



The Navy of the Republic of Genoa in the Context of Mediterranean Military Renewal (16th-17th Centuries)

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Renewal (16th-17th Centuries)*

The concept of Military Revolution has provided the accepted paradigm for the understanding of transformations occurring in the Mediterranean scenario, in the 16th and 17th century, especially as regards the rise of large, public, galley fleets (in Spain, Venice, and the Ottoman Empire). When the particulars of each instance are taken into account on their own merits (beyond matters of sails and cannons), the consensus is that a broad modernization of techniques, logistics, and tactics did also occur in Mediterranean warfare, in strict relation to the development and flourishing of the chief players in the area (and of their respective land armies). The peculiarity of Genoa is, in the first place, the vast disproportion between its eminence as a geo-political and economic entity and its relatively diminutive public fleet and land army, which were no way near matching the Republic of Venice. Is Genoa, then, an instance of a failed (or embryonic, at most) military revolution? To accept the commonplace of an intrinsic backwardness of the Genoese Republic, and extend it to the military domain too, would be to disregard the massive contribution of la Superba to the prosperity of its ally, Spain, and to the history of Mediterranean armaments. Beyond the weight of the contracts secured by Genoese *asientistas*, one need look for no further counterexamples than the importance of harbours all along the Liguria coast within the Spanish route outlined by Parker. The dispute over naval rearmament and over its costs and prospective benefits, in fact, divided the Genoese ruling class throughout most of the 1600s. This article examines: 1. the matter largely from the perspective of the coeval debate and illustrates the extent to which stakeholders were conscious of the demands of warfare modernization to meet the trends afoot in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, based on such unpublished documents as the anonymous *Trattato delle armi marittime genovesi* (*Treatise on Genoese maritime armaments*, 17th century); 2. the bombardment of Genoa, carried out by Louis XIV's fleet, in 1684. At that time, Genoa

realised all too well that naval warfare had radically and profoundly changed, and had to face the adverse reaction of France (i.e. dynamics of global strategy).

Keywords: Genoese navy, Mediterranean battle fleets, Bombardment of Genoa

Introduction. Revolution or renewal?

In the scenario of the early modern age Mediterranean, the *military revolution* paradigm applies, in particular, to the strengthening of the fleets of kingdoms and republics in the second half of the 16th century, largely on account of the many naval clashes between the Christian States and the Ottoman empire¹. In fact, compared to factors denoting continuity – for example, the role of the galley, which remained the most important naval warship in the Mediterranean² – there were many new elements, and

¹ J. Glete, *Warfare at Sea, 1500-1650. Maritime conflicts and the transformation of Europe*, Routledge, London 2000, pp. 93-111 (It. tr. *La guerra sul mare, 1500-1650*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2017, pp. 155-70); Id., *Navies and Nations. Warships, navies and state Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860*, Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm 1993, vol. I; L. Lo Basso, G. Candiani (a cura di), *Mutazioni e permanenze nella storia navale del Mediterraneo, secc. XVI-XIX*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2010 (“Annali di storia militare europea”, 2), pp. 10 ff. In an extensive bibliography, see also G. Parker, *The Military Revolution. Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500–1800*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1988, pp. 84-9 (It. tr. *La rivoluzione militare. Le innovazioni militari e il sorgere dell’Occidente*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1990, pp. 158-65); I.A.A. Thompson, *The Galley in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Mediterranean Warfare*, in Id. *The Military Revolution and the Trajectory of Spain: War and Society, 1500-1700. Ten Studies*, Paragon, [Trowbridge] 2020, pp. 113-46; Cf. J. Black, *A military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550-1800*, Basingstoke, London 1991; *La Révolution militaire en Europe (XV^e-XVIII^e siècles)*, Actes du colloque organisé le 4 avril 1997 à Saint-Cyr Coëtquidan par le Centre de recherches des Ecoles de Coëtquidan par l’Institut de recherches sur les civilisations de l’Occident moderne (Université de Paris-Sorbonne) et par l’Institut de stratégie comparée, J. Bérenger, Economica-Institut de stratégie comparée eds., Paris 1998; C.J. Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate. Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe*, Routledge, New York 1995; F.F. Olesa-Muñido, *La organización naval de los estados mediterráneos y en especial de España durante los siglos XVI y XVII*, Editorial Naval, Madrid 1968, voll. I-II.

² Despite the growing use of sailing ships, even by Mediterranean war navies. See J. F. Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Gallies. Changing technology & Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the Sixteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1974; I.A.A. Thompson, *Las galeras en la política militar española en el Mediterráneo durante el siglo XVI*, in “Manuscripts: revista d’història moderna”, no. 24, 2006, pp. 95-124; P. Williams, *Empire and Holy War in the Mediterranean. The Galley and Maritime Conflict between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans*, I. B. Tauris, London-New York 2014; E. Beri, *La guerra sul mare e la lotta per la supremazia navale tra XVI e XIX secolo/The war at sea and the struggle for naval supremacy between the 16th and 19th centuries*, in *Velieri*.

not just in terms of growing numbers. Fleets also came to be equipped with new command structures, and financed with new taxes, and, on the whole, became “complex and permanent organisations”, indispensable for the defence and strengthening of the State³. In Jan Glete’s opinion, however, the synergy between these two processes – between the modernisation of States and that of their naval armament – was much greater in Northern Europe as a result of rising powers in the Atlantic⁴.

The concept of *military revolution* as applied to the Mediterranean, therefore, requires some clarification, or at least due caution⁵. It is certainly possible to speak of a significant *evolution* of warfare even in Mediterranean waters, provided we do not think only of *sails* and *cannons*, which, as we know, constituted the two main innovations in the Atlantic context⁶. If anything, we should be thinking of the more general process of modernisation, of the technical, logistical and tactical renewal that characterised warfare as a consequence of the development of State structures in the area of the small *Middle Sea* (as opposed to the Ocean, with its connections to antiquity and to the complexity of its political, economic, social and cultural features)⁷.

Grandi storie di mare, a cura di F. Gavazzi, Bandecchi & Vivaldi, Pontedera 2018, pp. 29-35; Id., *Rivoluzione militare nel Mediterraneo (XVI-XVII sec.)*, in *altervista.org* 2020 (<https://cronistoria.altervista.org/la-rivoluzione-militare-nel-mediterraneo-xvii-sec/2020> – read on 17/11/2022).

³ The citations from Italian sources and studies are all given in English translation, L. Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra e costruzione dello Stato moderno: Genova e Savoia, due percorsi a confronto (secc. XVI-XVIII)*, in G. Assereto, C. Bitossi, P. Merlin (a cura di), *Genova e Torino. Quattro secoli di incontri e scontri. Nel bicentenario dell’annessione della Liguria al Regno di Sardegna*, Società Ligure di Storia Patria, Genova 2015 (“Quaderni della Società Ligure di Storia Patria”), p. 216. Cf. O. Hintze, *Military Organization and the Organization of the State*, in *The Historical Essays of Otto Hintze*, F. Gilbert ed., Oxford University Press, Oxford 1975, pp. 178-215; J. Fynn-Paul (ed.), *War, Entrepreneurs, and the State in Europe and the Mediterranean, 1300-1800*, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2014.

⁴ J. Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe. Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as fiscal-military States, 1500-1660*, Routledge, London 2002; Id., *La guerra sul mare*, cit., pp. 17-21; M.A.J. Palmer, *The “Military Revolution” Afloat: The Era of the Anglo-Dutch Wars and the Transition to Modern Warfare at Sea*, in “War in History”, no. 4, 2, 1997, pp. 123-49.

⁵ Cf. F. Tallett, *War and Society in Early-Modern Europe, 1495-1715*, Routledge, London 1992, pp. 123-9.

⁶ Beri, *Rivoluzione militare nel Mediterraneo (XVI-XVII sec.)*, cit.; B. Tunstall, *Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail. The Evolution of Fighting Tactics, 1650-1815*, N. Tracy ed., Wellfleet Press, Edison 2001; C.M. Cipolla, *Vele e cannoni*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2001.

⁷ J.J. Norwich, *Il Mare di Mezzo. Una storia del Mediterraneo*, Viella, Roma 2020; D. Abulafia, *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2011.

1. Specifics of the Genoese case

The case of the Genoese navy requires further clarification in relation to the specific nature of this Republic, a *lightweight* Italian State (*Stato leggero*), with a small administrative apparatus and an even smaller military force⁸. Added to this is the fact that, unlike Venice, Genoa had no overseas domain to defend. Its last possession in the Levant, the island of Chios, came under Ottoman rule in 1566, and even sovereignty over Corsica never resulted in the need for a large fleet⁹. One final element to be taken into consideration is the alliance with Spain. From 1528 onwards – from the birth of the aristocratic Republic – Genoa became crucial to the workings of the *Spanish route*, a much-trafficked *waterway*. The port of Genoa was, in fact, a strategically important junction within the Habsburg system¹⁰. Genoa contributed to this bond “of mutual advantage” with “military and logistical services (a strategic position at the centre of the land and sea routes that connected the disparate parts of the Spanish system) as well as the obvious financial services”. In exchange, Spain guaranteed “the diplomatic and military protection of a great power”¹¹.

⁸ C. Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, Laterza, 2011, pp. 12-20; G. Assereto, *Il ceto dirigente genovese e la sua "diversità"*, in *Ceti dirigenti municipali in Italia e in Europa in età moderna e contemporanea*, a cura di D. Marrara, ETS, Pisa 2003, pp. 83-92. Cf. B.A. Raviola, *L'Europa dei piccoli stati: dalla prima età moderna al declino dell'Antico Regime*, Carocci, Roma 2008.

⁹ Cf. A. Pacini, *La repubblica di Genova nel secolo XVI*, in D. Puncuh (a cura di), *Storia di Genova: Mediterraneo, Europa, Atlantico*, Società Ligure di Storia Patria, Genova 2003, p. 347; P. Calcagno, *Corsari e difesa mobile delle coste. Il caso genovese nella seconda metà del XVII secolo*, in “Studi Storici”, no. 55, 4, 2014, pp. 937-64.

¹⁰ G. Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: the Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1972. See also Id., *Spain and the Netherlands, 1559-1659: ten studies*, Fontana press, Glasgow 1990; A. Pacini, “Desde Rosas a Gaeta”. *La costruzione della rotta spagnola nel Mediterraneo occidentale nel XVI secolo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2013; D. Maffi, *Alle origini del "camino español". I transiti militari in Liguria (1566-1700)*, in A. Peano Cavasola (a cura di), *Finale, porto di Fiandra, briglia di Genova*, Centro Storico del Finale, Finale Ligure 2007, pp. 119-72; Calcagno, *Corsari e difesa mobile delle coste*, cit., pp. 937-64. Cf. C. Bitossi, *Il patriariato genovese negli anni '30 del Seicento: composizione e schieramenti*, in *Genova e Francia al crocevia dell'Europa/Gènes et la France au carrefour de l'Europe (1624-1642)*, Atti del Seminario internazionale di Studi, Genova, 27-28 maggio 1989, a cura di M.G. Bottaro Palumbo, Centro di Studi sull'Età Moderna, Genova 1989, pp. 149-51.

¹¹ Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 13-8. Cf. Irving, *Las galeras en la política militar española*, cit., pp. 95-124; Id., *The Galley in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Mediterranean Warfare*, in Id., *The Military Revolution and the Trajectory of Spain*, cit., pp. 113-46.

At this point, it will be easy to understand why Genoa was able to rely on a navy which barely reached ten units during the 17th century – a very small fleet, indeed, when compared to the size of the Spanish navy and the equally famous Venetian *Armata*¹². In spite of the modest size of this military contingent, the contribution of the Genoese to the Hapsburg war machine was great indeed, and not only in the naval domain, as the case of Ambrogio Spinola, one of the greatest protagonists of the Flanders campaigns, demonstrates¹³. Among its chief merits, the Genoese military system was highly integrated, both in terms of the relationship between private and public armament, and in terms of the role of the coastal garrisons in relation to the tasks assigned to the fleet¹⁴. Private armament consisted of the so-called *galee di particolari* placed at the service of Spain by means of *asiento* contracts (the *escuadra de Génova*). Their number varied considerably between the first half of the 16th century and the War of Spanish Succession, but was still significantly higher than that of the public galleys¹⁵. Thus, the small navy of the Republic could, when needed, count on a reserve war potential that was actually part of the Spanish *Armada* although it was mostly moored in the port of Genoa¹⁶.

¹² Roughly speaking, in the years of the Battle of Lepanto, the Venetian fleet had forty galleys in permanent active service, in addition to the 100 others and the six galleys that the Serenissima could arm if necessary. In the same years, the Spanish Armada had approximately 150 units, divided into four squads (Genoa, Naples, Sicily and Spain), D. Goodman, *Spanish naval power, 1589-1665: reconstruction and defeat*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1997, pp. 7 ff.; Glete, *La guerra sul mare*, cit., pp. 155-70; M. Aymard, *Chiourmes et galères dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle*, in G. Benzoni (a cura di), *Il Mediterraneo nella seconda metà del '500 alla luce di Lepanto*, L.S. Olschki, Firenze 1974, pp. 71-91; Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., p. 216; L. Lo Basso, *Una vita al remo. Galee e galeotti del Mediterraneo, secc. XVI-XVIII*, Atene edizioni, Imperia 2008, pp. 116 ff.

¹³ G. Brunelli, "Spinola, Ambrogio", in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* (henceforth DBI), vol. 93, 2018 (https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/ambrogio-spinola_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ – read on: 18/05/2022); E. Beri, *L'ammiraglio e il generale. Federico e Ambrogio Spinola da Genova alle Fiandre*, in Id. (a cura di), *Dal Mediterraneo alla Manica. Contributi alla storia navale dell'età moderna*, Società italiana di Storia militare-Nadir Media, Roma 2022, pp. 107-33. Cf. R.A. Stradling, *The Armada of Flanders: Spanish Maritime Policy and European War, 1568-1668*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992.

¹⁴ Calcagno, *Corsari e difesa mobile delle coste*, cit., pp. 937-64; Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 215-6. Cf. Ch. Duffy, *Siege warfare: the fortress in the Early Modern World, 1494-1660*, Routledge, London-New York 1996.

¹⁵ Around 1620, for example, the galleys that the king of Spain had "in Genoa, called the *galee di particolari*", were in fact "16 or 18", i.e. roughly three times the fleet of the Republic, Biblioteca Universitaria di Genova (henceforth BUG), ms. B.VIII.27, A. Spinola, *Dizionario politico-filosofico, Galee forastiere*.

¹⁶ Lo Basso, *Una vita al remo*, cit., pp. 213 ff.; Lo Basso, *Gli asentisti del re*, cit., pp. 397-428; B. Maréchaux, *Los asentistas de galeras genoveses y la articulación naval de un*

As for the relationship between the coastal fortresses and the navy, it is worth remembering that the conformation of the mainland Genoese dominion (narrow and along the coastline) and the nature of the Ligurian Sea (infested by corsairs) were such as to require an effective *mobile defence system*, complementary to the *land defence system*. In other words, the Republic's fleet was essentially set up to perform paramilitary tasks, i.e. maritime police duties, in accordance with a model analogous to Venice ("which, in order to assert sovereignty over its sea, organised [...] a coastal force to defend the Lagoon and then also a squadron of [...] public ships"), and unlike Spain ("which, both in the Iberian peninsula and in the Italian maritime dominions, [...] opted for a progressive naval disengagement and a static defence system based on towers and coastal forts")¹⁷.

In short, the military function of the Genoese navy was of decidedly minor importance; what clearly prevailed was the "small war"¹⁸, and the need to ensure anti-corsair defence for Liguria, above all for the two Rivieras, Levante and Ponente. This fleet also had a commercial role, which "during the 17th century [...] was accentuated [...] with the increase of missions to Spain (for the recovery of capital), to Southern Italy, to Livorno and to Marseilles (for the transport of silk)". Luca Lo Basso has calculated that between 1559 and 1607 the Genoese galleys carried out just over 1,000 missions, the purposes of which were as follows:

1,014 voyages, of which 359 to the Rivieras, 122 to Corsica, 100 to Spain, 197 to Sicily, 18 to Civitavecchia, 35 to Livorno and 183 to other destinations. 54.9% of these voyages involved the transport of illustrious passengers, 14.9%

imperio policéntrico (siglos XVI-XVII), in "Hispania. Revista española de historia", no. 80, 264, 2020, pp. 47-77. See also P. Williams, *Past and present: the forms and limits of Spanish Naval Power in Mediterranean, 1590-1620*, in M. Rizzo, J.J. Ruiz Ibáñez, G. Sabatini (eds.), *Le forze del principe: recursos, instrumentos y límites en la práctica del poder soberano en los territorios de la monarquía hispánica*, Actas del Seminario internacional, Pavia, 22-24 septiembre 2000, Universidad de Murcia, Murcia 2003, pp. 237-78; G.H. Enrique, D. Maffi (eds.), *Guerra y sociedad en la Monarquía hispánica: política, estrategia y cultura en la Europa moderna, 1500-1700*, Laberinto, Madrid 2006, vol. I; Olesa-Muñido, *La organización naval de los estados mediterráneos*, cit., vol. I.

¹⁷ Calcagno, *Corsari e difesa mobile delle coste*, cit., p. 940.

¹⁸ M. Mafri, *I mari del Mezzogiorno d'Italia tra cristiani e musulmani*, in *Storia d'Italia*, Einaudi, Torino 2002 ("Annali 18" – *Guerra e pace*, a cura di W. Barberis), pp. 75-6. See also *Mediterraneo in armi, secc. XV-XVIII*, "Quaderni - Mediterranea: ricerche storiche", no. 4, 2007, a cura di R. Cancila.

the escort of ships and convoys, 14.3% the transport of troops or privateering (*la guerra di corsa*), 7.3% the transport of silks from Sicily, 5.2% that of precious metals from Spain, and 3.4% that of timber for the Genoese arsenal¹⁹.

Another aspect, no less important, in understanding why the Genoese navy remained small is that of cost. Setting up a galley was less expensive than fitting out a sailing ship – not so the running costs, however. Since its inception in 1559, the *Magistrato delle galee* was responsible for finding the money needed to build and maintain the fleet. The founding decree stipulated that two thirds of the cost of managing one of the four galleys were to be the responsibility of the Rivieras. In 1561, with the fleet increased to six galleys, the Magistrate was provided with a regular, although still insufficient, income, “so that, at intervals, the *Camera* would issue extraordinary funding to the *Magistrato delle galee*” as it did, for instance, in 1563, when the Magistrate was funded through 1,500 shares of the Bank of Saint George (*luoghi della Casa di San Giorgio*) and the full intake of the levy on fish (*gabella dei pesci*)²⁰. In 1611, instead, the cost of fleet development stood at “320,000 *lire* a year, which is to say 40,000 for each galley. With 120,000 *lire* still missing to meet the required sum, the levy on flour milling was raised” alongside further ad hoc provisions²¹.

¹⁹ Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 221-2. See also A. Ceccarelli, *The Spinola system for maritime postal exchanges between the Madrid nunciature and the Roman Curia (1645-58)*, in N. Klein Käfer (ed.), *Privacy at Sea: Practices, Spaces, and Communication in Maritime History*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, forthcoming. Cf. E. Beri, *Genova e il suo Regno. Ordinamenti militari, poteri locali e controllo del territorio in Corsica fra insurrezioni e guerre civili (1729-1768)*, Città del silenzio, Novi Ligure 2011, pp. 165-8; G.C. Calcagno, *Armamento pubblico e magistrature marittime a Genova nei secoli XVI e XVII*, in *La Storia dei Genovesi*, Atti del convegno di studi sui ceti dirigenti nelle istituzioni della Repubblica di Genova, Genova, 25-27 aprile 1985, Genova 1986, vol. VI, pp. 22-38.

²⁰ In 1643, the income from the fleet was 326,007 Genoese lire, while its costs were 332,396 lire. This liability worsened in 1676 (324,858 lire in income, 441,500 lire in expenses). Around the middle of the 17th century, the cost of fitting out a galley was around 87,500 lire a year, while the cost of its maintenance was more than 50,000 lire, Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 222-3. Cf. V. Borghesi, *Il Magistrato delle galee (1559-1607)*, in *Guerra e commercio nell'evoluzione della marina genovese tra XV e XVII secolo*, in “Miscellanea Storica Ligure”, III, 1973, pp. 187-223. Cf. N.A.M. Rodger, *From the “Military Revolution” to the “Fiscal-Naval State”*, in “Journal for Maritime Research”, no. 13, 2, 2011, pp. 119-28.

²¹ C. Bitossi, *Il Genio ligure risvegliato. La potenza navale nel discorso politico genovese del Seicento*, in F. Cantù (a cura di), *I linguaggi del potere nell'età barocca* (1. *Politica e religione*), Viella, Roma 2009, p. 87.

In short, maintaining a war fleet, even a small one, was very costly. For this reason, Venice sometimes resorted to chartering rather than fitting out new vessels²². The Genoese too made this choice when it was necessary to strengthen the shipping service to the Spanish ports. I am referring here to the experiment of the so-called *galeoni*, a small squadron of armed vessels (two to four units), fitted out in the mid-17th century on the Nordic model to provide protection for merchant ships²³.

The strengthening of the Republic's navy was also achieved through the introduction of the so-called *galee di libertà*, designed in the early 17th century for missions to Sicily – for silk cargoes – and, again, to counter privateer raids. The term *galee di libertà* derives from the fact that they were “crewed with [...] free oarsmen, recruited from the communities of the Rivièras through a system of maritime conscription”. In short, the *galee di libertà* constituted another peculiarity in the history of this navy²⁴.

The use of the fleet to support private shipping was, therefore, a necessary measure to lower costs. The most profitable activity was the transport of Iberian silver – capital returning from Spain, the fruit of loans granted to the *Monarquía* – that is to say, a cash recovery that soared following the disastrous Habsburg bankruptcy of 1627²⁵.

Let me give here a few details about the extent of the so-called naval *rearmament* of Genoa: between 1559 and the 1580s, there were four public galleys, which later increased to six units, and from 1624-25, on the occasion of the attempted conquest of the Ligurian State by a French-Piedmontese army, the number rose to eight/ten units. In 1652, an attempt was made to fix the permanent units at ten. Between 1672 and 1676, during the second conflict against Piedmont, the number of galleys was reduced to seven, then fell to six in 1684, and finally returned

²² Beri, *Rivoluzione militare nel Mediterraneo*, cit.

²³ G.C. Calcagno, *La navigazione convogliata a Genova nella seconda metà del Seicento*, in *Guerra e commercio nell'evoluzione della marina genovese tra XV e XVII secolo*, in “Miscellanea Storica Ligure”, no. 1, 1970, pp. 266-392; E. Beri, “*Per la difesa delli bastimenti nazionali*”. *Genova e la protezione degli spazi marittimi in età moderna (XVI-XVIII sec.)*, in L. Antonielli (a cura di), *La polizia nelle strade e nelle acque navigabili. Dalla sicurezza alla regolazione del traffico*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2018, pp. 161-78; Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 223-4.

²⁴ Ibid. Cf. Calcagno, *La navigazione convogliata*, cit., pp. 267-78.

²⁵ Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 224-5; Id., *Diaspora e armamento marittimo nelle strategie economiche dei Genovesi nella seconda metà del XVII secolo. Una Storia globale*, in “Studi Storici”, no. 56, 1, 2015, 137-55; M. Herrero Sánchez, *La quiebra del sistema hispano-genovés (1627-1700)*, in “Hispania”, no. 65, 219, 2005, pp. 115-51.

to four during the last century of the Republic²⁶. It was therefore a very modest rearmament, which nonetheless constituted a very divisive issue within Genoese public debate, for most of the 17th century especially.

To conclude, it is certainly possible to affirm that the international weight of this Republic – quite substantial in geo-political and economic-financial terms²⁷ – was not matched by a numerically noteworthy army and fleet. Starting from the mid-16th century, however, Genoese public armament grew and was modernised. Significantly, the functions of command and control were centralised and assigned to the top offices of the Republic, assisted by a specific new magistrate²⁸. The Genoese navy boasts some noteworthy features (witness the *galee di libertà*) and at least one record: it was the first completely State-owned navy. Indeed, in 1559, at the end of the Italian Wars (1494-1559), Genoa chose to create an entirely publicly owned fleet, instead of following the prevailing trend in Europe at the time, that of private armament²⁹.

²⁶ Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 220-1.

²⁷ Assereto, *Il ceto dirigente genovese*, cit., pp. 83-92; A. Pacini, *La Genova di Andrea Doria nell'Impero di Carlo V*, Olschki, Firenze 1999; T.A. Kirk, *Genoa and the Sea. Policy and Power in an Early Modern Maritime Republic, 1559-1684*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore-London 2005; Id., *The Apogee of the Hispano-Genoese bond, 1576-1627*, in "Hispania", LXV, no. 1, 2005, pp. 45-66.

²⁸ Command of the fleet was the responsibility of the *Collegi* (the highest governing body of the Republic), whereas the appointment of the *Generale delle galee*, the highest office in the navy (called *Commissario generale delle galee* from 1685 onwards) was the responsibility of the *Minor Consiglio* (and was then ratified by the *Collegi*). The administrative and judicial management of the fleet was the responsibility of the *Magistrato delle galee*. Tasks related to the construction of new vessels, on the other hand, fell to the *Magistrato dell'Arsenale* between 1607 and 1738, then returned to the *Magistrato delle galee*. From 1651, moreover, the *Collegi* delegated many political decisions to the *Consiglio di Marina*. Finally, the *Conservatori del Mare* were the drafters of the rules concerning armament and the regulation of discipline on board, Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 221-2. Cfr. Id., *Il finanziamento dell'armamento marittimo tra società e istituzioni. Il caso ligure (secc. XVII-XVIII)*, in "Archivio storico italiano", CLXXIV, no. 1, 2016, pp. 81-105.

²⁹ As Luca Lo Basso has aptly pointed out, the Spanish *Armada* was the fruit of *asiento* contracts, the Ottoman fleet was controlled by the *beylerbey* of the various provinces, the French fleet (which was very small at the time) was run on a semi-private basis, and those of England and Holland had not yet come into being. Limited to the so-called *Antichi Stati Italiani*, it is worth mentioning at least the case of the Republic of Venice, where "it was private individuals who managed the crews", and that of Piedmont, which in turn relied on private armament. In conclusion, only in Denmark and Sweden, "almost at the same time as the Genoese experience", were "two permanent state-owned war navies" born, Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., pp. 219-20. Cf. Id., *Uomini da remo. Galee e galeotti del Mediterraneo in età moderna*, Selene, Milano 2003, p. 206; G. Caneva, *La flotta permanente della Repubblica di Genova (1559-1797)*, Basile, Genova 1964, pp. 11 ff;

I understand the temptation to conclude that Genoa is a case of a *failed* military revolution, or rather, one that remained in its embryonic form; however, and particularly if we take the medieval period as a term of comparison, it seems to me that significant evolution and modernisation did take place, starting with the fact that the Genoese even equipped their galleys with heavy artillery³⁰. Besides, Genoa continued to boast of a naval know-how worthy of the utmost respect. Emiliano Beri has rightly pointed out that the protagonists of the great Mediterranean seafaring tradition, starting with those who, like the Genoese, served the *Monarquía*, were perfectly capable of fighting on the Ocean as well (on ships equipped with new sails, which forced a different arrangement and use of cannons, and which sailed on the high seas). If they did not do so in the Mediterranean, it was simply because the characteristics of the *Middle Sea* were different from those of the Ocean (currents, winds, conformation of the coastline). These same characteristics explain how the galley had come about and had established itself, with its *feet* and *wings* (oarsmen and sails) and its greater manoeuvrability, which allowed for the use of artillery pieces which were fewer in number but of a higher calibre and easier to use³¹. In comparison with warships used mainly on the Oceans, the Genoese galleys made less use of cannons, even in the line of battle. In the Mediterranean, they continued boarding, a technique that required a large crew (such as galleys had). Both the line of battle and bombardment at a distance (practised by sailing ships) were rarely adopted in the Mediterranean; nevertheless, galleys and sailing ships did at times encounter one another and clash³². It would be wrong, therefore, to conclude that Genoa in the Modern Age was a State with a

Borghesi, *Il Magistrato delle galee*, cit., pp. 187-90; D. Parrott, *The Business of War. Military Enterprise and Military Revolution in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2012; P. Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery*, State University of New York Press, Albany 1994.

³⁰ J.F. Guilmartin, *The Early Provision of Artillery Armament on Mediterranean War Gallies*, in J. Glete (ed.), *Naval History, 1500-1680*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2005, pp. 3-6; J.B. Hattendorf, R.W. Unger (eds.), *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Boydell, Woodbridge 2003.

³¹ Beri, *Rivoluzione militare nel Mediterraneo*, cit. Cf. Id., *Genova e la sua frontiera marittima fra XVI e XVIII secolo: difesa e controllo*, in V. Favaro, M. Merluzzi, G. Sabatini (eds.), *Fronteras. Procesos y prácticas de integración y conflicto entre Europa y América (siglos XVI-XVII)*, Fondo de Cultura Economica, Madrid 2017, pp. 341-52.

³² W. Maltby, *Politics, Professionalism and the Evolution of Sailing-Ship Tactics, 1650-1714*, in J.A. Lynn, *Tools of War. Instruments, Ideas and Institution of Warfare, 1445-1871*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1990, pp. 53-73; Beri, *Rivoluzione militare nel Mediterraneo*, cit.; Tunstall, *Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail*, cit.

medieval, even archaic structure³³. On the contrary, it was a republic that undertook a process of modernisation that also resulted in the birth and “bureaucratisation of its forces [...] responsible for defence [...], control of the territory [...] and the exercise of war”³⁴.

2. The debate on war and naval rearmament

Reflections on naval rearmament and on warfare in general – of which the Genoese were witnesses, rather than protagonists, and which was changing rather rapidly before their very eyes – take up a great deal of space within this culture, starting with the writings of the greatest Genoese intellectuals of the 16th and 17th centuries. This is a little-known aspect, which I have tried to highlight. Claudio Costantini pointed out that rearmament was “one of the most interesting themes” in Genoese political debate, as it offered

an opportunity to define just what Genoa’s vocation actually was – among the many that were attributed to it: commercial emporium, maritime and ship-owning centre, financial centre – and what was politically the most opportune position for the Republic in the Mediterranean context, where the dynamics were in many ways alarming³⁵.

2a. Andrea Spinola

In 1559, the year in which the *Magistrato delle galee* was established, there was talk of the victory of the faction which identified itself as *new nobility* (*nobili nuovi*)³⁶. While their goal of enlarging the fleet by dozens of

³³ R. Savelli, *Scrivere lo statuto, amministrare la giustizia, organizzare il territorio*, in Id. (a cura di), *Repertorio degli statuti della Liguria. Secc. XII-XVIII*, Regione Liguria-Assessorato alla cultura-Società ligure di storia patria, Genova 2003, pp. 101-18. See also G. Assereto, *Le metamorfosi della Repubblica. Saggi di storia genovese tra il XVI e il XIX secolo*, Elio Ferraris, Genova 1999.

³⁴ Lo Basso, *Evoluzione delle marine da guerra*, cit., p. 215. Cf. Glete, *La guerra sul mare*, cit., pp. 8 ff.; Rodger, *From the “Military Revolution”*, cit., pp. 119-28; Ch. Tilly, *L’oro e la spada. Capitale, guerra e potere nella formazione degli Stati europei, 990-1990*, Ponte alle Grazie, Firenze 1991.

³⁵ C. Costantini, *Aspetti della politica navale genovese nel Seicento*, in *Guerra e commercio nell’evoluzione della marina genovese tra XV e XVII secolo*, in “Miscellanea Storica Ligure”, II, 1970, pp. 207, 224-5.

³⁶ This faction of nobles was admitted to government functions following the reforms of 1528, but actually remained a minority, compared to the *nobiltà vecchia* (old nobility), until yet another institutional *tournant* in 1575-76 (until the promulgation of the *Leges novae*),

warships remained a chimera, they did not stop campaigning for it, either. This was certainly the case with Paolo Foglietta (c. 1520-96), author of the *Rime per armar galee*, in which he contrasted the military feats of the medieval Genoese, who had a leading force in the Eastern Mediterranean, with the “ineptitude of the modern Genoese, who were not only incapable of maintaining that standing, but even of defending the mainland territories from pirate attacks”³⁷. The greatest representative of the ruling class of the time, Andrea Spinola (c. 1562-1631)³⁸, however, was a member of the *old* nobility and a staunch *anti-navalista* who opposed rearmament – or rather, remained faithful to Renaissance republicanism and to the conviction that republics should avoid war “like the plague” (they should be able to defend themselves without ever aspiring to wars of conquest)³⁹. As he wrote in an entry in his *Dizionario politico-filosofico* (otherwise titled *Ricordi*), the new public galleys (eight in all, at the time), “strip us to the bone”. If his fellow citizens had therefore been content to have had only three, reconverting the remaining ones for use by the maritime police (“to beat those rogues, of whom the least bad are the Turks, and the Moors”), they would have saved 40,000 to 50,000 *lire* a year. Spinola also warned that by deciding to rearm, Genoa would risk antagonising Spain⁴⁰. But, as he commented, “our doges”, dominated by ambition and ignorance, “say *I do not want the galleys to be disarmed during my government*”⁴¹.

R. Savelli, *La repubblica oligarchica. Legislazione, istituzioni e ceti a Genova nel Cinquecento*, Giuffrè, Milano 1981; G. Doria, *Un quadriennio critico: 1575-1578. Contrasti e nuovi orientamenti nella società genovese nel quadro della crisi finanziaria spagnola, in Fatti e idee di storia economica nei secoli XII-XX. Studi dedicati a Franco Borlandi*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1976, pp. 377-94.

³⁷ Brother of the better known Oberto, protagonist of the civil wars of 1575-76, Paolo was also an ardent supporter of the political claims made by the *new* nobles, allied to the *populares*. The *Rime per armar galee* were published in *Rime diverse in lingua genovese* (G. Bartoli, Pavia 1588), G. Checchi, “Foglietta, Paolo”, in DBI, vol. 48, 1997 (https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/paolo-foglietta_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ – read on: 18/05/2022). Cf. S. Verdino, *La “Preghera pe ra peste de 1578” di Paolo Foglietta*, in “Studi di filologia e letteratura”, IV, 1978, pp. 105-25.

³⁸ C. Bitossi, *Introduzione. Profilo di Andrea Spinola*, in A. Spinola, *Scritti scelti*, a cura di C. Bitossi, Sagep, Genova 1981, pp. 5-64; A. Ceccarelli, “Spinola, Andrea”, in DBI, vol. 93, 2018 (https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/andrea-spinola_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ – read on: 18/05/2022); Ead., “*In forse di perdere la libertà*”. *La Repubblica di Genova nella riflessione di Giulio Pallavicino (1583-1635)*, Viella, Roma 2018, pp. 17-44, 64-89, 93-187.

³⁹ BUG, ms. B.VIII.27, *Guerra*.

⁴⁰ Ibid., *Galee nostre pubbliche*.

⁴¹ Ibid., ms. B.VIII.25, *Bombardieri*.

On the other hand, Spinola was convinced that Genoa needed military reorganisation; above all, the city's garrisons urgently needed to be redesigned, "as there are few who remain steadfast in the face of death"⁴². It is no coincidence that military matters occupy much space in the *Ricordi*, and among the dozens of entries on the subject (*Armamenti, Archibugi a Ruota, Archibugi a fuoco, Artiglierie, Bastie, Bombardieri, Fanteria forastiera, Polvere...*), many specifically concern naval armament (*Generale delle nostre Galere, Galee nostre Pubbliche, Galee forastiere, Galee di particolari, Marineria...*)⁴³.

Even in Spinola's opinion, war had changed ("Jesus, how much the world has changed nowadays", he wrote, for example, in the entry *Andrea Doria*)⁴⁴. The technical and tactical aspects remained outside of his reflections, which, however, were not without insight; his *Ricordi* were intended, he pointed out, as warnings "for those who know the trade of arms, of which I know neither a little nor a lot"⁴⁵. Under the entry *Bombardieri*, Spinola wrote that he feared, above all, an attack from the sea. The 70 bombers at the city's disposal were too few, and at least 100 were needed, rigorously selected from amongst "our craftsmen" (whose "fathers", indeed, had to have been "born in Genoa")⁴⁶, and forced to practise "every Sunday in a dedicated place, where they kept their ordnance for this exercise"⁴⁷. Regarding the dominion's main coastal fortresses, however – those of Gavi, Savona and Vado – Spinola was optimistic (they guaranteed an effective defence and many cannons and men were needed to conquer them)⁴⁸. In short, he was convinced that the Republic did not run great risks in ordinary times, whereas it did run risks when foreign armies assembled just beyond its borders, as had happened during

⁴² Ibid., *Arme pubbliche*. Cf. Duffy, *Siege warfare*, cit.

⁴³ BUG, mss. B.VIII.25-28.

⁴⁴ "Jesus, quanto si è mutato il mondo, al di d'hoggi", Ibid., ms. F.VI.22, *Andrea Doria*.

⁴⁵ Ibid., ms. B.VIII.26, *Difesa della nostra città*.

⁴⁶ Ibid., ms. B.VIII.25, *Bombardieri*. Cf. *Carichi militari*; ms. B.VIII.26, *Fanteria forastiera*. I would remind readers that even in Venice (which was Andrea Spinola's great model) "the domestic component" remained "a fundamental element in recruitment [...] and [...] in the functioning of the military apparatus", G. Ongaro, *Il lavoro militare fra XVI e XVII sec.: contadini-soldato nella Repubblica di Venezia tra subordinazione e agency*, pp. 15-27, in *L'impronta domestique du travail – Varia*, "Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée moderne et contemporaines" – MEFRIM, no. 131, 1, 2019, pp. 15-7.

⁴⁷ BUG, ms. B.VIII.25, *Bombardieri*.

⁴⁸ Ibid., ms. B.VIII.26, *Fortezze dello nostro Stato, di maggiore consideratione*. Cfr. ms. B.VIII.27, *Gavi, o sia fortezza di Gavi*. Cf. Duffy, *Siege warfare*, cit.; Id., *Fire and stone: the science of fortress warfare 1660-1860*, Greenhill, London 1996.

the recent Wars of Monferrato (1613-31). In times of particular alert, auxiliary forces and capable men were needed, starting, as far as the navy was concerned, with two small armed frigates (to guard “all night [...] the entrance to the port”)⁴⁹ and a general of the galleys (*generale delle galee*), who was also a skilful disciplinarian⁵⁰ (since commanding a galley implies the use of the “stick”)⁵¹.

2b. *The Trattato delle armi maritime*

As another great exponent of Genoese culture noted, the erudite bibliophile Giulio Pallavicino (c. 1558-1635), war today is “a new thing”⁵². His collection included the anonymous *Trattato delle armi maritime genovesi*, drawn up in the early 17th century and dedicated “to the immortal Andrea Doria”⁵³. The purpose of this work was to clarify “whether it suits the Genoese Republic to have naval armaments or not”. As can be understood from the very first lines, the author was an ardent *navalista*, convinced that the Genoese were among the most suitable, “in wit and strength, for any military exercise”, and that at least 80,000 of them would be ready “to arm themselves, and to fight at all times and on all occasions”. The Genoese, moreover, were absolutely the best suited to naval warfare⁵⁴: “this gift had been given by God [...] to Liguria”, a State that “has always been the cradle of maritime arms in Italy”. If Genoa had wanted to arm 100 galleys, therefore, it could have done so “[entirely] with Genoese sailors”, and in so doing, would have disarmed most other fleets, since, with the exception of the Venetian fleet, they were “almost

⁴⁹ BUG, ms. B.VIII.26, *Difesa della nostra città*.

⁵⁰ Ibid., ms. B.VIII.27, *Generale delle nostre Galere*.

⁵¹ Ibid., *Galee nostre pubbliche*.

⁵² Ceccarelli, “*In forse di perdere la libertà*”, cit., pp. 112-3.

⁵³ ASGe, ms. 709, *Trattato delle armi maritime genovesi*. Cf. A. Ceccarelli, *Lo Stato da mar nello sguardo genovese (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, in *Alimentazione, cibo e gastronomia nello Stato da mar e altri contributi*, Atti dell’VIII convegno internazionale “Venezia e il suo Stato da mar”, Venezia, 13-15 febbraio 2020, a cura di Bruno Crevato-Selvaggi, Società dalmata di Storia patria-La Musa Talia, Roma-Venezia 2022, pp. 17-35; C. Reijner, *Il mito dell’Olanda. Politiek en geschiedschrijving in vroegmodern Italië*, in “Incontri. Rivista europea di studi italiani”, no. 30, 2, 2015, p. 53.

⁵⁴ “It must be understood that naval armament is not like field armament, which can be put together in any place and at any time, but is of a type that those who do not possess it by nature, in their own country, or do not maintain it with continuous care, cannot have it” (“Conviene considerare che la militia marinarescha non è come la terrestre, che in ogni luogo e in ogni tempo si mette insieme, ma è di sorta che chi non l’ha naturale al paese, o non la trattiene continuamente, non la può avere”), ASGe, ms. 709, *Trattato delle armi maritime genovesi*.

all commanded by Genoese”. These seafarers, so valiant and capable, “had not been used by the Republic for a long time” and had indeed “turned to serving foreign Princes”. If there were no return to arming galleys, “the warrior valour of the Genoese, already so famous”, would remain extinct forever. In short, in the opinion of this unknown treatise writer, the notion that a “constantly armed” squadron of galleys in Genoa, maintained by the king of Spain, was a sufficient asset for the protection of the Republic was a gross mistake⁵⁵. False, too, was the idea “that by arming ourselves we would arouse the jealousy of a few Princes, and especially that of the king [of Spain] himself”, since in comparison with Spain, the Genoese would always be “like the ant against the elephant”. “Wretched indeed can the State that relies solely on mercenary arms be defined, because times change” and “political aims grow”. Naval armament was an indispensable element for “the defence of States and their preservation”. The Turks had been able, when required, to arm 200 galleys⁵⁶, and so had Venice. Holland too, we read in this treatise, although a “small and barren province”, had supported “the war against the [...] Catholics for many years, more with sea forces than with those of land”. In truth, it would have been sufficient to take an example from other Italian States, “some of which [...] do not have an inch of coastline, as the Church⁵⁷, Savoy and Florence do not”, and yet “do not wish to remain without this type of armament [...], so that for every galley they arm, we should arm ten”⁵⁸. The author of the treatise also believed the resources necessary to outfit a large, new fleet were not lacking. The Republic had sufficient money and revenue, while “timber, hardware [and] sails” could be found elsewhere. Moreover, Spain largely drew on

⁵⁵ “The galleys of this king [of Spain] are of no use to us in the summer, because they go now to the Levant against the Turks, now to Africa against the Moors, and at other times to the west against the northern peoples” (“Le galee di esso re di Spagna, in estate, non ci sono di alcun servizio, perché vanno hora in Levante contra Turchi, hora in Africa contra Mori, et hora in Ponente, contra popoli settentrionali”). Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Cf. C. Imber, *The reconstruction of the Ottoman fleet after the battle of Lepanto, 1571-1572*, in *Studies in Ottoman law and history*, The Isis Press, Istanbul 1996, pp. 85-101.

⁵⁷ ASGe, ms. 709, *Trattato delle armi marittime genovesi*. Cf. Archivio Apostolico Vaticano (henceforth AAV), Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, Miscellanea di Genova, fols. 137r-148v, *Arcani svelati di tutti li Prencipi d'Italia*: the Pope now has 30,000 soldiers in his defence, and the proverb says that “the Pontiff has the worst subjects but the best soldiers in the world” (“Il Pontefice ha li più cattivi Sudditi, et i Migliori Soldati del Mondo”, fol. 139r); J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic and the Hispanic World, 1606-1661*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1982.

⁵⁸ ASGe, ms. 709, *Trattato delle armi marittime genovesi*.

the resources of its allies for these necessities, “and the Dutch, [...] who sail more than 5,000 ships”, had “in their country no timber, iron [...], or anything else necessary to build so many ships”. Shameful, is the concluding remark of the *Trattato*, “that a State such as this”, that “so noble city, so populous, should be deprived of maritime weapons” and remain at the mercy of all sorts of corsairs⁵⁹.

In short, the Genoese aristocracy of the 16th and 17th centuries was more than attentive to the changes in warfare at sea, and there is no doubt that the problem of corsairs (Christian, rather than Muslim) was its main concern⁶⁰. Moreover, in the reflections of this ruling class (mostly still in the form of manuscripts), the *change* we are dealing with is indeed such as to suggest the concept of *revolution*, of a *radical change* in warfare and at the same time in the political-institutional order of the States that practised it, whether small (the Italians) or large (Spain), whether new (Holland) or ancient (the Papacy).

3. The bombardment of Genoa

In 1684, the Genoese realised all too well that, in spite of themselves, naval warfare had radically and profoundly changed, and also had to face the adverse reaction of other powers (Mediterranean powers especially) to its attempt to strengthen its merchant and war navy (which entailed, among other things, a period of resumed diplomatic and trade relations with Constantinople, 1666-82), i.e. the unforgiving dynamics of “global strategy”⁶¹. The obvious case in point is the bombardment of the city, carried out by Louis XIV’s fleet, an episode that highlighted the reality of a “ruling class with weak military resources, traditionally averse to taking any martial initiative, and yet not willing to succumb

⁵⁹ Ibid. This, however, is the testimony of Andrea Spinola: “I have seen more than once that boats have been taken by pirates, right here, in front of the city, and when this has happened, it has been customary for some of those involved to ask the Senate to deign to send a galley immediately to see if they could recover the prey, but they have never succeeded” (“Ho veduto più d’una volta che ci son state prese da corsari delle barche qui su gl’occhi della Città, e quando ciò è avvenuto, è stato solito, da alcuno interessato, ha richiesto in Senato che si degnino di mandar immediate una galea per veder se si potesse ricuperar la preda, ver’è che mai è riuscito”), BUG, ms. B.VIII.27, *Galee nostre pubbliche*.

⁶⁰ Calcagno, *Corsari e difesa mobile delle coste*, cit., pp. 937-64; P. Calcagno, “Per la pubblica quiete”. *Corpi armati e ordine pubblico nel Dominio della Repubblica di Genova (secoli XVI-XVIII)*, in “Società e Storia”, 129, 2010, pp. 453-87.

⁶¹ M.G. Bottaro Palumbo, “*Genua emendata*”. *La politica del Re Sole nei confronti della Repubblica*, in *Il bombardamento di Genova nel 1684*, Atti della giornata di studio nel terzo centenario, La Quercia, Genova 1988, p. 23.

to the Sun King's politics"⁶², a ruling aristocracy that for eleven days tenaciously resisted a veritable hailstorm of bombs that seriously endangered its survival. The damage caused to the city was extremely serious, starting with the Doges' Palace; some 3,000 houses were destroyed and the number of civilian victims was also very high⁶³. France, which had long aspired to consolidate its weight in the Mediterranean and to bring Genoa into its orbit (to steer it along a line of neutrality, "benevolently pro-French")⁶⁴, had carefully prepared the attack, as explained in the report by François Pidou de Saint Olon, Ambassador of France, who, after warning the *Serenissimi*, had left Genoa by night ten days before the bombardment. Indeed, Paris was well aware that only a "swift blow", launched from the sea, had any hope of success⁶⁵. At that time, the Republic of Genoa had at its disposal the four *galee di libertà* (the result of its minor rearmament)⁶⁶, "six good galleys constantly armed" (the standard ones) and "two ships with sixty cannons, armed only on convoys to Spain" (the *galeoni*)⁶⁷. The Spanish contingent was minimal and reinforcements by land and sea (from Milan and Naples) might not arrive in time. It was also May, the beginning of the busy season for the *escuadra de Génova*. The small Republic thus had to face the great mon-

⁶² C. Bitossi, "*Una mostra così gagliarda*". *Minacce francesi e difese genovesi nel 1679*, in Id., *Oligarchi: otto studi sul ceto dirigente della Repubblica di Genova. XVI-XVII secolo*, Università di Genova-Dipartimento di storia moderna e contemporanea, Genova 1995, p. 71. The bombing of Genoa was preceded by those of Sanremo and Sampierdarena (1678).

⁶³ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 33-52; Id., *L'antico regime genovese, 1576-1797*, in Puncuh (a cura di), *Storia di Genova: Mediterraneo, Europa, Atlantico*, cit., p. 465. Cf. F. Casoni, *Storia del bombardamento di Genova nell'anno MDCLXXXIV*, R. Istituto sordo-muti, Genova 1877; R. Ciasca, *Genova nelle relazioni di un inviato francese alla vigilia del bombardamento del 1684*, in "Atti della Società di Scienze e Lettere di Genova", II, no. 2, 1937, pp. 79-121; O. Pastine, *Le rivendicazioni dei Fieschi e il bombardamento di Genova del 1684*, in "Bollettino ligure per la storia e la cultura regionale", I, 1949; S. Rotta, *Introduzione to Il bombardamento di Genova*, cit., pp. 12-3; R. Dellepiane, *Mura e fortificazioni di Genova*, Nuova editrice genovese, Genova 1984, pp. 193 ff.

⁶⁴ C. Bitossi, "*Il piccolo sempre soccombe al grande*". *La Repubblica di Genova tra Francia e Spagna*, in *Il bombardamento di Genova*, cit., p. 58. In the same volume, see also G.V. Galliani, *Il "bombardamento" come atto militare: alcuni interrogativi e considerazioni*, pp. 95-107.

⁶⁵ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 10-4; Galliani, *Il "bombardamento" come atto militare*, cit., p. 96; A. Zappia, *Il miraggio del Levante: Genova e gli ebrei nel Seicento*, Carocci, Roma 2021, pp. 121-35.

⁶⁶ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 9-11.

⁶⁷ Galliani, *Il "bombardamento" come atto militare*, cit., p. 97.

archy, the new continental superpower, essentially alone⁶⁸. The *little one* risked succumbing to the *big one*, contemporaries commented, *the ant against the elephant*, in the words of the *Trattato sulle armi marittime*⁶⁹. France effectively now had a superb fleet. In 1661, it had possessed just twenty vessels, which had risen in number to 121 by 1684, the year of the bombardment of Genoa, and would increase to 137 in the following decade. This was a rearmament indeed, “exceptional in its intensity and results”, as desired by the Colberts, father and son. The “political brain” of the operation against Genoa, the actual commander of the fleet, was, in fact, the new Secretary of State for the Navy, “the 32-year-old son of the great Colbert”. At his side, also deployed in front of the port of Genoa, were the best seamen France had at its disposal⁷⁰. What was the reaction of the Genoese to this massive deployment of forces?⁷¹ Their dismay is documented perfectly in several anonymous reports, held at the *Carpegna* and *Miscellanea* collections of the *Archivio Apostolico Vaticano*. Some of these sources are of huge interest, as they were written by eyewitnesses of the bombardment, and have remained unpublished hitherto. Wrote one such witness:

Yesterday, Wednesday [17 May 1684], after having skirted, here and there, the French fleet, now to the east, now to the west, it lined up like a crescent, 100 sailing ships in number, that is, 20 galleys, 16 square-rigged vessels, 14 boats, 10 of those barques that they call *carcasse*, equipped with mortars for throwing bombs, the remaining boats of little importance [...], all fitted with large sails, in wonderful order⁷².

⁶⁸ Cf. D. Parrott, *Richelieu's Army War, government and society in France, 1624-1642*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006.

⁶⁹ Bitossi, “*Il piccolo sempre soccombe al grande*”, cit., pp. 39-69; ASGe, ms. 709, *Trattato delle armi marittime genovesi*.

⁷⁰ Admiral Abraham Duquesne, for example, Commander Tourneville and the Duke of Mortemart. Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 6-20.

⁷¹ Bitossi, “*Una mostra così gagliarda*”, cit., pp. 71-81.

⁷² “Hierì, mercoledì, dopo avere bordeggiato in qua et in là l'armata, hora a Levante, hora a Ponente, si schierò come una mezza luna in numero di 100 vele, che venti Galere, 16 vascelli quadri, 14 Barche, 10 di quei Barconi che chiamano Carcasse, dove sono i Mortari da gettare le Bombe, li rimanenti legni di poco forza [...], tutti posti con grande vela in meravigliosa ordinanza”, AAV, Fondo Carpegna, Vol. 38, fol. 358r. Cf. Ibid., *Relazione del bombardamento*, fols. 402r-409v; Ibid., Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Miscellanea di Genova, Cronaca del bombardamento*, fols. 93r-95r.

A slightly different estimate is contained in another report:

Appeared in sight of this city [...] the French fleet, consisting of 20 galleys, 20 ships (14 of which were tall ships and the others ordinary), 18 boats, other minute boats and 10 machines for throwing bombs, with two mortars for each machine, which look like *palanchi* and are called *carcasse*, which [...] skirted the Riviera di Ponente, or else arrived in the evening in front of our port⁷³.

According to Carlo Bitossi, there were, instead, fourteen or sixteen vessels, and “a hundred or so cargo and transport vessels; [...] and last, [...] perhaps the most important element, ten ships of a new type, the *galiotes à bombes*”⁷⁴. The French had, indeed, just devised “the means to carry out this military act” to subdue Genoa, “cheap and effective” with the “mortar placed on a specially designed ship”: the galley bomber or bombard⁷⁵. The *palandre* or *carcasse* – as the Genoese called them – were, in short, the “avant-garde product of French naval engineering” and their inventor, Bernard Renau d’Eliçagaray⁷⁶, was also there in front of the port of Genoa. At the young Colbert’s request, he had modified a Dutch galley, a rather small and squat ship, by removing its foremast and “inserting a bronze platform on the deck with two mortars incorporated, so that the hull could absorb the recoil”. It was not many years later that it became clear that the wooden structure of the bombers could withstand very little mortar use, “but in that moment, the *palandre* were a [...] very new and deadly tool”⁷⁷, as François Blondel had pointed out in his treatise only a year earlier⁷⁸. All the *palandre* that France possessed – ten, each with

⁷³ “Comparevte a vista di questa Città [...] l’Armata di Francia, consistente in 20 Galere, 20 Navi tra quali 14 di alto bordo, l’altre ordinarie, 18 Barche ed altro Barcareccio minuto e 10 machine da gettar bombe con due morti per machina che paiono Palanchi e si chiamano Carcasse, quali con ordinaria, costeggiarono la Riviera di Ponente quali pervennero alla sera sopra il nostro Porto”. Ibid., fol. 94v.

⁷⁴ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 7-8. Slightly higher is Galliani’s estimate (160 ships in all, deployed “from the Lanterna to the Foce”, i.e. 16 vessels, 20 galleys, 10 galley-bombers, 2 brulottes, 8 transports, 17 tartanes, 72 rowing boats, with a total of 756 guns), Galliani, *Il “bombardamento” come atto militare*, cit., p. 102. See also Guido Candiani, *Novità tecnologica e pressione psicologica: l’introduzione delle galeotte a bombe nella marina veneziana (1685-1695)*, in N. Labanca, P.P. Poggio (a cura di), *Storie di armi*, Unicopli, Milano 2009, pp. 183-202.

⁷⁵ Galliani, *Il “bombardamento” come atto militare*, cit., p. 98.

⁷⁶ Mathematician and engineer of Basque origin. Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 8 ff.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Cf. Galliani, *Il “bombardamento” come atto militare*, cit., p. 98.

⁷⁸ F. Blondel, *L’Art de jeter les bombes...*, Francois Le Cointe, Paris 1683. Cf. Bottaro Palumbo,

two mortars – were deployed in front of the port of Genoa. Moreover, the French had just tested them against the Barbary Regencies of Tunis and Algiers in August–October 1682. It was, in short, a weapon designed specifically for the naval bombardment of towns, which, however, never achieved the desired level of precision and ductility, also because the stability of the hulls depended on sea conditions and the *palandre* had to be towed by galleys or vessels, either to reach their destination or to be repositioned⁷⁹. In May 1684, unfortunately for the Genoese, sea conditions were perfect. The *Serenissimi*, having been informed of the imminent arrival of the French fleet, had created a War Council and reinforced all coastal defences. Although they were ready to meet the challenge, they were convinced that the terrible *palandre* would not be used this time⁸⁰. However, the deadly “mortars for launching Bombs” did in fact arrive, such that some witnesses hastened to depict them, and graphically too⁸¹. It should be pointed out that unlike the cannon, which launched “solid balls with a curved, but relatively taut trajectory”, the mortar launched hollow shells filled with explosives (which burst by fuse ignition) which had a very pronounced parabolic trajectory. The French had also noticeably reduced the length of the barrel, thus reducing firing distortions considerably. The 12-inch mortars used in Genoa could launch a 5.5-libra charge of powder. A projectile weighing up to 90 kg was placed at the bottom of the barrel, whose range was approximately 1,200m–1,500m⁸². The Genoese, whose defences were designed to counter shots with a straight trajectory, i.e. cannon shots, and who had no mortar, had no choice but to deploy five of their galleys side by side, encircling the mouth of the harbour, and to prepare for the worst⁸³. And the worst came. The French fired, perhaps 13,300 rounds; they had arrived with 15,000 shells (far more than in Algiers)⁸⁴ and an unspecified number of incendiary grenades, prepared

“*Genua emendata*”, cit., pp. 21 ff.

⁷⁹ Candiani, *Novità tecnologica e pressione psicologica*, cit., pp. 183–202.

⁸⁰ Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 6 ff.; Galliani, *Il “bombardamento” come atto militare*, cit., pp. 21–2, 102.

⁸¹ AAV, Fondo Carpegna, Vol. 38, f. 358r. Cf. Candiani, *Novità tecnologica e pressione psicologica*, cit., pp. 183–202.

⁸² Galliani, *Il “bombardamento” come atto militare*, cit., p. 98.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 102. Cf. Dellepiane, *Mura e fortificazioni di Genova*, cit., pp. 193 ff.

⁸⁴ In the opinion of Filippo Casoni, on the other hand, about 8,000 bombs fell into the sea or were left unexploded, Casoni, *Storia del bombardamento di Genova*, cit. Cf. Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit.; Galliani, *Il “bombardamento” come atto militare*, cit., pp. 104–5.

with black powder or pitch⁸⁵. In short, the French applied to naval warfare weapons and tactics that had been devised for sieges and pitched battles, against which the Genoese had no option but to resist or flee. “The miseries of this poor and afflicted city are such that I am convinced there is nothing like it in books”⁸⁶, commented one of them. The bombardment began on the evening of 18 May 1684, and was preceded by a peremptory ultimatum: the *Serenissimi* were first ordered to abandon “the useless protection of Spain”⁸⁷, then they were ordered to hand over the “four [new] galere di liberta”⁸⁸ to France, to send a delegation of four senators to Paris (to ask *forgiveness* from Louis XIV) and finally to grant a salt warehouse in Savona (functional to the military operations that were underway in Monferrato). The Genoese government met in the Doges’ Palace, voted against the ultimatum by a very large majority (146/150) and opened fire on the coastal batteries⁸⁹. Little more than a warning, in truth: from Santa Margherita in Carignano only one “cannon shot without a ball” was fired, according to one of the Vatican reports, while “one cannon shot with a ball was fired against the Carcasse”⁹⁰. In response, the French, who had been repositioning themselves for several hours (in order to be out of cannon range and to anchor the *palandre* in the best way possible about 1 km from the coast and pier)⁹¹, started the “fury of the bombs”. Had they not been bombs, this witness wrote, “they would have been cannonballs”. In short, the mortars [Figure 1] began to target the city

with such fury, devastation and House fires, that the People immediately began [...] to get themselves to safety outside the City [...]. These are such raging bombs that when they reach the roof of a house, however strong it is, they demolish it from top to bottom.

⁸⁵ It would seem that incendiary grenades were first used against a civilian population by the Spanish in the Rhineland (Wachtendonck) in 1588, *Ibid.*, p. 99. Cf. Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 9 ff.

⁸⁶ AAV, Fondo Carpegna, Vol. 38, *Relazione del bombardamento*, fols. 402r-409v.

⁸⁷ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, Miscellanea di Genova, *Traduzione della Scrittura rimessa dal Sig. Segnelay*, fols. 91r-v.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 94v.

⁸⁹ Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 10-33.

⁹⁰ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 94v.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, fols. 94r-v. Cf. Bitossi, *1684. La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 9-35.

The Genoese felt “great fear and consternation at such a devilish new instrument, never before heard of”⁹². In their eyes, this was an entirely *new* war. Over the next few days, the French continued to strike the city, especially at night⁹³, and even their cannons, although unable to produce any serious damage, did not remain silent⁹⁴. “Today, Saturday 21” – May, that is, the third day since the attack had begun – “they continue, sometimes with four, sometimes with five and sometimes with six Carcasse to strike the City, but slowly, which means either that there is a shortage of bombs, or that it is some sort of French cunning”⁹⁵. The *relentless slowness* of these early days of bombardment was in fact a tactic of attrition. Regarding the size and type of these bombs, this witness believed that their dimensions were:

Four fingers, weighing three or four *cantari*, some more and some less, and they rise more than two miles high, and go just as far, where there is no obstacle, and they resound in such a way as to make the houses tremble, nor can these [devices] be countered with an effective weapon, because the culverins and cannons do not reach them⁹⁶.

⁹² “Con tanta furia, ruina ed incendij di Case, che il Popolo subito cominciò a furia a salvarsi fuori della Città, [.]. E sono tanto impetuose queste bombe che arrivando sopra un tetto di casa, benché forte, lo subissano da cima in fondo, il che causò grandissimo spavento e costernazione per un tal novo instrumento diabolico mai più sentito”, AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 94v.

⁹³ “The following night, in the darkness, one began to see the bombs in the air, which rose up in such a way that it seemed they wanted to fight against the heavens, and they fell with great clamour over the city, and where they fell they either destroyed or set fire to it, and they fell all at once, so that truly, during the night, our city seemed to be a new Troy” (“La notte seguente si cominciarono per l’oscurità a vedere le bombe per aria accese che si alzavano di maniera che pareva volessero combattere il Cielo e precipitando con gran strepito sopra la Città che dove toccavano o rovinavano o incendiavano, e rovinavano tutte assieme che veramente alla Notte pareva la nostra città una nova Troia”), Ibid. See also Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 30 ff.

⁹⁴ “And during this time, until Saturday morning, a great number of cannons were fired, which either did not hit, or if they did hit, did no damage”, AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 94v.

⁹⁵ Ibid., fols. 95r-v.

⁹⁶ “La qualità di dette Bombe sono di grossezza quattro dita, di peso tre in quattro Cantara, qualche d’una più e qual che d’altra meno, ed ascendono in alto più di due miglia, e vanno altrettanto lontano, dove non è muraglia, e di fatta maniera risuonano che fa tremare le Case, né a questo si può riparare perché le Colobrine e Canonni non vi arrivano che di volo”, Ibid., fol. 95v. Cf. Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 40-9.

On the evening of Saturday 21 May, the French, who had so far fired about “one hundred bombs per hour”, sent an emissary to the Genoese captaincy galley, which had remained in port, again in the hope of inducing the Republic to surrender⁹⁷. The reply was, once again, “that the general should not hesitate to carry out his king’s orders, and that he could certainly demolish and set fire to the city, but [that] at its [...] walls, in order to preserve [their] freedom”, the Genoese would stand “most resolute in their own defence”⁹⁸. And so it was. On Sunday, 22 May 1684, eight *carcasse* out of ten resumed firing, and “in the evening”, the Genoese flagship galley finally “went out [...] to skirmish with six other galleys and carcasse, but always trying to engage them under the fire of our cannon”. The French then attempted two landings, one for show at Levante (at the mouth of the Bisagno river, on the night of 22 May), the other, much more conspicuous, at Ponente (at Sampierdarena), a full-scale amphibious operation involving some 3,500 men, which was neutralised by the Genoese elite force (*uomini scelti*) and by an emergency contingent set up with men from the Polcevera Valley⁹⁹.

The author of this memoir wrote that between the night of 22 May and the dawn of 23 May, “five galleys of the armada landed, with many boats, at the mouth of Bisagno, within musket range of the Muraglia di Carignano”. “Immediately the bell was rung and all positions were taken up [...] by our troops and they were received as they deserved”. All the attackers were killed, except for fourteen who were taken prisoner. In the meantime, “an Enemy galley almost sank”, hit by the cannon that guarded the Lanterna (Genoa’s famous lighthouse), and shortly afterwards, at Sampierdarena, the French attempted a second raid, this time with men “in great numbers [...] also with the landing of Bombs, grenades and other incendiary material”. At least 150 assailants were reportedly left “dead on the beach [...] leaving on the ground quantities of bombs, grenades and hoes, shovels, ladders ten palms wide”¹⁰⁰. On the night of 24 May, then, “five of our galleys went out to skirmish with six of the enemy and two vessels [...] (but our Galleys always [remained] within [firing range] of our Canon)”. It all ended with “some broken oars” only.

⁹⁷ Ibid., pp. 35-40.

⁹⁸ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 94v.

⁹⁹ The Polceveraschi had already distinguished themselves for courage and valour during the war against the Franco-Piedmontese (1624-25), Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 34-40; Ceccarelli, “*In forse di perdere la libertà*”, cit., pp. 135-6, 187-9.

¹⁰⁰ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95r. Cf. Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 36-43.

Although the city was exhausted and “a third of it destroyed, [...] ruined beyond belief except by those who see it”, the French continued bombing until 28 May. “Enormity, unprecedented barbarity, which cries out [to] God for vengeance”. Even the Pontiff condemned the aggression soundly¹⁰¹. The umpteenth weapon which the enemy had in store, the young Colbert’s last card, was not activated, however. It was, if this witness is to be believed, “a Machine with fireworks, which is [...] nine palms wide, and six high, which with its shot, near the walls of the Port”, would have caused “an earthquake”¹⁰².

The *Serenissimi* now had sufficient reason to feel capable of resisting. Carlo Tasso, a veteran of the Spanish Army, had been placed in command of the land forces, while command of the fleet had been entrusted to Ippolito Centurione, an already illustrious name in maritime history, and well known to the French admirals (Centurione had in fact taken part in the bombardment of Algiers, fighting for the king of France on that occasion)¹⁰³. The meagre Spanish contingent had again risen to the occasion¹⁰⁴ and, above all, had received the expected reinforcements: a *tercio* from Naples, “4,000 infantrymen and some soldiers on horseback”, who had arrived together with the Governor of Milan (the Count of Melgar, fiercely anti-French), who had in turn personally taken part in the military operations¹⁰⁵. More than anything – we read in this anonymous account – “the Genoese were waiting [from one day to the next] for the arrival of numerous Galleys from Naples, Spain and Sicily”¹⁰⁶. Although now “scarce and shabby”, compared to the glorious days of Lepanto, the Spanish naval forces did still exist¹⁰⁷.

On 29 May 1684, the attackers finally weighed anchor. Genoa was safe, but “if the Italian Princes do not wake up”, commented the unknown author of this memoir, “with this form of warfare that they are

¹⁰¹ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95v. Cf. E. Villa, *Il bombardamento di Genova nel 1684 e la letteratura del tempo*, in *Il bombardamento di Genova*, cit., p. 90.

¹⁰² AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95v.

¹⁰³ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 40-6. Cf. Dellepiane, *Mura e fortificazioni di Genova*, cit., p. 204.

¹⁰⁴ The Spanish garrison rescued many religious and the treasure of the *Banco di San Giorgio*, which was transferred to the *Albergo dei Poveri* (where the War Council had also installed itself). Cf. Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 38-46.

¹⁰⁵ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95v. See also Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 37-48.

¹⁰⁶ AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95v.

¹⁰⁷ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit., pp. 44-6.

maintaining, the French will soon make themselves lords of all Italy”¹⁰⁸. It was an entirely *different* war, never before so *deadly*, a *diabolical* war, actually, which raged on cities and defenceless civilians, evidently conceived by “a Heretic”¹⁰⁹. Indeed, over those very difficult eleven days, the Genoese also resorted to the weapons of faith and devotion, as witnessed by the *ex-voto* that are still preserved in Santa Maria di Castello¹¹⁰. This was an aspect that the anonymous writer of this memoir was not oblivious to, and not wanting to omit this bizarre detail, he wrote “the people report that, because of the explosion of these bombs, some superstitious writings have been penned, whereby, in various places, the balls that were launched by the cannons against the enemy have been blessed”¹¹¹.

4. Conclusions

The final act in the French campaign against Genoa was the concession of an audience at Versailles in May 1685 to a sizeable delegation of Genoese representatives led by doge Francesco Maria Imperiale Lercari and four senators. The Republic of Genoa, that is, consented to an act of “dignified humiliation” before Louis XIV, to a provisional “submission” which allowed the French to parade as victors and make a show of their “might” and “prestige”¹¹², as well as of great “clemency” in granting their enemy “pardon”¹¹³. The Genoese government accepted the terms of the peace treaty they were offered, which included the disarmament of the four *galee di libertà* and effectively entailed the definitive end of the “symbiosis” between Genoa and Spain¹¹⁴. At the same time, this epilogue did not spell the beginning of a French protectorate over Genoa. The Republic

¹⁰⁸ “Se li Principi Italiani non si svegliano, con questa forma che tengono i Francesi di guerreggiare, si renderanno in breve Padroni di essa”, AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95v.

¹⁰⁹ “For first they burnt and destroyed the Ducal Palace, the Monasteries, the hospices and the Churches, so that the poor Nuns were dispersed in the villas”, Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Dellepiane, *Mura e fortificazioni di Genova*, cit., p. 203.

¹¹¹ “Non si tralascia di dire che dal volgo vien riferito che per scopiar di dette Bombe, vi si ritrovano alcuni scritti di superstitione, per il che, in vari posti si sono benedette le palle che con i Canonici si tirano al nemico”, AAV, Misc. Arm. I, Vol. 153, *Cronaca del bombardamento*, fol. 95v.

¹¹² Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit. (*Genova-Versailles e ritorno and Dieci anni dopo*).

¹¹³ Rotta, *Introduzione*, cit., p. 14.

¹¹⁴ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit. (*Genova-Versailles e ritorno and Dieci anni dopo*). Cf. T.A. Kirk, *La crisi del 1654 come indicatore del nuovo equilibrio mediterraneo*, in M. Herrero Sánchez, Y.R. Ben Yessaf Garfia, C. Bitossi, D. Puncuh (coords.), *Génova*

ostensibly took a course of neutrality, though a clear tendency to defer to the French did prevail (the doge who came to be elected in 1685 was, notably, the staunchly pro-French Pietro Durazzo)¹¹⁵. Genoa, that is, cut out for itself a role as key “logistical hub” within Mediterranean Europe; it continued to be a State endowed with “high-quality armaments”, and, most importantly, never ceased to be a pivotal financial market. French bombs may well have “ruined [Genoese] *palazzi* but left their coffers intact”¹¹⁶. More precisely, the losses incurred by the *Casa di San Giorgio*, as the principal financial institution of the republic, and the Genoese oligarchs essentially came under two headings: the cost of the 1672 “defensive war” against Charles Emmanuel II, duke of Savoy, and the damages to private housing caused by the bombardment in 1684:

The proceeds of *gabelle* collected by the *Compere* [di *San Giorgio*] had fallen from 1,180,000 *lire di numerato* [money of account] in 1683 [...] to 925,400 the following year. And the same yield is recorded in the final balance for the year 1685. Clearly, fear, mass evacuations, and general impoverishment had impacted on consumption. Declining yields, in turn, affected [...] rates of interest paid on *shares of the debt* [...]; and only as of 1691 did *San Giorgio* go back to making payments higher than two *lire* and ten or twelve *soldi*¹¹⁷.

However, Carlo Bitossi concludes, once the bombardment was over, it would only be a matter of a few years before delegates of the Emperor and the Most Christian King sought to outdo each other in securing the services of Genoese financiers. By that stage, the French had fully shed all arrogance, as the Grand Alliance (1689-97) severely put the Sun King’s armies to the test and France entered its *années de misère*, when military defeats coupled with famine and epidemics. But the Genoese, for their own part, finally learnt how lending to the French crown was

y la Monarquía Hispánica, 1528-1713, “Atti della Società ligure di storia patria”, LI, no. 1, 2011, pp. 527-38.

¹¹⁵ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit. (*Genova-Versailles e ritorno*). Cf. O. Pastine, *Genova e l’Impero Ottomano nel secolo XVII*, in “Atti della Società ligure di storia patria”, LXXIII, 1952, p. 6; V. Vitale, *La diplomazia genovese*, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, Milano 1941, p. 10; C. Costantini, *La ricerca di un’identità repubblicana nella Genova del primo Seicento*, in “Miscellanea Storica Ligure”, VII, no. 2, 1975, pp. 9-74.

¹¹⁶ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit. (*Dieci anni dopo*).

¹¹⁷ G. Giaccherio, *I Genovesi riemergono dopo il bombardamento*, in *Il bombardamento di Genova*, cit., pp. 128-9. See also Id., *Il Seicento e le Compere di San Giorgio*, Sagep, Genova 1979, pp. 676-8.

by no means “a bad deal”, when they could bargain interest on loans of up to 7.15 percent – a rate the *Monarquía* had not been able to sustain for several decades¹¹⁸.

The bombardment of Genoa, we might say, ended the long season that had begun with the disastrous Habsburg bankruptcy of 1627. From that point on, year upon year, the Genoese ruling class had grown dissatisfied with the political, military, and financial alliance with the Spanish which had once, under Andrea Doria, been the premise for the modernisation of the Republic. Now came “a period of renewed vitality” for Genoa, and new attempts were made to revive its navy for both commercial and military use¹¹⁹. In the long-standing debate that ran through most of the 16th and 17th centuries, from the time of Paolo Foglietta to the mid sixteenth-century *navalists*, out of the several grounds given for rearmament (in answer to military demands, as a check upon privateer raids, to resume trade with the Levant, as a means to become independent of Spanish tutelage, etc.), what finally prevailed was the original “aspiration to restore Genoa to leadership in the great scheme of merchant shipping”, which translated into the design involved to equip a new “squadron of vessels”, armed, that would operate at the service of a “great merchant navy”¹²⁰. On this point, it seems, *navalists* and *anti-navalists* had in effect agreed all along: the considerable costs of rearmament could be neither met nor justified in the absence of immediate financial gains, whether through trade (as championed by even the *anti-navalist* Andrea Spinola) or the proceeds of privateering campaigns against the *Infidel*. As Giovanni Bernardo Veneroso, who spearheaded the campaign for the Republic’s involvement in the War of Candia (1645–69), wrote, the Genoese ought to set their aims on the “returns from Armament” (which had made their forbears rich, trading in the Eastern Mediterranean). “Goods” and “Armadas” were to be understood as the two sides of one coin¹²¹. There is a sense in which the intellectual and political makeup of Veneroso, as well as his personal biography, sum up the themes discussed in this article: formerly a galley captain (and later diplomat, senator, and governor of Corsica), Veneroso printed *Genio ligure risvegliato* in 1650, a work run through

¹¹⁸ Bitossi, 1684. *La Repubblica sfida il Re Sole*, cit. (*Dieci anni dopo*).

¹¹⁹ Pastine, *Genova e l’Impero Ottomano*, cit., p. 6.

¹²⁰ Costantini, *Aspetti della politica navale genovese nel Seicento*, cit., pp. 207, 224–5.

¹²¹ G.B. Veneroso, *Genio ligure risvegliato. Discorso di Gio. Bernardo Veneroso, nobile genovese*, Gio. Domenico Peri, Genova 1650, pp. 4, 16–8, 25–46.

by a firm conviction that the Republic could once again emerge as a great naval power, as it had been in the Middle Ages [...]. Far from seeing themselves as peaceable merchants, [...] the Genoese cast themselves as a warrior breed [...] for the most part victorious. This celebrative revival of alleged origins as a belligerent people was [...] instrumental to designs to transform [...] the city from a centre of finance to its former state of trading centre and maritime hub¹²².

Finally, as for the sustainability of the costs of rearming the navy, which supplied *anti-navalists* with one of their strongest arguments (though the money was, in fact, raised through a mix of extraordinary funding and private capital, without the involvement of the Bank of Saint George, which, if anything, subsidised the merchant navy),¹²³ Veneroso, who personally and generously backed public armament, was in favour of a special tax on luxury goods and services, such as carriages, theatre-going, and games – those “vices”, that is, Andrea Spinola had also been vocal in deprecating¹²⁴.

While politically divided along several fault lines (*old vs. new nobles*, *navalists vs. anti-navalists*, *pro-Spanish vs. pro-French*), on the whole, the Genoese ruling class adhered to strong pragmatist principles. They were fully aware that Genoa was, essentially, a *small State* which was destined to remain so, and should not think of aspiring to a public fleet that could compete militarily with the greater contenders on the Mediterranean; they also clearly understood the art of warfare would go on changing on both land and sea, and this meant levelling up by at least taking the adequate countermeasures (a point even Andrea Spinola eventually conceded). Besides, the Genoese had significantly contributed to Spanish military development in several other capacities than as mere financiers. The bombardment of Genoa is an event neither Spinola nor Veneroso

¹²² Bitossi, *Il Genio ligure risvegliato*, cit., p. 82.

¹²³ Besides, “a substantial proportion of the revenue of the Camera and Casa di San Giorgio” came from trade and port traffic, C. Costantini, *L’istituzione del porto franco genovese delle merci*, in “Miscellanea Storica Ligure”, IV, 1966, p. 99. See also G. Felloni, *1407. La fondazione del Banco di San Giorgio*, Laterza, 2010; Costantini, *Aspetti della politica navale genovese nel Seicento*, cit., pp. 207, 224-5; S. Subrahmanyam, *On the Significance of Gadhies. The Genoese East India Company of the 1640s*, in “The Journal of European Economic History”, XVII, no. 3, 1988, pp. 559-81; Zappia, *Il miraggio del Levante*, cit., pp. 13, 123-4; C. Brilli, *Coping with Iberian Monopolies. Genoese Trade Networks and Formal Institutions in Spain and Portugal during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*, in “European Review of History”, III, 2016, pp. 456-85.

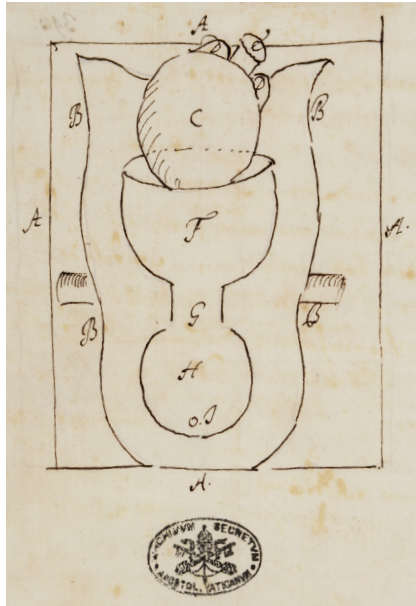
¹²⁴ Veneroso, *Genio ligure risvegliato*, cit., pp. 7, 20-3, 32. Cf. BUG, ms. B.VIII.25, *Carrozze and Cuochi*; ms. B.VIII.27, *Lettiche*; Bitossi, *Introduzione*, cit., pp. 10-64.

lived to witness, though both had foreseen the risk of such an occurrence. In the longer view, however, the bombardment opened up opportunities that brought Genoa to a turning point, as the city freed itself from the bind of the Spanish protectorate and came into the orbit of France, which for decades had been the object of interest of many among the *new* families, most of which were also *navalists* (chief among them, Della Torre, Giustiniani, and Durazzo).

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Figure 1. AAV, Fondo Carpegna, vol. 38, fol. 407v (new numeration).



Caption

A = "Lastra quadra di Bronzo alta 2/3 dove si appoggia sopra il mortaro".

Bronze plate, 2/3 thick, onto which the mortar is placed

B = "Cassa del mortaro";
Mortar crate

C = "Balla in peso libbre 500, e ve sono anche delle più grosse e più piccole vuote consistente sopra libbre 50 polvere arteficiata incendiaria grossa dite 3 o 4 de ferro alchimiato".
Hollow iron shell weighing 500 librae (both smaller and larger ones also in use).

The shell is 3-4 fingers thick and contains 50 librae of incendiary powder

D = "Manichi della Balla".
Mortar ball grips

E = "Bocca della Balla, dove per una spoletta, o sia Topaccietto forato con un soffanello di polvere sino a Centro a tempo prefisso schioppo la balla";
Firing muzzle from which, by means of a detonator or hollow cylinder and a sulphur match, positioned at the centre, the ball is fired at the desired moment

F = "Mortaro consistente la Balla";
Mortar holding the ball

G = "Topaccio che spinge la balla";
Ignition fuse that propels the ball

H = "Casa della polvere dove vi anderanno da libbre 30 polvere";
Powder crate (capacity ca 30 librae)

I = "Focone dello sbaro";
Touch hole for firing

"Poi tutto il mortaio si concatena con la lastra per sodezza"
The mortar is then fastened to its supporting plate for stability