

VERONESE EASTERS

The Verona rising against Napoleon (April 17-25, 1797)



Veronese Easters (April 17-25, 1797). 1-2 - Fighting between Veronese insurgents and Napoleonic troops in Piazza delle Erbe and Piazza Bra. The people and the soldiers of Saint Mark are freeing the city gates and compelling the French to retreat into Castelveccchio and fortresses on the hills surrounding the town. Oil on wood by Mario Emilio Ferrari. 2006. Verona. Private collection.

The *Veronese Easters*, like the *Sicilian Vespers*, is the name for the general insurrection in Verona and its surrounding country, on April 17, 1797: Easter Monday. Among the innumerable risings from 1796 to 1814 which swept through Italy and Europe occupied by Bonaparte, and which expressed the rejection by the people of the false principles of the French Revolution, imposed by bayonets, the insurrection of Verona was certainly the most important in Italy, after the Saint Faith's Crusade in 1799, by which Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo of Calabria and the farmers of the south regained a whole Kingdom for the Bourbons of Naples.

1 - Verona and the Serenissima Republic before the Revolution

The Revolutionary France, drunk with the massacres of the Terror, ventured into a series of wars against the other European Powers after killing the legitimate Sovereign, Louis XVI, exterminating his family, causing the death of the Dauphin at the age of ten in the Temple Tower jail, demolishing the monarchy, persecuting



worship and the Catholic religion. The revolutionary hordes, led by the darkest anticlerical sects, above all the Masons, were anxious to export hatred against the Church all over the world and upset the traditional sacred Institutions both civil and religious, to which the people were deeply attached.

The Italian States and the aristocratic Republic of Venice were then unfortunately experiencing a sad moral decline: a large part of the patrician ship, a shadow of that which had faced and beaten the Turks so many times, was infiltrated by the libertarian and libertine principles of the French Revolution. The patricians were indifferent towards religion, bourgeoisified, uninterested in the public good, frequently affiliated to Masonic lodges, which included a lot of professionals, priests and bishops.

Only the people and a good part of the clergy (specially the lower one) had remained impervi-

3 - The Lion of St. Mark with ducal horn and clenched sword in the fist. *Fortiora Leoni* on the scroll means that the greatest deeds pertain to the lion. Venice. Correr Civic Museum Library. Gherro Collection.

ous to the Enlightenment and the secularizing ideas which came from beyond the Alps. Their touching fidelity to the traditional, civil and religious order, a heritage from their forefathers and by them defended at the cost of their lives (hundreds of thousands of fighters fell during the Napoleonic period from 1796 to 1814), shines in the counter-revolutionary insurrections that swept all over the Peninsula and of which no mention is found in history school-books. The explanation of the dissolution of the thousand year old glorious Republic of Venice lies in the substantial betrayal of its own glorious past by the governing classes.

Verona, however, distances itself from this discouraging picture. Towards the end of the XVIII century, the town had approximately 50.000 souls, which reached 230.000, if including the province. A moderate economic well-being was widespread among the less well-to-do social classes, favoured by almost fifty uninterrupted years of peace. The Veronese aristocracy, owners of considerable estates in the countryside, improved the living conditions there, while, in town, the ancient and famous silk industry was in great demand and produced above all for foreign markets.

The extremely wide administrative and judicial autonomy enjoyed by Verona and the slight fiscal pressure only served to increase the filial affection of the population towards the Serenissima. The harmony among the various social classes and the religious spirit, extraordinarily rooted in every class, completed the picture of an orderly and peaceful society, naturally hostile to the unheard-of ideas which, from Jacobin France, were infecting Northern Italy too. Also in Verona, in fact, the Masons - the principal instigators of subversion - looked for adepts, but affiliates were few and soon the careful and discreet vigilance of State Investigators - perhaps the only Venetian magistracy still efficient and equal to its glorious past - discovered their shady plots, dismantled lodges and dispersed the members.

The almost absolute popular participation in Catholic practices, a clergy still immune to revolutionary in-



4 - The Madonna appearing before Venetian Senator Giovanni Zusto. Although her words went unheeded, she advised Venice to take arms against the revolutionary horde from France, which would shed blood throughout Italy by overthrowing its ancient and venerable Catholic Principalities, overpowering the Church itself. Painting by Giorgio Sartor.



5 - His Majesty Louis XVI, the most Christian King of France, being martyred by the revolutionaries on January 21, 1793 in defiance of the royalty principle, but above all of the Catholic religion, according to the words of Pope Pius VI. By the guillotine, the confessor is taking leave of the King looking in God and addressing the Sovereign with the famous words: "Son of Saint Louis, ascend to Heaven". London engraving by A. Cordon, on a sketch by C. Benazek. Milan. Public printing collection Achille Bertarelli.



6 - The splendour of Verona before the revolution: View from the East with Ponte delle Navi, 1750 ca. Drawing by Gian Francesco Avesani, engineer. Engraving by Valesi. Verona. Public library. Printings and drawings cabinet.



7-10 - A 16th Regiment gun rack from Treviso; an ultramarine soldier or *Schiavone* and Veronese Noble Guard in azure and gold: troops defending Verona during the *Veronese Easters*. On the right: a dragon officer on horseback or light Venetian cavalry. Drawings by Giorgio Sartor. As a sign of patriotism and aversion to the French Revolution, common people and authorities pinned a yellow-blue (the colours of Venice and Verona) cockade on their coats or on hats.

fective ideas, the presence of numerous secular brotherhoods in the whole territory prevented the Jansenist heresy (the progressives of that time) promoters of the subversive ideas of France, from asserting itself.

Just a few years before the *Veronese Easters*, giants of the Catholic faith received their religious formation: St. Gaspare Bertoni, the future founder of the religious order of Stimmatini; God's Servant, Father Pietro Leonardi; the Blessed Carlo Steeb and the Marquise Saint Maddalena of Canossa, belonging to one of the most ancient and aristocratic town families, the founder, in the coming century, of the *Daughters of Charity* Order. The Venetian patrician ex-Jesuit Gianandrea Avogadro, deeply anti-Jansenist and lively opponent of the Enlightenment's disruptive social philosophy had been in charge of the see of St. Zeno since 1790. In short, as the Marquis Francesco Agdollo, a Venetian secret agent sent to Verona to check and report on the presence of the Count of Lilla, the future Louis XVIII, King of France, reported to the Dominant on January 25, 1795: «No news from this town, good order; such an incomparable population makes it appear to be the seat of tranquillity».

2 - The Napoleonic invasion



11 - March 1796. A menacing Bonaparte ready to fall upon Italy. The troops from a blood-surfeited France on the brink of economic collapse are crossing the Alps to plunder the most prosperous nations in Europe and spread the principles of the anti-Christian Revolution. Paris. Cliché by French National Library.

In March 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte, an unknown Corsican official (favourite of the mistress of Barras, at that time the head of the French Directory) already distinguishing himself a few months before, during the cannonade against the Parisian crowd, received the command of the Army of Italy. He was entrusted with the order to open a secondary front, to the one on the Rhine, against Imperial Austria.

The unsuspected gifts of Bonaparte, his unscrupulous military conduct (contempt for word given and chivalrous rules, which until then had disciplined wars, recourse to gold if only to bribe opposing generals, systematic looting of the occupied territories even if neutral, maintenance and billeting of the troops at the expense of the civil population treated as enemies, oppression of the losers) an intelligence service much more efficient and remunerated than that of the enemy, the powerful help of the Masons and the other secret societies, the recourse to drugs (the famous cantharides) to galvanize the conscripts (when the fanaticism of the revolu-

tionary commissioners, charged with supervising them, alone was not enough) and a lot of good fortune, explain the successes of the army between 1796 and 1797.

Once the Piedmont and the Austrian Lombardy were occupied, on the pretext to pursue fleeing Imperialists, Bonaparte also invaded the neutral territories of the Serenissima Republic of Venice, that had refused the repeated



12 - Italian satire on requisitions by the revolutionary French people of valuables, foodstuff, livestock, clothes, historical finds, works of art and the fat of the land. February 1797. Paris. © Photo Musée de l'Armée.

13 - Misdeeds of the French republican troops and their freedom fighters desecrating the tombs and even robbing the dead. Dutch satire. Pencil drawing. Paris. © Photo Musée de l'Armée.

offers of military alliance both from the one and the other belligerent. On June 1, 1796 Napoleon entered Verona, with the fuses of his canons lit amid general hostility. Immediately, his troops distinguished themselves by robbery and impiety, not caring about Venetian neutrality and taking possession of fortresses and related armaments.

Being the Imperialists overcome at Rivoli, in March 1797 the plan for the subversion of the Serenissima was realized: Bonaparte induced a bunch of conspirators from Bergamo and Brescia to carry out a coup d'état, to separate these two towns from the Serenissima. In fact, they proclaimed their independence as republics, while, in reality, they were only puppets protected by the French bayonets. Crema was treacherously overthrown by the French themselves.

The whole Venetian Lombardy was in flames. Salò was disputed by Jacobins and the inhabitants of the valleys, unconditionally loyal to the Lion of St. Mark, and these, led by a heroic priest, Don Andrea Filippi, finally prevailed and asked help from Verona. The Jacobins were however decided not only to retake Salò, but also to march on Verona.

Not to be overthrown in turn by violence or by betrayal, *Verona Fidelis* (Faithful Verona) immediately gave proof of its loyalty to the legitimate Government, asking the Venetian Senate permission to arm and defend itself against Bergamo's and Brescia's Jacobins. Forty thousand Veronese people were in arms, among whom very many farmers of the *cernide* led by the young General Antonio Maffei, mustered to garrison the border with Brescia, liberate various villages and even go as far as to besiege Brescia. The yellow-blue cockade - the town colours - was their emblem. Verona's Bishop, Mons. Gianandrea Avogadro, the model of charity for all the



14 - Verona. The revolutionary iconoclasm during the French occupation. The statue of Saint Nicholas from Tolentino in Sant'Eufemia is being pulled down using ropes by the insubordinate troops, but surprisingly stands. Their efforts are vain, so at the height of their rage, the sanculottes bludgeon it. Despite their savagery, the statue remains intact. Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.

counter-revolutionary fighters, gave the order to melt the silverwares of the churches for the salvation of the Country.

In town, amid the embarrassment and the apprehension of the French, barricaded in the castles, everyone cleaned swords and polished muskets, while at every street corner notices and writings with 'Viva San Marco!' (Long live St. Mark!) appeared. All the gates were

guarded by the Noble Guard, a voluntary militia specially constituted by the Veronese Authorities to evidence a diffused mistrust towards national armed forces, bound to the Senate in regard to the shameful policy of unarmed neutrality. So, merely to keep faith with this policy, the Republic prohibited any action whatsoever of hostility against the French, who, in the meantime, from Milan, Mantua and Ferrara-Padua were marching against the Venetian-Scaliger army of Maffei and against Verona.

3 - The Veronese Easters



15 - The Council of War of Verona and Venetian Authorities in Verona (March 22, 1797). Verona decided not to end up like Crema, Bergamo and Brescia, which were betrayed by Serenissima infidels under the protection of French arms and separated from Venice by force, before being handed over to Napoleon. Verona declared its loyalty to Saint Mark and the legitimate Venetian Government, from which it was never to be parted except by violence, is preparing to take arms against the Jacobins and the revolutionaries under General Antonio Maffei at the Mayor's suggestion, Francesco degli Emilei. Painting by Giorgio Sartor. Detail.

April 17, 1797, the Monday after Easter, the continuous French provocations gave rise to the first incidents. At 5 p.m., during Vespers, the batteries from the castles overlooking the town, which were in enemy hands, began to fire on Verona. The exasperated people rose up in unison crying 'Long live St. Mark!', while the church bells warned the country population too, that the general insurrection had begun.

For nine days they fought house to house, freed all the gates, stormed the strongholds, sent requests for help to Venice, in whose name and interest they fought and died, and to the Empire, that just recently had signed the

preliminaries to peace with Bonaparte in Leoben.

The people, inexperienced in managing cannons, were helped by six Imperial artillerymen, released from imprisonment. Castelvechio was besieged. The cannons were transported to the hills of St. Mattia and St. Leonardo. The people fired from above on the French revolutionaries who were barricaded inside St. Peter's Castle and St. Felix Castle. Two hundred Imperial soldiers were fighting in confusion in the fray.

Count Francesco degli Emilei (the then Mayor of the town) and Count Augusto Verità led the Veronese people. Thousands of farmers rushed to Verona to help. The inhabitants from Valpolicella, which offered all its men, were the first to arrive. The hill-dwellers came down from Lessinia, other columns of volunteers in arms arrived from the lower and the east Veronese land.

The people advanced inch by inch towards the fortresses, rejected every attempt at sortie by the enemy



16 - Review of the Venetian troops and rebels by the Venetian and Veronese authorities in San Pietro in Cariano, before the insurrection of the *Veronese Easters*. The Valpolicella was to give all its men for the defence of the Country. Painting by Giorgio Sartor. Detail.

17 - The Bishop of Verona, Mons. Gianandrea Avogadro, exhorting the clergy to preach in favour of the real freedom and of the Country, while ordering all the silverware of the churches to be melted for its salvation. Painting by Giorgio Sartor.



18 - At 5 p.m. on Easter Monday, April 17, 1797, and under French occupation, the fortresses on the hills surrounding Verona, in the French hands, start shelling the town thus interrupting the celebration of the Vespers in its churches. A frightened and exasperated crowd is pouring into the streets and squares. A cry of alarm rises: "Take arms! Let's slaughter the French. Long live Saint Mark! Long live Saint Mark!". Painting by Giorgio Sartor.

19 - *Veronese Eaters*. Via Mazzanti was the theatre of the first clashes. In the background: the Lamberti's Tower. Photomechanical print based on a drawing by Lodovico Pogliaghi, in Francesco Bertolini, *Il Settecento e il primo Regno d'Italia (The Eighteenth century and the first Kingdom of Italy)*. Milan 1913. F.lli Treves Editori (opposite page 176). Milan. Museo di Storia del Risorgimento.

and considered as traitor anyone who wanted to negotiate with him.

The untrustworthy General Beaupoil, who, from the castles above the city, had been hammering it with his artillery, came down to negotiate. He soon lost all his arrogance, whined and his life was saved by the Marquis Giona, who got him out of a lynching by the exasperated crowd. The Jews of the ghetto sided with the enemy without any hesitation, offering shelter and weapons. From the search of the ghetto in fact three boxes of explosives and other war material were found, hidden by them to place at the French revolutionaries' disposal.

Castelvecchio hoisted the white flag. The cease fire was ordered, but the French revolutionaries, perceiving that the besiegers had unwisely come too close to the castle, treacherously took advantage of this by discharging a quick-fire gun against them, making a massacre. An Imperial patrol, that unfortunately was bringing the news about the preliminaries to peace in Leoben, was welcomed with enthusiasm by the population

who, instead, considered them a vanguard of the Imperialists, about to free the town from the hated Jacobins.

In Pescantina, the heroic resistance of the inhabitants



20 - The Veronese people can be seen seizing all the city gates, rebutting the French soldiers (compelling them to surrender) and setting up communications with the province and the capital, Venice. Count Francesco degli Emilei, the City Mayor, was to his men and personally conquer *Porta Nuova*. Painting by Giorgio Sartor.

21 - Count Antonio Maria Perez (the son) leading popular troops (*cernide* or trainbands) to assault St. Peter's Castle, overlooking Verona from the hill. Painting by Giorgio Sartor. Detail.



stopped the advance of a French column, preventing them from ferrying across the Adige. This heroism led nineteen people, among them women and children, to lose their life, shot or burnt alive in their houses.

In Venice, in the meantime, Emilei didn't get the help he had hoped for and had to return empty-handed. On the lake, General Maffei, attacked by the French armies coming from Milan, had to withdraw, faithful to Senate's orders not to engage them, but in S. Massimo and Santa Lucia on April 20 battle was engaged. The encounter was propitious, at first, for the Venetian soldiers and that was the last time that victory smiled on



22 - *Veronese Easters*: Veronese people's assault on the fortress of Castelvechio, inside which Napoleonic hordes were entrenched. French print of that time by Duplessis-Bertaux. Verona. Museo del Risorgimento at the Biblioteca d'arte del Museo di Castelvechio.

St. Mark, but then, outnumbered, they had to retire behind the walls.

The fate of the town, deprived of any external help, was already sealed, but the people didn't want to surrender yet. In the province, summary executions followed one another: in a place called Ca' dei Capri, near S. Massimo, a young priest, Don Giuseppe Malenza, who was leading a group of rebels, fell, shot by French bullets. From the hills, the Veronese Jacobins, traitors to their Country, played military fanfares for the imminent collapse of the abhorred Verona. Finally, besieged by five armies, bombed day and night, betrayed by the Venetian Proveditors who abandoned the town a second time, simply not to violate the chimerical neutral-



< 23 - Besieged by the Veronese people, Castelvecchio is surrendering and hoisting the white flag. To negotiate with the enemy, the insurgents made a tactical mistake and got too close to the enemy. After loading their canons, the French revolutionaries hurled fire and death upon the Veronese people. The most powerful army of the world resorted to these abject manoeuvres to quell the rebellion. Painting by Michele Nardo.

> 24 - A phalanx of French troop from Milan to subdue the insurgents is trying to wade the Adige river by Pescantina, but is driven back by the heroic resistance of the inhabitants on April 20. Nineteen of whom, women and children, were shot dead or burnt alive in their homes by the French. Tempera on canvass by Quirino Maestrello.



ity, Verona capitulated on April 25, 1797 (St. Mark's day), declaring at the same time the end of the Venetian rule over it, with a symbolical gesture which underlined the contempt for the sloth and the betrayal by the Venetians and which raised it to the rank of capital.



25 - April 20, 1797: the Venetian-Scaliger army joined battle in San Massimo and Santa Lucia. For the last time, victory smiled on the soldiers of St. Mark. Painting by Giorgio Sartor. Detail.

At the end of nine days of fighting, the French left hundreds of victims on the field after a battle that had become, for the most powerful army in Europe, a scorching defeat. The captured French prisoners numbered about 2.400. Five hundred of them were soldiers. Other 900 belonged to the civil staff of the Napoleonic army together with their families: they all were led to the *Piazza dei Signori* near the building of the Venetian Authorities in Verona. Other 1.000 French soldiers, in-patients in the hospitals of the town, were guarded by the Veronese themselves to protect them from any revenge.

Just 350 are the Veronese victims: to be added to the two thirds of the 2.500 infantrymen of the Venetians garrisoning Verona which were deported to France, where they perished amidst hardships. This raises the Veronese and Venetian dead to 2.057.

26 - In order not to jeopardize the chimerical neutrality of Venice, the Venetian Proveditors are fleeing from *Porta Ves-covo* at night, abandoning Verona while being shelled. In the streets, people fight and die for Venice and bells are tolling for the peasants in desperate defence. Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.



27 - Fighting between the insurgents and French troops in *Piazza delle Erbe*, in Verona. Tempera on canvass by Quirino Maestrello.

28 - The Veronese Jacobins, who, betrayed their Country by laying in wait during fighting, are flushing out from the hills surrounding the town as consummate opportunists, to celebrate the downfall of the abhorred Verona. Tempera on canvass by Quirino Maestrello.

4 - The revolutionary revenge and the end of the Serenissima

On April 27 the French returned to Verona after disarming the people, making the cannons useless, choosing the sixteen most eminent fellow citizens as hostages (among whom the Bishop, Emilei, Verità and all those in the highest authorities). First of all they robbed the pawnshop, the bank of the poor. Enormous contributions were imposed, works of art plundered, while a military commission was charged with arranging the deportation to Guyana of the fifty principal leaders of the insurrection. The Veronese traitors, worse than their masters, would like to change the name of Verona (re-naming it *Egalitopoli* or *The Town of Equality*) that had stained its honour by rebelling against such great liberators and would like to punish, with a public beheading in the main street, all the heads of the families who supported the glorious defence of their own town and of their own legitimate and beloved government. The French themselves, not to increase tension, forbade the execution of the massacre.

But the revenge came soon. In the night of May 6, 1797, after a farce of political trial in Ridolfi Da Lissa Palace, today the Scientific High school Montanari, they arrested and put to death, on May 16th, June 8th and 18th, Giovanni Battista Malenza (Giuseppe's brother) a member of the Venetian counterespionage, whom Jacobins had been denouncing for some time and who had been one of the leaders of the town insurrection; Counts Emilei and Verità whose houses were pillaged and the old Capuchin friar Luigi Maria from Verona (alias Domenico Frangini) who died in the odour of sanctity. Disgusted by the sansculottes' impiety, in an in-



29 - On the very first day of their return to Verona, the very thing they do, the Napoleonic soldiers plundered the pawnshop where the gold of the poor was kept. Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.

30 - Count Augusto Verità being arrested at dead of night. He was one of the most heroic leaders of the counter-revolutionary insurrection known as the *Veronese Easters*. After a farcical trial before the French revolutionary military court, the Count was to be shot to the right of *Porta Nuova* on May 16, 1797. Painting by Giorgio Sartor.



tercepted letter to one of his brothers, he had defined them worse than cannibals, because the latter had attacked men only, while the French republicans had attacked God. Father Frangini refused to disown the authorship of the letter or to be

considered crazy or drunk and faced martyrdom, radiant, to the discordant sound of the drums.

Also common people like Pietro Sauro, Andrea Pomari, Stefano Lanzetta and Agostino Bianchi suffered the same fate: all of them were shot on the right of the *Porta Nuova*, looking at it from the outside.

Great was the lack of jurisdiction of the French revolutionary tribunal: it sentenced the Veronese insurgents to death on the strength of a French criminal law, punishing crimes against the republican army in territories at war with France, which was still formally in peace with the neutral Serenissima.

As soon as the town was recaptured, the French revolutionaries decided upon the immediate deportation to France, via Cisalpine and Milan, of the 2.500 men of the Venetian garrison which defended the town and particularly the Treviso infantry regiment. To lodge them, the country of the liberators of humanity set up the first modern concentration camp.

Less than half or even one third came back from those prison and extermination camps after the Camponovio peace treaty.



31 - The martyrs of the *Veronese Easters* (Count Francesco degli Emilei and Count Augusto Verità with Giambattista Malenza) are being led to their execution by shooting flanked by emotional crowds of people. May 16. 1797. Painting by Giorgio Sartor.



32 - Portrait of the Servant of God, Father Luigi Maria of Verona, a Capuchin friar, in the world Domenico Frangini (Verona, July 3, 1725 - June 8, 1797) shot by the French revolutionaries, and Martyr of the *Veronese Eaters*. Medal. Verona. Private collection. "After hearing the fateful judgment, he said aloud: «Deo gratias. Te Deum laudamus» («Thanks to God! God be praised!») and was taken back to prison happy and joyful late at night. On June 7, he was interrogated one last time, unrepentant. On the eve of his execution, from his prison cell, he converted a condemned person who was not in the least bit interested in contrition, the innkeeper of the Rosa, Agostino Bianchi. He made a small testament, and removed his shoes as he wanted to walk barefoot to the scaffold. The following morning he bade farewell: «Good-bye, until we meet in Heaven, let there be consolation in death», and walked barefoot [...] while comforting his fellow prisoner, Bianchi. Among the soldiers and at the untuned sound of the drums, he was led to ditch outside Porta Nuova. He was so relieved, even triumphant. There he was shot 26 days short of his 72nd birthday. It was June 8, 1797 at 10.00 a.m." in Antonio Pighi, *Biographical notes about Father Luigi Maria from Verona, Capuchin, shot by the French in 1797*. Verona. Pozzati 1897, page 10.

33 - The night before his execution, Father Luigi Maria Frangini is hearing the confession of the innkeeper Agostino Bianchi, in prison. He was converted and executed with the father at dawn (June 8, 1797). Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.

They were sent back home at the end of that horrible 1797 and in the following months through the Rhine border and the friendly territories of the Empire. Most of those soldiers, guilty of carrying out their duty, starved to death in France, some on the Brenner roads or on the Tarvisius on their way home.

In the following months, Veronese Jacobins and revolutionaries from beyond the Alps wreaked their resentment: raised trees of liberty and pyramids, removed the crown and despoiled the venerated image of the *Madonna of the People* in the Cathedral (she was refused the highly aristocratic title of Queen, downgraded to *Citizen-Madonna*). They committed other sacrileges, by denouncing blunders from the Public Education Room, suggesting, for instance, the burning of all the confessionals, the shooting of clergymen in



34 - Execution by shooting of the Martyrs of the *Veronese Eaters* at Porta Nuova. Painting by Michele Nardo.

35 - The Venetian garrison that defended Verona during the *Veronese Eaters* is leaving Porta San Zeno, to be deported en masse to concentration camps in France. Most of the soldiers, who were found guilty of serving their Country, would never return. Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.

St. Fermo Road or the demolishing of the *Arche Scaligere* (*Scaliger Tombs: Della Scala were the ancient Lords of Verona*) because they had been raised under an anti-democratic government. The lions of St. Mark were destroyed, noble armorial bearings and the respective titles forbidden, under penalty of heavy fines for those who even dared to pronounce them.

Straightway, to justify their aggression towards a town and a Republic neutral and at peace with them,

36 - The removing of the crown from the most venerable image of the *Madonna of the People*, in the Cathedral of Verona. Realizing that the revolutionaries were going to strip her of her golden crown, a chief of the brotherhood of the *Madonna of the People* decided to replace the crown with a golden-copper one that a pious artisan had forged overnight. The following morning, when the blasphemous villains went to remove the crown from the Madonna, they realized it was made of cheap metal. They flung the crown to the ground, seized the statue and asked for a high ransom for it. A pious patrician offered to pay the ransom, provided nobody revealed his name. And so it was. Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.



transalpine revolutionaries and Veronese Jacobins laid the blame on their victims and invented the fable of the massacre of Verona and passed off the insurrection of a city tired of the tyranny of its so-called liberators as a programmed and coldly realized slaughter of sick or wounded French soldiers. The major part of the press posters of the period, dealing with the insurrection in Verona, are inspired by this lie.

After reaching the power solely through the French forces of occupation, the Jacobins summoned the elections thus hoping to see their usurpation legitimised. What a disappointment, what a furious reaction, when they were defeated in almost all the constituencies by the members of the ancient noble class! The popular verdict was obviously not respected by the democratizers. The French General, who had the final



37 - The heroic Captain Domenico Pizzamano, Venetian patrician. On April 20, 1797, three vessels, flying the flag of the French Republic, tried to enter the lagoon. The orders of the Serenissima were peremptory: no foreign military ship to be allowed in. From the forts of St. Andrew, Pizzamano had some warning shots fired. An enemy vessel, which for life's little ironies was called *The Liberator of Italy*, attempted to run the blockade, sailed to Venice and shelled the vessels trying to block its way. Faithful to his task, Captain Pizzamano shelled the privateer, boarded and subdued it after a cold steel fight during which a venetian and several french sailors died and among them commander Laugier. The ship, laden with arms, was seized. Bonaparte was furious with the loyal soldier and made peace with Venice, conditional upon his arrest. The moderate, as always happens, gave in and Pizzamano served several months in prison. Portrait of Alessandro Longhi. Oil on canvas. Venice. Ca' Rezzonico. Museum of the Venetian '700.

38 - The shelling and boarding of the French vessel *The Liberator of Italy*, in a Bonaparte propaganda printing. Milan. Public printing collection Achille Bertarelli.

word, expelled by force a large part of the elected people, who were judged too tied up with the ancient government and brought the losers back.

The Bishop was finally arrested again: the first time, as he had refused to bless the tree of liberty, he



39 - May 12, 1797. The abdication of the last Doge Ludovico Manin, surrendering to Bonaparte's conditions. "Have this, no longer will I wear it": while handing the Doge horn (dogal toque, like the papal camauro) to a squire, the last Doge shamefully brought the centuries-old history of the Venetian Republic to its capitulation. This cowardly act caused him to be despised by the Venetian people, who insulted him as he passed before them. Anonymous. Painting XIX c. Venice. Correr Civic Museum.

40 - The last moments of the Venetian Republic: not to displease Bonaparte, the Senate ordered a popular revolt aimed at the defense of St. Mark to be suppressed in blood. It was the so-called *Battle of Rialto*, May 12, 1797. G.L. Gatteri drawing. G. Bernasconi engrav. From the volume: *Venetian history expressed in 150 tableaux invented and drawn by Joseph Gatteri according to various customs*. II Edition. Venice, 1854. Venice. Correr Civic Museum Library.

had escaped the firing-squad by one vote. Now, a few days before the final evacuation of the town by the revolutionaries from beyond the Alps, he was forced under penalty of imprisonment to grant the divorce to a French officer.

While Verona was groaning under the arrogant lash of the revolution, the Venetian Authorities committed the last betrayal of the Republic. They abandoned its defence on which Napoleon had declared war in the mean-

41 - The theft of the horses of Saint Mark on December 13, 1797. For the first time in several the centuries, the four horses were taken down to the sorrowful silence of the Venetian crowd. They were taken to Ancona and then to Leghorn



by sea, where, together with other treasures pillaged from Italy, they were loaded on to a frigate that headed for Toulon. By navigating inland canals, ten boats took them to Paris. In fact, Bonaparte wanted the horses in Paris as a trophy to immortalize the Italian campaign. Drawing by Rouargue. Copperplate by Outhwaite. 1830. Milan. Public printing collection Achille Bertarelli.



42 - The last day of the Serenissima. Venice is occupied by the French republicans. A provisional municipality is invested with power formed by the glib and foolish Jacobins, who begin to demolish the glorious symbols of the historic city of the Doges. Photomechanic engraving on the drawing by Lodovico Pogliaghi, in Francesco Bertolini, *Il Settecento e il primo Regno d'Italia (The Eighteenth century and the first Kingdom of Italy)*. Milan 1913. F.lli Treves Editori (opposite page 184). Milan, Museo di Storia del Risorgimento.

time, even though Bonaparte had no ships to conquer Venice. On May 12, 1797 the Doge himself, Ludovico Manin, proposed to the *Maggior Consiglio* (Greater Council), whose numbers that day moreover did not reach a quorum for any resolution, the devolution of power to the people and the revolutionary democratization. The only Authorities, whose behaviour was honourable (the State Inquisitors and the heroic Captain Domenico Pizzamano, who, obeying orders, had bombed and compelled a hostile warship slipping into the lagoon to surrender) were arrested, as requested by Bonaparte and his men. Ironically, that French ship was called: *The Liberator of Italy*.

This wasn't enough: a popular anti-French riot, that had broken out in the Rialto in defence of the Serenissima, was bloodily crushed by the same Venetian Authorities.

After a thousand years of splendour and uncontested dominion by the winged Lion of St. Mark, during which the glorious banner of the Serenissima had flown over all the seas, feared and respected even by the Turks, the ancient Doges' town was given over to a swarm of scheming and loquacious town-councillors pro-French Revolution, who planted the tree of liberty in St. Mark's square and threatened of death penalty anybody daring to cry out *Long live St. Mark!* They would usurp power till the triumphal entry of the Imperial troops into the town, in January 1798.



43 - Venetian soldiers of the Verona garrison kept in prison camps in France, after the *Veronese Eaters*. Their loyalty to Saint Mark was written in blood. Painting by Mariano Zardini. Mixed technique.

5 - The Restoration



44 - January 21, 1798: triumphant entrance of the Imperial Army in Verona. After eighteen months of incessant prayers and candlelight vigils at the altar of the *Madonna of the people*, the Veronese people are granted the grace of being delivered from the revolutionary barbarity, on the martyrdom anniversary of His Majesty Louis XVI, the Most Christian King of France. The imperial divisions are marching by into the town from *Porta Nuova*, headed by the Baron Wilhelm von Kerpen, while the crowd is in delirium. Tempera on wood by Quirino Maestrello.



45 - The funerary catafalque, 55 feet high, erected on the occasion of the solemn honours of Count Francesco degli Emilei and Count Augusto Verità. Verona, at Saint Sebastian's Church on September 23, 1799. Devising and drawing by Leonardo Manzati, a priest. Engraving by Giuseppe Dall'Acqua from Vicenza, 1800. Verona. Diocesan Seminary Library.

After eighteen months of incessant prayers and lighted candles day and night in front of the altar of the *Madonna of the People*, the Veronese people were satisfied and received the grace to be freed from the revolutionary barbarity. On January 21, 1798, exactly on the fifth anniversary of the martyrdom of His Majesty Louis XVI, the most Christian King of France, Imperial divisions, commanded by Baron Wilhelm von Kerpen, entered the town in parade-formation passing through *Porta Nuova* and were welcomed by a delirious population. During the *Te Deum* in the Cathedral the Bishop magnanimously begged the people to avoid any revenge, while the theatre stayed open and the whole town was decorated and lit up in jubilation during that memorable night.

Verona didn't forget its heroes. The lifeless bodies of the three unlucky defenders of the town (Emilei, Verità and Malenza), as well as those of the other Martyrs, which had been hastily buried in a common grave in the cemetery of Trinity church, on February 6, 1798 were exhumed and interred in the respective family vaults. And, as per decree of the town's Noble Council, in St. Sebastian's church, granted as *giuspatronato* (that was a privilege) to the town, on September 23, 1799 a most solemn ceremony was held in front of all the town Authorities in mourning. For the occasion the town built an impressive hearse, decorated with numerous elegant engravings recording the principal achievements of those Martyrs.

With the arrival of the Imperial troops, also the fearless Capuchin Father Luigi Maria of Verona received a worthy burial. When his body was taken out of the naked earth, in which it had lain for seven months, everybody was deeply astonished to find it uncorrupted (excluding the head, which had been damaged by lethal blows). He was buried in the Capuchins' church, which would later be suppressed by Bonaparte,



abandoned by the friars and transformed into barracks. Father Luigi Maria wasn't remembered till March 29, 1897, when, during the first centenary of the *Veronese Eaters* the learned priest Antonio Pigghi recovered his mortal remains, which, followed by a crowded procession, were laid in the Monumental Cemetery of Verona, in the Capuchins' niche. It was June 8, 1897 and that day marked exactly one hundred years of his martyrdom.

46 - Pro-Jacobin french printing, entitled *Slaughtering of the French in Verona*. Villafranca di Verona. Arnaldo Liberati collection.

47 - Door-to-door fighting in Verona, in Sant'Anastasia Road. Neatly shaped in the background, the *Tower of Gardello* and the façade of Maffei Palace over *Piazza delle Erbe*. Engraving from the book *France militaire*. Paris 1835. Drawing of Martinet. Reville, the sculptor. Villafranca di Verona. Arnaldo Liberati collection.

48 - *Verona uprising in 1797*. Litography (?) by L. Gazzini. From *Journal pour tous. Magasin littéraire illustré* (sic). Paris. Publication de Ch. Lahure et cie. 8 Février 1862, n. 455. Verona. Private collection.

VERONESE EASTERS: MEMORIES OF THE PERIOD

*"Thus on the day dedicated to the Protector of the Venetian Republic, St. Mark, our subjection to this dying Republic ended, rendering in the final act of our irreparable fall the bloodiest sacrifice, that a sincere faith can ever offer on the altar of sovereignty. A fine example to the other peoples of Italy, or rather, to many others of Europe, who, carried away by the furor of fanatical propagandists of a government [the French Revolution] repugnant to divine and human laws, as we [...] fallen into an abyss of endless troubles and wretchedness, they won't share with us that beautiful title of most faithful people gained long ago", **Girolamo De' Medici**, *Vicende sofferte dalla provincia veronese sul finire del secolo XVIII e nel cominciamento del XIX* (Events in the Veronese province towards the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth) manuscript n.1360, II, page 288. Verona. Public Library.*



49-50 - Commemorative medal of the bicentenary of the *Veronese Easters* (1797-1997). *On the obverse:* on the foreground, a veronese fighter is armed with a musket wearing the uniform of the town Noble Guard, the voluntary army formed by the Verona people to guard the town at the gates of the city. In the background, the *Porta San Giorgio* is engraved with the façade of the homonymous church, where the fighting between the French troops and the Veronese people were the fiercest. The inscription *Verona April 17-25, 1797* celebrates the nine days of the town insurrection. The branch of laurel encircling the image celebrates the heroism of the insurgents. *On the reverse side:* in the centre, the winged Lion of Saint Mark clenches the shielded arm of the town, the one of *Verona Fidelis* (*Faithful Verona*) which was the only one to help the Serenissima against the most powerful army of the world. All round, the inscription: *Bicentenary of the Veronese Easters April 17-25*. Project and drawing by Quirino Maestrello. Bronze alloy casting by Brizzi & Mantovanelli of the firm Briman. Verona 1997.



VERONESE EASTERS celebration Committee

(April 17-25, 1797)

Via L. Montano, 1 - 37131 VERONA

Tel. 0039/329/0274315 - 0039/347/3603084

0039/45/520859 - 0039/45/8403819

www.traditio.it - E-mail: pasqueveronesi@libero.it

Verona, April 2011 - Translation by Ennio Mortara



Con il patrocinio e il contributo
della Regione del Veneto, della
Provincia e del Comune di Verona