J.N. STEPHENS. *The Fall of the Florentine Republic 1512–1530*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983. Pp. 265.

Stephens begins this detailed discussion of his subject by asserting that the preoccupation of scholars with regimes, factions and the institutions of government in Florence has obscured the single most fundamental question of Florentine history: "Why did the commune give way to the Medici?" (4.) To answer this question, the author suggests that the allegiance of the great *popolani* families should be investigated; for these *ottimati* in reality determined the nature of the state.

The history of Florence consequently unfolds from a different perspective in Stephens' analysis. The years after 1378 witness not the growth of oligarchy, faction or even the rise of the Medici as much as the cementing of a conscious bond of common interest and shared ambitions among the great republican families. The Ciompi revolt and the war of the Eight Saints had dissolved the bonds of the *Parte Guelfa* and the Guild structure. What replaced these traditional focuses of class self-awareness was a desire for stability, wealth and power that became the shared ideal of the *ottimati* and seemed best fulfilled by acquiescence to one family, not as princes but as political bosses who could make the medieval, mercantile, participatory constitution of Florence work in favour of its privileged citizens.

As a result, 1434 ceases to be a watershed date. The Albizzi regime had begun the work that Cosimo de' Medici continued. The powers of patronage and reward exercised by the Medici merely reinforced the system begun really half a century before Cosimo's *coup*. The leading families of Florence were thus implicated in the growth of what was becoming almost a signorial regime. Moreover, these aristocrats supported this regime as long as they continued to benefit by sharing in the spoils of Cosimo's victory.

This pattern was not completely disrupted by the cataclysmic events of 1494. Stephens correctly notes that the constitution of Florence after the expulsion of the Medici did not change fundamentally. Indeed, the only significant alteration was the institution in 1502 of the office of Gonfaloniere for life, an admission of sorts that Florence needed the Medici, or another family or individual like them. By the turn of the century, nostalgia for Laurentian Florence was widespread and the ideal of a republic without a leading family was losing its currency.

Nevertheless, the republic of 1494 was destroyed not by Medici partisans within Florence but by Spanish and papal arms. The princely regimes of Europe did not offer support to a Florence without a family or citizen to embody the principle of monarchy. By 1512 this external support was increasingly needed both from transalpine states and the *signori* of Italy itself. Monarchy was the wave of the future, and leading citizens of Florence were willing to accept the principle, if not yet the office, of a prince, provided that it restored internal harmony and external security.

This the Medici did after 1512. The elevation of Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici to the papacy as Leo X assisted the *ottimati* in their search for wealth and self-interest. The vast patronage power of the pope was added to that of the Republic of Florence and many *popolani* families

prospered. The Medici manipulated and suborned these groups as successfully as they had done before, and little by little concentrated more authority into their own hands, even using family household officers as public officials.

However, again the acquiescence of the great aristocrats of Florence dissipated under external pressure. The election of Giulio de' Medici to the Holy See in 1523 removed to Rome the guiding hand of a respected member of the Medici family. Also, the international situation required Clement VII to tax Florence heavily to pay for papal policy. Rather than benefitting, the *ottimati* lost by the union of the throne of St. Peter with the political control of Florence.

The discontent bred by this situation resulted in the second expulsion of the Medici in 1527, a consequence of the Sack of Rome. However, once more the Republic that emerged was without guidance and had no clear idea as to who would rule. The regime proved itself as inimical to the ambitious *ottimati* as had the Medici and, moreover, it lacked that family's influence in foreign affairs. Instability, fear of economic collapse, political indecision and failure of republican will, together with a Spanish army symbolizing the power of the monarchical principle represented by Europe's rulers, toppled that last Florentine republic in 1530. Thereafter, the old medieval commune was destroyed and replaced by a dynastic monarchy. The tyranny of one family appeared a more palatable tyranny than that of many, once all factors were considered. The clever, ambitious and self-absorbed *ottimati* of Florence recognized this in the 1530's and again acquiesced, this time forever. Republicanism had not been killed by Duke Cosimo I after 1537; it had died with the will of the Florentine patricians to sustain it at the cost of their wealth, influence and international connections, and in the face of the apparently invincible idea of monarchy.

Stephens' book, then, is a provocative argument and one worthy of study. His thesis is intriguing and instructive, directing as he does the focus of Florentine political studies away from the Medici and towards the large number of *ottimati* families that supported them. The text is heavily based on wide study in the Archivio di Stato, Firenze, and argues its position well. Unfortunately, as in many, heavily documented studies that arose from doctoral dissertations, it is heavy reading. Still, J.N. Stephens deserves our gratitude for addressing in such a stimulating manner, a period largely ignored by modern scholars.

KENNETH R. BARTLETT

University of Toronto

DANTE ISELLA. *I Lombardi in rivolta — Da Carlo Maria Maggi a Carlo Emilio Gadda*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi, 1984. Pp. 308.

Isella has collected in this volume fifteen articles, of which fourteen have been published previously, the first in 1958, most of them with critical editions of texts. He explains his directing theme as the identification of the Lombard "function" from the birth of Maggi's Milanese theatre in the