

I GIOCHI DI QUARTIERE: GAMBLING AND DIPLOMATIC RIGHTS OF IMMUNITY IN BAROQUE ROME

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In the course of the summer of 1627, papal constables and servants of the Spanish ambassador in Rome sparred in a series of street battles that brought the neighborhood around his palace in Piazza della Trinità dei Monti to a standstill. The violence did not stem over what we might deem high politics. Rather the ambassador's men were defending their ability to gamble at his palace under the protection of his diplomatic immunities. This went up against Pope Urban VIII's reforming zeal that sought to eradicate the vice of gambling from the streets and squares of the city, and especially in the quarters of the ambassadors. This essay will examine the lengthy trial – numbering more than four hundred folios – that resulted from the tribunal of the Governor of Rome's investigation into the violence provoked by the Spanish ambassador and his familiars.¹ The trial highlights seventeenth-century embassies as a privileged space for gamblers, the importance of games of chance as a diplomatic right protected by the immunity of the quarter, and the failure of the papacy to curb this illicit activity.

In defending the gambling in his palace, the Spanish ambassador asserted his sovereignty over a wide swath of the *rione* of Campo Marzio and projected Spanish power into the streets, revealing the limitations of papal goals in controlling the streets of the city and monitoring the activities of foreign embassies.² Championing his men's ability to gambling was also a defense of the ambassador's honor and the majesty of his monarch. Any slight to this honor, even the arrest of gamblers in his palace or even outside in the square, was a perceived assault on the ambassador's sovereignty in Rome. This essay locates diplomacy outside the court and papal audiences by situating it in the streets of Rome.³ Diplomatic immunities and the

¹ Archivio di Stato di Roma, *Tribunale del governatore criminale* (hereafter ASR, TCG), Processi (1627), 226.

² On Spanish power and influence in Rome, see T. J. Dandele, *Spain in Rome, 1500-1700*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2001; M. J. Levin, *Agents of Empire: Spanish Ambassadors in Sixteenth-Century Italy*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 2005, pp. 43-153; and M. A. Visceglia, *La città rituale: Roma e le sue cerimonie in età moderna*, Rome, Viella, 2002, pp. 191-238.

³ On connecting diplomacy to the world outside the court, see C. Fletcher, *Diplomacy in Renaissance Rome*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015; F. De Vivo, *Information and Communication: Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 70-74; D. Frigo, *Corte, onore e ragion di stato: Il ruolo dell'ambasciatore in età moderna*, in Eadem (ed.), *Ambasciatori e nunzi. Figure della diplomazia in età moderna*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1998, pp. 13-55; J. M. Hunt, *The Ceremonial Possession of a City: Ambassadors and their Carriages in Early Modern Rome*, «Royal Studies Journal», 3, pp. 69-89; T. Osborne, *Diplomatic Culture in Early Modern Rome*, in P. M. Jones, B. Wisch, and S. Ditchfield (eds.), *A Companion to Early Modern Rome, 1492-1692*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2019, pp. 60-74; J. Watkins, *Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, «Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies», 38, 2008, pp. 1-14; and P. Woodcock, *From Royal Hôtel to Street Brawls: The Location, Personnel, and Public Problem of Venetian*

gambling it fostered could fundamentally shift the tone of a neighborhood, for good or ill. Ambassadors, therefore, did not stand above the noise of the street, but inserted themselves into the life of community as «islands of immunity» in the urban fabric that both attracted crime and violence and presented opportunities for Romans.

1. *Defending the Quarter*

On the nights of 31 July and 1 August 1627, constables (*birri*) of the Governor's Tribunal clashed with servants of the Spanish ambassador in a succession of street battles that exposed and exacerbated existing tensions between the ministers of justice and the ambassador. After hearing reports of illicit gambling taking place at the ambassador's home, the sale of bootleg wine out of his pantry, and robberies and assaults committed by his familiars in the vicinity, the bargello of Rome sent his constables patrol the streets around Piazza della Trinità dei Monti, where the ambassador, the Count of Oñate kept his embassy in the Palazzo Monaldeschi.⁴ The ambassador's servants, resenting this intrusion into their quarter, harassed and assaulted the constables, provoking the two nights of skirmishes and a month of hostilities between the two forces.

The first night of these disorders saw the constables and ambassador's men engage in a series of skirmishes that ended a climactic battle, involving swords and harquebuses, in the Piazza della Trinità dei Monti at the foot of the of Pietro Bernini's Fontana della Barcaccia, which was being constructed at the time. Leading the attack against the police were the ambassador's son, Don Felipe Vélez de Guevara and the palace's majordomo, Captain Luigi Pavizza. After several rounds of gunfire, the Spaniards forced the constables to flee. Once the conflict had ended and the smoke of the harquebuses had cleared, the Spanish counted their dead from the night's fray, and, among them, were the ambassador's *maestro di sala* and his barber. The loss of the *maestro di sala*, the gentlemen in charge of the ambassador's affairs and a substantial figure in the management of his household, was too much for the Spaniards to take.⁵

The next day, the first of August, Oñate's household talked of nothing but «wanting to go hunt for the constables».⁶ Later that night, Don Felipe and Captain Pavizza gathered before the palace a posse of gentlemen and the household servants, a mixture of Spaniards and

Ambassadors in Seventeenth-Century Paris, «Legatio: Journal of Renaissance and Early Modern Diplomatic Studies», 1, 2017, pp. 63-95.

⁴ On Palazzo Monaldeschi, see A. Anselmi, *Il Palazzo dell'Ambasciata di Spagna press la Santa Sede*, Rome, Edizioni de Luca, 2001. Oñate's full name is Íñigo Vélez de Guevara.

⁵ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), ff. 483r-484r and 539r-v. On the *maestro di sala* (more commonly known as the *maestro di camera*), see C. Evitascandolo, *Dialogo di Maetro di Casa*, Rome, Giovanni Martinelli, 1598, pp. 184-185; L. Nussdorfer, *Masculine Hierarchies in Roman Ecclesiastical Households*, «European Review of History/Revue européenne d'histoire», 22, 2015, p. 635; N. Gozzano, *Lo Specchio della corte, il maestro di casa. Gentiluomini al servizio del collezionismo a Roma nel Seicento*, Rome, Campisano editore, 2014; and P. Waddy, *Seventeenth-Century Roman Palaces: Use and the Art of the Plan*, Cambridge-New York, MIT Press, 1990, pp. 33-34.

⁶ ASR, TCG, Processi (1627), 226, f. 549v: «volere andare a caccia a sbirri». Hunting metaphors were common among commoners and elite alike in early modern Europe; see T. M. Luckett, *Hunting for Spies and Whores: A Parisian Riot on the Eve of the French Revolution*, «Past & Present», 156, 1997, pp. 116-143 and E. Muir, *Mad Blood Stirring: Vendetta and Factions in Friuli during the Renaissance*, Baltimore-London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 222-238. For another example of hunting metaphors used against Roman constables, see ASR, TCG, Costituti (1559-1560), ff. 23v-25v.

Italians, armed with swords, daggers, bucklers and *terzaroli*.⁷ With their war party in order, the Spanish ambassador's men marched past Bernini's fountain and met the constables on Strada delli Condotti. After a confrontation in which «were fired infinite harquebuses», the Spanish forces routed the constables and wounded many of them, including the corporal in charge of the area of the Fountain of Trevi, who had been called to assist his compatriots.⁸

The assault on the constables did nothing to sate the Spaniards' desire for revenge. All day long the following day, the ambassador's servants and gentlemen fumed of «wanting to butcher the constables».⁹ Laughing among themselves, they made provisions for another attack on the police. The Spaniards and their Italian allies, led again by the ambassador's son and majordomo, marched around the piazza in a show of strength that marked the area as Spanish territory and then returned to the palace. Emboldened by this rattling of swords, many of the servants retired to a nearby inn to quench their thirst and to vent «about wanting to avenge themselves of the harquebuses fired [at them] by the constables».¹⁰

Using the idioms of hunting and butchery, the ambassador's men had initiated a vendetta against the law and its ministers. While the killing of the *maestro di sala* and barber stoked the fury of the second outburst of violence, the initial skirmish had been instigated by the Spaniards' defense of their quarter from the intrusion of the constables' patrols. The servants and gentlemen of the palace had recourse to violent action to assert their rights of *franchigia*, the immunities that ambassadors and embassies enjoyed in seventeenth-century Rome. An initial report of these altercations by the bargello of Rome reveals how the ministers of justice tiptoed around these privileges and how the assertion of the law over the private interests of ambassadors was fraught with troubles. The bargello had warned the corporal of the patrol in the days leading up to the tumults to give the zone around the ambassador's palace a wide berth «since it was the quarter of the Spanish». The bargello warned the corporal that «he should respect it [the quarter] and patrol elsewhere since the Count, his Lord Ambassador, didn't want the constables to be in the streets and the quarter belonged to the Spanish».¹¹

Respecting the quarter of the Spanish ambassador meant recognizing the *franchigia*, or immunities from the law that the zone enjoyed as unwritten practice. Originally, the term *franchigia* was attached to monasteries, churches and the residences of cardinals and other prominent members of the city's political and ecclesiastical hierarchy. *Franchigie* were sanctuaries from the law in which the Governor's constables and other ministers of Rome's myriad and overlapping tribunals, both civil and criminal, could not make arrests, issue warrants, or even enter within their confines.¹² Criminals fleeing arrest or hiding from the law often sought refuge in churches and palaces of the city's elite and were protected due to the inherent sacredness or honor of the places.

After the establishment of permanent residential agents in Rome, the palaces of ambassadors also enjoyed immunity from the law since they were associated with the

⁷ *Terzaroli* were small but high-powered harquebuses that were illegal to possess and carry in Rome. On *terzaroli* and other firearms in Rome, see P. Blastenbrei, *Violence, Arms, and Criminal Justice in Papal Rome, 1560-1600*, «Renaissance Studies», 20, 2006, pp. 68-87.

⁸ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), f. 550v.

⁹ *Ivi*, f. 549v: «volevano far macello di sbirri».

¹⁰ *Ivi*, f. 555r: «vendicarsi dell'archibugiate tirate da d.i sbirri».

¹¹ *Ivi*, f. 179r: «doverebbe rispettarlo e andar a spasso altrove poichè il Conte, suo signor Ambasciator, non voleva li sbirri fusse p[er] le strade; et il quartiere apparteneva a li spagnoli».

¹² On the *franchigia*, see P. Blastenbrei, *La quadrature del cerchio. Il bargello di Roma nella crisi sociale tardocinquecentesca*, «Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica», 1, 1994, pp. 5-37 and I. Fosi, *Papal Justice: Subjects and Courts in the Papal State, 1500-1750*, Washington D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2011, pp. 71-75.

inviolability connected to their roles as symbolic and corporal representatives of their monarchs' majesty at the court and the city.¹³ Diplomatic immunity not only shielded ambassadors from the law and but also protected their familiars and other residents of their palaces. This immunity, in theory, made ambassadors and the members of their households above the law with the exception of egregious crimes of espionage and murder. Although political theorists and jurists argued that diplomatic immunity only applied to crimes committed before ambassadors' arrival, in practice, the concept was malleable enough, allowing the households of ambassadors to commit a variety of petty crimes.¹⁴ Popes and their chief policing agent, the Governor of Rome, vainly inveighed against these diplomatic privileges, seeing them as novelties and barriers to *buon governo* and *buona giustizia*, but faced the intransigence and pretension of the ambassadors, who invoked the authority and majesty of their princes as a defense against prosecution.

By the middle of the seventeenth century, ambassadors began to settle into permanent residences rather than rent palaces from Roman potentates. Upon securing permanent housing, French and Spanish ambassadors began to push the boundaries of the *franchigia* beyond the palace and surrounding space to include entire streets and squares beyond its vicinity. The ambassadors had created, in essence, what became to be known as the «Quartiere di Francia» and the «Quartiere di Spagna».¹⁵ These quarters were extraterritorial zones, effectively France and Spain in Rome, where «the justice of the pope could not penetrate», as one anonymous guidebook described the French quarter, centered on Palazzo Farnese, in 1661.¹⁶ The Spanish initiated this process when, in 1647, Iñigo Vélez de Guevara y Tassi, the eighth count of Oñate, purchased the Palazzo Monaldeschi in Piazza della Trinità dei Monti. This was the very palace that his father, the seventh count of Oñate and ambassador to Rome, had rented ten years earlier – during the violent summer of 1627. It took only two years after Oñate's purchase of the palace to change the toponym of the square to Piazza di Spagna, no doubt due to the routinized presence of the Spanish embassy in the neighborhood.¹⁷ The square and surrounding streets had become a permanent Spanish quarter with full diplomatic immunities, a broad extension of the traditional *franchigia*.

In 1627 the transformation of Piazza della Trinità dei Monti into the permanent residence of the Spanish embassy had yet to take place. However, the actions of ambassador and his men demonstrate that they had formulated a notion of a «Quartiere di Spagna» with immunities extending well beyond the Palazzo Monaldeschi.¹⁸ Immediately, after the

¹³ L. S. Frey and M. L. Frey, *The History of Diplomatic Immunity*, Columbus, Ohio State University Press, 1999, pp. 121-127 and 218-219.

¹⁴ L. S. Frey and M. L. Frey, *History of Diplomatic Immunity*, 185-195 and D. Frigo, *Ambasciatori, ambasciata e immunità diplomatiche nella letteratura politica italiana (secc. XVII-XVIII)*, «Mélanges de l'École française de Rome», 119, 2007, pp. 31-50.

¹⁵ L. Nussdorfer, *The Politics of Space in Early Modern Rome*, «Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome», 42, 1997, pp. 175-177. For the French acquisition of the Farnese Palace, see B. Nevue, *Regia fortuna: Le Palais Farnèse durant le seconde moitié du XVIIe siècle*, in *Idem, Le Palais Farnèse*, Rome, École française de Rome, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 475-507.

¹⁶ J. Connors, L. Rice (eds.), *Specchio di Roma Barocca: Una guida inedita del XVII secolo*, Rome, Edizioni dell'Elefante, 1991, p. 47.

¹⁷ On Oñate's purchase of Palazzo Monaldeschi, see A. Anselmi, *Il Palazzo dell'Ambasciata*, 53-54. By July 1649, the hispanophile newsletter writer, Teodoro Ameyden, was already referring to the square as Piazza di Spagna, see Biblioteca Casantense, m.s 1833, *Diario della città di Roma notato da Deone hora temi Dio*, ff. 280v-281v.

¹⁸ Frey and Frey see this transformation as happening after the Thirty Years' War and the Treaty of Westphalia. Rome was therefore precocious in this regard; see L. S. Frey and M. L. Frey, *History of Diplomatic Immunity*, pp. 207-208.

skirmishes of 31 July and 1 August, Oñate, anticipating further trouble with the constables, secured his quarter by summoning soldiers from the Kingdom of Naples to guard his palace and the entrances into the square.¹⁹ The spectacle must have been frightening to inhabitants of the neighborhood. Men and women living in the square recounted the substantial presence of foreign soldiers, armed with swords and *terzaroli*, wearing military cassocks *alla spagnola*, and speaking among themselves in Spanish. One witness told the Governor's judges that the soldiers «didn't want the police to pass through [the piazza] » and that he had seen them « march through nearby streets in troops of two, three, four and even five, all armed with swords and daggers».²⁰

Under the direction of his majordomo, Captain Pavizza, the ambassador had commandeered inns and *camera locande* in the piazza and greater neighborhood to billet these soldiers.²¹ The reinforcement of soldiers from Naples was used not only to guard the ambassador's palace and Piazza della Trinità dei Monti but also to safeguard an expansive jurisdiction of streets and squares in the *rioni* (districts) of Campo Marzio and Colonna. Based on the testimony of residents of these areas, the Spanish soldiers, in patrolling the streets, claimed a huge swath of the city as their own, a zone which radiated out of Piazza della Trinità as far north as the Strada dei Greci, extended westward to the Corso, Rome's longest street, and projected southward from the monastery, San Silvestro in Capite, to the basilica, Sant'Andrea della Fratte (see Fig.1).

In securing this expansive territory, the soldiers barred the constables, their *mandatori* (warrant officers), and other ministers of justice, including the officials of Rome's Dogana (customs house) from performing their duties as representatives of the law.²² At least a dozen officers testified that they could not enter the streets surrounding the Piazza della Trinità dei Monti to patrol or issue warrants and citations out of fear of the Spanish soldiers and their aggressive defense of the quarter's immunities. The *mandatorio* of the Governor's Tribunal, Rosato da Spoleto had not been able to serve warrants for the entire month of August, after the soldier's appearance in Rome. Rosato told the Governor's judges that «I heard it said by everyone in the streets that the Spanish didn't want the constables or other ministers of justice to execute their duties without the approval of the ambassador of Spain».²³ Another officer, Dionisio Pancini, recounted that he had not been able to issue warrant for three months, divulging that even before the arrival of the soldiers from Naples the ambassador's servants had been hindering the law from entering the «Quartiere di Spagna». One evening, while he was serving warrants near San Silvestro in Capite, several soldiers accosted him, grabbed his warrants, ripped them to shreds, and laughed as they fled down the street.²⁴ Over the course of

¹⁹ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), ff. 561v-562r. The soldiers had been sent to Rome by the Viceroy of Naples at the request of the ambassador. It was common practice of the Viceroy to keep several companies of soldiers at the borders between the Papal States and the Kingdom of Naples in case of emergencies, especially during papal elections and vacant sees; see J. M. Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2016, pp. 105-107. On the mobilization of Spanish soldiers in Naples, see T. Astarita, *Istituzioni e tradizioni militari* in G. Galasso and R. Romeo, *Storia del Mezzogiorno*, Naples-Rome Edizioni del Sole, 1991, vol. 9, pp. 137-138. Several of the Spanish soldiers summoned by Oñate entered Rome via boats at the Port of Ripa; see *ibid.*, ff. 597r-598v.

²⁰ *Ivi*, f. 440r: «non vogliano che ci passino sbirri» and «p[er] quelle strade convicine caminavano troppe dui tre quattro et cinq[ue] insieme armati di spade et pugnali».

²¹ *Ivi*, ff. 422r-v and 641r-643r.

²² On papal justice and tribunals, see I. Fosi, *Papal Justice*, pp. 23-46; N. Del Re, *Monsignor Governatore di Roma, Rome*, Istituto nazionale di studi romani, 1972; and M. Di Sivo, *Il tribunale criminale capitolino nei secoli XVI-XVII. Note da un lavoro in corso*, «Roma moderna et contemporanea», 3, 1995, pp. 201-216.

²³ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), ff. 449r-v.

²⁴ *Ivi*, ff. 447v-448v.

August, the soldiers harassed and assaulted the constables and *mandatori*, wounding several in sword fights and gun battles.

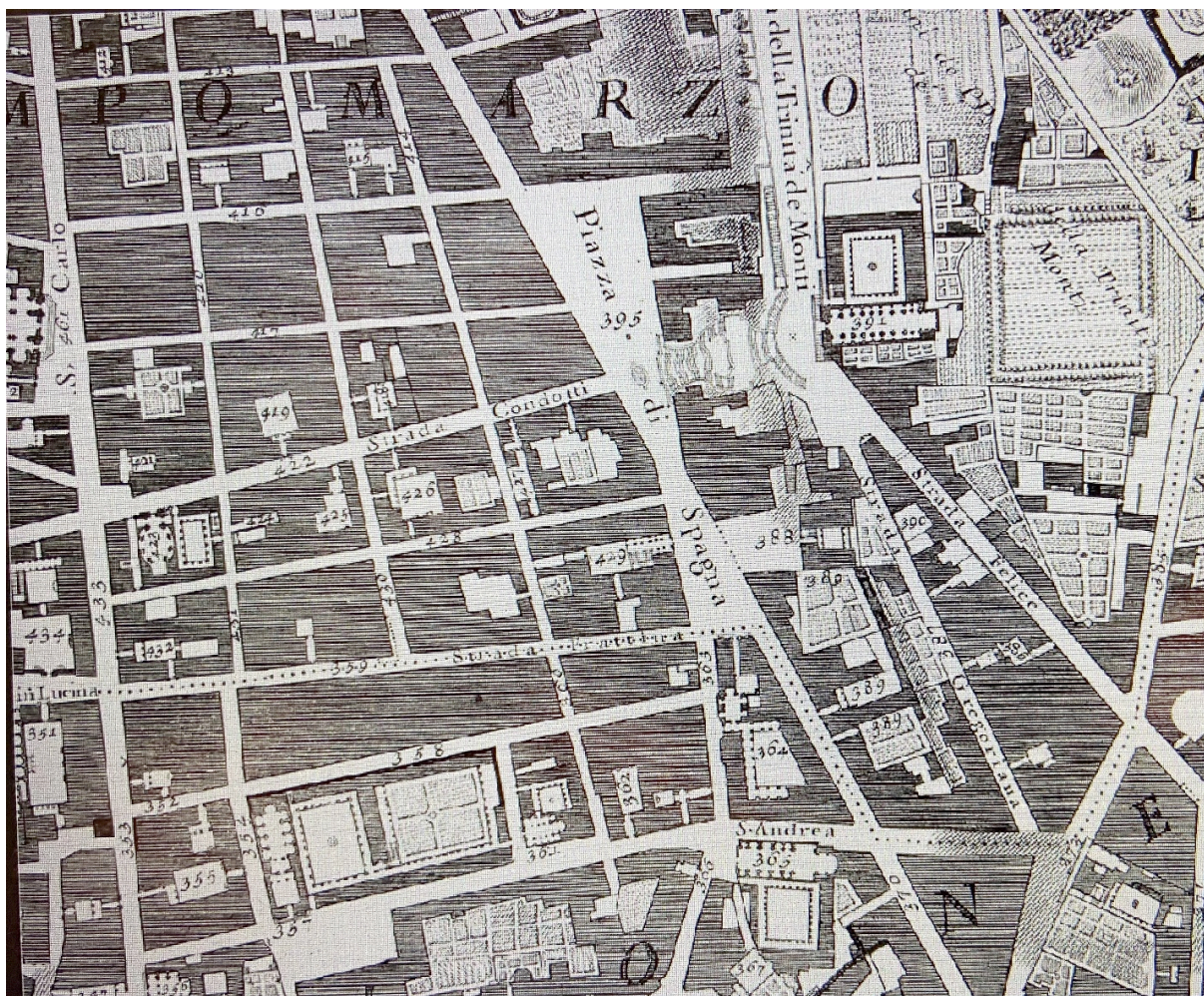


Fig. 1. The Spanish Quarter and its boundaries centered on Piazza della Trinità dei Monti (Piazza di Spagna). The Spanish Ambassador's palace is numbered 429 on the map. Giambattista Nolli, *La pianta grande di Roma*, Rome, 1748. <http://nolli.uoregon.edu/>

In response to the assaults in the hands the soldiers, many officers simply avoided the territory of the Spanish quarter, skirting the Spanish ambassador's palace and its vicinity. Others did their rounds but went out in increased numbers and heavily armed with harquebuses, «otherwise», as the officer, Domenico Rossi da Spoleto, stated, «we would have been killed by the Spaniards, who didn't want the constables to do anything».²⁵ With the reduced presence of the constables in the streets, the Spanish soldiers committed a range of crimes. They robbed passersby walking in the streets, broke into homes, threatened shopkeepers, and vexed courtesans. Artisans closed their shops earlier than usual and residents of the area, fearful of the soldiers, eschewed going out at night.²⁶ In their defense of the quarter's immunities, the Spanish had stopped justice from running its course and terrorized the neighborhood near the ambassador's palace. They had essentially taken over a wide ambit of Campo Marzio and part of Colonna, spatially proclaiming Spanish sovereignty

²⁵ *Ivi*, f. 595v.

²⁶ *Ivi*, ff. 457v-458r, 459r, 464v-465r, and 466r.

over a large part of Rome and revealing the inherent weakness of the papal justice system in the face of diplomatic immunities.

2. *The Spanish Ambassador's Gambling Den*

Ambassadors in Baroque Rome were notorious for their pretensions of honor and defense of diplomatic immunities, inextricably tied together in the jostling for rank among city's élite. For example, in 1637, the extraordinary ambassador of Spain in Rome, Juan Cuamachero y Curillo, raised a ruckus when constables issued civil warrants near his palace in the Piazza del Collegio Romano. His servants rushed out of the palace threatening the officers for «not carrying due respect toward the palace of the ambassador».²⁷ But there was something more than the honorific posturing going on with Oñate and his servant's actions during the summer of 1627. From the depositions of constables and witnesses, we learn that Oñate's palace had become a refuge for bandits and outlaws, a tavern where untaxed wine and bread were sold from the pantry, and a gambling den. For at least ten months, Captain Pavizza had managed a *biscazza* (gambling den) out of the ambassador's palace, attracting punters of diverse social stripes from the city at large. Over the course of this time, rowdy gamblers disturbed the peace of the neighborhood with boisterous shouts and riotous brawls. All of this was done under the protective aegis of the ambassador's *franchigia*, or, as one anonymous account of the 1630s called the space, the *giochi di quartiere*, the games of the quarter.²⁸

In contrast to the dignified and magnificent exterior that the Palazzo Monaldeschi projected onto the piazza, all sorts of nefarious activities transpired inside the palace. Testimonies from constables, witnesses, and the ambassador's servants paint a picture far different from the prescriptive ideal portrayed in manuals on household management for masters of the house and other gentlemen in charge of running the affairs of Rome's élite.²⁹ From the top down, Oñate's palace had become a proverbial den of thieves with the ambassador and his majordomo, Captain Pavizza, playing a significant role in fostering and organizing the illicit gambling and sale of wine. They did this by giving shelter and sanctuary from the law to a host of criminals who had either been banned from Rome or had fled from the law to escape prosecution in the Governor's court.

Oñate, like all ambassadors, brought a retinue of his own servants from Spain. Most of the servants were gentlemen, often trained in law and letters, who performed the higher duties of his household. Captain Pedro González, the assistant to the majordomo, typified the sort of servant that ambassadors took with them to Rome. González had served Oñate for at least seventeen years.³⁰ However, the majority of Oñate's servants, especially the *famiglia bassa*, the lower servants such as coachmen, grooms, and cleaning staff, were Italians, hailing primarily from Umbria, the Marches, and other regions of the Papal States, who sought work, shelter, and protection from the ambassador. Several of these men had previously worked as apprentices in shops of bakers, barbers, carpenters and other artisans. They had left their

²⁷ G. B. Spada, *Racconto delle cose più considerabili che sono occorse nel governo di Roma*, edited by M. T. Bonadonna Russo, Rome, Società romana di storia patria, 2005, p. 60: «portavano rispetto al Palazzo dell'Ambasciatore».

²⁸ Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Urbinate latine* (hereafter BAV, Urb.lat), 1646, *Relatione delli delitti seguiti et altro nel pontificato di Urbano Ottavo*, f. 66r.

²⁹ L. Nussdorfer, *Masculine Hierarchies*, P. Waddy, *Seventeenth-Century Roman Palaces*; P. Hurtubise, *Tous les chemins mènent à Rome: Arts de vivre et de réussir à la cour pontificale au XVI^e siècle*, Ottawa, La presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2009, pp. 151-172; and G. Fragnito, *Cardinals' Courts in Sixteenth-Century Rome*, «Journal of Modern History», 65, 1993, pp. 25-56.

³⁰ ASR, TCG, Processi, 262 (1627) f. 564r.

positions, due to confrontations with the law, to seek an easier life of a servant among the ambassador's *famiglia*. More than twenty of the men serving Oñate, had been exiled by the court or had fled the law for a miscellany of crimes, both petty and serious, that ranged from theft and gambling to carrying prohibited weapons and murder. Hence, they were bandits in the legal sense of the term rather than brigands, although the two roles often went hand in hand in early modern Italy.³¹

These bandits sought refuge from the law within the ambassador's quarter, either living inside the palace or lodging in nearby inns and *camere locande*. The baker, Antonio Rocchi, testified before the Governor's judges that in the inn next to the ambassador's palace, «lived one Alessandro the barber who at this time was contumacious of the law and had been exiled so that he hid there in order to be safe from the court». He added that both «Alberto Bevilacqua and Giacomo Tartaglia stay hidden [inside the palace] because they are exiled, and Jacomuccio the baker is also hiding there because it is said that he has fled from the court».³² Antonio Paride Romano, also a baker, had returned to Rome after several months of exile in Florence. He deposed that «I came back to Rome and stayed in the palace of the ambassador of Spain, where I remained hidden out of fear of the court since I have been exiled from Rome on account of the malice of some [of my enemies]».³³ Under interrogation, he admitted that «in the palace I know enough men who were contumacious and exiled who stay there hiding».³⁴ Even some of the ambassador's servants with highly-sought after skills were exiles, including his *trinciante* (meat-carver) and *infermiero* (the servant who took care of the household's sick).³⁵

The majority of the men holed up in the palace and quarter performed menial tasks for the ambassador and his household. While staying inside the palace for two months «on account of a woman and for fear of falling into the hands of the law», the baker, Giacomo Altoviti Bergamasco, was given board by Captain Pavizza and paid to carry out services for the ambassador's gentlemen.³⁶ Giacomo da Viterbo, a singer who also sought refuge in the palace, performed various jobs, getting paid two *giulii* a day for his labor.³⁷ The services the bandits provided for the gentlemen of the household involved helping them dress, serving their meals, and running errands on their behalf, but their primary job was to serve as *bravi*, protecting the ambassador and guarding his palace and quarter. It was these men that Oñate had called upon to fight for him during the initial skirmishes with the constables.

The bandits also helped run the illegal wineshop that Captain Pavizza organized out the ambassador's palace. Under the watchful eye of the majordomo, the household's steward sold wine out of the *dispensa* (pantry), which opened right onto the square. Antonio Paride Romano took care of the task of selling wine, including the high-quality wine Neapolitan wine, *lachryma*, as well as coveted white bread to crowds of Romans who gathered outside pantry, attracted by the opportunity to purchase *lachryma* at a much-reduced price of three

³¹ I. Fosi, *La società violenta. Il banditismo dello Stato pontificio nella seconda metà del Cinquecento*, Rome, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985, pp. 12-17.

³² ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), f. 536v: «Alberto Bevilacqua and Jacomo Tartaglia stavano li ritirato perche havevano l'essilio, et Jacomuccio ancora haveva ritirato perche diceva di esser contumace della Corte».

³³ *Ivi*, f. 545r: «sono venuto a Roma et sono stato continuamente li nel Palazzo de s.r Ambasciatore di Spagna, dove io stavo li ritirato p paura della corte poiche io havevo l'essilio da Roma per malevolenza di alcuni».

³⁴ *Ivi*: «nel Palazzo ci ho cognosciuto assai contumaci et essiliati li stavano li ritirato».

³⁵ *Ivi*, ff. 452r and 555v-556r.

³⁶ *Ivi*, f. 502v.

³⁷ *Ivi*, f. 506v.

baiocchi a foglietta.³⁸ The throngs not only bought wine to take home but also drank and ate in the pantry. The ambassador's servants even allowed people to hang out and converse with one another, turning the pantry into «a new inn or tavern», as one customs official bitterly complained to the Governor's Tribunal.³⁹ The selling of contraband comestibles was common enough at early modern embassies, which enjoyed an exemption from duties on wine and other foodstuffs, but the ambassador's men in Rome had gone further, turning the pantry and lower rooms of the palace into a rollicking *bettola* to the delight of some and the chagrin of others.⁴⁰

Most the outlaws oversaw the gambling that took place in the ambassador's quarter. With the supervision of Captain Pavizza, they organized two games of dice, cards, and roulette both inside the palace and in the Piazza della Trinità dei Monti.⁴¹ Two of the servants, Diego, a groom of the ambassador, and Marchetto, a bandit from Spoleto, had responsibility for what they called the *gioco grasso* («the fat game»), which was held in the *sala dei palafrenieri* («the grooms' room»). The gambling in this room attracted a diverse crowd that consisted of gentlemen, merchants, and even many artisans, and shopkeepers, who risked large sums of money in the games. The gambling in the square, called *il gioco di piazza*, took place on makeshift tables made from large stones and tempted a lesser clientele of more cautious artisans, apprentices, and the city's poor to try their luck on smaller bets. The games in the square were managed by Jacomuccio, Alberto Bevilacqua, Giacomo Tartaglia, and a youth named Fedeleto, all bandits who found refuge under the ambassador's protection.⁴²

The six men kept track of the posts that the gamblers laid down when playing and supplied them with house dice and cards to ensure that no one cheated with marked cards or false dice. The servants also charged for each post the gamblers made during the games. Based on other trials for gambling in the archives of the Governor's Tribunal, this was common practice at other *biscasse* in Rome.⁴³ Diego and Marchetto required players to put up one *grosso* a post to play in the *gioco grasso*, while the other three organizers had players in the *gioco di piazza* pay *a mezzo grosso* per round.⁴⁴ They kept the profits from the games in a locked box, which they consigned to Captain Pavizza at the end of each night. The enterprise was quite profitable for all involved. Andrea Paride testified that «in the gambling one could daily take in between fifteen and twenty-five *scudi*, more or less, depending on who played at the *gioco*

³⁸ *Ivi*, ff. 436r-v and 545r-v; f. 436r. In elite households, *lachryma* was generally reserved for the gentlemen servants of the master; see C. Evitascandolo, *Maestro di Casa*, p. 68 and T. Astarita, *The Italian Baroque Table: Cooking and Entertaining from the Golden Age of Naples*, Tempe, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2014, pp. 233-235. The price of ordinary wine in seventeenth-century Rome was three to four *baiocchi a foglietta* thus, the ambassador's steward was selling the *lachryma* at a much-reduced price. For the price of the table wine of the people, see R. E. Spear, *Scrambling for Scudi: Notes on Painters' Earnings in Early Baroque Rome*, «The Art Bulletin», 85, 2003, p. 312. Most ordinary Romans drank the local *vino romanesco* and wines from the *castelli romani*; see J. Revel, *A Capital City's Privileges: Food Supplies in Early Modern Rome*, in R. Forster and O. Ranum (eds.), *Food and Drink in History*, Baltimore-London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, p. 45.

³⁹ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), ff. 437v-438r. For the quote of the customs official, see f. 436v: «una nuova hosteria o bettola».

⁴⁰ L. S. Frey and M. L. Frey, *History of Diplomatic Immunity*, pp. 221-223.

⁴¹ It is unclear what types of card games the servants sponsored at the palace but, by the seventeenth century, banking games like *bassetta* and *banco fallito* had gained favor among Italians; see A. Fiorin, *Carte, dadi, e tavolieri*, in *Idem* (ed.), *Fanti e denari. Sei secoli di giochi d'azzardo*, Venice, Arsenale Editrice, 1989, pp. 64-65.

⁴² ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), ff. 506r-v and 536r-v.

⁴³ For other examples, see ASR, TCG, Processi, 68 (1608), ff. 572r-600v; 84 (1610), ff. 1534-1361r; and 140 (1617), ff. 18r-24v.

⁴⁴ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627) f. 504v.

grasso».⁴⁵ At the *gioco di piazza*, Jacomuccio and the others made between fifteen and thirty *giulii* a day.

The profits from the gaming were then farmed among the organizers with Captain Pavizza getting the lion's share of the money. According to various witnesses, Marchetto and Diego gave 150 *scudi* to the majordomo each month.⁴⁶ But all involved in the turned a quick and easy profit. The innkeeper Giacomo Brugnolo claimed that he heard Diego boast of making fifteen *testoni* in one day and that he earned fifty *scudi* «to keep custody of the gambling».⁴⁷ The profits were smaller for those running the *gioco di piazza*, considering the clientele, but Fedeleto managed to take in a *scudi* a month for his efforts.⁴⁸ This was not an insubstantial windfall when one considers that an unskilled worker scraped by on three *scudi* a month.⁴⁹

Testimonies from witnesses depict Captain Pavizza as the chief organizer of the gambling. In contrast to the image of the majordomo found in household management guides, which called majordomos to carry out their duties with honor and rectitude and to stamp out all licentious behavior, including gambling, among the *famiglia*, Pavizza promoted the gambling and profited mightily from it.⁵⁰ It was rare to find a majordomo acting in such a disreputable manner—generally, grooms or *cavallerizzi* (gentlemen with expertise with horses) managed the *bisacce* at elite households in Rome.⁵¹ Pavizza, a former military captain, may have found it hard to leave behind the soldier's penchant for gambling. Not only to Pavizza keep charge of the profits he also secured safe sites for the gambling to occur and enlisted men to serve in administering the games. According to one Vittoria Scaletti Napolitana, the majordomo had rented a room next to the palace since the autumn of 1626 and had allowed her and her out-of-work husband to live there. Pavizza then gave her husband responsibility to keep and watch over the box that contained the gambling profits. In addition to allowing the two to live in the room, Pavizza sometimes gave her husband a *testone* or two as a tip.⁵² Pavizza was so engaged in the gambling that one witness called him the «master of the games and profits» since «he was the one who gave orders and had authority to keep the games».⁵³ When the groom and previous overseer of the games, Orlandino Spavamento, failed to bring in enough profit, Pavizza replaced him with Diego, who ensured that the majordomo made more than a thousand *scudi* over the course of eight months.⁵⁴

⁴⁵ *Ivi*, ff. 546r-v: «nel gioco si poteva pigliare venti cinque et quindici scudi il giorno di ripicchi più o meno, secondo il gioco grosso». Antonio Rocchi echoed Paride's testimony, telling the judges that «of the game they maintain inside the palace takes in 30 *scudi* a day, more or less, according to the game», f. 536v: «Del gioco che si teneva dentro al Palazzo se ne poteva cavare di ripicchi trenta scudi il giorno più o meno secondo il gioco». Landino Schiata, a gentleman who gambled occasionally at the palace, claimed they the organizers made 20 to 25 *scudi* a day at the *gioco grosso*, f. 587r.

⁴⁶ *Ivi*, f. 557r.

⁴⁷ *Ivi*, f. 507v: «p[er] tener d.a cura del gioco».

⁴⁸ *Ivi*, f. 537r.

⁴⁹ For monthly wages of workers, see R. Ago, *Economia Barocca. Mercato e istituzioni nella Roma del Seicento*, Roma, Donzelli editore, 1998, pp. 8-9.

⁵⁰ C. Evitascandolo, *Maestro di Casa*, pp. 104-186 and L. Nussdorfer, *Masculine Hierarchies*, 630-633.

⁵¹ See the trials the trials that involve Michele Rocco, the *cavallerizzo* of the French ambassador; ASR, TCG, Processi, 68 (1608), f. 573r-600v and 78 (1609), ff. 965r-985r. For other *cavallerizzi* organizing gambling dens, see ASR, TCG, Costituti, 629 (1612), ff. 150v-152v, Spada, *Racconto delle cose*, pp. 73-79; and BAV, Urb.lat 1646, *Relazione delli delitti*, ff. 66r-v. Grooms are ubiquitous in the sources as organizers of the *bisacce*.

⁵² ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), f. 579r.

⁵³ *Ivi*, ff. 587r-v: «padrone di d.i Giochi et Emolumenti» and «lui era quello che dava li ordini et l'autorità di tener d.i giochi».

⁵⁴ *Ivi*, f. 580r.

Pavizza also ordered Diego and the other bandits to maintain order and to beat « anyone who caused trouble».⁵⁵ This really entailed enforcing players to pay for each round of play and to punish spies who might report their skullduggery to the bargello and his constables, a common enough occurrence in Baroque Rome.⁵⁶ The enforcement of order provoked daily arguments and fights at the games, especially at the *gioco di piazza*. One brawl saw Diego, along with Jacomuccio and Marchetto, stone soldiers from papal fortress, Castel Sant'Angelo, who had refused to pay for their ability to play at the tables. When a witness to the altercation told them that they should not have wounded the soldiers, Diego and his companions turned on him. Crying out the epithet, «*spia*», they rained more than twenty blows with clubs and halberds on the hapless bystander.⁵⁷ Throughout the summer of 1627, the ambassador's servants jealously guarded the games, chasing away anyone they deemed as spies from the palace and quarter.⁵⁸

Throughout the trial, Oñate's presence looms large. It was under the protection of his immunity that Captain Pavizza and his men organized the *biscazza*. But one may ask how complicit was the ambassador in the dubious undertakings of his familiars? The testimony of a stone cutter named Giovanni Paolo Triceri paints a fuller picture of Oñate's involvement and approval of the gambling taking place under his roof. According to Triceri, who had sought refuge from the law in the sanctuary of the palace, Captain Pavizza «had the express order of the ambassador to have me taken and beaten because the Spaniards suspected that I do nothing but go there to spy and see who gambles at dice».⁵⁹ Triceri fled before the majordomo could act on Oñate's command, but that did not stop the ambassador from searching for the stone cutter in the streets in order to intimidate him. One day, while Triceri and his friends were walking towards Termini, Oñate intercepted the group in his carriage. Immediately, one of grooms mockingly hailed Triceri as «Your Reverence, Fra Giovanni Paolo Scarpellino». When asked what he wanted, the groom enigmatically said «nothing» and walked away.⁶⁰ As the carriage pulled away toward Quattro Fontane, Triceri muttered to himself, «I don't want anything to do with the ambassador. I'm in the land of the Pope»!⁶¹ The episode reveals that the ambassador observed even the most marginal members of his household and the lengths he would take to protect the illicit activity of his servants.

3. Sovereignty and the Right to Gamble

The gambling that Oñate sheltered at his palace and in his quarter expose the onset of a new space of gambling that first originated in Venice. This was the *ridotto*, a site organized for gambling sponsored in rented rooms by Venetian gentlemen, a practice that took root in the mid-sixteenth century. In contrast to games that held in small groups in private homes, at

⁵⁵ *Ivi*, f. 587r: «che faceva rumore».

⁵⁶ The constables of Rome frequently used spies, often called «*amico della corte*» or «*huomo della corte*», to locate and infiltrate *biscazze* and other gambling dens in Rome; see ASR, TCG, Relazioni dei birri (henceforth RB), 101 (1601-1602), f. 162v; RB, 102 (1603-1604), ff. 115v, 146r-v, and 163r; RB, 103 (1604-1605), 22r; RB, 106 (1623-1634), ff. 147r, 181r, 193v, 194r, and 258r; RB, 107 (1629-1630), f. 164v; and RB, 109 (1631-16320), f. 152r. Roman constables also relied on organizers of *biscazze* to inform them on the activities of rivals; see ASR, TCG, Processi, 68 (1608), ff. 583v-584v.

⁵⁷ ASR, TCG, Processi, 226 (1627), ff. 585v-90r.

⁵⁸ *Ivi*, ff. 478r and 593v-594r.

⁵⁹ *Ivi*, f. 566r: «era ordine espresso del Ambr di farmi pigliare et di bastonarci perche li Spagnoli havevano havuto sospetto che io non andassi li a fare la spia et vedere chi giovava li al gioco di dadi».

⁶⁰ *Ivi*, f. 565r: «Vostra Reverenza, il P.re Fra Gio Paulo Scarpellino». The episode was corroborated by two other witnesses in the trial: *Ivi*, ff. 566v-567v and 573r-574r.

⁶¹ *Ivi*, f. 567r: «Io non ho da fare niente con l'Ambasciatore et stavo io in Terra del Papa».

taverns, and in the streets, the *ridotti* were open to a paying public, were staffed by employees, usually servants of the gentlemen organizers, and operated on a semi-permanent basis.⁶² With its division of games according to wealth by space, its access to crowds of gamblers with no affiliation to the ambassador or his men, and the complex system for dividing profits, the gambling that Captain Pavizza and the ambassador's men managed operated much like a Venetian *ridotto*. Based on my reading of trials of gamblers in the Governor's Tribunal, these types of secret yet semi-public gambling dens began popping up in Rome around the turn of sixteenth century.⁶³ These *ridotti*, often called *biscazze* in Rome, were organized by gentlemen devotees of the games or by servants of cardinals, noblemen, and ambassadors. Naturally, the protective space of the ambassador's palace and quarter with its immunities lent itself as the ideal sanctuary for these games. The *relazioni dei birri* (police reports) of the early 1600s confirm this change. Papal constables rarely arrested gamblers at the homes of ambassadors before 1600. By the 1620s, the police regularly apprehended gamblers and the organizers of the games in the *sala dei palafrenieri* and the courtyards of ambassadors' palaces.⁶⁴

In 1636, the Governor of Rome, Giovanni Battista Spada, recognized this development when he wrote in his diary of notable crimes under his watch that «there has been introduced in Rome an abuse quite damaging to *buon governo* and it was that the royal ambassadors allow keep public games and *biscazze* [at their palaces]». ⁶⁵ By Spada's time, gambling at the palaces had become an established practice. Moreover, gambling had become part of the immunities of the quarter, or the *giochi di quartiere*, as they came to be called in the 1630s. Ambassadors upheld gambling in their quarters through protest and negotiation; and, as Oñate example demonstrates, through violence. They asserted their men's right to gamble just as vigorously as they did their claims of precedence at court ceremonies and their claims of right away while riding in their carriages in Roman streets.⁶⁶ Ambassadors' vindication of gambling was a defense of their majesty's honor and sovereignty in the city.

The Ambassadors' support of gambling ran up against reform-minded popes of the post-Tridentine era who sought to uphold *buon governo* and make Rome a holy city by attacking vice, crime, and scandal.⁶⁷ In January 1636, Pope Urban VIII had fixated on gambling as both

⁶² A. Fiorin, *Il ridotto*, in Idem, *Fanti e denari*, pp. 87-104 and J. Walker, *Gambling and Venetian Noblemen, c. 1500-1700*, «Past & Present», 162, 1999, pp. 28-69. For gambling in streets and inns, see G. Dolcetti, *Le bische e il giuoco d'azzardo a Venezia*, Vittorio Veneto, Dario De Bastiani Editore, 2010 and G. Roberti, *I giochi a Roma di strada e d'osteria*, Rome, Newton Compton editori, 1995.

⁶³ The term «*ridotto*» had entered the common parlance in Rome by the late 1620s; see ASR, TCG, RB, 107 (1629-1630), f. 187r and RB, 109 (1631-1632), f. 50v. In reality, both *biscazza* and *ridotto* were synonymous terms, signifying secret but semi-public gambling dens.

⁶⁴ See the *relazioni dei birri*, ASR, TCG, RB 106 (1623-1624); RB 107 (1629-1630); RB 108 (1630-1632) and RB (1631-1632).

⁶⁵ G. B. Spada, *Racconto delle cose*, p. 40: «Erasi già di molti anni introdotto in Roma un abuso assai preiudicevole al buon governo, et era gli Ambasciatori Regii facevano tenere un publico gioco et biscazza». On gambling as a moral sin, see A. Arcangeli, *Recreation in the Renaissance: Attitudes towards Leisure and Pastimes in European Culture, c. 1425-1675*, New York, 2003, pp. 55-61.

⁶⁶ M. A. Visceglia, *La città rituale*, pp. 119-190; J. M. Hunt, *Ceremonial Possession*, pp. 69-89; and M. J. Levin, *A New World Order: The Spanish Campaign for Precedence in Early Modern Europe*, «Journal of Early Modern History», 6, 2002, pp. 233-264.

⁶⁷ On the importance of justice and *buon governo* as part of the image of popes; see I. Fosi, *Papal Justice*, pp. 224-236; Ead., *Court and City in the Ceremony of the Possesso in the Sixteenth Century*, in G. Signorotto and M. A. Visceglia (eds.), *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 31-52; and Ead., *Justice and Its Image: Political Propaganda and Judicial Reality in the Pontificate of Sixtus V*, «Sixteenth Century Journal», 24, 1993, pp. 75-95.

a moral sin and a crime that ruined poor artisans and provoked disorder in the streets.⁶⁸ After hearing that the ambassadors fostered gambling in their palaces during the Christmas holiday in 1635, Urban VIII had had enough. He was especially incensed that gambling at the *biscazze* had enticed:

[...] many artisans, devotees of the game to abandon their work and to sell all the tools of their trade and their wives' jewelry; and spurred others to commit thefts, deemed a sacrilege, in doing whatever they can to obtain money to gamble. And at the New Year almost all of them who flocked there have lost [their money] with the ruin of their houses and all this money went into the hands of the organizers of the games (*biscazzieri*).⁶⁹

Learning that the Imperial ambassador to Rome, the Prince of Bozzolo, had allowed gambling to take place before his palace in Piazza Navona, the pope's cardinal nephew, Francesco Barberini, had the governor act since «it seemed all the more scandalous as the site was so public».⁷⁰ Without delay, Spada had his constables arrest the organizers of the game, which included several of his gentlemen and servants. Bozzolo protested the arrest and resentfully complained of «partiality since [the gambling] was tolerated at other places».⁷¹ The Imperial ambassador was referring to the notorious gambling inside the palace of the French ambassador, the Marquis François Duval de Fontenay, a staunch ally of the pope. After meeting with the cardinal-nephew, Bozzolo agreed to forbid the games at his palace but only if the Fontenay complied as well. Solicitous of their honor, neither ambassador wanted to be the first to comply with Barberini's demands.

At an impasse, the pope had Cardinal Barberini arrange for individual mediations with the ambassadors of the Holy Roman Empire, France, and Spain «in order to remove this inconvenience and to follow the will of His Holiness».⁷² What followed as nine months of intense negotiation with the ambassadors sending intermediaries to speak on their behalf and lodge accusations of favoritism at the cardinal-nephew. None of the ambassadors wanted to be the first to prohibit gambling in their quarters. To do so would admit guilt and lose face among their rivals in city. Cardinal Francesco had to navigate ambassadorial pretensions to avoid insulting the honor of their majesties and provoking international controversy. Amid these negotiations, the Spanish special envoy, Fernando Afán de Ribera, the duke of Acalà, protested the arrest of several of servants for gambling at his palace by threatening vengeance on the Barberini «to make known the esteem of the Catholic King and to have them respect his Majesty».⁷³ In the end, the Acalà contended himself with boycotting papal audiences for four months. Despite the tensions, Cardinal Barberini managed to get all three ambassadors to agree dismiss the gambling from their quarters by 22 November 1636. The precise date was selected since «otherwise everyone would have wanted to wait to see if the others would

⁶⁸ For recent treatments of the Barberini, see L. Nussdorfer, *Civic Politics in the Rome of Urban VIII*, Princeton, Princeton University, 1992 and J. M. Hunt, *Ritual Time and Popular Expectations of Papal Rule in Early Modern Rome*, «Explorations in Renaissance Culture», 45, 2019, pp. 29-49.

⁶⁹ G. B. Spada, *Racconto delle cose*, p. 40: «che molti Artisti dediti al gioco, abbandonavano l'arte, vendevano tutti gli arnesi di casa, et ornamenti delle mogli loro, et altri commentavano furti, anche qualificate con sacrilegio, per fare in qualunque modo denaro per giocare, et in capo dall'anno tutto ciò che vi perdevano con la ruina delle proprie case quei che vi concorrevano, andava in mano dei biscazzieri». The title of Prince of Bozzolo was held by Scipione Gonzaga, great-grandson of Federico II Gonzaga.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*: «pareva di tanto maggiore scandolo, quanto che il sito era così pubblico».

⁷¹ *Ibid*: «partialità cioè che fusse tollerato ad altri».

⁷² *Ibid*: «per toglier via questo inconveniente, et secondare i sensi di S.tà».

⁷³ BAV, Urb.lat 1646, *Relatione delli delitti*, f. 67v: «far riconoscere la stima del Re Cattolico, et il dovuto rispetto alla Maestà Sua».

do». ⁷⁴ After the ambassadors agreed to this date, Spada confidently declared in his diary that «a most pernicious abuse introduced long before the current pontificate was brought to an end». ⁷⁵

Predictably, hardly a month had passed after the settlement, before Fontenay allowed the gambling to resume at his palace for the Christmas season. Once again, Spada and Cardinal Barberini sent emissaries, including Cardinal Mazarin, to convince him to prohibit the gambling in his quarter. Fontenay acceded to their request, replying «although he was not inferior to the other ambassadors, since he was such a servant of the His Eminence [Cardinal Barberini] that, if ordered not to foster gambling, he would obey even though the others still did so». ⁷⁶ Despite making these promises, Fontenay's servants continued to promote the games well into January of the next year. Piqued by this disobedience, Cardinal Barberini had Spada arrest several of the organizers of the *biscazza* at Fontenay's palace on 22 January 1637. The next morning, Charles de Rouvray, the ambassador's *cavallerizzo* and principal organizer of the games, protested this insult before Spada, complaining «that it was his profit in the gambling, that the jailed men served him, as he said, in the Academy of the Game...and that the [constables] had greatly offended the Lord Ambassador». ⁷⁷

Delicate negotiations commenced anew that would have to gratify the honor of both parties. This time, Cardinal Barberini had his spirited younger brother, Cardinal Antonio, host the ambassador for dinner at the Barberini palace at Quattro Fontane where they embarked on a long discussion of the matter. During the conversation, Cardinal Antonio sought «to find a way to give satisfaction to the ambassador without giving offense to the law» and heard Fontenay's complaints that «they gambled elsewhere, that is, in the Imperial ambassador's house and in the piazza of the Spanish ambassador». ⁷⁸ Eventually, Cardinal Antonio settled on a ruse that would repair Fontenay's damaged honor and uphold the pope's demand for justice. The young cardinal convinced Fontenay to claim he had been tricked by his servants into allowing them to «gamble under his name» and to withdraw his protests over their arrest. In return, the pope would grant the ambassador's men a full pardon, contingent on Fontenay's prohibiting gambling at the embassy in the future. The plan saved face for both parties and Cardinal Antonio left the dinner believing that «*buon governo* would not be comprised» in making it. ⁷⁹

These convoluted and torturous negotiations pitted ambassadorial honor and immunities against papal concerns for reform and *buon governo*, and equally taxed the patience of Spada and the Barberini cardinals. Despite promises and endless negotiations, the games prevailed within the sanctuaries of the ambassadors' quarters. In January 1639, Spada yet again bemoaned in his chronicle of crimes that the games «continued as before, even in the house of the Lord Ambassador of the Empire gambling has resumed». ⁸⁰ Papal justice faced the loud protests and violence of the ambassadors who rigorously objected to attempt to suppress the right of their men to gamble. Part of these protests were based on the defense of their

⁷⁴ G. B. Spada, *Racconto delle cose*, p. 41: «altramente ogn'uno haverebbe voluto stare a vedere che cosa facessero gli altri».

⁷⁵ *Ibid*: «si diede ad un perniciosissimo abuso introdotto molto prima del presente pontificato».

⁷⁶ *Ivi*, p. 47: «che egli fosse inferior a gl'altri ambasciatori tuttavia, che egli era tanto servitore di S. Em., che se gl'havesse comandato di non far giocare, quando anche gli altri lo facessero, haverebbe ubbidito».

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, p. 48: «suo era l'utile del gioco, che fussero stati carcerati quei che lo servivono, come egli diceva, nell'Accademia del gioco [...] che si facesse un grande affronto al Sig. Ambasciatore».

⁷⁸ *Ivi*, pp. 48-49: «si trovasse modo di dar sodisfattione all'Ambasciatore senza offense della giustitia» and «si giocasse altrove, cioè in casa dell'Ambasciatore Cesareo, e nella piazza dell'Ambasciatore di Spagna».

⁷⁹ *Ivi*, p. 49: «potesse ricevere pregiudizio il buon governo».

⁸⁰ *Ivi*, p. 73: «continuò come prima; Onde anche in casa del Sig. Ambasciatore Cesareo si riprese il gioco».

prerogatives of immunity, rooted in claims of sovereignty in the city and honor in the international pecking order at the papal court. Ambassadors refused to cede to will of the pope and the Barberini for fear of losing rank their diplomatic rivals. When Cardinal Francesco Barberini warned the Prince of Bozzolo to prohibit gambling at his palace, the imperial ambassador protest that «he did not want to serve as an example to the ambassador of France, the Marquis Tassi, and the others».⁸¹

In their defense of gambling, ambassadors also looked out for their men – gambling tied patron and client together in mutual bonds of loyalty. In May 1636, constables arrested several servants of the Spanish ambassador on account of the «ruckus of the games of the quarter (*giochi di quartiere*)».⁸² The ambassador, «taking to heart the cause of his familiars», threatened violence against the constables and even the Barberini. Three years later, the French ambassador, Fontenay, vowed vengeance against Spada after the arrest of several of his servants that ended in with the murder of his *cavallerizzo* in the hands of bounty hunters working for the papacy.⁸³ For the entire year of 1639, Spada used caution when going about his business for fear of retaliation: he kept a gentleman skilled at weaponry in his carriage and armed his grooms with *terzaroli*. As the Carnival season of 1640 approached, fearing «deadly tragedies» instead of the usual comedies of the festive time, Spada increased his personal guard and placed two hundred Corsican soldiers on the Corso, where the races of the *palii* were held, and at the gates of the city.⁸⁴ The anticipated violence never materialized thanks to a safe-facing compromise brokered between the governor and the ambassador. Spada removed the *caponotaro* who oversaw the *cavallerizzo*'s trial for having executed the orders of the pope with too much rigor. This placated the anger of the ambassador, who had been very fond of his servant. The episode even temporarily severed the alliance the Barberini had with France and it even gained the attention of Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu, underscoring how microcosmic affairs in the streets of Rome could create waves that reached the royal courts of Paris and Versailles.⁸⁵

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It might strike readers as odd that French and Spanish ambassadors in Rome spend so much time and energy fretting about gambling inside their palace during the hostilities of the Thirty Years' War. But as Oñate's case demonstrates, gambling had become an important component of the immunities of the quarter. Much of the defense of gambling was rooted in keeping the law out of the sovereign and extraterritorial space of the quarter, but, as with squabbles over precedence at the papal court or brawls that erupted over right-of-way in carriages in Rome's streets, diplomatic prestige and royal honor were at stake in addition to the stakes risked in the games. Losing control over the quarter, including over their familiars' ability to gamble and to participate in other outlawed activities, resulted in the loss of honor and international rank within the hierarchy of the papal court. It is telling that ambassadors complained of partiality and favoritism when told to prohibit gambling in their households

⁸¹ Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del principato, *Carteggio diplomatico*, 3365, dispatch of Francesco Niccolini of 30 January 1638, f. 68v: «non voleva server d'esempio al s.r Ambre di Francia, al Marchese Tassi, et ad altri». Marquis Giovanni Battista Tassi was in charge of the Spanish post near the Piazza di Pasquino. Tassi allowed his servants to gamble, as Spada wrote in his chronicle, «under the shadow of the King», see G. B. Spada, *Racconto delle cose*, p. 41: «sotto l'ombra del Re».

⁸² BAV, Urb.lat 1646, *Relatione delli delitti*, f. 66v: «rumore de giochi de Quartieri».

⁸³ G. B. Spada, *Racconto delle cose*, pp. 74-79

⁸⁴ *Ivi*, p. 77: «tragedie funeste».

⁸⁵ *Ivi*, pp. 78-79.

and promised to comply only when assured that their rivals would act on their promises first. In the competition for rank among their peers, none of the ambassadors wanted to be the first to blink.

Faced with the ambassadors' steadfast defense of gambling inside their quarters, Urban VIII and the Barberini had to navigate between displays of exemplary justice and protracted negotiations. Reformed-minded popes may have tamed the Roman nobility, they could never fully force ambassadors to prohibit gambling at their palaces for fear of offending the majesty of their kings and damaging diplomatic relations with their kingdoms. Although Cardinal Richelieu probably did not have games of chance in mind when he advised Louis XIII in his *Testament politique* to cut a good figure in Rome, «the diplomatic and geographic center of the world», in practice, ambassadors saw it as an integral part of the sovereignty of their quarters and were willing to have recourse to violent action in its defense.⁸⁶

Caught between the dictates of diplomacy and *buon governo*, papal judicial authorities increasingly stirred clear of regulating the gambling dens of the ambassadors. Registers of the *relazioni dei birri* in the 1640s and 1650s reveal few arrests of gamblers at the palaces of ambassadors despite the preponderance of arrests made in inns, taverns, streets and open space like the Roman Forum.⁸⁷ Gambling in ambassadorial households did not stop, rather the immunities of the quarter prevailed, especially after ambassadors began to settle into permanent residences after 1647. In the second half of the seventeenth century, embassies in Rome garnered reputations as havens of outlaws and gamblers where «many crimes were left unpunished».⁸⁸ Growing weary of the crimes shielded by the ambassadors, Pope Innocent XI outlawed the immunities of the quarter in 1687.⁸⁹ However, by that time, the pope's ability to enforce this measure lacked teeth, and the games of the quarter continued despite the reforms of the popes.⁹⁰

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⁸⁶ Armand Jean du Plessis, *The Political Testament of Cardinal Richelieu*, Madison-London, University of Wisconsin Press, 1961, p. 96.

⁸⁷ See *relazioni dei birri*, ASR, TCG, RB, 111 (1640-1641); RB, 112 (1648-1649); and RB 113 (1651-1652); and RB 114 (1652-1653). The last extant register of police reports of the seventeenth century, representing the years from 1682 to 1684 confirms this argument. Although constables arrested many gamblers and cardsharps in taverns or in the open spaces of the city during these years, they did not apprehend anyone for gambling at the palaces of ambassadors; see ASR, TCG, RB, 120 (1682-1684).

⁸⁸ J. Connors, L. Rice (eds.), *Specchio di Roma Barocca*, p. 49

⁸⁹ T. Osborne, *Diplomatic Culture*, p. 65.

⁹⁰ L. S. Frey and M. L. Frey, *History of Diplomatic Immunity*, pp. 223-226.