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“Cum Status Ecclesie Noster Sit”: Florence and the Council of Pisa (1409)

ALISON WILLIAMS LEWIN

Of all the divisions and crises that the Catholic church endured in its first fifteen hundred years of existence, none was so destructive as the Great Schism (1378–1417). For forty years learned theologians and doctors of canon law argued over whether the pontiff residing in Rome or in Avignon was the true pope. The effects of the schism upon the highly organized administration of the church were disastrous, as were its effects upon society in general. Countless clerics fought over claims to benefices with appointees from the other obedience; the revenues of the church, quite impressive in the mid-fourteenth century, shrank precipitously; and opportunistic rulers especially in Italy did not hesitate to wage private wars under the banner of one or the other papacy, or to prey upon the actual holdings of the church.

Various means had been proposed to resolve the schism: the *via concessionis*, by which one pope would simply yield his claim to the other for the sake of Christendom; the *via facti*, by which one pope would use his alliances with secular powers to overpower the other and force his abdication; and the *via concilii*, by which a general council of the church would decide the strength of the rival claimants' positions. Though the theologians Conrad of Gelnhausen and Henry of Langenstein had suggested at the very outbreak of the schism that the *via concilii* was the most appropriate mechanism to resolve it, thirty years passed before an actual council materialized.

By the early fifteenth century, the *via concilii* had increasingly come to seem the only viable option left to heal the schism. The actions of the popes themselves had shown the futility of backing the *via concessionis*; nor was either pope able to hire enough troops to conquer his rival, or to find some sufficiently rich and capable ruler to champion his cause.¹ It was the cardinals of both obediences who took decisive steps in the spring of 1408 to hold a council with or without their superiors' attendance or even permission. Though the problematic Council of Pisa did not in fact resolve the schism, it did add impetus to the *via concilii*, and helped to lay the groundwork for the election in 1417 of Martin V as the one true pope at the Council of Constance.

1. Certainly both Clement VII and Benedict XIII hoped that in supporting Angevin claimants to the throne of Naples they would clear the way for a French conquest of the Roman papacy.

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The cardinals' initiative alone, however, could not bring the council into existence; hard-headed worldly diplomacy was needed too. Indeed, it can be argued that the council would not have taken place without the material assistance offered by the republic of Florence. Though one can assume that eventually those within the church would have found some way of resolving their differences, the thirty-year history of the schism did not give great hope that such a resolution would occur imminently. It was only the confluence of specific conciliar ideas with specific political circumstances that led to the summoning of the council.

I propose to examine the political and military situation of Florence in the early fifteenth century that led the commune to promote the Council of Pisa, giving special attention to the sentiment within Florence that its own security was increasingly tied to that of the temporal church in Italy.² The intellectual history of conciliarism has long been a favorite topic of both church historians and political theorists; this interest has only grown since the appearance of Brian Tierney's seminal work nearly forty years ago.³ Though other works have described either the general European political scene in the years preceding and including the council, or the attitudes of one or another specific power, none has shown the uniquely Florentine need for a strong and stable papacy ruling central Italy.⁴ To understand fully why the Florentines were willing to take the risky step of allowing a disputed council to meet on their territory in the face of active opposition from Ladislao of Naples, we must examine the history of Florence and of the Papal States in the decades preceding the council.

For several decades the Florentine commune had, with varying degrees of force, generally opposed the presence of a strong papal government in the Papal States. In the 1350s and 1360s the Florentines minimally aided, and at times actively impeded, Cardinal Albernoz's campaign to assert papal rule in central Italy. The early 1370s had brought all Florentine fears of papal rule and possible expansion to the fore, and led to the so-called War of the Eight Saints (1375–1378). Florence squared off against the papacy and its leaders

2. The quotation in the paper's title was spoken in May 1413 by Antonio Alessandri, an influential adviser to the Signoria; Alessandri here fully articulated the idea that "Our condition (*status*) is the same as that of the church" some five years after this new and unspoken principle had begun to shape Florentine policy.

3. Brian Tierney, *The Foundations of Conciliar Theory: The Contribution of the Medieval Canonists from Gratian to the Great Schism* (Cambridge, 1955).

4. See Paolo Landi, *Il Papa deposto (Pisa 1409): L'idea conciliare nel Grande Schisma* (Turin, 1985). On the attitudes of specific powers see Edoardo Piva, "Venezia e lo schisma durante il pontificato di Gregorio XII (1406–1409)," in *Nuovo Archivio Veneto* (1897), 13:135–158; Noël Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme d'Occident* (Hildesheim, 1967), 4 vols. Gene Brucker very briefly mentions the strategic problem Florence faced regarding Ladislao and the Papal States in his *Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, 1977), p. 227.

urged neighbors and allies to cast off the yoke of foreign oppression and declare independence from their papal overlord.

The War of the Eight Saints indicated how important friendly relations and free trade within the Papal States were to Florence, since the commune was willing to wage war against even the papacy to obtain those conditions. The schism, however, proved even more deleterious to Florentine interests in that region than strong papal rule. The Papal States were especially vulnerable to the weakness caused by a divided papacy and soon degenerated into anarchy, with each lordling or *condottiere* able to muster a fighting force attempting to stake his claim on one or another of the papal towns. Nor were such attacks limited to small holdings; the important cities of Bologna and Perugia were swept up in the general confusion, with Perugia enduring years of civil war, and Bologna even promising allegiance to Clement if that would secure French aid.

The merchants of Florence could not tolerate instability in these two cities. Bad enough that crucial trade routes to and through the Papal States were disrupted; but that Bologna and Perugia, gateways to the eastern and southern parts of Italy and important trade centers in themselves, should be in disarray was simply not acceptable. Though the two papal cities showed themselves to be fickle allies at best, from the time of the war onward, Florence had been consistently willing to aid these two cities in any way that would lead to a stable, pro-Florentine regime. Thus Florentine interest in the Papal States, always present, was heightened by the crisis of the Great Schism.

The wars with Giangaleazzo Visconti further increased Florentine concerns for Bologna and Perugia, and desire for strong government in the Papal States.⁵ Disorder in the Papal States made that area an easy target for any ruler with expansionist dreams, and many towns preferred to give themselves over to the Visconti rather than endure the uncertainty and danger of standing alone against all comers. Moreover, the Visconti had long coveted Bologna, and Giangaleazzo made it the primary target of his several aggressive campaigns in central Italy. Bologna gave itself to Giangaleazzo in 1402, as Perugia had in 1400, despite the Florentines' desperate attempts to save it.

The threat of Milanese expansion succeeded in completely reversing the Florentine policy of preventing the pope or his appointees from exercising control over his own territories. With increasing desperation, the commune allied with Steven of Bavaria in 1390, the Count of Armagnac in 1391, the

5. Hans Baron has argued that the Milanese wars wrought a total transformation of internal as well as external Florentine policy. While not disagreeing with his thesis, I would nevertheless maintain that the temporal church also played a significant role in the reevaluation and reorientation that the citizens of Florence underwent regarding themselves and the world in the early fifteenth century. See Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, 1966).

French king in 1396, and Rupert of Bavaria in 1401. After so many expensive and disastrous ultramontane alliances, the leaders of Florence turned in 1402 to Pope Boniface VIII, seeing him and his legate to Bologna, Baldassare Cossa, as their only allies in an increasingly hostile Italy. Though Boniface proved useless and Cossa made a separate peace with the Milanese, the Roman papacy was nonetheless the only entity that potentially had as much at stake as the commune in creating and maintaining peace in central Italy. It was therefore only logical the the makers of Florentine policy saw an increasing identity between the stability of the church and the security of their city.

The ineffectual Innocent VII (1404–1406) made no moves to end the schism, having been forced to promise Ladislao of Naples that no arrangement regarding union of the church would be made unless Ladislao were guaranteed title to the kingdoms of Sicily and Naples.⁶ In Florence, advisers to the Signoria realized the dependence of Florentine safety on a strong church, saying, “it seems that, for our peace and that of Italy, the unity of the Church is necessary.”⁷ Unfortunately for the Florentines, Angelo Corraro, elected Pope Gregory XII in 1407, was in no better position than Innocent to end the schism, despite his sworn promise to do so.⁸ Neither his nephews, who profited from his elevation, nor King Ladislao, who needed papal confirmation of his rule and moreover had designs on large portions of Gregory’s patrimony, had any intention of allowing the easily dominated pontiff even to meet with his forceful rival, Benedict XIII, much less entertain thoughts of abdicating his position, upon which theirs depended. Because Florence was in the unique position of enjoying cordial relations with both pontiffs, and needed a strong ally in Italy when Ladislao attained his majority, the city of Florence moved increasingly to the fore as the promoter of unity within Christendom.⁹

For over a year the leaders of the regime focused their attention on

6. Ladislao had succeeded in imposing a peace on the powerful rival clans of Colonna and Orsini within Rome, but extracted a high price for doing so. For details of the fighting and of Ladislao’s intervention and compulsion of Innocent, see Arnold Esch, *Bonifaz IX. und der Kirchenstaat* (Tübingen, 1969); *Cronica Volgare*, pp. 321–322; Michel de Boüard, *Les origines des guerres d’Italie: La France et l’Italie au temps du grand schisme d’Occident* (Paris, 1936), p. 308; Peter Partner, *The Lands of St. Peter: The Papal State in the Middle Ages and the Early Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1972), p. 17; and Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme*, 3:384.
7. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Consulte e Pratiche* (hereafter *Consulte*), register 38, folio 88v, 27 September 1407.
8. Rinaldo degli Albizzi, *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il comune di Firenze*, 2 vols., ed. C. Guasti (Florence, 1867), I (1399–1423): 152.
9. At the curia at Avignon the presence of Piero Corsini, member of an ancient and respected Florentine family and brother to Filippo Corsini, a main adviser to the Signoria, kept some lines of communication open between Florence and that court; the traditional ties of trade and friendship with the kingdom of France also fostered cordial relations with Clement and then Benedict.

arranging a meeting between the two pontiffs. In accordance with discussions before the Signoria, ambassadors to both Gregory and Benedict were instructed to urge each to meet with his rival, and to give Florence the honor of hosting such a momentous meeting.¹⁰ Gregory, however, took matters into his own hands and arranged to meet Benedict at Savona.¹¹

Feeling snubbed, the commune recalled its ambassadors from Rome. Ladislao then made his first aggressive move, informing the pope that he did not wish any Florentines to remain in Rome, because they were promoting union.¹² Ostensibly to cleanse the city of Florentines, Ladislao led his troops into Rome on 17 June 1407. Gregory fled to Castel Sant'Angelo; contemporaries speculated that he might have been glad of the excuse the attack provided to avoid going to Savona.¹³

Liberated by his *condottiere* Paolo Orsini, Gregory began to invent new reasons to avoid his meeting with Benedict. Among his excuses were lack of funds for the journey, and fear of accepting the Genoese galleys that the other side had agreed to provide for his transport. Though the advisers to the Signoria showed no great willingness to assist Gregory materially, and they maintained contact with Benedict, they continued to try to accommodate Gregory's increasingly capricious maneuvers.¹⁴ For an entire year, from August 1407 until August 1408, the influential citizens called to advise the Signoria debated how best to proceed. At issue were the questions of whether to receive Gregory into the city itself, how to respond to Gregory's request for an armed escort, how to advance the cause of union and, increasingly, how to maintain Florence's own security.¹⁵ The debate of 12 September 1407 closed

10. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 13v, 14v, 15r, 2–8 March 1407. Albizzi, *Commissioni*, p. 153.

11. The prolonged wrangling over this meeting created the first suspicions that the two might be in collusion to prolong the schism and preserve their own thrones. See Theoderic of Nyem, *De schismate Libri Tres*, ed. George Erler (Leipzig, 1890), p. 271. Note 1 on the same page mentions another such opinion cited in Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, ed. Augustin Theiner (Paris, 1874), ad 1409, no. 61.

12. Landi, *Il papa deposto*, p. 90.

13. *Cronica Volgare*, in *Rerum Italicarum Storia* (Città di Castello, 1915), vol. 27, part 2, no. 1, p. 363; Nyem, *De schismate*, p. 122.

14. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 53r–55v. *Cronica Volgare*, p. 361; Albizzi, *Commissioni*, pp. 153–154.

15. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 69r–70v, 18 August 1407; *Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 72r–72v. Piero Baroncelli: "Quod videtur nunc respondendum oratoribus quod, ne isti videantur impedire unitatem, quod concederet libere ut posset per nostros fines ire Mantuam. . ." (*Consulte*, reg. 38, fol. 75v, 7 September 1407). Andrea Vettori: "et quod hortentur ipsum ad persequendum unitatem; et quod non abstringeret ipsum ad expectandum, sed quod bene hortantur ipsum. . . , et quod hoc relinqueret sibi, ne umquam posset dicere Florentiam fuisse causam, etc." (*Consulte*, reg. 38, fol. 80r, 12 September 1407). Some, like Piero Pitti, feared alienating Benedict; others, like Antonio Alessandri, feared that Gregory's presence might cause disturbances within Florence (*Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 76v, 80r).

with the guarded statement, "let everything that can be done for unity be done, not obliging the commune more than it is."¹⁶

Keeping Benedict's trust was of great importance to the Signoria at this juncture. Gregory's nephew could escort his uncle with Florentine or other troops as long as "the antipope does not have cause to lose faith [in us]."¹⁷ In a formal letter to Gregory, the Signoria requested that Gregory avoid the city of Florence itself if he passed through Tuscany, "not because we have any suspicions of His Holiness, but for other good concerns and reasons which none could or ought to say or write," a cryptic enough answer which sought to please Gregory without angering Benedict.¹⁸

While the Florentine ambassadors urged Gregory to arrange some meeting with Benedict and work toward unity of the church, ambassadors from other powers were not idle. In Siena Gregory received embassies and letters from Wenceslaus of Bohemia and other German lords, from Sigismund of Hungary, from the king of England, and from Ladislao. They offered various arguments why he should not go to Savona: because it was not neutral territory but under the king of France; he would be forced to resign; and he was after all the only true pope. Against these arguments ambassadors from Florence, Venice, the king of France, and Benedict reminded Gregory of his past promises, and of his duty to heal the schism.¹⁹

In the fall of 1407, each pope felt increasing pressure to end the schism. On the Roman side, the doctors of the University of Bologna declared that "hardening of the heart" had transformed the schism into heresy, and that therefore it was necessary to refuse obedience to both popes as obstinate and heretical.²⁰ On the Avignonese side, the assassination of Louis of Orléans on 23 November cost Benedict his most constant ally at the French court and led to the ascendancy of John of Burgundy, no friend to the Avignonese pope.²¹

Gregory's response to the Bolognese declaration was, surprisingly, to request a meeting on Florentine soil. The *richiesti* (those citizens requested to advise the government on a particular issue) all agreed with Andrea Vettori that the commune "should grant all its territories for such a good cause, except Pisa, but one [pope] should not be received without the other." Most

16. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fol. 82r.

17. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fol. 84r, 16 September 1407.

18. Letter of 14 September 1407, transcribed in Albizzi, *Commissioni*, p. 154.

19. *Cronica Volgare*, pp. 363–364.

20. Landi, *Il papa deposto*, p. 98. There can be little doubt that Cossa played some part in urging the university to reach this conclusion. In one of his diatribes against Cossa, Pope Gregory accused him of terrorizing Antonio Butrio and Piero Ancharano into supporting the Council of Pisa "against their consciences"; neither one's subsequent actions would seem to bear out Gregory's accusations. See Raynaldus, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 27 (1397–1423): 237.

21. Howard Kaminsky, *Simon de Cramaud and the Great Schism* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1983), p. 277.

wished that the two parties agree on a meeting place, then make a joint request for it, which Florence would immediately grant. The concerns for security raised in September appeared heightened in December. Most were willing to grant Gregory free transit through Florentine territory, though the speakers for both the Parte Guelfa and the Ten Governors of Pisa added the reservation, "as long as he did not lead rebels of our commune with him." The latter was sufficiently concerned about rebel activity to ask that Gregory avoid Florence as well as Pisa.²²

By January of 1408, after many more rounds of negotiation, Gregory and Benedict were a scant thirty miles apart, yet no closer to any agreement, even on a meeting place. Up until now, all the advisers to the Signoria had agreed to exclude Pisa from the list of possible sites for a meeting, "because it is not yet fortified."²³ As January dragged on, however, the Florentines as main promoters of the meeting felt some initiative was necessary from their quarter. In a debate of 7 February 1408, they discussed whether to offer all Florentine territories, including Pisa; in a complete reversal of previous policy, they decided that they could. Pisa was appealing to both popes: to Gregory, because Pisa was in Florentine hands; to Benedict, because of the Florentine promise to give Pisa over to his obedience.²⁴ Each could thus see the city as owing him allegiance.

Though some citizens such as Paolo di Francesco Biliotti and Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi feared that the presence of two popes might lead to internal discord, several others emphasized their confidence in the stability of the *reggimento*. Cristofano Spini said that "he had not seen our state more solid since 1381 [1382], since all who deserved it had a position [status], and he did not worry about anything."²⁵ Similarly Piero Baroncelli said that "he saw nothing to fear, considering the tranquility of the regime." A few others, including Antonio Alessandri said that since Siena and Lucca had received one pope and nothing had happened, there really was no danger in receiving two in Florence.

Alessandri brought up another important point, namely that considering the great offers made and works done to pursue unity, "it would be of great ignominy" if the commune were to retreat now. Gino Capponi agreed, saying that "considering the offers made for unity in general and in particular the commune could not hold itself back without incurring the scorn of God and of men."

22. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 108r–111v, 15 December 1407.

23. *Consulte*, reg. 38, fols. 108r–111v, 15 December 1407.

24. De Boüard, *Les origines des guerres d'Italie*, pp. 316, 330; Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme*, 3:414.

25. The Florentine calendar began the new year on 25 March rather than on 1 January, so for almost three months of the year dates given Florentine style do not coincide with our modern system. Biliotti is referring in his speech to the coup in early 1382 that eliminated the last traces of the Ciompi-initiated corporate regime of 1378–1382.

One lone voice expressed the views of the past, that a good papacy was a weak papacy. Gionaccio Baroncelli said that “enough had been done for the union of the Church, and that nothing further should proceed; and that for the good of this [Florentine] people he wished that there were twelve popes!” No one agreed with him, however, and one week later ambassadors were sent to both pontiffs to grant the city of Pisa as a meeting place if requested.²⁶

When nothing came from this generous offer, the priors raised the possibility of another Florentine initiative, that of subtracting obedience from its pope. Here more cautious views prevailed. If it were to be done at all, the counselors agreed with Piero Baroncelli that “when the French and Venetians declare neutrality, then we will do it.” They likewise agreed with Piero Firenze who said he did not want the Florentines to be the first to withdraw obedience.

The threatening military movements of Ladislao of Naples helped to push the Florentines toward extending themselves even further in order to resolve the schism. As long as the church was divided, there would be no security in the Papal States, and therefore no security in Florence. Ladislao, like Giangaleazzo before him, saw the pope’s holdings as the logical place to begin a campaign to conquer all Italy. Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi, a key figure in the regime, expressed the commune’s constant underlying concern for its own security by saying, “for now there is nothing to do but wait to see what happens [in negotiations]. . . ; and nothing possible and honorable can be omitted so that union follows, because no remedy seems more reasonable for opposing the king.”²⁷ A strong unified papacy seemed to be the republic’s best hope for a powerful ally against a new tyrant.

The next move in the complex negotiations came from the Roman college of cardinals. By now most people, especially those in closest contact with the popes, had lost all hope that the two difficult and vacillating pontiffs would resolve the schism. Representatives from Gregory’s cardinals apparently approached the Signoria in order to discover whether their safety would be guaranteed regardless of their relations with Gregory. Most of the *richiesti* summoned on 12 April 1408 said without hesitation that it should be. Filippo Magalotti said that the cardinals should not be received, however, “if they wish to come in order to conspire against the pope.”²⁸ The speaker for the Sixteen favored their reception, “provided that they do not make a new schism.”²⁹

The reconquest of Rome in late April by Ladislao again changed the whole

26. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fols. 5v–7v; Landi, *Il papa deposto*, pp. 103–104.

27. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 24v, 19 March 1408.

28. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 30v, 12 April 1408.

29. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 36r, 3 May 1408.

picture of negotiations concerning union.³⁰ In particular, it signaled the beginning of a confrontation between the king and the cardinals, whose goals were in every way opposed to one another. Florence found itself squarely in the middle, wishing to further resolution of the schism in order to create a strong buffer state between itself and Naples, and yet wishing at all costs to avoid another expensive and exhausting war.

Ladislao pressured the commune directly. On the one hand, he continually requested admittance to the league that Florence had with Siena. On the other hand, he made veiled threats to intervene forcefully in negotiations between popes, or between popes and cardinals. It was clear to most Florentines from the spring of 1408 onward that "this king wishes to usurp the liberty of the commune," though some voices were still raised in his defense.³¹ Regardless of their evaluations of Ladislao's intentions, no one wished his forces to enter Tuscany.

For the next month fear of Ladislao underlay Florentine actions as the republic struggled to maintain some semblance of impartiality in all its negotiations. When Benedict requested a safeconduct for himself and his court to enter Pisa to meet with the Roman cardinals who had abandoned Gregory, Vannozio Serragli for the Sixteen (an elected advisory council) reminded the Signoria that there was nothing to do but grant it, because, as had been advised at other times, "we should keep ourselves in the middle."³² Fear of Ladislao prevailed however, and the governors of Pisa were instructed secretly to refuse entry to any Avignonese prelate, though they should make it appear that the refusal stemmed from their own initiative.³³ Similarly, the republic inclined towards an alliance with Cossa, but wished it to be concluded "in greatest secrecy."³⁴

Consistent with this, the response that the *richiesti* recommended for both the cardinals and the king of France was that "however fervently union of the Church is desired, nonetheless it did not seem to them that it should come to this, that it should create danger to our liberty, and especially [that it] should be against our reverence of King Ladislao."³⁵ At the same time the

30. Florentine actions toward Ladislao up to and including this point are examined most thoroughly in Renzo Ninci's "Ladislao e la conquista di Roma del 1408: ragioni e contraddizioni della diplomazia fiorentina," *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 111 (1988): 161–224.

31. Giovanni di Bicci de' Medici for one said "that he believed that he [Ladislao] was the dear father of this people, and that he did not believe those things said by the lord priors and standard-bearer." Nonetheless he agreed that it was not necessary for Ladislao to enter Tuscany, because Pope Gregory would not be received in Pisa or elsewhere in Florentine territory. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fols. 41v, 42r.

32. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 47r, 11 May 1408.

33. Landi, *Il papa deposto*, p. 119.

34. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 47v, 12 May 1408.

35. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 50r, 18 May 1408.

counselors called for collecting great sums of money and creating a new form for imposing forced loans so that the city could be prepared for the worst.

In mid-May the Roman cardinals called for a general council against their pope. In their meeting with Benedict's representatives to arrange a possible meeting with him, the Romans suggested a general council of both obediences. Despite the French king's support for a council, the Avignonese cardinals hesitated for some days before deciding to break with Benedict. Once they did, however, events moved swiftly. The Florentine republic had concluded an alliance with Cossa in late May, deciding to cast their fate with his, and at least tacitly to accept his position that only a general council could resolve the schism. On 10 June 1408 the Signoria wrote to the captain and podestà of Pisa, now requesting that all prelates and courtiers of the antipope be allowed free entry into their city.³⁶ On 29 June six cardinals from each obedience together with representatives from Pietro Filargo (the future Pope Alexander V), and Baldassare Cossa (the future Pope John XXIII), announced to the world from Livorno that they would follow the way of cession and of a general council.³⁷

While hiring troops and granting Gregory's outrageous demands for a safe passage to Siena, the Signoria had to decide whether to allow the cardinals to hold the council in Pisa.³⁸ Three basic positions emerged from the debate of twenty-six citizens summoned to tender advice. One group, led by Cristofano Spini, Domenico Corsi, and Vieri Guadagni, argued that "because of fear of war a place should not be denied the cardinals," and that "there seemed greater danger in denying a place than in granting it." Those opposing, led by Matteo Tinghi, Paolo Biliotti, and Niccolò Guasconi, said that "scandals could arise," and that "the farther away they [the cardinals] were, the greater the security that would lie over the city." The speakers for the two colleges and for most of the other corporate bodies inclined cautiously toward hosting the council, but only after further deliberation.³⁹

By the time the matter was put before the Council of the People three days later, most favored conceding a place, but still worried for Florence's own security. Several speakers said that they would accede to the cardinals' request if other temporal lords requested it, or conversely, that they would not accede unless other lords agreed to it.⁴⁰ Others followed Maso degli Albizzi, a most important figure, who said that granting a place would lead to

36. Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Signoria, Carteggi, Missive, I Cancelleria (SCMIC)*, reg. 28, fol. 81v. Most unusually, there are no records in the *Consulte* of any discussion concerning this major change in policy.

37. Valois, *La France et le Grand Schisme*, 4:14–15.

38. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 74v, 12 July 1408. Besides a large escort, Gregory demanded twelve Florentine hostages to ensure his own safety. Albizzi, *Commissioni*, pp. 167, 175.

39. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 78v.

40. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fols. 79r, 79v.

great honors, usefulness, preeminence, and stability for the condition of the commune (*status communis*), and that honor to God would follow. Maso perceived only one threat to security, namely Ladislao, and argued that with the proper precautions he could be dealt with.

A few raised more ecclesiastical issues. Dominico Corsi wished guarantees from the cardinals that they would not elect a third pope before the council, and also wished to assure Ladislao that the cardinals were not acting heretically and therefore were not in need of his correction.⁴¹ Antonio Alessandri for the Six of the Mercanzia said that that group would consent to the cardinals' request if it were clear that they had the support of Italian rulers; for himself he added "that he wished that they would do it in the ordinary way and, if they did otherwise, he would expel them."⁴² Matteo Leoni agreed to a council if other rulers consented, but said he would leave it to be worked out among the clerics, and concluded by saying "he wished they would go to France and leave us alone."⁴³ Although each quarter of the city most unusually voiced some dissent within its ranks about the proper course of action, by 23 August Florence was ready to welcome the cardinals within Pisa's walls, provided that their promises concerning Ladislao's acquiescence were confirmed.⁴⁴

Florence continued to commit itself more and more to the cause of the council. The council opened with over 700 prelates in attendance on 25 March 1409; the next day, in accordance with a declaration of 7 February the commune of Florence subtracted obedience from Pope Gregory XII, after he had failed to appear at Pisa. Increasingly worried by Ladislao's threats, the cities of Florence, Siena, and Bologna strengthened their alliance, making it clear that they were willing to go to great expense to ensure that the "cardinals knew they had nothing to fear, but could pursue their affairs in peace."⁴⁵

There is no question that the Florentines expected some return on their

41. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 79v.

42. "... quod vellet facerent per viam ordinariam et, si aliter facerent, repelleret eos" (*Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 80r). One possible reading might be that he wished them to persuade one of the popes to call a council, since that was "the usual way," although by now each had in fact called his own council to compete with that of Pisa.

43. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 79v.

44. *Consulte*, reg. 39, fol. 85r. A more general safeconduct for prelates from both colleges to enter Florentine territory had been issued on 4 August. See *SCMIC*, reg. 28, fols. 93r–94r.

In informing Gregory of its decision, the Signoria argued that all the cardinals had vowed to work for the end of the schism, and that Florence was only helping them keep their vows. Moreover, Gregory's council could not have the desired effect of uniting the church, since Benedict had called a council as well. For these reasons, the Florentines begged Gregory that he deign to attend the council at Pisa. See *Signoria*, *Carteggi*, *Missive*, *Legazioni*, *Commissioni*, reg. 4, fol. 71r, 28 August 1408.

45. Landi, *Il papa deposto*, p. 170.

considerable investment in protecting the council; in the short run they were not disappointed. The same day that the cardinals in conclave at Pisa elected Pope Alexander V, Florence formed a league against Ladislao with Siena, Louis II of Anjou, and Cossa. Though the new pope did not formally join the league, he did recognize Louis's claim to the Neapolitan throne, and furthermore granted substantial financial dispensation to Florence in recognition of costs incurred pursuing Louis's claim.⁴⁶ As expenses mounted in the fight to help Louis conquer Naples and the papacy regain Rome and the Papal States, the influential speaker Maestro Cristofano Brandaglini reminded his fellow citizens that "*for our defense*, union of the Church was achieved through our efforts. And we should beware lest that which was achieved with such expense be dismissed."⁴⁷

For the next five years the commune would continue to subsidize the military force of first Louis and then Baldassare Cossa, believing that "if the Papal States and Rome were saved, our position would be safe, and if they were lost our liberty would be lost."⁴⁸ In the minds of the leaders of the *reggimento*, the security of their commune and that of the temporal state of the church were intimately entwined. Guided by their belief that the temporal church and the republic would survive or perish together, the leaders of the city government continued to subsidize at great expense the papacy's wars against Ladislao, even after Pope John XXIII had shown by his actions that Florence's safety was of minimal or no concern to him.⁴⁹ The tragedy for the republic in these years lay in failing to see how little the Pisan popes shared their vision of a common destiny for Florence and the church; the two popes were more than willing to accept Florentine gold, less than eager to protect Florentine interests.

46. Landi, *Il papa deposto*, pp. 203, 218.

47. "Quod pro nostra defensione facta est nobis operantibus unio ecclesie" (*Consulte*, reg. 40, fol. 217r; emphasis added).

48. *Consulte*, reg. 42, fols. 23v, 24v, 30 May 1413.

49. For some idea of the expense of the war, see Anthony Molho, *Florentine Public Finances in the Early Renaissance, 1400–1433* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), pp. 52–54.