

## A COMPLEX DIPLOMATIC MISSION. LEONARDO DONÀ AT THE SPANISH COURT OF PHILIP II (1570-1573)

### Resumen

El presente artículo de investigación analiza mediante una metodología cualitativa la etapa entre 1570 y 1573, cuando Leonardo Donà fue embajador de la Serenissima en la corte de Felipe II. En Madrid, el futuro Doge llevó a cabo una acción diplomática delicada y compleja. La duración de su embajada coincidió exactamente con los años de la guerra de Chipre y las circunstancias de su misión gravitaron en la órbita de esos eventos. En los tres años que pasó en la corte mantuvo relaciones constantes con el Soberano y su *entourage*. Entre la constitución de la Liga Santa, la batalla de Lepanto y la paz estipulada por Venecia con el Imperio Otomano sin el conocimiento de los “confederados”, Leonardo Donà ejerció su misión diplomática de manera ejemplar: colocó los intereses de la Serenissima antes de cualquier consideración de naturaleza personal y, con prudencia y astucia, pudo enfrentar la difícil misión de justificar a Filippo II la paz estipulada entre Venecia y la Sublime Puerta. La correspondencia del embajador veneciano de Madrid y dirigida al Senado veneciano está llena de consideraciones políticas de alto valor moral, inspiradas en un alto sentido del deber hacia el Signoria y, sobre todo, dictadas por un conocimiento refinado del arte de la diplomacia. Donà permaneció en Madrid hasta el 17 de septiembre de 1573.

### Palabras clave

Leonardo Donà, Misión diplomática, Felipe II, Corte Española, Liga Santa, Imperio Otomano.

### Abstract

This research article studies through a qualitative methodology perspective the period between 1570 and 1573, when Leonardo Donà was ambassador of the Serenissima to the court of Philip II. In Madrid, the future Doge carried out a delicate and complex diplomatic assignment. The duration of his ambassadorship coincided exactly with the years of the Cyprus War and the circumstances of his mission all gravitated into the orbit of those events. In the three years he spent at the court he maintained constant relations with the sovereign and his entourage. Between the formation of the Holy League, the battle of Lepanto and the peace stipulated by Venice with the Ottoman Empire, without the knowledge of the “Confederates” Leonardo Donà exercised his diplomatic mission in an exemplary manner: he put the interests of the Serenissima before any personal considerations and, with prudence and shrewdness, he was able to face the difficult mission of justifying to Philip II the peace reached between Venice and the Sublime Porte. The correspondence of the Venetian ambassador from Madrid addressed to the Venetian Senate is full of political considerations of high moral value, inspired by a high sense of duty towards the Signoria and, above all, guided by a refined knowledge of the art of diplomacy. Donà remained in Madrid until September 17th 1573.

### Keywords

Leonardo Donà, Diplomatic Mission, Philip II, Spanish Court, Holy League, Ottoman Empire.

**Reference:** Pingaro, C. (2019). A Complex Diplomatic Mission. Leonardo Donà at the Spanish Court of Philip II (1570-1573). *Cultura Latinoamericana*. 30 (2), pp. 268-310. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14718/CulturaLatinoam.2019.30.2.12>

# UNA COMPLEJA MISIÓN DIPLOMÁTICA. LEONARDO DONÀ EN LA CORTE ESPAÑOLA DE FILIPO II (1570-1573)

*Claudia Pingaro\**  
*Università degli Studi di Salerno*

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14718/CulturaLatinoam.2019.30.2.12>

## 1. United and guaranteed with Philip II

In 1559 the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis defined the agreements that brought the conflict between the Habsburgs and France to an end. The treaty defined the new European balances and, moreover, highlighted the political weakness of the Italian states, recognizing an undisputed protagonism on the international political scene of the Habsburg dynasty, in its two branches, Spanish and Austrian. The Republic of Venice remained the only Italian political reality that managed to preserve relative autonomy thanks to its role in the Mediterranean and its ability to contain the Turk danger.

However, faced with the leadership of the powerful Western Empire<sup>1</sup>, the Serenissima could only diminish its role on the European

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\* Ph.D. in Mediterranean European History from Antiquity to Contemporary Age from the Università degli Studi della Basilicata. Post-doctorate of the Università degli Studi di Salerno and the Università della Basilicata, she is author of several articles and monographs, and has participated as a speaker in numerous congresses. Her lines of research concern the political, diplomatic and institutional history of Southern Italy and Europe in the Modern Age. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000000259306560>. E-mail: [cpingaro@unisa.it](mailto:cpingaro@unisa.it)

This article is a result of a research project developed at the Università degli Studi di Salerno.

Fecha de recepción: 30 de julio de 2019; fecha de aceptación: 30 de agosto de 2019.

1. Abbreviations: AGS = Archivo General de Simancas; E = Estado; L = Legajo; PR = Patronato Real; SAV = State Archives of Venice; MNL = Marciana National Library, Venice; ms = manuscript; r = recto; v = verso; s = sheet; ss = sheets.

Allow me to express my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Lidia Oliva, my special linguistic consultant. On the role and function of the Spanish monarchy between 16th and 17th century, Molas Ribalta, 1992; on the relations between Europe and Philip II's imperial monarchy, Galasso, 2001, 352-356; on the balances of power in Spanish Italy, G. Signorotto, 2003, 225-240; *Martínez Millán, Fernández Conti* (eds.), 2005.



stage, realizing the powerlessness «a fronteggiare da sola il colosso spagnolo e timorosa anche di giocare, contro l'invadente presenza della Spagna, le alleanze della Francia e della lontana Inghilterra» (Preto, 1987, p. 235). In that moment in history, Madrid was the centre of an “imperial system” (Elliott, 1982 e 2017; Musi, 2013) and –as claimed by Bennassar (2004, p. 16)– «sin ningún género de dudas, España es entonces, en el plano político y militar, una potencia mundial y solamente el Imperio otomano, su gran rival en el Mediterráneo, puede comparársele». While recognizing the effective role of Spain in the West (Galasso, 2004), Venice was not at all willing to end the relations with the Porte (Pingaro, 2018). Only when it became clear that the setting up of a powerful Turkish fleet was actually needed to take possession of Cyprus (Orhonlu, 1971, pp. 91-103; Hill, 1972; Gaziolu, 1990; DüNDAR, 2000, pp. 259-274; Hadjidemetriou, 2002; Costantini, 2009; Korrè, 2015, pp. 197-209)., did Venice begin to consider a possible alliance with Spain. The control of the geographical space on which the possessions of the *Stato da Mar* traditionally insisted was at stake. If in the West the Republic necessarily had to take the Spanish imperial complex into consideration, towards the East it continued to cultivate its relations with the Ottoman Porte, alternating, in an articulated and contradictory framework, periods of war and peace with Constantinople and maintaining commercial and diplomatic relations with it.

When Selim II (1566-1574) resumed the project of expansion towards the West with the intention of occupying Cyprus, Venice was unable to stop the Ottoman advance and Europe became aware, in the light of the unstoppable enemy offensive in the heart of the Mediterranean, of the necessity to intervene. «Per indebolire la potenza del Governo veneziano [...] Selim II, imperatore de' Turchi decise di conquistare l'isola di Cipro da quasi un secolo soggetta a Venezia ed avanguardia de' suoi possedimenti in Levante» (Cogo, 1899, p. 4) starting a war that abruptly interrupted the peace between the two States.

The most authoritative historiographic observation (Cozzi, 1992, pp. 3-200) attributed the responsibility for the Cyprus War to the expansionist desire of Selim II and his powerful Jewish favourite Jossèf Nassi, considered by the Venetians the creator, to the detriment of the Republic, of an international network of spies. In reality, what was considered as a “declaration of war” sent to Venice on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1570 by çavuş Kubad, who brought with him the ultimatum of the Sultan for the sale of Cyprus, concealed other reasons that pushed the Ottoman Empire towards the conflict. As Maria Pia Pedani stated,



the Empire showed signs of intolerance towards the Republic because it did not stop building castles and villages in Dalmatia, beyond the border lines of the territories that had been attributed to it by the previous peace agreements (Pedani, 1994, p. 162).

Another instability factor was the regular use of the island of Cyprus by pirate ships as a base for supplies and for attacking the Ottoman ships in transit on the Alexandria-Constantinople route. «Secondo il pensiero ottomano, alla base del conflitto – clarifies Pedani (2004, p. 288) – non vi erano dunque questioni personalistiche, bensì precise ragioni geo-politiche». If Cyprus had not been acquired by the Ottoman territorial heritage, therefore, it would have represented a persistent threat to the security of the Empire and the island would have turned into a logistical base of dangerous corsairs. Cyprus's strategic position – and its status as a Christian enclave – made it more attractive to the Ottomans who, by conquering it, would have precluded the pirate ships the possibility of anchoring and supplying, thus ensuring safe navigation in the Mediterranean. In the area of the *Mare Nostrum* –especially in the second half of the 16th century– pirate actions had become more and more audacious and the Christian fleets responded to this aggressiveness with equal military commitment. The consequence of those raids and of those continuous clashes determined a progressive impoverishment of the populations and the cereal crisis enveloped the Mediterranean region.

If since the Middle Ages the Near East had supplied Europe with its grains, in the second half of the sixteenth century «si ebbero una serie di proibizioni all'esportazione di tale prodotto da parte ottomana [...] volte a privilegiare i rifornimenti interni ormai appena sufficienti al fabbisogno locale» (Pedani, 2004, p. 288). In the Cyprus War, therefore, both geo-strategic and markedly economic reasons converged. And from this point of view, as it will be seen later, the Ottoman conquest of Cyprus forced Venice to turn elsewhere to secure the supplies of grains necessary for the Republic. The pretext used by Selim to start the real war with Venice came when Maltese pirates, refugees in the port of Cyprus, arrived in Venice «catturarono un carico di piastre, che da Alessandria veleggiava verso Costantinopoli», and the Sultan, on 13th January 1570, ordered «che tutte le navi veneziane che, per ragioni di commercio, si trovavano nell'isola, fossero sequestrate, che l'ambasciatore Marcantonio Barbaro fosse arrestato e, quasi ciò non bastasse, permise ai corsari di molestare e di far preda in mare sulle galee di Venezia» (Cogo, 1899, pp. 4-5).

The exhausting siege of Famagusta (22nd August 1570 - 4th Au-



gust 1571) allowed the Turks to definitively take possession of the island and foreshadowed in Europe a further advance of the “infidels in the Mediterranean. All this contributed to the awakening, in the West, of a renewed spirit of Christian crusade and to face the common enemy that ruled in the Mediterranean, a Holy League<sup>2</sup> would bring together Venice and other smaller states (Malta with its knights, the Republic of Genoa, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the Duchy of Urbino, the Duchy of Parma, the Republic of Lucca, the Duchy of Ferrara, the Duchy of Mantua and the Duchy of Savoy) under the leadership of Philip II (Lieutenants, 1995, pp. 109-123; Kamen, 1997; Gattoni, 1999, pp. 611-650) and under the protective wing of Pope Pius V Ghislieri (1566-1572)<sup>3</sup>. The year before the League was officially constituted, the Spanish ambassador in Genoa, Diego Guzmán de Silva (1520-1577)<sup>4</sup>, on 8th February 1570, reporting to Philip II (Spagnoletti, 2018) on the Cyprus affair, supported the need to defend the Venetian cause and, possibly, to establish a concrete alliance with the Republic. From a conversation held in Genoa with the «hijo del Consul de Venecia que está en esta ciudad» (AGS, E, L, 1399, s. 1 r), the Spanish diplomat received information coming from Constantinople, according to which

se dezia que en breve vendria otro Chauz a pedirles aquella Isla. [...] Y alargandose en la platica mas conmigo, me vino a tocar en que seria cosa que estaria muy bien a su Republica hazer estrecha liga con Vuestra Majestad para contra este enemigo [...]. Y que tenia por cierto, que quando se propusi ese a Vuestra Majestad les mostraria el afiçion, que tiene a sus cosas en particular y al bien comun dela Christiandad, aconsejandole, que si se oviese de tratar dello en algun tiempo, que quanto mas presto fuese seria mejor. Bien creo, que si los apretase el Turco vendrian por sus fines en algun medio (AGS, E, L, 1399, s. 1 r-v).

As a result of what was happening in the Mediterranean, Venice was forced to reconsider the prerogatives that over time had made it the protagonist of a diplomacy swinging between the image of privileged partner of the Porte and, at the same time, bulwark of Western

2. AGS, PR, L. 17, *Capitulación de la Santa Liga contra la armada del Turco*, ss. 50-59. Specific aspects of the agreement between the “confederati” are dealt with in the two volumes of Serrano, 1918-1919.

3. Guasco, Torre (eds.), 2005; Gattoni, 2006; Cervini, Spantigati (eds.), 2006; for a general overview of the scene in which the Pope acted, see Prospero, 1986, pp. 175-211.

4. On diplomatic functions, the nature of ambassadors and the role of courts in the early Modern Age, Mattingly, 1955, pp. 209-295. About the Spanish Ambassadors, Levin, 2005.



Christianity. Finally, in 1571, the Signoria entered the Holy League. From that moment on, despite the commercial past and the preferential economic relations with Constantinople, a political strategy began to emerge: this favoured both the emergence of a wide range of commonplaces on the Ottoman world and the dissemination of news concerning the spectre of Turk danger to Western Christianity. It was a precise political plan that took concrete form primarily in the change in relations between Venice and the Sublime Porte, favouring the contingencies that forced the Serenissima Republic to come closer to the united Western powers and guaranteed by Philip II. The change in strategy was clarified, moreover, in a passage from the Report read in the Venetian Senate in February 1571 by Sigismondo Cavalli (1530-1579), Ambassador of the Republic to the Spanish Sovereign from 1566 to 1569:

dirò di aver compreso che il re si trova assai ben soddisfatto di questa Serenissima Repubblica, poiché vede che tutte le sue azioni sono piene di rispetto e riverenza verso di lui, e che il proceder che usa Vostra Serenità<sup>5</sup> non va a cammino di dar disturbo o impedimento a' suoi pensieri. Vero è che stava con qualche ombra, e gli dispiaceva la bontà ed amicizia che lui credeva che s'avesse coi Turchi, parendogli che di loro si facesse più stima che di tutti i principi cristiani insieme e che con troppa intrinsechezza si conservasse la pace che con quelli s'aveva. Per il che ho dovuto usare con Sua Maestà, ma più con i ministri, diversi ufficj [...] per giustificar questo fatto e farli capaci dei rispetti che movevano Vostra Serenità ad usar a' Turchi qualche apparente dimostrazione, per causa della loro gran potenza e dei molti e lunghi confini che seco s'avea, e non per buona volontà che lor fosse portata; e che quando fosse stato tempo, questo Stato averia mostrato che animo veramente teneva verso loro, e quanto era pronto al servizio di Dio e al beneficio della cristianità<sup>6</sup>.

With the inclusion in the Holy League, any doubt regarding the fidelity of Venice to the Christian cause seemed to have been dispelled. But even before the Republic joined the League, the ties between the lagoon city and Constantinople were controversial. On 24th May 1570, exactly one year before the agreements of the Holy League were sanctioned, Guzmán de Silva wrote to Philip II addressing the perplexities raised both by Guidobaldo II Della Rovere (1514-1574) and

5. Alvise I Mocenigo (1570-1577), successor of Pietro Loredan (1567-1570) since May 1570.

6. «Relazione di Spagna di Sigismondo Cavalli. 1570», in Albèri, 1861, pp. 190-191.



by Cardinal Antoine Perrenot de Granvelle (1517-1586)<sup>7</sup> about the reliability of Venice's involvement in the Christian blockade against the Turk:

El Duque de Urbino me escrivò a los 18 deste, que avia alguna opinion o esperanza que se podrian venecianos acordar con el Turco, el qual habia comenzado a tratar bien su Baylo, y a dar libertad a los mercadores y a sus mercançias, los quales antes detenidos, y que pareçia, que el Rey de Francia se queria meter por medio a hazer esta concordia, y que se avia offrecido a ello, que seria ocasion, de hazer los entrar en alguna esperanza, pero que todavia no dexavan de armar con toda diligencia, estando atentos a las provisiones necessarias para la guerra. Este mesmo aviso del Duque de Urbino me escribe el Cardinal de Granvela, que le davan de Venecia, y que el Embaxador del Rey de Francia avia offrecido, que su Rey se meteria por medio de buena gana para concertar con el Turco, pero que entendia, que habia quedado descontentos deste officio, que el embaxador hazia (AGS, E, L 1399, 48, s. 99).

Although the alliances were defined between 1570 and 1571, it was by no means certain that Venice would interrupt its relations with Constantinople. The French mediation, too, appeared to be worrying «para concertar con el Turco» so much so that Guzmán de Silva sent to his Sovereign an encrypted assertion which, when interpreted, was equivalent to «es de creer que ninguna ocasión perderán franceses por hacer más» (AGS, E, L 1399, 48, s. 99), clarifying that France would not spare aid to the Ottoman Empire<sup>8</sup>. However, the pact concluded by the Holy League to confront the Turk danger, as it is known, bore fruit on 7th October 1571 in Lepanto<sup>9</sup> where Don John of Austria (1547-1578), Philip II's brother, in command of the Christian fleet, inflicted a heavy defeat on the Ottoman Empire, which lost more than thirty thousand men, was deprived of more than a hundred ships and saw about twelve thousand Christian slaves released. As Braudel said, in Lepanto «l'incanto della potenza turca fu infranto» (Braudel, 1976, p. 1166). Venice was informed in this way of the outcome of the battle:

7. The diplomatic correspondence of the cardinal was collected, at the end of the 19th century, in a ponderous work edited by Piot and Poulet, 1887-1896. On the role of the cardinal in Spanish politics see Legnani, 2013; and Musi, 2013, pp. 67 and following.

8. Braudel, 1976<sup>2</sup>, «Il fattore diplomatico francese», vol. II, pp. 1170-1174.

9. The literature on the Battle of Lepanto is very extensive. It has been the object of numerous publications, from the initial "accounts" and "reports" published soon after the event to the latest research. Among the many volumes dedicated to the memorable battle, see Beeching, 1982; Canosa, 2000; H. Bicheno, 2003; Rivero Rodriguez, 2008; Barbero, 2010; Capponi, 2010.





La nova della Vittoria, ottenuta ai Curzolari sotto li VII del sopradetto mese di Ottobre 1571 contra Turchi, fu portata dal Magnifico Onfrè Giustiniano Governator di Galea il giorno XIX di detto mese, il quale giunto nel porto di Venezia, et dentro de i lidi fece sparando tutta l'artellaria, et suonando molti strumenti, segno di suprema allegrezza, havendo anco fatto vestir, e soldati, e ufficiali, e galeoti delle spoglie, ei parava la galea dell'armi, et insegne de' nemici, strassinando molte di esse bandiere per acqua<sup>10</sup>.

Being informed of the «gran vittoria», the «gran numero di Popolo che era corso alle rive» was taken by «gran meraviglia» and «consolazione» (SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, sec. XVI-1797, I, ss. XLI). The Venetian Senate, in an atmosphere of general euphoria, established the ways to celebrate the event. On 19th October 1571, in fact, the constitutional organ of the Republic deliberated that

niuna cosa più conviene al Principe veramente Christiano, che il riconoscere dalla onnipossentissima mano del Signor Dio ogni vittoria, et felicità, et perciò in spiritu humilitatis, et in corde contrito deve render gratie a sua divina Maestà, et se in alcun tempo è stato conveniente far questo, è si presente, che l'infinita misericordia del Signor Dio si è degnata donar alla Christianità, et particolarmente alla Repubblica nostra, così segnalata vittoria pero dovendosi far quelle demonstrationi, che in così importante occasione sono debite<sup>11</sup>.

The enthusiasm for the victory had pervaded the Christian spirit of Venice and, at that point, the Senate recognized Philip II's undisputed role as leader and defender of the Christian West against the "infidel" enemy. The Patriarch of Venice John Trevisan (1560-1590) should have ordered «a tutti li Piovani delle Contrade di questa città, et alli monasterij de frati, et Monache, che debbano far oratione al signor Dio ringratiando sua divina Maestà de così segnalata vittoria, facendo publiche processioni il Mercore, Venere, et Sabato della Settimana futura, et la Domenica sussequente» (SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, cit., s. XL r) also encouraging the people to follow the religious services as

10. SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, sec. XVI-1797, I, ss. XL-XLI, *Come capitò in questa città la nova della vittoria contra Turchi, et molti altri particolari*, s. XL v. About the Venetian Ceremonial, see Casini, 1997, pp. 107-160.

11. SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, sec. XVI-1797, I, *Ordine di far processione per la vittoria bavuta contra Turchi et che si vada ogn'anno a 7 d'ottobre a Santa Giustina*, M. D. LXXI Die XIX Ottobre in Pregadi, s. XL r.





a sign of gratitude. Guzmán de Silva –who had come from Genoa to Venice<sup>12</sup>– took part in the solemn celebrations in San Marco, where

al serenissimo Principe Alvisè Mocenigo presentate le lettere dell'Ill. mo General Veniero et nonciata la ricevuta gratia del sommo Eterno Dio, diede Sua Serenità subito ordine che fussero suonate le campane di San Marco di alerezza; et nel tempo medesimo con l'Eccellentissimo Collegio discese alla Chiesa di San Marco; nella quale giunse poco dapoi il Reverendissimo Signor Don Diego Guzman, Ambasciator della Maestà del Re Catolico, et fu dalla sua sublimità, et da detto Reverendissimo Ambasciatore intonato il TE DEUM (SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, cit., s. XLI r).

The celebrations continued for several days, always in the presence of the Spanish ambassador who, representing his King, used the same gestures and «s'entoure du même apparat» (Bély, 2007, p. 52) to demonstrate the power of his State and to receive the honours attributed to Spain for the naval victory of Lepanto, in the general celebration, among the highest city authorities and the conspicuous popular participation<sup>13</sup>. In the 16th century, in fact, the importance of the figure and role of the ambassador took on considerable relevance as an expression of sovereign power and, starting with the volume *De officio Legati* by Étienne Dolet published in Lyon in 1541, started a tradition of writings that proposed a series of “guides” to practice the art of diplomacy. The model that emerged from the pen of Dolet –educated in Padua, in close contact with some of the major protagonists of the Renaissance including Bembo, Pomponazzi and Pole– was a reworking of the author's personal experience as secretary of the Venetian legation of Jean de Langeac. Despite the fact that the work was pervaded by an inevitable clientelary rhetoric about some of his contemporary ambassadors, Dolet's considerations constituted the key to humanistic culture in which a circumscribed pedagogical design contributed «alla definizione, entro la sfera politica, di precise identità professionali ancorate alla gestione del discorso, scritto e orale, pubblico e cancelleresco, cortigiano e propagandistico» (Frigò, 2015, p. 236). The arts of oratory and rhetoric were placed at the service of power by

12.The appointment as ambassador to Venice had already been issued by the Secretary of State Antonio Pérez in Madrid on 26 November 1569 (AGS, E, L 1398, 267, s. 508) but in the meantime de Silva had remained in Genoa waiting for the new envoy to arrive. Doge Alvisè I Mocenigo had received communications from Madrid about the new Spanish resident (AGS, E, L 1401, 267, s. 532).

13.On Venetian rituals, on the dynamics of identity deriving from the celebratory representations in the city space and «based upon a broad consensus about social values», Muir, 1981, p. 5.



men of letters to strengthen the qualities of their office and to qualify the effectiveness of their political action. If the mission of the perfect ambassador consisted in promoting, moving, advocating for causes, attending public celebrations, in Venice Guzmán de Silva exercised his office to perfection:

Alli XXI andò il Principe con la Signoria, et con l'Ambasciatore del Principe in Chiesa dove si celebrò la messa del Spirito Santo, cantata dal Reverendissimo Ambasciatore della Catolica Maestà, et fu fatta una solennissima processione d'intorno alla Piazza con il corpo di Nostro Signore, portato inanzi a sua Signoria sotto l'ombrela del sopradetto Reverendissimo Ambasciatore (SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, cit., s. XLI r).

Venice was celebrating a renewed Christian harmony and a partnership with Philip II, who would soon begin to show the first signs of weakness, as will be seen later, a clear indication of the changed political and economic strategies of the Serenissima Republic. However, the victory over the Turks had invigorated the spirits and, initially, it seemed that the dream of an Ottoman thalassocracy had died in Lepanto. So, immediately after the «gran vittoria», a general sense of satisfaction reigned in the city and the Doge led the ceremonial prepared to seal the triumph over the Turk. Once again «alli XXVIII discese il Ser. <sup>mo</sup> Principe, et Ill. <sup>ma</sup> Signoria con gli Ambasciatori alla Chiesa [di San Marco] dove cantata la messa dal sopradetto Reverendissimo Don Diego Guzman de Silva, si comunicò sua Sig. <sup>ria</sup> et tutto il Senato, referendo gratie a Dio di tanto gran bene» (SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, cit., s. XLI r).

And to reward those who had committed themselves to fighting in the waters of the Korcula «fu alli II di Novembre sussequenti per parte di Senato creato Cavaliere il sopradetto Magnifico Giustiniano, et fattogli dono di una catena di oro di valore de scudi trecento» (SAV, Collegio, Cerimoniale, cit., s. XLI r). To those who had fallen in battle, moreover, Paolo Paruta (1540-1598) «interprete intelligente e brillante delle tradizioni della nobiltà veneziana» (Preto, 2013<sup>2</sup>, p. 180), dedicated an intense funeral oration. The work, containing celebratory motifs that exalted Venetian courage and virtues, marked the literary debut of the author –to whom we will return later– and recognizing the strength and power of the Turks in battle, exalted the value of the Venetians. With patriotic pride, Paruta affirmed that «non hanno combattuto i nostri con alcuna vil nazione, usa a non sostener pur l'aspetto del nimico [...] ma con uomini ferocissimi e



bellicosissimi, quali i Turchi sono, di nome dianzi così terribile e di forze invitte»<sup>14</sup>.

The Venetian patrician Leonardo Donà (or Donato, 1536-1612) – future doge of the Republic from 1606 until his death– who also came from the most cultured elite and, like all Venetian diplomatic representatives was «impregnati di cultura umanistica»<sup>15</sup> (Valensi, 1989, p. 25), was appointed ambassador to the Court of Philip II – succeeding Sigismondo Cavalli– on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1569, taking charge of the office and presenting his credentials to Philip II on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1570 (Brunetti e Vitale, 1963, p. XXIV).

The period of Donà's ambassadorship coincided exactly with the years of the Cyprus War and the circumstances of his mission all gravitated in the orbit of that event. The Venetian ambassador remained at the Court of Philip II until 17<sup>th</sup> September 1573, when he left the Sovereign together with the extraordinary ambassador Giovanni Soranzo, sent to Spain by the Serenissima Republic to present the “excuses” of the Republic after the peace stipulated with the Turk in 1573. The circumstances were truly extraordinary and required the permanence at court of both Donà and Lorenzo Priuli (1538-1600) –Donà's successor, who arrived in Madrid on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1572– and the presence of Soranzo in order to conclude the problematic diplomatic question that arose after the conclusion of the Ottoman-Venetian peace. The role played by Donà in Spain –a leading political observer in sixteenth-century Europe– was undoubtedly important and took place in conjunction with significant historical events. If the questions concerning the Holy League -in its diplomatic, strategic and logistical aspects– were addressed and resolved by the Spanish, Venetian and Pontifical ambassadors and envoys congregated in Rome since June 1570 to stipulate the Capitulations, Donà had to deal with «compiti delicati ed anche di gran peso connessi allo sviluppo della vicenda della Lega» (Brunetti e Vitale, 1963, p. XXV). Fernand Braudel (*Avant-propos* in Brunetti e Vitale p. XI) wrote to the Venetian ambassador «entre dans sa trente-quatrième année quand il prend effectivement sur ses épaules [...] la lourde charge de représenter la République auprès de Philippe II» and the awareness of the difficult task connected to the uncertainty of the times probably persuaded him that «au milieu de sa vie, il ne pas plus assuré de son brillant avenir personnel que la Seigneurie elle-même ne l'est de sa fortune».

14. Paruta, «Orazione funebre. In laude de' morti alle Curzolari», in Monzani, 1852, p. 26.

15. On the cultural background of Donà, see the contribution, now a classic, by Seneca, 1959.



Donà had to deal, as it could often happen to ambassadors residing in foreign courts, with an environment which was not necessarily friendly and clear where –continues Braudel– «le Roi est “prudent”, courtois, énigmatique; ses “ministres” sont prudents comme lui, lents, énigmatiques, comme lui» (Braudel, *Avant-propos* in Brunetti e Vitale, p.XV). The diplomatic mission required to «connaître ces hommes, s’acharner à les deviner, à les considerer comme des acteurs agissant et libres, à retourner leurs cartes truquée, c’est rechercher, sinon retrouver toujours la réel, le tangible, le vrai» (Braudel, *Avant-propos* in Brunetti e Vitale p.XV), thus fulfilling the precepts of diplomatic art. Donà’s diplomatic action at the Spanish Court was unrelenting and from his arrival in 1570 he supervised to accelerate the expedition of the Spanish galleys of Giovanni Andrea Doria (1539-1606) (Savelli, 1992, pp. 361-375), or to solicit the mediation of Philip II so that the Emperor Maximilian of Hapsburg would join the League, or to define the controversial points of the Treaty that was being written in Rome among the Christian powers.

He also tried to mediate on the granting of “routes” or export licenses for grains –as it will be seen below– from the Kingdom of Naples in favour of the Venetian army. As it can be imagined, these were issues of the utmost importance and in that historical moment the Court of Philip II represented the place where strategic decisions on the future of the political-international structures were made (Musi, 2013, pp. 99-127).

When the news of the victory of Lepanto reached Madrid, the union of the Christian forces appeared to be very successful both in the eyes of the Venetian resident and in the circles of the Court. On 2<sup>nd</sup> November Donà wrote to Doge Mocenigo from the Spanish capital:

La nova della gloriosissima vittoria, che dalla benigna mano di Dio è stata concessa a tutta la cristianità, et in particolare così abbondantemente alla Serenità Vostra, e che a lej è piaciuto d’inviarmj [...] mi arrivò qui all’ultimo del mese passato, due ore dopo il mezzo giorno la prima notte della quale, così come mi riempì subito di giocondissima allegrezza, così mi fece ancora molto ben riconoscere che l’abbondantia della pietà di Dio, verso di noi, eccede non solamente i nostri meritj, ma insieme anchora le nostre medesime speranze. Onde non sapend’io, ne potendo in alcun’altra maniera renderli qualche poco di gratie, prostratomj subito con la faccia, e con la bocca per terra, laudai, benedissi e fortificaj con ogni humiltà la Divina, et inenarrabile sua misericordia (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 104 r).



On the same day Donà asked the King for an audience via the butler of the Court Pedro Fernández de Cabrera y Bobadilla Count of Chinchón and «piacque a Sua Maestà d'annettermj dentro delle Cortine del suo baldacchino et d'odirmj» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 104 r.) to describe to him the details of the victory and to share the “joy” for the common triumph. The satisfaction with the result obtained in Lepanto made Philip appear as the champion of Western Christianity –along with Pius V– but this did not exclude that the benefits of success were also reaped by the other States gathered under the banner of the Holy League and Venice was attributed an indisputable protagonism. Ambassador Donà recognized the clear signs of Spanish gratitude to the Republic in the “familiarity” granted to him by Philip, who wanted to recite the prayers «insieme con me [...] laudando la bontà di Dio di tanto favore, e rendendo infinite gratie alla Serenità Vostra di questo preclarissimo aviso e poi mi disse che il Te Deum non solamente voleva che lo dicessimo insieme ma che tutta la Capella anchora solennissimamente lo decantasse» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 104 v). And to emphasize even more the high esteem he had for the King, Leonardo Donà added that «accompagnai Sua Maestà dentro le sue stantie ragionando sempre di questo buon successo, e mi fermai etiam con lej fin'alla notte oscura, con molto suo piacere» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 104 v).

Venice and Madrid seemed to be united by an authentic bond of collaboration that on the one hand was skilfully described by the diplomatic language and on the other hand manifested itself in the courtly formalities exhibited by Philip II, in an effective and strategic game of the parties. Taking advantage of the relaxed climate and the «vivo calore [...] nel quale mi haveva posto la notitia di questa celeberrima fatione» that «mi sumministrava molto vigore» (ASV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Madrid Alli 4 di Novembre 1571, s. 105 r), the ambassador was allowed to express

a Sua Maestà con tutta la mia efficacia possibile, per eccitarla a conoscere, a bene usare quella gratia, che la misericordia di Dio ci ha concessa, ricordandoli che le più grate laudi, e le più gioconde gratie, che si possono dare a Dio, saranno il proseguir la vittoria con tutto il sforzo del suo potere, e caminar dietro quel gran lume, che la bontà di Dio inaspettatamente si ha degnato di mostrarcj per debellare l'Inimico (ASV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Madrid Alli 4 di Novembre 1571, s. 105 r).



Venice, therefore, at that time was determined to keep the commitments made with the League and, resorting to the rhetoric of the common Muslim enemy to be fought under the auspices of the “divine grace”, considered it appropriate to secure the powerful friendship with Philip II. The Republic, “united” in the Holy League, did not ignore the Habsburg supremacy in the Western Mediterranean and knew well that the “construction” of the sea route (Pacini, 2013), begun with Charles V and continued by Philip II, allowed Spain to excel politically and militarily on the European political scene of the sixteenth century. Donà had good reasons to please the Signoria, since the King seemed grateful to the Republic and declared his intention to maintain friendly and lasting relations with it. The ambassador reported that

Sua Maestà mi rispose, che ella conosceva molto bene, che tutto quello ch'io le havea detto, era verissimo, e che poichè a Dio è piaciuto di farci un beneficio tanto singulare, intendeva l'obbligo suo essere di riconoscerlo, e di seguitare questa cristiana vittoria, con tutte le forze. Onde mi prometteva con ogni certezza, che dal canto suo farà tutto quel più, che le sarà possibile, e laudava grandemente la Serenità Vostra della buona, e prudente intentione che ha di non lasciare rifar l'Inimico, ma di proseguire questo prospero corso in ognj vigore (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, cit., Madrid Alli 4 di Novembre 1571, s. 105 r - 105 v).

Venice, therefore, evoking the defense of Christianity and the defeat of the common enemy, considered inevitable –right after Lepanto– to ensure the availability of Philip II. Although at that time Spain’s willingness to support Venice seemed real<sup>16</sup>, the Serenissima would not have waited long to change its plans and, pragmatically evaluating the circumstances, would decide to move closer to the Porte.

After Lepanto, however, the art of Venetian diplomacy (Preto, 1998, pp. 151-166) took the field in Madrid and with all the skills of eloquence and oratory, Donà tried to protect the interests of the Republic and, capturing the favour of the Spanish Sovereign, he had the response: «Io stimo Ambasciatore grandemente l'amore che mi porta la Signoria, e spero che, così come siamo congiunti in questa occasione, così ancora saremo in tutte le altre» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, cit., Di Madrid, Alli 4 di Novembre 1571, s. 105 v).

16. The ambassador said: «nell'espressione che Sua Maestà mi fece di quella sua volontà, veramente che a me parve, che ella parlasse col Cuore, e con più asseverantia di quello, che ella mi habbia alcun'altra volta fatto», SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, cit., s. 105 v.



What better opportunity to plead the cause of Venice's inability to obtain grain supplies from the East as a result of the war and in distress at the shortage of cereals? For this reason, in addition to the enthusiastic tones of circumstance for the achieved naval victory in Lepanto, Donà appealed to Philip II to favour the supply of grain to Venice:

Nella materia della tratta de granj esposi a Sua Maestà tutto quello che la Serenità Vostra mi scriveva [...] e le dissi apertamente che senza la comodità delli granj, impossibil cosa sarebbe alla Serenità Vostra attendere a questa espeditione, che il bisogno delli viveri, e la fame non patiscono dilatione alcuna, che dal mancamento di essi conveniria necessariamente nascere ogni sorta di confusione. Onde la pregava a remediare con ordinj chiari e presti, che siano senza cavillationj obbeditj, et il bisogno di Vostra Serenità sostenuto (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, cit., Di Madrid, Alli 4 di Novembre 1571, ss. 105 v. 106 r).

The Sovereign reassured the Signoria that the provision of grain would be possible in Sicily and in the Kingdom of Naples and, according to the agreements reached in the capitulations of the League, Venice would not lack the support of Spain. On 6<sup>th</sup> November, Donà addressed Philip II once again and considered it certain that the Sovereign would have honoured the «negotio» relating to the supply of cereals and the general subject matter of the «tratta dei granj dalli suoi Regni di Sicilia, e di Napoli», certain that «ella haverà dato sufficiente comissione per questo bisogno». The Venetian ambassador communicated to the Sovereign the need of the Signoria to as rapidly as possible overcome the granary shortages that impended the Republic, as «si tratta della maggiore importantia di tutte le cose, che la Serenissima Signoria mi comette e raccomanda questo negotio con un'efficacia inestimabile» and only because of the seriousness of the situation «io convengo ritornare a pregare vostra Maestà, che si degnj darmi espeditione tale che i miei Signori restino sodisfattj, e li ministrj di Vostra Maestà non habbino causa di metter difficultà alcuna in liberamente concederle» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Donà a S. R. C. M., Di Madrid Alli 6 di Novembre 1571, s. 107 r). And in order to attribute the most absolute licitness to the request, Lorenzo Donà did not hesitate to recall what was established by the agreements between the states coalesced in the League and, on the basis of the most formal reasons, he declared that «la Capitulatione della Legha è tanto chiara, che non ha bisogno





d'interpretatione alcuna, e quello che si domanda, tutto è per comun beneficio dell'Impresa, e per sostentatione della nostra militia, e li granj si portano ove la Signoria ha maggior comodità di poterli ridurre in biscottj» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Donà a S. R. C. M., Di Madrid Alli 6 di Novembre 1571, s. 107 r). An utterly sober way to claim support for the troops at a time when the costs of war also affected the food supplies available to the State. Even the King knew very well that «la fame [...] non ha riparo alcuno, e senza li granj non solamente potremo dal canto nostro proseguir insieme con Vostra Maestà la Vittoria come si conviene, e come sommamente desideriamo, ma tutte le cose riceverano singular nocumento» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Donà a S. R. C. M., Di Madrid Alli 6 di Novembre 1571, ss. 107 r - 107v).

On Christmas Day 1571, an occasion which that year acquired an even more meaningful connotation for the Christian “federated”, the Venetian legacy reiterated to the King of Spain the intention of the Serenissima to pursue the interests of the League alongside all the “allies” submitting to his will:

Io certo non posso negare, che il comodo proprio della mia Patria non mi stia sempre nel Cuore, ma [...] non è minore ancora il desiderio, ch'io ho del ben comune di tutti li Christianj [...] dopo che quella perversa Casa Ottomana tiraneggia nel Mondo, il Signor Dio appresentò occasione più bella, che la presente [...] Vostra Maestà è hoggi di il specchio, e l'esempio della bontà, e della vera religione del Mondo (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Da Madrid il dì della Natività di N. S. 1571, s. 116 r).

For another year, the Venetian diplomacy would have expressed itself in the same tones and had not intimated, at least formally, the intentions of re-stitching relations with the Sublime Porte. The “intrigues” of diplomacy advised caution (Andretta, 2006) and prudence and the Lordship would put its interests –political and economic– before any obligation assumed in other places.

## 2. Men by the King, men of the King

On 1st May 1572, at the death of Pope Pius V, intransigent theologian, inquisitor and promoter of the Counter-Reformation, the League remained orphaned of its spiritual supporter and was head-



ing towards an inexorable rift. Venetian and Spanish interests clearly differed, as it has been said many times, and Gregory XIII Boncompagni (on the Chair of Peter from 1572 to 1585)<sup>17</sup>, while continuing the action of his predecessor and showing a firm will to promote the anti-Turk coalition, failed in the intent to keep alive the Holy League, formed in 1570, and –despite the political and diplomatic efforts– its final demise had to be accepted (Tamborra, 1961).

Fernand Braudel stated that the «treason» by Venice –that is the end of the treaty of peace with the Porte– took place on 7th March 1573. More than betrayal, it is preferable to speak, says the author, of the Venetian «desertion» of the union established in Rome between the Christian federated states against the Turk. In the period in which Venice was involved in the war in Cyprus, the situation of the Republic was characterized by disorganization «nel commercio, nelle industrie, nelle finanze, sfinita dalla guerra marittima, costosa più di ogni altra, torturata nella vita quotidiana dalla rarità e dal caro prezzo dei viveri [...] e le ditte dei ricchi veneziani non potevano contentarsi di un commercio indiretto con la Turchia» (Braudel, 1976<sup>2</sup>, vol II, p. 1206).

The war that had been going on for three years had not brought any substantial profit to the Republic (Brunetti, 1958, vol. II, pp. 145-156). If anything, it had suffered heavy losses, from the island of Cyprus as early as 1571, to a series of strategic outposts in the Adriatic territories. Thus, the discontent due to the heavy economic losses resulting from the current war, the divergence of interests with Spain, the need to maintain its independence from the Spanish yoke –which politically dominated much of the Italian peninsula– induced Venice to resume the preferential dialogue with the Ottoman Levant. Without foretelling the allies of the League's exit and the intention to sign a separate peace with the Turk –as established by the Roman agreements– the Serenissima acted in the conviction that it had done well, to the benefit of the State.

The news of the Peace between Venice and Costantinople «diventò argomento capitale di discussione, e il principio, che “il minor male è spezie di bene”, autorizzava a considerare la pace con il Turco [...] un male per Venezia e per la cristianità minore che la perdita di Candia e dell'Adriatico» (Cessi, 1946, vol. II, p. 128). An expected separation between Venice and the League implied for the Lordship

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17. About the relations between the Court of Madrid and the Holy See during the pontificate of Boncompagni, see Fernandez Collado, 1991.



the rethinking of its role in the political and international order of the European States. And what better place to have the measure of the political climate after the signing of the peace than the Court of Philip II, where Donà continued to carry out his diplomatic mission? A direct relationship with the centre of Spanish politics, in the presence of the Sovereign who in the West held the leadership of international politics<sup>18</sup>: and precisely for these reasons the function of Donà took on a very different aspect when he was invited to provide answers, together with Lorenzo Priuli, on the question of the “talked-about” peace between the Signoria and the Porte. A very delicate, if not complex and arduous task.

The news of the peace had arrived in Madrid on 17<sup>th</sup> April 1573:

Il corriero espeditoci dalla Serenità vostra con l'avisò inaspettatissimo qui a questo tempo della conclusione della pace, arrivò hoggi 17 del mese due hore inantj al mezzo giorno. Et noi, così per obbedire alla Serenità Vostra, che ci comette presta esecuzione, come perché ci parve, per ogni honesto rispetto, esser bene, che Sua Maestà ne havesse da noi immediata notitia, le facessimo subito domandare l'audientia [...] et ella fece rispondere non esser possibile admetterci hoggi [...] ma che comunicassimo, se così ci pareva, con alcuno delli suoi Ministrij, e che domattina poi ella procurerebbe d'odircij (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 161 r).

The *avisò* of the regained peace reached Madrid *inaspettatissimo*, the result of a decision taken in the “Homeland” and about which the Donà should have talked to Philip II. The postponement of the audience to the following morning presumably clashed with the need felt by Leonardo Donà to confer promptly with the Sovereign. This is especially true when taking into account the fact that the Venetian ambassador was «assolutamente contrario al modo di operare della Repubblica» (Brunetti e Vitale, 1963, vol. I, p. XLIV) and in open opposition both to the work of the Council of Ten (Macchi, 1864) and, in general, to the executive group that had promoted and deliberated the peace negotiations. The fracture that was to become evident at the end of the 16th century between two opposing political tendencies within the Venetian ruling class was beginning to appear. Between exponents of the city patriciate «vecchi» (for example Paolo Tiepolo) and «nuovi» (Donà or Nicolò da Ponte, to name a few) (Andretta, 2017, pp. 176-196) there was the political dialectic about the role that

18. On his political strategies, Galasso, 1995, pp. 13-40; Anatra, Manconi (eds.), 1999.



the Republic should play in the Italian and Mediterranean scene. A “generation clash” –as Gaetano Cozzi (1958, pp. 1-52) pointed out– was materializing between two different political positions, between the old and the new guard: the first tending towards the conservation and custody of political and religious orthodoxy that favoured alignment with Spanish politics; the second tending to curb the interference of rigid Spanish politics and to favour, instead, a rapprochement with France, both from the economic point of view and from the religious point of view (Preto, 1987, pp. 241- 242; id, 1994, pp. 215-238).

The political biography of Donà, his election to doge in 1606, also represented the crowning of the political choices that, in the twilight of the sixteenth century, had imposed themselves in the Venetian aristocracy<sup>19</sup>. In the peace negotiations of 1573, as Eligio Vitale stated, on the basis of a careful analysis of the sources, there seems to be no doubt that they were the result of the choices made by the Council of Ten, which ipso facto attributed paternity to them and that the management of the war, from the earliest stages, was always firmly entrusted to the decision-making power of the Ten (Brunetti and Vitale, vol. I, pp. XLV and following). At the Spanish Court, therefore, Donà, despite himself, had to try with the weapons of diplomacy to put forward the most sensible reasons to justify the peace just concluded with the Turk. Alongside the reasons he officially proposed for “justifying” Venice, the Ambassador explained, with feelings of lively participation, the «christiane» virtues, the civil and military merits, the commitment of the State, the sacrifice of many to enable the Republic to observe the precepts of the League and the devotion to the allies:

Presentatici adunque a Sua Maestà et fatta una modesta scusa della sollecitudine nostra con l'importantia di quello che havevamo a dirle, e che ben'era che ella presto sapesse, le dicessimo che dalla maniera con la quale la Serenità Vostra haveva fatto la guerra al Turco di continuo per li tre anni passatj, et dall'augumento delle forze che ella ha sempre tenuto più abondante assaj dell'obbligo della sua propria portione, poteva Sua Maestà haver chiaramente compreso quale fusse l'ardore della nostra Patria nelle trattationj della guerra, quale il desiderio non solo del nostro bene ma della christianità tutta, e quale sia stato il vigore della nostra Nobiltà con il sangue suo proprio di mantenerla. Perciò che non solamente vi haveva

19. On the role of Donà as leader of the «giovani» in the lively political-cultural and religious debate in Venice, Stella, 1986, vol. II, pp. 727-739, in particular pp. 731-732.



impiegato le forze delli suoi propri vassalli, ma haveva procurato d'haver quelle della Maestà Sua, e d'altrj, et haveva mandato in Armata 400 delli nostri Gentilhominj, accioché con il suo proprio petto valorosamente, si come si vede, che han fatto, sostenessero l'impeto dell'inimico, e diffendessero questa causa comune (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 161 v).

The feeling, however, also gave way to rational considerations that Donà, smart and sensitive politician, knew how to grasp and interpret. In reality it was a question of balancing the two levels of personal impulse and political realism and, while sacrificing his own convictions to honour the cause of the Lordship, the Ambassador admitted on the one hand the failure of the League, and on the other the risk for Venice of being deprived of all Levantine possessions:

ma, vedendo finalmente esser tanto grandi le forze dell'inimico che con tutta la lega insieme non si è potuto spuntar con lui togliendoli niente dal suo, anzi s'è perso grandemente del nostro, et vedendosi manifestamente tutti li Statj nostri di Dalmatia et di Levante arsi, depredati et destrutti senza alcuna speranza di poter ricever risarcimento, anzi con disperatione che più si potessero mantenere, haveva la Serenità Vostra convenuto pensar a se stessa et considerare che questo suo perseverare nella guerra, poteva essere non solamente la sua rovina ma, perdendo il suo, della christianità tutta et partorir insieme differentissimi effetti da quello che era nella sua pia, et veramente Christiana intentione. Perciò che se con l'haver fatto prova per tre annj continuj si è veduto, che con la guerra non solamente non si faceva progresso, ma si perdeva et con tutta la maggior Vittoria che mai habbia havuto la christianità, non s'è trovato rimedio di far frutto, anzi s'è provocato l'inimico a metter più forze insieme contra di noi soli (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 161 v).

The consultation granted by Philip II to Donà and Priuli is an example of the mood circulating at the Court regarding Venetian “about turn” and the serenity with which the Sovereign received the news –which in fact had already come to him from other sources– was symptomatic of a situation in which Spain had more to gain than to grieve for the “betrayal” of the Republic. In fact, the disengagement from the Mediterranean, with the Ottoman fleet now bent by the recent defeat and Flanders in constant revolt, seemed the most appropriate solution to address elsewhere the Spanish interests. And it was precisely the solution of the political problem in the Nether-



lands that was dearest to Philip II's heart, since it was a matter of guaranteeing the fidelity and preservation of that decisive part in the system of the domains of the Crown (Musi, 2013, pp. 102-110). And by requiring the League to bear a financial burden of no lesser importance, which took away the energy needed for its commitment in Flanders, the Venetian pacification should not have appeared as disastrous as it might seem at first glance. The «christiano» and confederative spirit to which Pius V had inspired the strict principles of the League for the protection of the West from the Turk danger, was sacrificed in the name of political opportunism. This is what Donà reported about his conversation with Philip II on the afternoon of 17<sup>th</sup> April 1573:

Il Re ci udì sempre attentissimamente, et quanto più nel corso del ragionamento sentiva la costante modestia del nostro parlare, la quale fu accompagnata da quella affettuosa forma di prononciatione, che così grave materia si sumministrava, tanto più con attentione ci mirava, et teneva Sua Maestà fermj li occhi verso di noi, né mai fece altro segno con la sua faccia, se non, che quando ultimamente udì le conditionj della Pace essere state accettate, fece un picciolissimo, et ironico movimento di bocca leggerissimamente sorridendo, con il quale pareva quasi, che Sua Maestà, senz'interromperci, volesse dire /Hor su, voi l'havete fatta, sì come tutti mi dicevano, che voi fareste/.

It was the conditions of peace that aroused the curiosity of the Sovereign and not so much the conclusion of the agreement between Venice and the Porte in itself, as it was only when “he heard the conditions” that he nodded, which, in the eyes of the two Ambassadors, left no room for doubt. The burdensome and in many ways “humiliating” conditions that the Serenissima had accepted –as will be seen later– represented the test of the political choices of Venice, for a short time linked to the Western powers against the Turk but too “involved” and determined to resume the usual course of its policy and its privileged economic relations with Constantinople. Not a glance, not a facial expression, not a crack in the voice of the Sovereign escaped Donà, who at that time showed all his skill and diplomatic ability in the presence of the Catholic King, just as shrewd a master of the political scene:

Dipoi Sua Maestà, secondo il suo solito, senza discomponersi punto, et trattando con noi con la medesima maniera, che suole far sempre, ci ris-



pose queste poche parole / Ambasciatori, voi non mi sete mai importunj, et havete fatto bene a procurar di parlarjm, ma come, ch'io stava spensieratissimo, che voi mi doveste parlar di cosa tale, et come, che questa è attione grande, et di molta consideratione, non è conveniente, ch'io vi risponda all'improvviso. Considererò, et vi farò rispondere alcuna cosa/ (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 6, s. 161 v).

The meetings between the Venetian Ambassadors and the components of Philip II's entourage were revelatory of the courtiers "feelings" regarding Venetian issues and the way Spanish politics considered the choice of the Republic. Ruy Gómez de Silva (1516-1573), Prince of Eboli, one of the most influential and powerful figures «at the court of Spain in the era when that court became the center of power in Europe» (Boyden, 1995, p. 2) and leader of the "ebolist faction" (Martínez Millán, 1992, pp. 137-198) in the facts of Flanders, reported to Donà that the peace established between Venice and Selim II, despite the reasons given by the lagoon State, should be the subject of an agreement between the confederates and not a unilateral decision of the Serenissima:

Se questa attione di fare la pace o tregua con il Turco era di beneficio vostro et di tutti, come io voglio che fusse stato, perché non procurare di farla con tutti insieme et con maggior vostro vantaggio? Perché non comunicarla con noi et metterci in obbligo, quando la fusse stata rotta, di ritornare a difendervi? Non havevamo noi nelle Capitulationi della Lega che, nelle difficoltà che occorressero tra li collegati, il Papa dovesse essere il giudice? (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 5, ss. 752 v - 757 r, s. 753 r, Madrid alli 19 di aprile 1573).

Ruy Gómez aimed straight at the Venetian liability for having violated the Rome agreements and for having acted in the sole interest of the Republic. Antonio de Toledo –prior of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Councilor of State and brother of the very powerful Fernando Álvarez de Toledo, Duke of Alba– declared to the Spanish ambassadors that he had always been against the constitution of the League, as «il suo parere è stato sempre, che questa Lega non facesse il privato comodo del suo Re, né delli suoi Stati, perché egli conosceva molto bene che non li apportava frutto nessuno, et che li faceva fare una soverchia spesa, vanamente» (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 5, ss. 757 r-760r, s. 757 r). Even though he understood the reasons given by the diplomats regarding the agree-





ment reached with the Turk, Toledo accused Venice of misconduct, something which would have been difficult to justify:

In due cose però, a me pare che, alla Signoria si possa attribuire di questa attione alcuna colpa, volendo tener tutto il resto, per le ragioni dette dalle Signorie Vostre, per giustificato: la prima è, che tenendo la Signoria questa negotiatione di Pace già tanto tempo, non l'habbia comunicata, sì com'era conveniente, con li suoi confederati [...]. L'altra cosa, della quale a me in verità [...] molto pesa è, che io non so vedere come la Signoria, restando debole come resta, possa fidarsi di questa conclusione di pace, per ciò che se, quando il Turco non haveva alcuna offesa da lei, gli ha rotta la Pace, et l'ha ingannata, come si può credere, che le debbi osservare la presente [...]? [...] Io non so comprendere, che sicurtà possa haver la Signoria di questa Pace, et come possa esser stato bono il suo consiglio (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 5, ss. 757 r - 760r, s. 757 r).

The Spanish Court had consolidated a single line of thinking regarding the Venetian conciliation with the Turk and the grievances against the two ambassadors of the Republic seemed to revolve around two indisputable objections: the lack of information about the abandonment of the League; the omission to the confederates on the start of peace negotiations with Selim II. And to the compact front created in the Philip's entourage, Donà and Priuli were able to oppose only the fine art of diplomacy and to prove themselves right by exposing the Venetian merits in Lepanto and pleading for the economic needs of the Republic because of the heavy commitments during the long war. The two ambassadors knew very well that those "omissions" to which they referred –in different ways and with different words– Ruy Gómez de Silva or Antonio de Toledo, did not leave room for "negotiations", if anything they highlighted the "faults" of the Serenissima. And among these responsibilities attributed to the Republic, implicit and explicit, there was the claim of independence from Spanish political hegemony –not adhering to the «processo di ispanizzazione» (Musi, 2013, p. 84)– had emerged in all its evidence in the recent decision of Venice to sign the peace with the Ottoman government. Philip II's answer –«Considererò, et vi farò rispondere alcuna cosa», had said the King– reached Donà and Priuli through the Secretary Antonio Pérez (1540-1611) (Marañón, 1947) on 8<sup>th</sup> May, about a month after the conversation in which the ambassadors had communicated to the Sovereign the news of the conciliation with the Turk. Pérez announced



Che Sua Maestà crede che ad haversi condotto la Signoria a far questa Pace con il Turco, apartandosi da Lega così Santa, et solenne, et che era in tanto beneficio particular della Republica, deve essere stata mossa da cause molto bastanti, et forzose. Che Sua Maestà si mosse ad entrar in questa Lega, per il servitio di Dio, et bene de la christianità, et per rispetto di Sua Santità, che fu il Procurator di essa, et per il bene, et per la difesa della Repubblica, la quale si ritrovava in così fatta strettura et necessità. Et che crede Sua Maestà medesima, che, tenendo essa Repubblica questa obligatione, et essendo debitrice a Sua Maestà per così buona sua volontà, dimostrata con tante buone opere, le corrisponderà, per la parte sua, sì come è il dovere (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, 5, ss. 776 v - 778 v, s. 776 v, Madrid alli 9 di maggio 1573).

To complement the work of Donà and Priuli, the Signoria sent Giovanni Soranzo to Madrid as an ambassador exceptional. Having arrived in the Spanish capital at the end of June 1573, Soranzo had the task of giving Philip II further clarifications on the peace agreements negotiated by the Republic. The three Venetian ambassadors, after repeated requests for an audience, were only received by the King thanks to the intercession of Pérez, in mid-September. And, therefore, Soranzo could inform the Signoria:

volendo esequire, quello che la Serenità Vostra ha commesso a me Soranzo, in materia della resolutione, che Lei fece di accettare la Pace, che le fu offerta dal Signor Turco, poichè giudicassimo non esser più tempo di dire a Sua Maestà le molte particolarità, che sono occorse [...] le dissi, che continuando la Serenità Vostra nella sua solita, antica affettione, et osservantia, che porta alla Maestà Sua Chatolica [...] se ben certa che questi signori Ambasciatori [...] havevano rappresentata a Sua Maestà la necessaria resolutione, che la Serenità Vostra prese in accettare la Pace, che le fu offerta dal Signor Turco [...] volse che tutto la intendesse, da persona mandatale particolarmente, et fece elettione di me [...] et, ben intese le ragioni, et le cause importantissime, che fece risolvere la Serenità Vostra in questo, fusse la Maestà Sua per continuare nel solito suo buon animo verso le cose nostre (SAV, Archivi propri degli Ambasciatori, Spagna, XVII, ss. 24 r - 24v).

All the justifications and reasons “in favour” of the Serenissima for the peace with the Sublime Porte had an international echo and aroused more than some perplexity among the states that had confederated and fought together in Lepanto. From Venice, Diego Guzmán de Silva wrote to Sancho de Guevara y Padilla on 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1573, a



month after the peace treaty had been agreed between the two states, († 1585), Spanish ambassador in Genoa and future Governor of Milan, declaring he had had the possibility to talk to Francesco Barbaro «el hijo del Baylo que [...] tienen en Constantinopla» (AGS, E, L. 1403, s. 36), who was in Venice to submit to the Senate the chapter of peace to be signed and returned to the Ottoman capital. In addition, in the document Guzmán de Silva informed de Guevara that he had been summoned by the Doge Alvise I Mocenigo who informed him with a «muy largo razonamiento sobra las cosas que le havian movido a hazer la paz con el Turco la qual había sido mas forçosa que voluntaria» (AGS, E, L. 1403, s. 36).

The Doge also confirmed to him that the government of the Republic would abide by the conditions stipulated with Constantinople, forced by imperative needs. Venice, therefore, admitted the onerous nature of peace and the most urgent economic need to re-establish relations with the Ottoman Sultanate. On 6<sup>th</sup> April 1573 Gian Andrea Doria wrote directly to Philip II about the news received from Venice by Guzmán de Silva. The Genoese admiral deplored the Venetian choice of pacification with the Porte, considering it a risky decision that, according to Doria, the Serenissima would have taken «sin haver tenido miramiento al daño que de ello puede resultar a toda la cristiandad y a su misma Republica, que es cosa que no se puede dexar de sentir mucho» (AGS, E, 1403, s. 125).

It was a precise stance towards the lagoon city, its politics and its choice to prefer the ancient vocation for trade and relations with the East. Two days after the news was made official by Donà and Priuli at the Spanish Court, on 29<sup>th</sup> April Philip II sent two «despachos» of the same tenor to Genoa, one addressed to Sancho de Guevara y Padilla (AGS, E, 1403, s. 229) and the other to Gian Andrea Doria (AGS, E, 1403, s. 259). To both of them the Spanish sovereign communicated that he had got to know the reasons for peace, to repeat the words of the King, the «grandes necesidades» that «havian forçado a hazer la paz con el Turco». But he said he was in any case perplexed about these decisions, so much so that he waited for further information because it was «menester mirar», it was necessary to observe the changes that were taking place on the international political scene. Philip also asked his ambassador Sancho de Guevara to supervise the negotiations and «los negocios» between Venice and the Porte. An important ally like the Republic, whose contribution had been decisive for the naval victory of Lepanto, had to be, in any case, controlled and ob-



served in its political choices even if the interests of the Serenissima had resumed the links to the the East.

While Venice decided to abandon the Western alliance mainly created to contain Turkish expansionism in the Mediterranean and opted to re-establish political and trade relations with the Porte at the cost of a peace in many ways “mortifying”, in the West Philip II continued to be the main adversary of Constantinople. The hegemony of Spain in international relations and the resulting political leadership guaranteed Madrid a number of allies and partners to rely on. Among the many, Ferrante Gonzaga, first Marquis of Castiglione (1544-1586), who at the end of that year (16<sup>th</sup> November, 1573) reaffirmed his loyalty to Spain and stressed, to be credited by the Sovereign, the «en prejuicio de la cristiandad» (AGS, E, 1403, s. 190).

After Lepanto, therefore, Venice showed more interest in rebuilding relations with the Ottoman Empire, setting up a difficult negotiating table with the government of Selim II. At least two strategies seem to have been implemented by the Serenissima after Lepanto:

1) a conscious action – albeit within the framework of a “humiliating” peace – to find and follow the manners of trade with the Ottoman East, according to its ancient vocation;

2) the political awareness resulting from this choice, which led Venice to favour an independent action for the benefit of its own interests, in spite of the Western policy based on containing the Turk danger in the Mediterranean and attracted to the orbit of the Spanish system of power.

It is still a double perspective in which the relations between Venice and the Porte must be considered: the first is that of commercial relations; the second is that of political relations. These two elements constituted the essence of the bond between the two states which, between war clashes alternated with long periods of peace, built a preferential axis between Venice and Constantinople on which men, goods, ideas and cultures moved. The period of peace inaugurated in 1573 lasted until the following century, when new vicissitudes led to the clash over the possession of Candia (between 1645 and 1669).

### 3. The weight of responsibilities

Facciasi dunque la pace, né si guardi a comperarla, quando anche occorresse; poichè è investita, non costo, quello, che risparmia il molto, ed un



molto, che risparmiato, può ancor valere all'intera ricupera dell'investito (Verdizzotti, 1698, p. 166).

With these words Alvise Mocenigo spoke to the Council of Ten «per terminare positivamente sopra questa gran materia» (Verdizzotti, 1698, p. 164), sealing the agreement with the Turk since, according to the Doge, the result that the Republic would achieve with the peace, had no economic equivalent. At the conclusion of what historiography has defined as the “War of Cyprus” and which had forced Venice for more than three years to a heavy war effort, the signing of the treaty with the Ottoman Empire generated a debate about the responsibilities, be them real or alleged, that had led the parties to the agreement.

The documentary sources give back to the historical knowledge the “feelings” that fostered the Venetian political debate after the peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire. And it seems almost obvious to say that the controversy gave rise to many considerations, causing a confrontation in which, inevitably, there was no single view. Just as the Venetian press had inaugurated the commemorative cycle on the occasion of the victory of Lepanto, exalting the duties of the Holy League and its supporters, in the same way, after the peace with the Turk, both writings that pointed to Spain (Barcia, 1995, pp. 179-206) as the only “guilty party” of the determinations to which the Republic had come, and the expressions of a feeling contrary to the peaceful resolution and that called the Lagoon City to its responsibilities to the Christian West began to circulate: «ogni Signor Cristiano [...] è tenuto aiutare a scacciare i nemici di Santa Chiesa, e come sodisfano i Venetiani a questa loro obligatione con questa loro pace! certo male: anzi fanno il contrario rendendo a questo modo più gagliardo et audace il Nemico di Santa Chiesa e più deboli e più timorosi i difensori di quella»<sup>20</sup>. The Republic was held responsible for an arbitrary choice, since it should not have «conchiudere tal pace, se prima da Nostra Santità non otteniva tal licenza» (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. I). It was the responsibility of the Pope, in his role of protector and guarantor of the League, to grant the Serenissima Republic the licence for the conclusion of agreements with Selim II. The fact remained that the Turk was considered the

20. MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), *Ragioni perché la Repubblica non dovea concludere la Pace con Turchi*, s. III. As the source does not indicate the numbering of pages, the writer has considered it appropriate to refer to a numerical order expressed in Roman numerals from I to XXXII, as such are the pages that constitute the manuscript, excluding from the numbering the title page bearing the title.



main enemy of the Christian West, which in turn, to defend its interests from Ottoman expansionism, had federated under the papal banner. Despite the safeguarding of the common interests coagulated around the Holy League, it was not a duty of the Pope – as head of the Catholic Church – to control the activities of each individual “federated” State. Therefore, the Pope (at first Pius V, then Gregory XIII) could not have prevented that «i membri gli siano rubelli, inobedienti, ovvero nascosamente l’abbandonino, accostandosi a’ Nemici» as it had happened in Venice: «havendo dunque quest’Illustrissima Republica, notabil membro del Christianesimo, contratta la Pace con comuni Nemici, e nascostamente, chi non direbbe tal Republica in ciò essere proceduta illegittimamente, et in danno di tutta la Christiana Republica, che più grava questo mesfatto» (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. II). The question, therefore, concerned two points: the general damage caused by the Serenissima to the entire «Christiana» community and the transgression of allied agreements: «trovandosi dunque questa Christiana Republica Venitiana soggetta al Papa Capo e Pastore di tutti i Christiani, almeno per conto della Religione, non dovea mai se non con il consenso di esso Papa contrattare tal Pace con infideli nostri comuni nemici» (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. III).

If Venice was in «tanta necessità» (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. XI), it was necessary, however, to grant some mitigation to the political choices of the Venetian government and to the “talked about” decision to reach the peace. Even if the choice itself is disputed, as emerged from the source, for the fault of the Serenissima, a series of justifications result, most probably, of a feeling of city partisanship:

Che poi sia stato malfatto a far pace con infedeli o perché la pace sia cattiva in sé, ovvero per danno che porti ad altri, ovvero nel modo in farla; [...] venetiani si possano giustamente iscusare da tutti questi tre capi. Imperoché la pace fu sempre istimata per cosa buona, santa, amabile, et desiderabile, il che facilmente si scorge dal suo contrario, cioè dalla discordia, discensionì, e guerra, ai danni, ingiurie, miserie, calamità, et rovina (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. XI).

The responsibility of Venice (the «tre capi»: to have concluded the agreement with the infidels, to have caused damage to Christianity and to have operated keeping the allies unaware) and the “deplorable” actions carried out could only be mitigated in the light of the general process of pacification which opposed the unrest, the mourn-



ing and the damage caused by the war. The peace was also inspired by practical needs that touched the heart of the Venetian economy and, as had also emerged from the words of the Doge mentioned above, only the cessation of hostilities would guarantee the Serenissima a return to the usual business activities and a recovery of the accounts drained for the war. Continuing the conflict with the Ottoman Empire would, in essence, have caused a series of incalculable damages to the Republic and its Levantine possessions: «essi Venitiani ogni mese [...] in cento galere spendevano 100 mila scudi qual spesa continuava per molti mesi, et anni. Oltre che era necessario aumentare i presidij in Candia, Cefalonia, Zante, Corfù et Zara, dove si spendeva più del solito altrettanto» (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. XX).

The belligerency with the Turk had exposed all the strategic Venetian possessions in the heart of the Mediterranean to serious danger and to defend them, the Signoria faced very high costs. If this was the situation on the islands, Venice was not in a better position:

In Città di Vinegia poi solita a cavare a migliaia de scuti all'anno de' suoi datij per li traffichi di mare erano ridotti a centenaia, et meno, et per mancar le facende li mercanti si partivano, laonde le loro case, fondachi, et botteghe restavano vuote, et i negozi si trasferivano altrove. Di più per sustentar la guerra insupportabilmente aggravavano sé et i sudditi, onde non haveriano potuto durare sotto a tanto peso. Che più havevano impoverito tutte le sue Città, et sudditi d'huomini da remo, di maniera che più non trovavano galeotti, né i sudditi che lavorasse i loro terreni (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), ss. XX-XXI).

In mitigating and limiting the responsibilities of Venice for having concluded the peace with the Turk, the precarious conditions of its economy and the relative “suffering” of the subjects, turned out to be the most reliable justification, the one that best represented the reality of things, partly rehabilitating the Republic in the face of the perplexity of the confederates for its ambiguous behaviour. Because of the conflict, moreover, as already said, the granary supplies of the Republic –which usually got its supplies in the East– were scarce (remember the requests to meet the granary supplies from Naples and Sicily made by Donà to Philip II) and the islands mentioned paid a very high price because of the shortage of grains:

Gli habitanti le sudette Isole soliti a procacciarsi il mangiare dalla Morea, et resto dalla Grecia trovandosi privi di vittovaglie per questa guerra





chiamando del pane, et non potendo Venetiani soccorrere al lor bisogno per non haver grano, né volendogline dare gli Agenti per il Re Philippo in Puglia et in Sicilia, s'ammutinavano, et chiamavano il Turco, al quale se et l'Isole offerivano in prezzo di pane. Né forza vi era a bastanza per resisterli (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. XXI).

Venice, in this way, posed the problem of safeguarding its own interests, which, placed before any other argument, should have “spared” it from the charge of “betrayal” against the Holy League. How to «biasimare la pace»? What was the «maggior pregiuducio alla Christianità, o la detta pace, overo che 'l Turco fusse diventato signore di dette Isole»? (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. XXI). The answer to the question for the Venetians was obvious and there was no doubt about the lawfulness of the peace stipulated with the Porte because the preservation of the State and the incalculable damage resulting from the possible loss of possessions in the Mediterranean were at stake. And it was clearly stated that «i Signori Venetiani non sono vassalli del Papa, et meno del Re Philippo» (MNL, ms. It., VII 807 (=9558), s. XXII). A perfectly legitimate way to express the senses of one's own decision-making autonomy.

If some attenuating circumstance could be granted to Venice in the question of the “incorrect” conduct towards the confederates, no less responsibility began to be attributed to Spain for the attitude taken before and after Lepanto. In fact, it was precisely in the Spanish political choices that was seen the responsibility both for the failure of the league and for the decision of the Serenissima forced to conclude the peace with the Turk because of the “ambiguous” behaviour of the Filipino government. These themes also emerged in the contribution by Paolo Paruta<sup>21</sup> regarding the «de' Veneziani co' Turchi». Paruta called for caution and believed that the Turk forces, despite being rejected at Lepanto, would soon recover and would not allow any respite to the confederates, as it was clear that even though «essendo stati li Turchi sbattuti e vinti sul mare, ma conservando intiere le forze di terra, non ha lo stato loro quasi sentito tale percossa» (Paruta, in Monzani, 1852, p. 434). And the greatest risk would have been taken mainly by Venice, given the geographical proximity of its possessions to the Ottoman Empire since, observed Paruta, «lo stato della Signo-

21. The contribution that historiography has dedicated to the work of Paruta is copious. Please refer to Comani, 1894; Candeloro, 1936, pp. 70-97 e 1936, pp. 51-79; Tria, 1941; Pillinini, 1964, pp. 5-28; Cozzi, 1963-1964, pp. 215-294 e 1997, pp. 13-86; Baiocchi, 1975-1976, pp. 157-233; Zanato, 1981, pp. 134-150; Benzoni e Zanato (eds.), 1982; Jacoviello, 1989, pp. 199-233; Venturelli, 2013; Benzoni, 2014.



ria è quasi da ogni parte esposto all'impeto del nemico, che da mare e da terra per li suoi propri confini può molestarlo» (Paruta, in Monzani, 1852, p. 436). The geographical configuration of the Venetian possessions did not allow an effective and immediate management in critical moments and during the wars it posed serious problems both for the defence and for the supplies.: «sono ancora i membri delli suoi stati così divisi, che nelli tempi di guerra vi bisognano grossissimi presidii per potere fornirli tutti, e buona parte d'armata per poter soccorrerli secondo il bisogno: le quali cose portano seco necessità d'una grandissima spesa» (Paruta, in Monzani, 1852, p. 436). In support of the achievement of the peace between Venice and the Porte, Paruta, with the usual “patriotic” spirit, reminded his readers that

la città piena di numerosissimo popolo, quale vive e si nutrice di varie industrie, cessando queste per la guerra, veniva a ridursi in somma povertà; dove per la pace fiorendo tutte le arti, la città si conserva viva e d'ogni cosa abbondante, e insieme con le private si accrescono le ricchezze pubbliche per li traffichi delle nazioni del Levante (Paruta, in Monzani, 1852, p. 438).

The political decision to conclude the peace had taken into account all these reasons which, according to Paruta, amply justified the actions of the Republic, because «sarebbe stata non fede, non prudenza, non zelo cristiano, ma pazza ostinazione volere [...] continuare tuttavia nella spesa e nelli travagli della guerra» (Paruta, in Monzani, 1852, p.440). Paruta was worried about the formidable power of the Ottoman Empire which, even after Lepanto, was a military and political bloc too strong to be broken. The awareness of the Ottoman military superiority, the need to restore peace and recompose the political and economic structures affected by the war, the Spanish “disengagement” to ensure the defense of Venetian possessions, were valid reasons to relieve the Republic of responsibility towards Rome and Madrid.

If these reasons were not enough, Paruta pointed out that the interest in the preservation of territorial integrity was a legitimate duty of every state and, therefore, just as the government of Philip had made every effort for the cause in the Flanders (Moretti, 1994, pp. 129-164), so Venice would be committed to protecting the territories exposed to the Ottoman conquest<sup>22</sup>. The political position of Paruta emerged

22. Paruta clarifies this concept well: «Perocché, gravissimo pericolo ella vedeva soprastare al regno di Candia, quando, per sorte, [...] si fosse incontrata nelle medesime difficoltà, per le quali non si avesse potuto, se non molto tardi, ovvero forse mai, prevalersi delle forze intiere della lega per soccorrere quell'isola; la quale non essendo meno cara né meno importante alla Signoria, che



clearly –«originale e scevra da imitazioni» (Pompeati, 1905, p. 300)– enthusiastic supporter of the peace between Venice and Selim II and defender of a sincere feeling «di ragione, di libertà, di giustizia eterna di amor patrio» (Zanoni, 1904, p. 44). If the naval victory of Lepanto seemed to undermine the Ottoman power and ignited, among many, the hope of a lasting alliance against the common enemy, the scenarios changed in a short span of time.

The turning point for the peace between Venice and Selim II definitively brought to an end the underlying tensions that had marked the relations between the confederates since the initial formation of the League. During 1572, if on the one hand carrying out the tasks assumed by the League was still considered a possibility –as seen before– on the other hand it was the year of the reckoning, since what happened in that period of time decided the fate of the whole affair.

Some facts were decisive and, as it often happens, a chain of causes influenced the course of events:

a) Philip II's willingness to block naval operations in the summer of that year by keeping Don Giovanni's fleet stationary in Messina and preventing the possible attack on the Turkish fleet;

b) the growing conflict between Spain and its historical rival, France, of the young Charles IX and his mother Catherine de' Medici who, while committed to fighting the Huguenots (Lapeyre, 1992, pp. 123-143) continued to cultivate animosity towards Spain and joined the England of Elizabeth Tudor signing in Blois, 19<sup>th</sup> April, an agreement in anti-Spanish function;

c) the resurgence of the revolt in the Flanders, where the insurrection of Flessinga (the strategic port of Zeeland at the mouth of the Western Scheldt in the North Sea) and the spread of the uprisings to other important centres such as Mons and Valenciennes, were grounds for serious concern for both Philip II and his government.

The challenge in Lepanto, therefore, could not quench the minds of either the Spaniards or the Venetians because the worrying –and complex– international scenario did not allow the détente necessary to direct the forces towards a common goal. Venice and Madrid chased different “routes”. Since the beginning of 1572 the Spanish had directed the naval forces –as already mentioned– to North Africa to conduct a military action on Algiers and other barbaric powers.

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siano li stati di Fiandra al re cattolico, doveva con ogni diligenza [...] procurare di assicurarla in quel modo che potea migliore», in «Discorso sopra la pace de' Veneziani co' Turchi», in Monzani, 1852, pp. 446-447.



Thanks to the rearmament of the fleet after Lepanto, the Turks managed, in 1574, to also regain Tunis. The strategy adopted by the Spanish to take possession of the so-called Barbary Coast did not have the desired effects, as the maintenance and defence of the «roccaforti costiere era dispendiosa e inaffidabile, visto che esse potevano venire abbattute dal nemico una alla volta, allorché l'attenzione della Spagna era rivolta altrove» (Casey, 1992, pp. 55-87, p. 79).

Philip II and Murad III came to call a truce in 1578, an inevitable step, as the two states were engaged on different fronts: Spain in northern Europe, the Ottoman Empire to quell the revolts in Persia. By then it was clear that the danger for Spain came from the coasts of North Africa and the truce established with Murad III did not solve the problems of the barbaric raids on the Spanish coasts that, unprepared for a war of that type, paid a very high price because of the raids and harassment perpetuated by pirates. Even before Lepanto, Venice tried to open the negotiating table with the Porte with the mediation of the bailout Marcantonio Barbaro, who was forcibly held in Constantinople. The first peace mission was entrusted to the Secretary of the Senate Jacopo Ragazzoni (1528-1610) (Brunelli, 2016), who left Venice on 11th March, 1571, «arrivò a Costantinopoli il 26 aprile e il suo primo dispaccio, che è dell'8 maggio, fu ricevuto a Venezia l'11 giugno, mentre il trattato di lega, com'è noto, fu firmato il 19 maggio» (Brunetti e Vitale, 1963, vol. I, p. XXXIX; Paruta, 1827, pp. 163 and following).

The Venetian initiative proceeded on a parallel track, between Rome and Constantinople, between the constitution of the Holy League and the attempt at peace with the Turk and the proximity of the dates makes well understood the interests at stake and the will of the Republic to create a margin for negotiation on both fronts. But this tactical parallelism, rather than a double game conducted with Machiavellian intent, was the consequence of the conflict between the intentions of the Council of Ten, which worked for peace, and those of the Senate, «in cui prevalse il partito favorevole alla guerra, e che riuscì ad imporla, togliendo l'iniziativa all'eccelso Consiglio ed avocando per una volta a sé la materia» (Brunetti e Vitale, 1963, vol. I, p. XXXIX). Ragazzoni's mission ended without success and the facts are well known. The intentions of the Ottoman Empire to expand into the Mediterranean knew no obstacles, the taking of Cyprus was proof of this and before Lepanto, when Ragazzoni was sent to Constantinople for the attempt at peace, Sokollu Mehmet Pasha declared to the Venetian envoy:



Mi replicò il magnifico pascià, che sarebbe per la serenità vostra stata molto migliore la pace, che la guerra, perché le sue forze non erano sufficienti a poter contendere con una potenza così grande, come era quella del suo imperatore, con la quale egli avrebbe occupato non solamente Cipro ma ancora altre parti dello stato suo, che poi anco la serenità vostra avrebbe avuto di grazia di far pace; soggiungendo che, per le loro profezie, dovevano i Turchi esser padroni fino di Roma<sup>23</sup>.

But at that time the Ottoman Empire made its choice and did not find it convenient to grant margins of negotiation to the Republic, especially after the political solution reached in Transylvania –where in 1571 the newborn Principality took power, the noble Báthory family under direct Ottoman control– allowed the Turk to concentrate their forces on the Mediterranean. The fact that there no longer was the Turkish will to regulate the terms of a peace, was well understood by Ragazzoni who, in the Report to the Senate held after the return from the mission in Constantinople, said that he understood that the Ottoman government wanted to «metter ancor tempo di mezzo in questo trattato» (*Relazione* by Jacopo Ragazzoni in Albèri, 1844, p. 93). The hegemonic project of the Porte looked towards the West:

in luogo della pace [...] aveva volto l'animo e i pensieri suoi tutti alla guerra, perciocché aveva accomodato le cose cogli imperiali a suo modo, avendo stabilito (il che grandemente gli premeva) nel regno di Transilvania un dipendente dal Gran Signore. Da ciò nasceva, che l'esercito guidato da Acmet pascià poteva liberamente voltarsi a danni di vostra serenità (*Relazione* by Jacopo Ragazzoni in Albèri, 1844, p. 93).

In the waters of the Curzolari, as has been said many times, the League stopped only temporarily the powerful Ottoman enemy. The unsuccessful mission of Ragazzoni was followed by the peace of 1573. Because of these agreements, relations between Venice and Madrid were completely compromised. In the Serenissima the Spaniards saw the *amancebada* of the Turk and the Spaniards did not have a better fate in the collective imaginary of the lagoon. For the age of Philip II Bruno Anatra has defined the relations between the two states as the result of «due prudenze a confronto» (Anatra, 1988, pp. 29-48) and Paolo Preto has reinforced the message by defining the bond as «due diffidenze a confronto» (Preto, 2003, pp. 201-226, p. 203) and

23. «Relazione dell'Impero ottomano di Jacopo Ragazzoni presentata nel suo ritorno da Costantinopoli il 16 agosto 1571», in Albèri, 1844, pp. 77-102, pp. 84-85.



between prudence and distrust there was certainly the need to find a third way that would guarantee everyone their own “living space” of influence.

Of course, the “record” in international relations that Spain was entitled to in the West was out of question, but Venice was able to adapt, within a defined geopolitical space, and find a relative autonomy that allowed the Republic to play a defined role in the context of the sixteenth-century European states. If between the signing of the treaty establishing the Holy League and the naval success of Lepanto it seemed that, as we have seen, a unified spirit of crusade, encouraged and supervised by Pius V, was emerging, after 1573 the scenario changed: the *amancebada* of the Gran Signore blamed both the League’s failures and the obligatory choice of concluding the peace only on the «perfidia de spagnoli»<sup>24</sup>.

From “caution”, to “diffidence”, finally to “deceitfulness”: it was the escalation of a strong anti-Spanish feeling and a rejection of Philip’s politics despite the intense Hispano-Venetian relations both on a cultural and artistic level (Hope, 1988, pp. 49-72; Pérez Sánchez, 1988, pp. 79-102; Anselmi, 2014). The interests at stake were politically divergent and the Venetians had absolutely no doubts about the Spanish responsibility for the damage suffered in Corfu and in the other Mediterranean islands in its possession. Having to find the army again in May 1571, according to the agreements contained in the *Capitolazioni*, to defend the possessions in Corfu

per colpa de spagnoli non solo non si vene a detto tempo a Corfù, ma si tardò tanto che l’armata Turchesca uscì liberamente fuori, et fece molti danni in Candia, al Zante et alla Zeffalonia di prede, di rapine, et di incendij, et prese poi ancora Dolcigno, et Antivari, talché facendo progresso et venendo inanti fu necessario a quell’armata de venetiani che si ritrovava a Corfù disloggiare, et andarsene, come andò a Messina (MNL, ms. It., VII, 681 (=7953), s. 10 v).

The accusations for the delays and for the “ambiguity” of the Spanish attitude during the years of the Cyprus war exploded after the establishment of the peace between Venice and Selim II. Among commonplaces, real or presumed accusations, there was the definitive dissolution of the League that, apart from Lepanto, had not brought

24. MNL, It., VII, 681 (=7953), *Discorso sopra la pace giustamente fatta da venetiani con il Turco per la perfidia de spagnoli*, ff. 1 r - 51 v.



to a successful conclusion the intentions that had inspired its formation. Venice claimed its autonomy and did not hide its resentment towards Spain:

Queste sono le fedeli compagnie, queste sono le amorevolezze de collegati, et in questa sorta de genti non potevano certo venetiani confidare, ne sperare se non infelicissime cose. Dicono questi sviscerati de Spagnoli, che venetiani devono haver grand'obbligo a questa Lega, et a questa natione perché si ella non fusse stata non si otteneva la vittoria, ne era sicuro alcun luogo della loro Repubblica dalli confini del Turco fino a Venetia, ne Venetia istessa (MNL, ms. It., VII, 681 (=7953), s. 12 v).

With the dissolution of the Holy League all the disagreements which during the alliance had been dulled by diplomatic prudence and by the uncertainties of the political scenarios that had emerged. From the cycle of praise initiated in Venice to celebrate the victory of Lepanto and exalt the work of Philip II and the Pope, to the role of *amancebada* attributed to the Serenissima, to the «perfidia de' spagnoli», the Cyprus war, which had imposed the highest price on Venice, came full circle.

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