance d'une société rurale. Montesarchio et la vallée caudine aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles*, (Istituto Italiano per gli studi storici, Napoli 1973), p. 92; cf. also Galasso, *op. cit.*, pp. 48 *et seq.*

⁹¹ L. De Rosa, "Motines y rebeliones en el Reino de Napoles en el siglo XVI", in L. M. Enciso Recio *et al.*, *Revueltas y alzamientos en la España de Felipe II*, (Universidad de Valladolid, Catedra de Felipe II, Valladolid 1992), pp. 98 *et seq.*

⁹² M. Benaïteau, "La rendita feudale nel Regno di Napoli attraverso i relevis: il Principato ultra (1550 - 1806)", in *Società e storia*, 1980, n.9, pp.561 *et seq.*

⁹³ M. A. Visceglia, *Rendita feudale e agricoltura in Puglia etc.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 257 *et seq.*

⁹⁴ Delille, *op. cit.*, pp.84 *et seq.*

⁹⁵ R. Merzario, *Signori e contadini di Calabria. Corigliano Calabro dal XVI al XIX secolo*. (Giuffrè editore, Milan 1975), pp.25-26; Galasso, *op. cit.*, pp. 287 *et seq.*

⁹⁶ Astarita, *op. cit.*, p. 220; R. Villari, *La rivolta antispagnola a Napoli. Le origini 1585 - 1647*, (Laterza, Rome - Bari 1994) (1^a edition 1967), pp. 188 *et seq.*, writes that between 1590 and 1675 the greatest increase was recorded in the number of princes that increased 5.6 fold; dukes increased 5.3 fold; marquises increased 3.5 fold, whereas the number of counts fell 11 fold.

trade and crafts at the same time as the rise in feudal revenues led nobles, merchants, financiers, magistrates and lawyers to invest their capital in the purchase of fiefs,⁹⁷ especially those inland, through which a considerable portion of trade passed and where it was therefore possible to impose other taxes.⁹⁸ One of the heaviest of such taxes were tolls, the number of which multiplied in the sixteenth century, when they were levied on secondary roads as well as on main roads, and imposed generally wherever carts, carriages and travellers could pass. These taxes came to be enforced without reference to the general tariffs, mainly according to the whim of the tax-collectors.⁹⁹

Speculation in the purchase of fiefs from the 1570s onward led to a rise in their price. The rush to buy fiefs did not signify a "return to the land",¹⁰⁰ in that, during the sixteenth century, the number of feudal lords who moved to the capital Naples, where they built themselves sumptuous palazzi, continued to increase.¹⁰¹

The new way of life in Naples was infinitely more expensive than life in the provinces: feudal lords could no longer look after the management of the fiefs themselves, and had to try every means to maximise revenue. And so they entrusted the administration of their lands to a third party, generally a local merchant or someone from another region,¹⁰² and did their utmost so that the old agricultural contracts - which were "tacit and based on a sense of justice in the relations between lord and peasants and vassals" - were replaced by

⁹⁷ "it is given for certain", wrote Girolamo Ramusio, a resident in the Veneto who was in Naples in 1597, "that at the Court there are now bills worth half a million gold coins belonging to Neapolitan gentlemen and other people who seek titles and offices; some offer a lot of money for these titles, others are willing to pay a lot so that their backgrounds are not pried into. This ambitious desire is very useful to the King, because His Majesty sells the title of prince for 20,000 scudi, duke for 15,000, marquis for 10,000, and count for 5,000...". Cf. *Relazioni, op. cit.*, p. 125.

⁹⁸ Delille, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.

⁹⁹ L. De Rosa, "Land and Sea Transport and Economic Depression in the Kingdom of Naples from the XIVth to the XVIIIth Century" in *The Journal of European Economic History*, vol. 25, n. 2, pp. 351 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁰ Delille, *op. cit.*, p.88

¹⁰¹ G. Labrot, "Le comportement collectif de l'aristocratie napolitaine du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle", in *Revue Historique*, 1977, pp. 45 - 72.

¹⁰² Galasso, *op. cit.*, pp.273 *et seq.*

short-term leases and written obligations that were due whether harvests were good or bad.¹⁰³

The change was all to the detriment of the peasants who, at the end of the sixteenth century, had already lost every right on the lands they cultivated. Except for lands belonging to the Church, where rent contracts were more stable, the workable area on other lands, especially feudal lands, was often divided up and rented out to several peasants,¹⁰⁴ thereby reducing their potential earnings.

The rapid population growth throughout the sixteenth century which reached its peak at the end of the century¹⁰⁵ had made land hunger even more acute. And so, not only workable land was increasingly sought after, but the increase in cereal demand led both to more profitable crops being sacrificed in favour of cereals in many areas, and to a reduction in cereal exports.

The search for workable land affected cattle-rearing, damaging both livestock rearing and transhumance farming. This was seen in Calabria,¹⁰⁶ but also in Apulia¹⁰⁷ where the net revenue of the Foggia Customs, the main centre for wool and animal products in the Kingdom of Naples, showed its greatest decline between 1579 and 1598.¹⁰⁸ There had been quarrels between "shepherds" and "arable farmers" in the first half of the sixteenth century, but they became increasingly fierce in the last decades of the century.

12. The general upheaval in the Kingdom of Naples in the sixteenth century, affected communes too, conditioning and at times mortifying their very existence. In many cases and in many provinces, they were

¹⁰³ Benaiteau, *op. cit.*, p. 593.

¹⁰⁴ Delille, *op. cit.*, p.95.

¹⁰⁵ M. A. Visceglia, *Rendita feudale e agricoltura in Puglia*, *op. cit.*, pp. 554 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁶ Merzario, *op. cit.*, p.13

¹⁰⁷ Visceglia, *op. cit.*, pp. 542 *et seq.*

¹⁰⁸ J. A. Marino, *L'economia pastorale nel Regno di Napoli* (tr. It.), (Guida editori, Naples 1992), pp. 472 - 473. A vicerojal decree in December 1583, for example, ordered that crops be grown on some lands in Apulia belonging to the R. Dogana delle Pecore, cf. A. S. N., Collaterale, Negotiorum Camerae, vol. 6, pp. 55 - 57 (Letter from the Viceroy to the Sommaria of 16 December 1583). Cf. also Mendella, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 32, 35.

forced to undergo long and wearisome law-suits against those barons who occupied lands and/or seized rights belonging to the commune's property; or else refused to pay dues and services ordered by the commune's authority. However, it must be emphasised that, as had happened in Calabria,¹⁰⁹ especially between 1560 and 1580, the population strove increasingly to collect the necessary money to pay off the baron or to prevent the government from handing the town over to the baron. Nonetheless, given its ruined finances, the State, after having agreed to keep as public property a town that had laboriously freed itself from baronial subjection, often sold it again to another purchaser. This was especially frequent in the second half of the sixteenth century.¹¹⁰

Caught between pressure from the barons and administrative demands, many communes ran into difficulty. This kind of situation became more serious and more widespread mainly in the second half of the sixteenth century. Often communes were not able to sustain the high and increasing fiscal burden, and so, in order to try and limit their increasing deficit, they levied new taxes on their citizens, on both nobles and commoners. Such a demand was not without consequences on the organisation of government, because, as has been observed, each group tried to shift onto others the supplementary tax burden, thereby bringing to a halt growth in the communes' independence and the peasants' freedom, and contributing to the constitution of oligarchical structures in the government of many communes, especially in Calabria. Thus, the poorer people were the ones who had to bear the heaviest fiscal burden, a situation that

¹⁰⁹ Distribution of feudal land and public land

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of public lands</i>	<i>Number of feudal lands</i>
Before first half of XVth Century	102	1550
1579	53	1619
1586	69	1973
End of XVth Century	76	1974

Source: G. Galasso, *Mezzogiorno medievale e moderno*, (Einaudi, Torino 1965), pp.173-174.

¹¹⁰ Galasso, *op. cit.*, p. 284 *et seq.*

generated discontent and reactions that sometimes took the form of uprisings and violence. On the other hand, if state taxes were not paid, a government inspector and his assistants arrived in the commune: at the commune's expense, they had the task of enquiring into the reasons for the commune's insolvency, with the aim of recovering as much as they could for the government; and so the mere arrival and the presence of the inspector aggravated the commune's financial plight. This is the reason why all the provinces in the Kingdom of Naples towards the end of the sixteenth century asked the government to change the fiscal system from one based on direct taxation, prevalent at that time, to one based on indirect taxation. Their requests were granted. However this change was not dictated - as has been rightly observed - by "the vested interests of the class that controlled the administration of the commune".¹¹¹ When not even increased taxation helped to restore finances, indebtedness was the inevitable conclusion, which meant that the revenue and/or the property of the commune was alienated, and so, in the end, the commune was further impoverished.

13. From what has been stated, it should be no surprise that the sixteenth century, and especially the second half of the sixteenth century, saw widespread brigandage and rebellion. Anti-feudal uprisings and insurrections against the introduction of the Inquisition in the Kingdom of Naples had taken place in the first half of the century, and had been triggered by specific, individual causes. However, the uprisings that exploded in the second half of the century were the expression of a more widespread discontent. As has been mentioned elsewhere,¹¹² these uprisings first became significant and dangerous in the 1560s, and were located along the Apennine range that crosses the provinces of Calabria, Basilicata and Principato Citra. In their heyday, brigands controlled the Tyrrhenian road from Naples

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 355.

¹¹² L. De Rosa, *Motines y rebeliones en el Reino de Nápoles en el siglo XVI*, *op. cit.*, pp. 97 - 116.

to Calabria, paralysing the traffic of both people and goods. With a series of harsh repressive measures, the government managed to gain the upper hand, wiping out brigandage in the province of Principato Citra (today Salerno) and in Basilicata. But when the agricultural crisis of the 1580s became more acute, brigandage reappeared, and was fomented by certain members of the middle class¹¹³ and some barons:¹¹⁴ this showed that discontent had spread like wildfire through broader social strata.¹¹⁵ Brigandage became so extensive that, in 1583, emergency legislation was adopted again. The fact that repressive measures were repeatedly enforced in 1585, 1586, 1592, 1596 and 1597 shows the size of the phenomenon and how rooted it was in the country. The bandits had managed to overrun the countryside in Terra di Lavoro, Calabria, Basilicata and Abruzzi,¹¹⁶ and led a large contingent of persons who had "escaped from prison or jail, had been driven from home by hunger, or were discontented with Spanish rule".¹¹⁷ Not even the killing of the bandit Marco Sciarra put an end to the raids of his band.¹¹⁸ The despatches the Venetian minister in Naples sent to the Serenissima in 1597 and 1598 continued to report on the activity of exiles who ventured right up to the city walls of Naples,¹¹⁹ and on bands of brigands in Abruzzi, against which officials of the Viceroy continued to fight.¹²⁰

Ramusio, the Venetian Minister in Naples, perceived that popular feeling was running counter to Spanish rule: in 1597, he wrote to his

¹¹³ G. Morelli, "Contributi a una storia del brigantaggio durante il Vicereame spagnolo. I. Marco Sciarra", in *Archivio Storico per le provincie napoletane*, N.S. Anni VII - VIII, (1970), p. 313.

¹¹⁴ L. Firpo, *Tommaso Campanella e la sua Calabria*, in Atti del 3° Congresso storico calabrese, (Fiorentino Napoli 1964), p. 17.

¹¹⁵ Morelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 300, 309 - 310.

¹¹⁶ R. Villari, (*op. cit.*, pp. 68 *et seq.*) mentions the assault at Lucera, Guardiaagrele, Montereale, Vasto, Petrella, Campomarino, Castellone, Roccaraso, Introdacqua, Gioia etc.

¹¹⁷ N. Faraglia, *Bilancio del Reame di Napoli degli anni 1591 e 1592* in *Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane*, Società di Storia Patria (ASPN), Naples, Year I (1876), fasc. I, p. 213; cf. also Morelli, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁸ Villari, *op. cit.*, p. 59 *et seq.*

¹¹⁹ *Dispacci*, *op. cit.*, (18 November 1591), p. 88; *Relazioni* (1597), *op. cit.*, p. 133.

¹²⁰ *Dispacci*, (7 April 1598), p. 122.

government that Capitanata and Molise “ill tolerated Spanish rule, and regretted their former links with the Serenissima,¹²¹ and that the Spanish were “greatly afraid of rebellions on the part of the nobles and the barons; if a popular uprising joined such a rebellion, it would be impossible to put down”.¹²²

The Campanella conspiracy that broke out in Calabria at the end of the sixteenth century came to a head - it has been seen - against the backdrop of these events, and was explicitly linked to the “intolerable wickedness” of the King of Spain and his ministers, who were responsible for the “very many taxes and payments and murders seen in the Kingdom of Naples”. However, it does not seem that Madrid was in the dark about the economic, social and political crisis in Calabria and much of southern Italy at the end of the sixteenth century,¹²³ since in November 1599 Madrid ordered the Viceroy to bear in mind the “causes of the loathing of the entire Kingdom’s subjects for tax payments and for soldiers’ billeting and other things”. In the orders he sent to Naples, Philip II’s successor, King Philip III, recommended “that where there was trouble between vassals and taxation”, subjects should always be favoured “over taxation”: this was very different from what had long been the case in such matters.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ *Relazioni, op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹²³ Amabile, *Fra Tommaso Campanella, La sua congiura, i suoi progressi e la sua pazzia*, (Napoli 1882), vol. I, pp. 226 *et seq.*

¹²⁴ *Dispacci* (23 November 1599), p. 262.